

Mid witchery

Life



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A wise woman was asked to present the baby to the world and predict its fortune. A wise woman, or witch was the priestess who instructed women in blood, birth, and the magic of it all. The French word for midwife means "wise woman". According to the Britannica Encyclopedia the "art of attending women in childbirth" is called midwifery. Midwives and their practices date back as far as ancient biblical, Greek and Roman times. Before the emergence of obstetrics, midwives and their practices were not considered an important part of the medical establishment.

In its beginning midwives had no formal training and relied solely on experience and the teachings from mother to daughter within the profession. Wise women were the healers of the ancient world, it was during this time that wise women and witch became synonymous. In the beginning of recorded history people lived in small groups as a tribe. Within the tribes men were in charge of the survival of the group. He was the protector and the hunter. Women's roles revolved around their power to give birth. They were the nurturers of the family and the healers of both the physical and the spiritual.

Women were a sacred part of the group and this arose to the worship of the Goddess. (Aisles, 1-7) There were many goddesses and myths associated with birth. One of the Greeks most sacred Goddess's was Artemisia (also known as the Roman Goddess Diana). When Artemisia was born she assisted her mother in the birth of her twin brother Apollo. She became the protector of women and made decisions regarding who would live and die during birth. (Encyclopedia mythical: Artemisia) Hake was an Egyptian Goddess. She had a frog's head which was a symbol of life and fertility.

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She was also known as the Goddess of the last stages of birth. Although the word midwife did not exist at that time, the occupation of a midwife held the title of " the servants of Hake. (Hake; Encyclopedia Mythical) The Celtic Goddess Brigit is very interesting because she went from pagan mythology to Christianity and sainthood. Brigit was known as the Goddess with three aspects. She was a the patroness for blacksmiths, for poetry, and for healing and fertility. Brigit has a seasonal holiday on the calendar of paganism called Imbolc which is celebrated on February first.

It is a celebration to usher in the spring. Christians accepted Brigit as a surrogate mother to Christ and changed the pagan Imbolc to Candlemas. She was canonized as St. Brigit. (Brigit; Encyclopedia Mythical) During the Goddess era, myths revolved around the goddesses who helped women. Women Goddess's were the mothers of all. Shrines and temples were erected to the worshiping of these women. But all the good that surrounds women and their knowledge comes to an end with the emergence of a patriarchal God. Christianity changed the view of women as Gods.

Eve, in the bible is solely responsible for all the evil in the world. In Genesis, it is Eve that is tempted by the serpent and brings shame upon herself and Adam with a punishment to last for eternity and all generations. God says: I will greatly increase your pangs in haltering; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. [Gene. 3: 6] With Christianity in the forefront of spirituality and religion comes one of the darkest times for women. Midwives were there to help women with the difficulties of childbearing.

They helped teach women techniques that would help move along the birth and keep the mothers as comfortable as possible. Since the pains of childbirth was there punishment for sins, anyone who helped in eased this pain were considered to be working with Satan. Women working with Satan were witches. In 1486 the church used a book written by Jacob Springer and Heimlich Kramer called the Mallets Maleficent or better known as " The Witches Hammer". It was and instructional book for witch hunters. Midwives had two chapters devoted to them and their practices.

The practice of child birth was set to change according to the church. (Summers) " No one does more harm to the Catholic faith than midwives" (CTD. In Rehiring and English 13). Midwifery was now being moved to the medical profession. Everything that women taught and used during child birth was now being scrutinized. Instead of litigating the knowledge women healers possessed, it was set in motion the total eradication of midwives altogether. The church set a course to rid society of magic. While boosting professional physicians the acts committed by untrained midwives was now a low status position to hold.

Life and death had a value that belonged to God and professional physicians. The church's position held that professionalism placed on the doctor put him on the side of God, while the female midwife became the personification of evil. In the book " Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A history of Women Healers", the author makes this statement: When faced with the misery of the poor, the Church turned to the dogma that experience in this world is fleeting and unimportant. But there was a double standard at work, for the Church was not against medical care for the upper class.

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Kings and nobles had their court physicians who were men, sometimes even priests. The real issue was control: Male upper class healing under the auspices of the Church was acceptable, female healing as part of a peasant underclass was not. "(Rehiring and English 13) The clergy noticed that women regarded midwives to an important status and plotted to have it stopped. Rehiring and English 11-12) With the " Mallets" in hand, the church was armed and ready for war. Midwives were watched closely and if a child died a midwife could be charged at sacrificing that child's soul to the devil.

It became important for midwives to have witnesses and control of all situations. Midwives were given a chance to sign documents stating that they would not perform rituals or use magic in anyway. These women found favor by following rules of men and training under them. These women joined in on the witch hunts and became the ones to help search out midwives who were found o be witches. Eighty percent of witches were women and a third of those women were in fact midwives. Approximately sixty thousand women were executed as witches for three century.

Cones) The scope of the witch trials is more then can be expressed and midwives are only one representation of the women accused of witchcraft. It is more notable that the witch trials were about religious authority over woman and the abuse of women by men. It has been over three hundred years since the Salem Witch trials. It is Americas worst history of witch hunts. Today there are many powerful women around the world. These women hold important positions in business, hospitals and even government offices. Midwifery has made a come back in the area of obstetrics.

Many doctors offices offer midwife services to clients. Women are interested in the experience of having a midwife rejoice in their celebration of life. But even with all of the accomplishments women have made they still struggle for equal rights. In 1992 Pat Robertson wrote in a fund raising letter, " The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill heir children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians. " There again is the accusation of witchcraft.