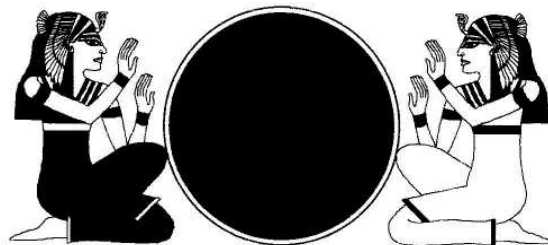


Temple of the Dark Moon



The Wytches' God

By Frances Billingham © May 2005

A great amount of information has been written about the Goddess, the Divine Feminine, in recent years. Indeed it is this image of Divinity that draws a large number of women to the practices of Wicca and Wytchcraft. But what about her counterpart and consort, the Divine Masculine, the God? Is the Wytches' God perceived as being aloof, distant and untouchable as in more orthodox religions? Or is there another side to him that seems to be forgotten?

Images of the Divine Masculine in his various shapes and forms, has been around with us since the Upper Palaeolithic era (30,000 to 10,000 BCE). While different from the life giving Goddess, the God and the sacredness of masculinity seems to have been understood by our ancient ancestors. Images of the Divine Masculine, such as those found in a number of French and Spanish caves, can still be seen today. Animals such as the bull and stag represented strength and virility, amongst other things, and often the heads of these powerful animals were adorned with horns or antlers. The connection or association between these horned animals and strength/virility became to be represented in the images of the Divine Masculine, the Horned God, of the Craft.



To the Gauls of the Parisii tribe in Notre Dame, France the name of their horned God has become synonymous today throughout modern Paganism with the Divine Masculine. In Notre Dame cathedral an image of such a Horned God was found bearing the name "Cernunnos" (meaning "horned one"). Cernunnos has now also lent his name to the antlered man depicted on the Gundestrup cauldron, dating to around 120 BCE, which was found in a Danish peat bog. On this cauldron a horned God is sitting cross-legged wearing the Celtic symbol of status, the torc, while being surrounded with various animals, such as stags and boars. But this is not the only image of such a God.

On the other side of the world, a seal dated from 2,500 to 2,000 BCE has been found depicting the Hindu Deity, Pashupati. Known as the "Lord of the Beasts", Pashupati is

shown sitting in a cross-legged yogic position, wearing a horned headdress and being surrounded by various animals included an elephant and tiger. While these animals may differ to those found on the Gundestrup cauldron, they are all very powerful animals, thus strengthening the belief that Celts originated from India.

To the ancient Celts horned animals represented strength. The stag in particular represented fecundity and renewal, and was a powerful totem animal that indicated chieftainship. The antlered or horned God therefore represented the Wild Herdsman who was the ruler and protector of the animal kingdom.

The bull is one of the four primary totem beasts of the Gaels. It has always been an important symbol of strength, potency and fertility. In Ireland, the bull has special significance with the kingship. In the ritual "Tarbh Feis" (or the "bull feast") a white bull was slaughtered and a Druid or shaman would eat its flesh, and then wrap his or herself in its hide. A prophetic dream that came during the sleep would foretell the rightful king.

As Christianity began to gain control on the Roman Empire, the Horned God became identified with the Devil, and was demonised in an attempt to have the people to turn away from him out of fear. While there were a number of reasons why the Church took a dislike to the Wytches' God, the Horned One, one of the more obvious was his blatant sexuality. The Wytches' God represented the very life force that flows through our blood, and when combined with the essence of the Goddess, brings forth renewal and new life. Every now and then we can still hear his primal beat which will lead us to the path of total disabandonment if we allow ourselves to slip from the shackles, even just once to experience to pure nature of his driving, enticing force.

With all this primal energy and strength, it is little wonder that the Christians feared him - the fear of anything relating to the primal sexual urges and desires which are still ingrained in our ancient memories. The puritans tried to discourage such activity, and today we still have remnants of this attitude where the attitude towards sex is often confusing.



The Horned God from the Gundestrup cauldron

The Horned God is still with us today, despite the efforts of Puritan Christians. He appears largely in myth and folklore and is often comes across in his many disguises, including the Lord of the Animals and the natural world. Even the British folklore hero of the underdog, Robin Hood, can be perceived as a representative of the ancient Horned God, the ruler of natural order.

There is another side to the Horned God which even some Pagans today feel uncomfortable about, and that he is also the Lord of the Shadows, of death and the Underworld. Regardless of religious or spiritual beliefs, facing one's own demons and fears can take a lot of effort, however the Horned God of the Craft can provide us with the strength which will enable us to do just this. After all, he provides a powerful link between the Upper and Lower worlds.

There is much that the Divine Masculine can teach us, in particular the positive nature of male energy. It is somewhat unfortunate that a number of Pagans feel that in rejecting patriarchal views, they need to also reject the concept of God purely due to the inner fear or mistrust that this world is associated with.

For Pagans, I personally believe it is just as important to honour the ancient Horned God as well as the Goddess. In doing so, we complete the cycle, the yin and yang, and become a whole being.

About the Author:

Frances has been a student of metaphysics and the occult for most of her life, with her formal training commencing in 1993. She is trained in both ceremonial magick and Alexandrian Wicca, and has been initiated into the Alexandrian Wiccan tradition.

Frances founded the Temple of the Dark Moon in 1999 to provide accurate information on Paganism (in particular Wicca and Wytchcraft. For a period of six years from 2000 Frances was the secretary for the Pagan Alliance Inc (SA) and worked closely with both the SA Police and Attorney General with respect to changes in legislation.

In 2003 she was invited to speak at the New Zealand Pagan Fest where she also led the opening ritual with Chief Druid, Philip Carr-Gomm.

Frances regularly writes for Australia's number one spiritual lifestyle magazine "Insight" and her articles also appearing in over 10 separate publications around the world including the 2008 Llewellyn's Witch's Calendar. Frances has appeared in the "Sunday Mail", the "Messenger" and the "Melbourne Age" with respect to being a Wytch.

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