

Helena Petrouna Blavatsky
Pantacle and Pentacle



CONFUSING WORDS SERIES
PANTACLE AND PENTACLE

From *The Path*, New York, Vol. III, No. 3, June, 1888, pp. 98-99.

To the Editor of *The Path*:

In the May number of your valuable journal [Vol. III], on page 60, we read:

With much deference we venture to invite the attention of *Lucifer* to the grave etymological objections to its definition of pentacle as a *six-pointed* star.

The attention of our benevolent corrector is invited to *Webster's Complete Dictionary of the English Language*, thoroughly revised and improved by Chauncey A. Goodrich, D.D., L.L., D., late Professor of Yale College, and Noah Porter, D.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics in Yale College, assisted by Dr. C.A.F. Mahn of Berlin and others. New edition of 1880, etc., etc., London.

At the word "Pentacle," we read as follows:

Pentacle — a figure composed of two equilateral triangles, intersecting so *as to form a SIX-pointed star*, used in ornamental art, and also with superstitious import by the astrologers, etc.

This (Fairholt's) definition is preceded by saying that *pentacle* is a word from Greek PENTE, *five*—which every school boy knows. But *pente* or five has nothing to do with the word pentacle, which Éliphas Lévi, as all Frenchmen and Kabbalists, spells *pantacle* (with an *a* and not with an *e*), and which is more correct than the English and less puzzling. For, with as much "deference" as shown by *The Path to Lucifer*, *Lucifer* ventures to point out to *The Path* that, according to old Kabbalistic phraseology, a *pantacle* is "any magic figure intended to produce results."

Therefore if anyone is to be taken to task for overlooking "the grave etymological objections to the definition of pentacle as a six-pointed star," it is the great Professors who have just revised *Webster's Dictionary*, and not *Lucifer*. Our corrector has evidently confused *Pentagon* with *pentacle*. "Errare humanum est."

Meanwhile, as *Lucifer* was already laughed at for this *supposed* error by some readers of *The Path*, the latter will not, it is hoped, refuse to insert these few words at its earliest convenience, and thus justify its colleague from such an uncalled-for charge of *blunder and ignorance*. Let us correct each other's mistakes and errors, by all means; but let us also be fair to each other.

Fraternally,

THE EDITORS OF *Lucifer*.

LONDON, May 21st, 1888¹

Pantacle (*Gr.*). The same as *Pentalpha*; the triple triangle of Pythagoras or the five-pointed star. It was given the name because it reproduces the letter A (alpha) on the five sides of it or in five different positions — its number, moreover, being composed of the first odd (3) and the first even (2) numbers. It is very occult. In Occultism and the Kabala it stands for *man* or the Microcosm, the "Heavenly Man," and as such it was a powerful talisman for keeping at bay evil spirits or the Elementals. In Christian theology it refers to the five wounds of Christ; its interpreters failing, however, to add that these "five wounds" were themselves symbolical of the Microcosm, or the "Little Universe", or again, Humanity, this symbol pointing out the fall of pure Spirit (Christos) into matter (*Iassous*, "life", or man). In esoteric philosophy the *Pentalpha*, or five-pointed star, is the symbol of the EGO or the Higher Manas. Masons use it, referring to it as the five-pointed star, and connecting it with their own fanciful interpretation. (See the word "Pentacle" for its difference in meaning from "Pantacle.")²


¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE PATH), IX pp. 399-400

² *Theosophical Glossary*: Pantacle. [Consult "Keys to the Mystery Language," a gallery of occult symbols, in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

The five-pointed star is a sign of the supremacy of spirit over brutal matter

First published in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. II, No. 11, August 1881, pp. 240-41.
Republished in: *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III pp. 250-54.

[The following comment was written by H.P. Blavatsky on letter by Mr. S.T. Venkatapaty, who claimed to have successfully used the five-pointed star, drawn on paper with the name of a Hindu god written in the spaces, for healing or mitigating the effect of scorpion bites.]

 F LATE NUMEROUS LETTERS have been received in *The Theosophist* office concerning the efficacy of the mysterious Pentagram. Our Eastern readers are perhaps unaware of the great importance given by the Western Kabbalists to that sign, and, therefore, it may be found expedient to say a few words about it just now, when it is coming so prominently before the notice of our readers. Like the six-pointed star which is the figure of the *macrocosm*, the five-pointed star has its own deep symbolic significance, for it represents the *microcosm*. The former — the “double triangle” composed of two triangles respectively white and black — crossed and interlaced (our Society’s symbol) — known as “Solomon’s Seal” in Europe — and as the “Sign of Vishnu” in India — is made to represent the universal spirit and matter, one *white* point which symbolizes the former ascending heavenward, and the two points¹ of its *black* triangle inclining earthward.² The Pentagram also represents spirit and matter but only as manifested upon earth. Emblem of the *microcosm* (or the “little universe”) faithfully mirroring in itself the *macrocosm* (or the great cosmos), it is the sign of the supremacy of human intellect or spirit over brutal matter.

Most of the mysteries of Kabbalistic or *ceremonial* magic, the gnostical symbols and all the Kabbalistic keys of prophecy are summed up in that flamboyant Pentagram, considered by the practitioners of the Chaldeo-Jewish Kabala as the most potent magical instrument. In magical evocation during which the slightest hesitation, mistake or omission, becomes fatal to the operator, the star is always on the altar bearing the incense and other offerings, and under the tripod of invocation. According to the position of its points, it “calls forth good or bad spirits, and expels, retains or captures them” — the Kabbalists inform us. “Occult qualities are due to the agency of elemental spirits,” says the *New American Cyclopaedia* in article “Magic,” thus making use of the adjective “Elemental” for certain spirits — a word which, by the by, the spiritualists accused the Theosophists of having coined, whereas the *N.A. Cyclopaedia* was published twenty years before the birth of the Theosophical Society.

¹ [Should read: “the lower point,” as corrected by H.P. Blavatsky herself. See footnote on page 315 of the present Volume. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² The double triangle on the right corner of *The Theosophist* was by a mistake of the engraver reversed, *i.e.*, placed upside down. So is the Egyptian *Tau* with the snake coiled round it, in the opposite corner of the title-page cover. The latter double sign when drawn correctly represents the anagram of the Society — a T.S. — and the head of the snake ought to turn the opposite way.

This mysterious figure [the five-pointed star] must be consecrated by the four elements, breathed upon, sprinkled with water, and dried in the smoke of precious perfumes; and then the names of great spirits, as Gabriel, Raphael, Orphiel, and the letters of the sacred tetragram and other Kabbalistic words, are whispered to it, and are fantastically inscribed upon it . . .

— adds the *Cyclopaedia*, copying its information from the books of old Mediaeval Kabbalists, and the more modern work of Éliphas Lévi — *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*. A modern London Kabbalist, styling himself an “Adept,” — a correspondent in a London Spiritual paper, derides Eastern Theosophy and would — if he could — make it subservient to the Jewish Kabala with its Chaldeo-Phoenician Angelology and Demonology. That new Cagliostro would probably explain the power and efficacy of the “five-pointed star” by the interference of the good “genii,” evoked by him; those *jinn*s which Solomon-like he has apparently bottled up by sealing the mouth of the vessel with King “Solomon’s Seal” servilely copied by that mythical potentate from the Indian Vaishnava sign, together with other things brought out by him from the no-less mythical Ophir if his vessels ever went there. But the explanation given by the Theosophists for the occasional success obtained in relieving pain (such as scorpion bites) by the application of the Pentagram — a success, by the by, which with the knowledge of the cause producing it might with some persons become permanent and sure — is a little less *supernatural*, and rejects every theory of “Spirit” agency accomplishing it whether these spirits be claimed *human* or *elemental*.¹ True, the *five-pointed shape* of the star has something to do with it, as will now be explained, but it depends on, and is fully subservient to, the chief agent in the operation, the *alpha* and the *omega* of the “magical” force — HUMAN WILL. All the paraphernalia of ceremonial magic — perfumes, vestments, inscribed hieroglyphics and mummeries, are good but for the beginner; the neophyte whose powers have to be developed, his mental attitude during the operations defined, and his WILL educated by concentrating it on such symbols. The Kabbalistic axiom that the magician can become the master of the Elemental Spirits only by surpassing them in courage and audacity in their own elements, has an allegorical meaning. It was but to test the moral strength and daring of the candidate that the terrible trials of initiation into ancient mysteries were invented by the hierophants; and hence the neophyte who had proved fearless in water, fire, air and in the terrors of a Cimmerian darkness, was recognized as having become the master of the Undines, the Salamanders, Sylphs and Gnomes. He had “forced them into obedience,” and “could evoke the spirits” for, having studied and acquainted himself with the ultimate essence of the occult or hidden nature and the respective properties of the Elements, he could produce at will the most wonderful manifestations or “occult” phenomena by the combination of such properties, combinations hitherto unknown to the profane, as progressive and exoteric science, which proceeds slowly and cautiously, can marshal its discoveries but one by one and in their successive order, for hitherto it has scorned to learn from those who had grasped all the mysteries of nature for long ages before. Many are the occult secrets ferreted out by her and wrung from the old magic, and yet it will not give it credit even for that which has been proved to have been known by the ancient esoteric sci-

¹ [See “Elementals and Elementaries” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series.]

entists or “Adepts.” But our subject must not be digressed from, and we now turn to the mysterious influence of the Pentagram.

“What is in a sign?” will our readers ask. “No more than in a name” we shall reply — nothing except that, as said above, it helps to concentrate the attention, hence to nail the WILL of the operator to a certain spot. It is the magnetic or mesmeric fluid flowing out of the fingers’ ends of the hand tracing the figure which cures or at least stops the acute pain in benumbing the nerves and not the figure *per se*. And yet there are some proficientes who are able to demonstrate that the *five-pointed star*, whose points represent the five cordial [sic] limbs or those channels of man — the head, the two arms and the two legs — from whence the mesmeric currents issue the strongest, the simplest tracing of that figure (a tracing produced with far more efficacy with the finger ends than with ink, chalk or pencil), helped by a strong desire to alleviate pain, will very often force out unconsciously the healing fluid from all these extremities, with far more force than it otherwise would. *Faith* in the figure is transformed into intense will, and the latter into energy; and energy from whatsoever feeling or cause it may proceed, is sure to rebound somewhere and strike the place with more or less force; and naturally enough that place will be the locality upon which the attention of the operator is at that moment concentrated; and hence — the cure attributed by the self-ignorant mesmeriser to the PENTAGRAM. Truly remarks Schelling that

. . . though magic has generally ceased to be an object of serious attention . . . it has had a history which links it on the one hand with the highest themes of symbolism, theosophy, and early science, as well as on the other with the ridiculous or tragical delusions of the many forms of daimonomania. . . . In the Greek mythology the ruins of a superior intelligence and even of a perfect system were to be found, which would reach far beyond the horizon which the most ancient written records present to us . . . and *portions* of the same system may be discovered in the Jewish cabala. . . .¹

That “perfect system” is now in the hands of a few proficientes in the East. The legitimacy of “Magic” may be disputed by the bigots, its reality as an art, and especially as a science, can scarcely be doubted. Nor is it at all doubted by the whole Roman Catholic Clergy, though their fear of its becoming a terrific witness against the legitimacy of their own ascendancy forces them to support the argument that its marvels are due to malignant spirits or “fallen angels.” In Europe it has still “a few learned and respectable professors and adepts,” admits the same *Cyclopaedia*. And, throughout the “Pagan” world, we may add, its reality is almost universally admitted and its proficientes are numerous, though they try to avoid the attention of the sceptical world.²



¹ [Quoted in the *New American Cyclopaedia*, art. on “Magic.” — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III pp. 250-54