



Who was the Widow?

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We are all Hiram, on one level of another. We discuss who he is, what he represents, what we are to learn from him and his sacrifice. To some, Hiram represents Jesus, and to others Mithra and to others Osiris and so on. We know that Hiram is an archetype, an exemplar, a teacher, and of course, we are all, symbolically, Hiram Abiff. We are all exemplars and teachers.

The one symbol we only discuss tangentially though, is WHO IS THE WIDOW? We are told that Hiram is a widow's sons, of the tribe of Naphtali. That is certainly the biblical reference, but if you carefully read the bible, you will see that he did not die before the temple was completed, and truth to tell, according to the bible he was a worker in metals, dyes, fabric and stonework, not an architect, or master of workmen.

When the first grand lodge was created in London in 1717, it comprised two degrees. The Fellowcraft possessed the "master's word". Shortly thereafter, around 1728, it is claimed, the third degree was created, more or less the third degree we have today. The character Hiram Abiff was chosen for a reason, one that, given the deep symbolic nature of the degrees already extent, had to be more than simple representation of an archetype.

So, who, or what, is the Widow, why are we all widow's sons, and why do we identify ourselves as Sons of the Widow?

Now, I was thinking about this the other day. I was responding to a post about Mary, the "mother" of god, and how the cult of Mary arose in the Catholic Church around the 4th Century AD, just about the time the Christian faith was taking off in England. Now, arguably, the existence of the Catholic Church can be pinned on the strength of that faith in England in the first four or five centuries AD, but that is another long and involved monologue.

But, here is the strange thing... the Celtic "faith" if you will, was a worship of the earth mother, the goddess, and her horned consort. The goddess appeared in three incarnations: the Virgin, The Mother, and the Hag. Now, we all know what the Virgin represents, and we all know what the mother represents, but the crone was DEATH... not the mean evil, avoid it at all costs death of contemporary culture, but the satisfying, going home, rest has finally come, welcoming grandmother.

Any of this sound familiar?

Mary, the mother of god, the eternal virgin who gave birth to god in his incarnation in flesh, and the comforting mother/grandmother that is with us in death. The cult of Mary was created by the Roman Catholic Church around the 4th century AD in direct response the Celtic Goddess.

The widow may symbolize a separation of the material world to that of the spiritual Father. The widow's son, the Hiram of Masonic allegory, therefore, symbolizes our human physical nature bound to the mother (creation/material) after the symbolic 'Fall' of mankind. The Widow reference therefore symbolizes our lost connection to our Divine essence and origin.

But the Celtic goddess is just another incarnation of Isis / Ishtar / Anu / Anna, a fertility goddess. Of Isis, it is written, Isis, the Virgin of the World

It is especially fitting that a study of Hermetic symbolism should begin with a discussion of the symbols and attributes of the Saitic Isis. This is the Isis of Sais, famous for the inscription concerning her which appeared on the front of her temple in that city: "I, Isis, am all that has been, that is or shall be; no mortal Man hath ever me unveiled."

This Egyptian deity under many names appears as the principle of natural fecundity among nearly all the religions of the ancient world. She was known as the goddess with ten thousand appellations and was metamorphosed by Christianity into the Virgin Mary, for Isis, although she gave birth to all living things - chief among them the Sun - remained a virgin, according to the legendary accounts.

The term 'widow' denotes a separation from one's husband. In Isis case, she as a symbol of the material world is identified as separated from the

spiritual side of existence, symbolized by her brother/husband (the nature of this relationship is meant to emphasize a unity between material and spiritual existence) the vital principle of Nature or creative Force.

Horus himself is the classic archetype and symbol of unifying our spiritual and material aspects. He is the personification of the transcendent nature of humanity, in other words, a different way to express the same nature of the creative forces symbolized as Isis and Osiris.

As above, so below - expressed in Hermetic terms.

"The only reasonable explanation that we had come across regarding the actual name of the Masonic hero was that Hiram meant 'noble' or 'kingly' in Hebrew, while Abif has been identified as old French for 'lost one', giving a literal description of 'the king that was lost'."

"Masonic ritual refers to Hiram Abif as the 'Son of the Widow'. In Egyptian legend, the first Horus was uniquely conceived after his father's death and therefore his mother was a widow even before his conception. It seemed logical therefore that all those who thereafter became Horus, i.e. the kings of Egypt, would also describe themselves as 'Son of the Widow'."

So, if the widow is Isis / Mary, then Hiram is Osiris / Jesus. The Widow, of whom we are all symbolic sons, is the archetype for the mother, the earth, the mortal, and material world. Hiram is the archetype of the spiritual, arising from the Widow.

This makes sense when we consider that the goal of the Mason is to transcend the mortal, to rise above the intellect, to become one with the creative principle, the Great Architect of the Universe in the Sanctum Sanctorum, where Master Masons hold their Lodges.