

## **History of the Order of the Gnostic Star - E.S.S.G**

The story of this Order is not yet finished, since at this very moment in time we find ourselves facing a potentially new era. There is the promulgation of a website dedicated to the Order, four published books that promote it, and at least two blogs produced by the two most active members. The organization itself consists of around twenty active and inactive members scattered across several States, but presently, there is no formal temple of the Order currently active. Perhaps the Order itself will finally pass away, as do all organizations in time. Yet the memories and the lore of this group still exist and are vibrantly alive in the minds of those who sought and received initiations and revelations to aid their ceaseless search for wisdom and spiritual fulfillment. Because of the arrival of new media promoting this organization, perhaps it may have a rebirth before finally being consigned to oblivion.

The origin of the Order is found within the personal history of a single individual, known to many as Frater Barrabbas Tiresius, who was its founder. Yet it was also triggered by others who talked him into assisting them in creating a simple organization dedicated to the study and mastery of ritual magick. Frater Barrabbas had a large accumulation of magickal lore. He had created new ritual structures and new techniques for the practice of magick. But the daunting task that faced him and his associates was the task of taking that material and translating it from a personal magickal system into one that was relevant to the group and the Order. This is an archetypal process that occurs in the production of new magickal systems, it is called objectification and also reclamation. What was learned in this mediation between one source and many recipients was a methodology that should be learned and mastered by all. Otherwise ritual magick will remain the subjective predilection of the lone magician.

Frater Barrabbas began his spiritual career studying magick and witchcraft as a teenager, quickly becoming something of an occult nerd. While others were interested in the rites of puberty (drinking and chasing skirts), he sought, studied and practiced all of the available material on occultism, magick and witchcraft that his limited means could purchase. Thus in a period spanning five years, he had studied ritual magick, ceremonial magick, the Qabalah, the Tarot, Astrology, numerology, geomancy, ancient religions and mystery traditions, the lore of the Golden Dawn and its spiritual heirs, practical occultism, and particularly, the religion of witchcraft. He finally gained membership to a coven of Alexandrian witches less than a month after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. But he had been practicing ritual magick and various forms of witchcraft, psychism, trance and meditation for five long years prior to becoming a member. Once a member, he quickly went through the ranks and mastered his lessons until only a year and a half later, he had achieved all three degrees. This may seem unusual, but considering his zeal and fascination for all things of the occult, it was not really too surprising or even unique, since others had also accomplished this in quick order. Of course we won't mention that his grades in college and his social life suffered as a consequence of this monomania.

The leader of this Alexandrian coven was the infamous Bill Schnoebelen, who adopted the name "Christopher Syn" as he conducted the business of being a teacher and leader of witchcraft and magick. Bill became a role model for everything that one shouldn't do as a teacher and leader, and

Frater Barrabbas painfully learned these lessons well. Bill later converted to become a fundamentalist protestant Christian pastor, calling his previous involvements with witchcraft and the occult “diabolical and inspired by Satan.”

Fortunately for Frater Barrabbas, the coven was not content to study witchcraft alone, but branched out into many directions simultaneously. This included a mastery of the Golden Dawn material as well as the practices of Thelema, being more properly the venue of a Golden Dawn temple or an O.T.O camp or oasis instead of a coven. The coven also managed to acquire the lineage of the Old Catholic tradition (both the Mathew and Vilatte successions), which they integrated into their practices and added to their initiations. Now there were five degrees (instead of the typical three), and Frater Barrabbas achieved these as well. So in addition to his Wiccan training, he also had a great deal of knowledge of the Golden Dawn, the O.T.O., and the A.A. of Aleister Crowley. He also gained an ordination in the Old Catholic tradition, a lineage that was much coveted by occultists and was the basis for the Liberal Catholic Church. It was also one of the possible source lineages of the E.G.C of the O.T.O. This was a time of tremendous growth and the learning of all things that had to do with Western occultism - even the dullest fool would have thrived in that environment.

Frater Barrabbas’s life was not without its pains, folly or passions. Unlike other men who seemed to master all they sought, his greatest love was for a woman whom he would never possess. She began as his friend, confidant, accompanied him into the Alexandrian coven that he joined and was his companion throughout its various metamorphoses. She had started as a fellow student, perhaps even his personal one, but later became his spiritual master. She showed him one great truth that he had never understood, which is how to approach the Deity through the highest form of Spiritual Love. The irony of this situation and its humbling consequences were not lost on Frater Barrabbas. Where he had achieved the Gnostic Priesthood through his studies, she received the Gnostic Episcopacy and became, for a time, the Spiritual Light of his life. They both left the coven when it had declined and become completely corrupt, ruled by the megalomania and even the partial insanity of its leaders. They were both deeply hurt and even to some degree spiritually damaged by that experience. Once free of this “coven from hell”, they attempted to found their own group. This attempt met with only partial success and afterwards, his friend and spiritual teacher passed the Gnostic Episcopacy on to him through a private consecration ritual (January 1983). Then they both began to follow different paths, although remaining friends, they had found different spiritual associations that led them in different directions, both metaphysically as well as geographically.

Frater Barrabbas had to leave his old friends and haunts in Southeastern Wisconsin, the place of his birth, in order to start up his career, due to economic considerations and a dearth of opportunities. He moved to Kansas City in 1983, being relocated there by the company that had started him on his career in data processing. Yet he continued his occult studies, having developed his methodologies by this time into an evolved personal system of ritual magick. He continued to work with people involved in neopaganism and witchcraft, even starting an annual pagan festival, but his own workings and studies no longer fit those structures. He had gone beyond what his peers were engaged in. Thus, by 1985, he decided to retire from all spiritual groups, even though he continued to be active in his own spiritual community. He belonged to neither coven nor grove, and continued to methodically build up his knowledge of ritual magick and Gnostic illumination. Frater Barrabbas

had been convinced and resigned to the fact that his knowledge was not for others, representing a personal magickal system intelligible only to him. This is a common stage that many magicians experience, and only a few learn to break beyond its limitations, often requiring the help of others.

Finally, in the year 1986, he met two individuals who talked him into sharing his knowledge. Frater Barrabbas was a confirmed solitary practitioner and he didn't seek to form any group or teach his knowledge to anyone. However, these two individuals, who became known in the Order as Frater Calixtus and Frater Discipulus Merlini, convinced Frater Barrabbas that not only was his knowledge of magick relevant and intelligible to others, it was also incumbent upon him to teach this knowledge and spread its practice. So inspired was he by his two friends and future associates that he began to formulate his knowledge of magick and Western occultism into the lore of the E.S.S.G. Frater Calixtus had been a wiccan high priest, occult scholar and theosophist, with many years of occult practice and knowledge. Frater Discipulus Merlini was also an accomplished occult scholar, quick wit and brilliant writer. The three of them became the founding elders of the first temple of the Order. What these two individuals saw in Frater Barrabbas was someone who had a lot of practical magickal knowledge, the kind of knowledge that they needed to build a magickal lodge. So they formed an alliance and melded their greater scholarly skills with his practical and creative capabilities. The result of this synthesis was the birth of the lore of the E.S.S.G.

At first there were only five or six members of this loosely defined group of magickal students, then within two years, it had reached the peak of around fifteen. The members started their task of crafting the lore of the Order by first writing the seasonal ceremonies. This was done prior to each seasonal event until all nine were written. Also, the first of the Circle Consecration and Elemental Octagon rituals were developed at this time. During the Autumn of 1987, all sixteen Elementals were invoked by the group, so they experienced the first flush of their own generated magickal power. In the midst of these intense workings the egregore of the temple began to emerge, becoming a tangible presence. Also, the first two initiations were written and performed for most of the members of the group, and the first vision quest was devised and performed. In January 1988, Frater Barrabbas wrote and performed an invocation ritual for the spirit of the Egregore, known as the Archangel Chiramael. This rite was attended by some of the members of the group and represented their first exposure to the specialized techniques of invocation and evocation as conceived and developed by Frater Barrabbas.

As new levels of occult knowledge and practice were needed by the group, the associated rituals and lore were translated from Frater Barrabbas' seemingly endless personal supply. He also formulated the structure of the Order and with the help of his associates put together the bylaws and determined the hierarchy of the temple. On February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1988 (after practicing together for almost a year and a half), the group officially inaugurated itself as the first temple of Isis-Sophia #1, which was based in Kansas City. For the next year, Frater Barrabbas acted as the Magister Templi and he brought to fruition the study and practice of magickal Gnosticism and the liturgy of the Anti Apostolic succession, which became the backbone of the initiatory lineage of the E.S.S.G.

Frater Barrabbas believed that the Masonic lineage, which had spawned numerous occult lodges and organizations, had been exhausted. So, he based the lineage of the Order on his personal spiritual

lineage, transmuting this new occult lineage from the ordination and consecration that he had received years previously. Thus the Order became a Gnostic magickal religious order, based on initiatory holy orders and a sacramental system of illumination, making it quite different from what had been practiced previously. Also, he decided, and was enthusiastically supported by the members, to fashion the hierarchical structure of temples of the Order into a Star Group. This is an organizational structure where each temple is an autonomous group ruled by the consensus of its members regardless of rank or spiritual accomplishment. The internal hierarchy of the temple was temporary and subject to the will of the group. Frater Barrabbas had finally put to rest the particularly bad experience he had had in the “coven from hell” eight years previously.

The structure of the Order and the hierarchy of the temple was successfully established and accepted by all. Yet as a sign that even Frater Barrabbas was subject to its rules, he relinquished his role as Magister and turned it over to his second, Frater Discipulus Merlini, in an orderly manner on Feb. 13, 1989 (the second Anniversarium). Group consensus was absolute, allowing no one to dominate it, which was a good and wise decision on everyone’s part.

Then in the early summer of 1989, he left Kansas City permanently to pursue career opportunities in the Southeast. The temple in Kansas City continued on for another year and a half and then folded in late 1990, when its members could no longer function as a consensus-ruled group. The last Magister was Frater Arjuna, who was a faithful, brilliant and dedicated member of the Order, having received all of his transformative experiences through the practices and initiations of the Order. He was the product and prime example of what the Order was capable of doing for an individual seeker. He continued to be the head of an informal body, known as the Isis-Sophia #2 temple, which also finally disbanded in 1993.

Some members continued to practice their magick together in informal groups (headed distinctly by Frater Barrabbas, Frater Arjuna and Frater Discipulus Merlini), other members left and went on to other studies and practices. The Order continued with a handful of members practicing singly or together in various parts of the country, all in the spirit of the Order. These informal groups even brought new members into the Order. Perhaps a couple of formal temple groups were attempted, and one later even managed to become a fully chartered formal practicing group for a time. But the first temple and its magickal glory was not to be recaptured in all of the years since it folded. It was an unnoted but special event in the history of occultism, not to be repeated in the same form or spirit.

Since that time a few of the original members have continued to push the knowledge and lore of the Order towards ever greater and more creative occult vistas. The founder has continued to add to the lore in the spirit of the first temple, and the Order at large. In the last 17 years since Isis-Sophia #2 disbanded, over a hundred new rituals have been written and the discipline of Enochian magick has been revolutionized with a series of ordeals representing a host of new material. A new form of ritual magick called Archeomancy was developed and given great substance and import. The degree-lore and ritual ordeals of the degrees of 5<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> have been completed, and the 8<sup>th</sup> degree is currently being designed and developed. A new Abramelin Lunar Ordeal was designed and recently tested, adding to what was already a fairly advanced system of ritual magick.

It was well past the time to bring the Order out of obscurity so that all of this magickal lore might be shared with those who are worthy - those who are willing to do the work and learn to master the Art of Ritual Magick. Therefore, in the Summer and Autumn of 2003, more than 15 years since the E.S.S.G. was formed and constituted through the temple of Isis-Sophia #1, this knowledge was collected and made available through the world-wide web. In 2007, the first of four books was published by Frater Barrabbas, representing the beginning stages to the mastery of this collective lore. The year 2010 represents the beginning of a two year project to publish all of the lore associated with the first three degrees of the Order. Other publications will also be planned, until the ritual lore of the four Elemental degrees and the Fifth degree have been published and disseminated to the reading public.

We hope that it is not too late to share this knowledge, that others will find this lore relevant and useful, so that a whole new generation of magicians and occult seekers might be given the opportunity to make this valuable information the basis of their studies and practices.

Fraternally yours throughout all time and space -

*Frater Barrabbas Tiresius - Hierophant (7=4)*

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