



Proof of the Illuminati

By Seth Payson

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Reprint. Originally published in 1802 under the title: Proofs of the real existence, and dangerous tendency, of illuminism.

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Editorial Review

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From Chapter VI, The Code of the Illuminees:

Nor is the candidate yet qualified to correspond with his new brethren, until he has acquired the cipher of the order. A simple one is prepared for the lower grades, but the superiors make use of hieroglyphics.

He now begins the study of the statutes of the society, and a morality extracted from heathen writers; but is told that the knowledge of mankind is above all other things important, and to acquire this, tracing characters, and noticing occurrences, are strenuously recommended; his observations are to be submitted to the review of his superiors.

In this stage of his novitiate, he is required to present the order with a written account of his name, place of birth and residence, age, rank, profession, favorite studies, books, secret writings, revenues, friends, enemies, parents, etc. A similar table is prepared by his instructor, of whatever he has been able to discover; and from a comparison of these, and his answers to a number of interesting questions, the superiors judge of the expediency of admitting him to the last proofs.

His admission being agreed upon, in the dead of night he is led to a gloomy apartment, and being repeatedly questioned respecting his readiness to devote himself to the order, he confirms his consent with a solemn oath, of which the following is a part, "I vow an eternal silence, an inviolable obedience and fidelity to all my superiors, and to the statutes of the order. With respect to what may be the object of the order, I fully and absolutely renounce my own penetration and my own judgment. I promise to look upon the interests of the order as my own; and as long as I shall be a member of it, I promise to serve it with my life, my honor, and my states." Having signed this oath, and with a sword pointed at his breast, being threatened with unavoidable vengeance, from which no potentate on earth can defend him, should he betray the order, he commences Minerval, and becomes a member of a lodge. Here Illuminism commences its connection with Masonry; and here those, who do not discover a disposition fully compliant with the views of their guides, are left to divert themselves with the three degrees of apprentice, fellowcraft, and master, and never attain any further acquaintance with Illuminism. But this, it was found, would not satisfy all candidates, and in particular, those who had previously been members of lodges; some intermediate degrees were therefore added, as the minor and major Illuminee, and Scotch Knight.

The Minervals hold frequent meetings under the direction of some more illuminated superior. These meetings are professedly devoted to literary pursuits, but particular care is taken to give the discussions a direction which shall coincide with the designs of Illuminism. That suicide is lawful under pressing dangers and calamities; that the end sanctifies the means, or that theft and murder become commendable when committed to advance a good cause, are sentiments frequently brought into view in the meetings of the Minervals. From these discussions the superiors judge of the propriety of advancing the candidate to the next degree, which is that of Illuminatus Minor. The members of this class have meetings similar to those of the former degree, but their instructors are taken only from among those who have attained the rank of priest, and who are directed to labor to remove what, in the language of Illuminism, is termed political and religious prejudices. The candidates are now to be formed for useful laborers. They are put upon studying the secret arts of controlling the mind, of seizing the favorable moment, of discovering and addressing the ruling passion, or acquiring a pliancy and versatility of address, and of concealing their views and feelings from others. As they are found qualified, they have more or less of the minerval degree committed to their

inspection.

Previous to his advancement to the next degree, the candidate is subjected to another scrutinizing examination respecting his views, and devotedness to the interests of Illuminism. He is likewise required to give the order a new proof of his confidence, by exhibiting an exact record of his whole life written without reservation. The design of the Institutor in requiring this, appears from his own remarks on this part of his code; "Now I hold him; if he should wish to betray us, we have also his secrets."

The history which the candidate gives of himself, is compared with the one already formed, in the records of the order, from the returns made by his Instructor, and the discoveries of invisible spies, in which, everything relating to his character, abilities, weaknesses, passions, prospects, attachments, aversions, education, and even language, gait, and physiognomy, are noticed in perhaps fifteen hundred particulars. To impress the mind of the adept with the strongest sense of the activity of the order, and the folly of expecting to escape its vigilance, this portrait of himself is put into his hands, and he is again questioned respecting his disposition to unite with such a society.

The disposition of the candidate being sounded by a new series of questions, and having been repeated the former oaths of secrecy, and devotedness to the order, he passes through the initiating forms, by which means he becomes Illuminatus Major, or Scotch Novice. It is impossible, I find, in this brief sketch, to give a full view of the slow, artful, and insidious process by which the mind is powerfully, though insensibly, drawn from the possession of its former principles, and fired with a fanciful idea of soon attaining the regions of sublime wisdom.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Warren Zeigler:

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