

As all Masons (and most everyone else) know, Freemasonry is filled with symbols. We use these symbols to teach lessons of morality and virtue. This series intends to analyze a single symbol used by Freemasonry – not for its deeper lessons or alternative teachings, but simply the symbol as it is. Perhaps you may find deeper meaning for the symbol for your life or in your journey through Freemasonry, but that’s for you alone.

The All-Seeing Eye

The All-Seeing Eye is one of the most iconic symbols of Freemasonry. Few other symbols have a clearer meaning: the eye of God looking down on us. This symbol, also called the Divine Eye of Providence, was used frequently in heraldry during the Enlightenment to represent God looking favorably upon the works of the organization represented.

The most well-known non-Masonic use of the Divine Eye of Providence is the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States and is displayed on the back side of the U.S. One Dollar Bill: "A pyramid unfinished. In the zenith an eye in a triangle, surrounded by a glory, proper." The eye is embordered by the motto *Annuit Cœptis*, which means "He favors our undertakings," and below the pyramid is the motto *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, which means "New order of the ages." Contrary to popular opinion, this was not designed by a Mason. Three separate committees provided strongly varying designs and all were eventually incorporated into the final design. Only the first committee had a Mason on it, but this design was the first use of the Divine Eye of Providence. The third committee used the eye on a pyramid, but not in a triangle.

The reverse seal design has never been cut into a seal die for any kind of use, but B.: Franklin D. Roosevelt did have the image (taken from a 1909 pamphlet) placed on the One-Dollar Silver Certificate in 1935 after his Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace, saw the image and felt that the motto *Novus Ordo Seclorum* had strong symmetry with Roosevelt’s New Deal of the Ages.

Conspiracy theorists have used this design as contrived "proof" that the Masons are taking over the world, since not only does the currency of the United States contain a Masonic symbol (the eye itself), but also if you poorly draw a few lines on the diagram in the same of a six-pointed star (which they claim is the Zionist symbol of the Star of David), whose vertices point out the letters spelling the word "MASON." Considering that proponents of these theories also claim that Queen Elizabeth II is an alien lizard monster in the guise of an old woman, it’s easy to discount the theories on their face as ludicrous. But I prefer pointing out the more practical fact that, if we truly were taking over the world, we would not be having the membership problems we are currently facing.

The use of the eye to represent spiritual matters extends well beyond the confines of Christianity. In the Egyptian Religion, the Eye of Horus was a symbol of protection, royal power, and wealth. The eye is personified in the goddess Wadjet, whose name serves as an alternate name for the symbol as well. Horus was the Egyptian god of the sky. His right eye was associated with Ra, the Egyptian god of the Sun, while his left eye was associated with the moon and with Thoth, the god of knowledge. Wadjet is a goddess of protection and is the patron and protector of the gods and of Lower Egypt and of pharaohs. She is also represented as a cobra.

The Eye of Horus may remind some of a similar image from the movie *Stargate: The Eye of Ra*. This, however, is somewhat of a misnomer, as the Eye of Ra is actually more like a sun-disk. It, too, is a

symbol of protection and is represented by the goddesses Hathor, Sekhmet, Bastet, Wadjet, and Mut. The Eye of Ra has much more violent connotations, concerning the wrath of the goddess who would harm those whom she was protecting.

The Hindu traditions teach of a Ajna chakra, sometimes called the third eye chakra. It is believed that with practice and training, this spiritual third eye is able to perceive the spiritual and temporal realms as our two physical eyes perceive the physical realm.

The symbol of an All-Seeing Eye has also been used in fictional contexts, and not always as a positive force. In J.R.R. Tolkien's signature novel *The Lord of the Rings*, the evil demigod Sauron is represented as an eye, rimmed in fire, yellow as a cat's, with a slit-pupil. It was depicted as an all-seeing eye, capable of seeing anywhere on Middle-earth. However, it had a limited gaze and could not see everywhere at once, nor can it see perfectly or discern intent.

The symbolism of the Eye is as complex as the organ itself. Every society in history has devised its own meanings behind what the eye is or can be, incorporating it within their own mythologies and traditions. The symbol of the All-Seeing Eye will continue to be an important symbol for Masons as long as the Fraternity endures. Given time and patience, perhaps this icon will once again inspire everyone to consider it as we do: that the Gaze of the Almighty Father of the Universe looks down upon us all. Let us all feel that this Gaze observes us serving Him satisfactorily.