

Eye of Providence

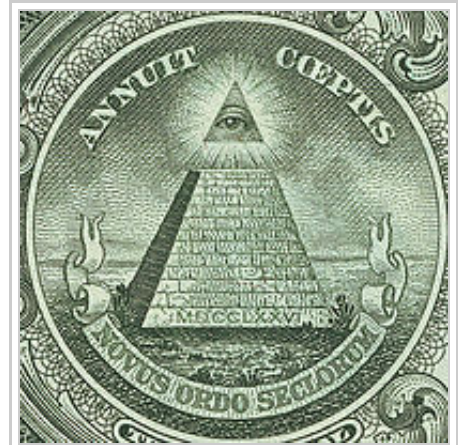
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The **Eye of Providence** (or the **all-seeing eye of God**) is a symbol showing an eye often surrounded by rays of light or a glory and usually enclosed by a triangle. It is sometimes interpreted as representing the eye of God watching over humankind (or divine providence).^{[1][2][3]} In the modern era, the most notable depiction of the eye is the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States, which appears on the United States one-dollar bill.

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The Eye of Providence can be seen on the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States, seen here on the US \$1 bill

Religious use



Eye of Horus
amulet, antique

Many religions have used the image of an eye in their religious symbolism. One of the earliest known examples (from Egyptian mythology) is the Eye of Horus.

However, the association of an eye with the concept of Divine Providence did not emerge until well into the Christian era, in Renaissance European iconography, where it was an explicit image of the Christian Trinity. Seventeenth-century depictions of the Eye of Providence sometimes show it surrounded by clouds or sunbursts.^[4]

United States

In 1782, the Eye of Providence was adopted as part of the symbolism on the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States. It was first suggested as an element of the Great Seal by the first of three design committees in 1776 and is thought to be the suggestion of the artistic consultant, Pierre Eugene du Simitiere.^[5]

In his original proposal to the committee, Du Simitiere placed the Eye over shields symbolizing each of the original thirteen states of the Union. On the version of the seal that was eventually approved, the Eye is positioned above an unfinished pyramid of thirteen steps (again symbolizing the original States, but incorporating the nation's potential for future growth). The symbolism is explained by the motto that appears above the Eye: *Annuit Coeptis*, meaning "He [God] approves (or has approved) [our] undertakings".^[6]

Perhaps due to its use in the design of the Great Seal, the Eye has made its way into other American seals and logos, for example: the Seal of Colorado and DARPA's Information Awareness Office.

Freemasonry

Today, the Eye of Providence is usually associated with Freemasonry. The Eye first appeared as part of the standard iconography of the Freemasons in 1797, with the publication of Thomas Smith Webb's *Freemasons Monitor*.^[7] Here, it represents the all-seeing eye of God and is a reminder that a Mason's thoughts and deeds are always observed by God (who is referred to in Masonry as the Great Architect of the Universe). Typically, the Masonic Eye of Providence has a semi-circular glory below the eye. Sometimes the Eye is enclosed by a triangle.

Popular among conspiracy theorists is the claim that the Eye of Providence shown atop an unfinished pyramid on the Great Seal of the United States indicates the influence of Freemasonry in the founding of the United States. This was dramatized in the 2004 Disney film *National Treasure*. However, common Masonic use of the Eye dates to 14 years after the creation of the Great Seal. Furthermore, among the members of the various design committees for the Great Seal, only Benjamin Franklin was a Mason (and his ideas for the seal were not adopted). Indeed, many Masonic organizations have explicitly denied any connection to the creation of the Seal.^{[8][9]}

Other uses

Coats of arms and seals

The Eye of Providence appears on many coats of arms and official seals, such as:

- The Coat of Arms of Braslaŭ, Belarus
- The Coat of Arms of Kalvarija, Lithuania
- The Coat of Arms and Flag of Plungė, Lithuania
- The Coat of Arms and Flag of Šiauliai, Lithuania
- Several college fraternities use the Eye of Providence in their coats of arms and/or badges, notably Delta Tau Delta, Phi Kappa Psi, Phi Delta Theta and Delta Kappa Epsilon
- The seal of the State of Colorado



Original design for the Great Seal of the United States by Simitiere



An early Masonic version of the Eye of Providence with clouds and a semi-circular glory

- The seal of The University of Mississippi
- The seal of The University of Chile
- The seal of the city of Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Currency

The Eye appears on the following currency:

- United States one-dollar bill, as part of the Great Seal (see above)
- The 50 Estonian krooni note, as part of a depiction of the pipe organ of the Kaina church
- The 500 Ukrainian hryvnia note

Miscellaneous

- On the original publication of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which also borrows iconography of the Ten Commandments
- On the front page of the Serbian Constitution of 1835
- The Kazan Cathedral, St. Petersburg, Russia
- The Salt Lake Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah
- Insignia of the UK Guards Division created in 1915
- The Steve Jackson Games logo
- Numerous video games, TV shows, films and other media contain depictions of the eye, often in the context of a reference to the Illuminati.



Coat of arms of Braslaw, Belarus

Pictures



Alchemical woodcut showing the all-seeing eye floating in the sky



All-seeing eye in a Cape Dutch gable in Stellenbosch, South Africa



Original seal of the DARPA Information Awareness Office



All-seeing eye on the pedestal decorations of Alexander Column



All-seeing eye on the top of the Declaration of Human Rights (1789), French Revolution



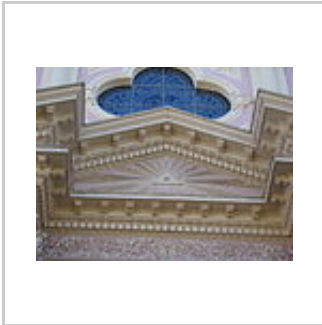
A Christian version of the Eye of Providence, emphasizing the triangle representing the Trinity



All-seeing eye in a pediment of an esoteric Christian temple in Mount Ecclesia, California



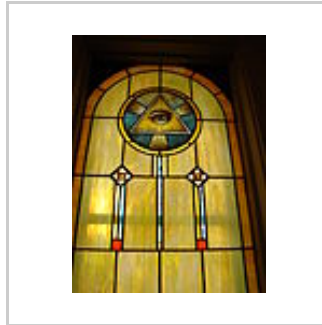
All-seeing eye on the gate of Aachen Cathedral



Eye of Providence on the exterior of a cathedral in Salta, Argentina



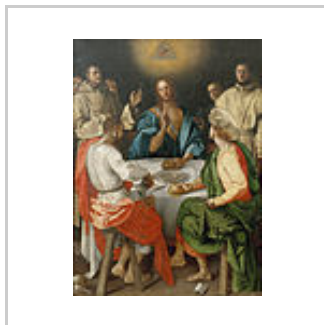
Eye of Providence depicted on altar equipment, now in a museum in Pala, Kerala state, India



Eye of Providence depicted in the stained glass window of a church in Fifield, Wisconsin



God eye in West Ukraine (Ukrainian Carpathian) near village Mykulychyn. The inscription on the stone, translated from an old Ukrainian dialect into English reads: "All will pass but God's eye does not pass you."



A 1525 Jacopo Pontormo painting using the Eye of Providence in a triangle as a symbol of the Christian Trinity



Eye of Providence, Jewish cemetery in Kamienna Góra



Eye of Providence in the canting arms of the Jauch family (motto: "Lord thou shalt guide me with thy counsel", Psalm 73:24)

References

- [^] The eye as a Christian symbol (<http://www.catholic-saints.info/catholic-symbols/eye-christian-symbol.htm>), catholic-saints.com
- [^] Page on the Eye as a religious symbol from Religiousfacts.com (http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/symbols/eye_of_god.htm)
- [^] "Freemasonry and the All-seeing Eye" (<http://www.freemasonry.bcy.ca/symbolism/eye.html>). *Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon*.
- [^] The World's Eye (<http://books.google.com/books?id=rFvu92GyDQoC&lpg=PA68&dq=%22eye%20of%20providence%22&pg=PA68#v=onepage&q&f=false>), Albert M. Potts, University Press of Kentucky, p.68-78
- [^] *The Great Seal of the United States* (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/27807.pdf>) booklet, published by US Dept. of State
- [^] Greatseal.com (<http://greatseal.com/mottoes/coeptis.html>)
- [^] "Eye in the Pyramid" (<http://www.msana.com/eyeinpyramid.asp>). *Masonic Service Association*.
- [^] Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon (http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/anti-masonry02.html#eye_pyramid), *Anti-masonry Frequently Asked Questions*
- [^] Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry (http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/masonic_dollar.html), *The "Masonic" One Dollar: Fact or Fiction?* by W.Bro. David Barrett

External links

- Media related to Eye of Providence at Wikimedia Commons

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Categories: Eye | Masonic symbolism | Pictograms

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