

THE ILLUMINATI

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For those of you who have heard that there is a global conspiracy to take over the world, I'm here to tell you : the Illuminati won. And I'll explain that a little later.

But first, the *Bavarian* Illuminati. In 1775, a very young—27 year old—university professor by the name of Adam Weishaupt found himself appointed professor of Natural and Canon Law at the University of Ingolstadt. This seriously upset the old guard for two reasons. First, he was young; and second, although trained by the Jesuits, he was not a Jesuit. And Jesuits had always held this chair. But the Jesuits had been suppressed—expelled from Europe in 1773—not to return until 1815. Weishaupt had little love for the Jesuits, and the feeling was mutual. On the other hand, the young Weishaupt was very popular with his students. Like many young people, he shared with his students an enquiring mind, strongly critical of the abuses of power and authority, and its arbitrary nature.

He started a club amongst his students, called the Order of the Perfectibilists. “Its professed object was, by the mutual assistance of its members, to attain the highest possible degree of morality and virtue, and to lay the foundation for the reformation of the world by the association of good men to oppose the progress of moral evil.”

Weishaupt was also popular with the shakers and movers in society. Realizing that his little college club would have little real chance of success, he discussed his ideas of free-thinking republicanism with a number of men of means, such as the Baron Von Knigge, and founded the Illuminati of Bavaria on May 1, 1776.

What does this have to do with Freemasonry? Although Weishaupt was not then a freemason; he was later initiated into Lodge Theodore of Good Council (Theodor zum guten Rath), at Munich in 1777.

Masonic membership wasn't required for initiation into the Order of Illuminati since the fourth, fifth and sixth degrees of Weishaupt and Baron Von Knigge's system practically duplicated the three degrees of symbolic Freemasonry, but Weishaupt recognized a kindred spirit in Freemasonry and used the lodges to recruit members. Although Knigge claimed to have a system of ten degrees, the last two appear never to have been fully worked up.

The Order was at first very popular, and is claimed to have enrolled no less than two thousand names upon its registers. Its lodges were to be found in France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and

Italy.

The more notable members were university professors, barons, marquis, at least one elector, booksellers, canons and abbés, mayors and politicians—men of influence and power. By the late eighteenth century the spirit of humanism, rationalism—enlightenment—was sweeping Europe. But there were holdouts, and reaction. Bavaria was very Catholic and not the place to be discussing free-thinking republicanism. The Elector of Bavaria, Duke Karl Theodor, influenced by his ex-Jesuit confessor, issued Edicts on June 22, 1784 for the Illuminati's suppression. They were repeated in March and August, 1785 and the order began to decline, so that by the end of the eighteenth century it had ceased to exist.

In the following year, 1785, Weishaupt was deprived of his professorship and banished with a pension from the country. Refusing the pension, he moved to Gotha and was later appointed a professor at the University of Gottingen, remaining there until his death in 1830. Coil's *Masonic Encyclopædia* describes the order as a "short lived, meteoric and controversial society"

Eight years of activity. Two centuries of influence. Why influential? Blame that on John Robison, a professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh who read neither German nor French, and the Abbé Augustin Barruel, a Jesuit exiled to London. As the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror ebbed, both, independently, published books, Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against all the Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* in 1798, Barruel's *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* in 1797. Both claimed that the conflagration that was sweeping France and threatened Europe was instigated by Continental Freemasonry and the suppressed Bavarian Illuminati.

Contemporary reviews of both books condemned them for shoddy research and agenda-driven conclusions. But they continued to be reprinted for many years and are quoted to this day.

John M. Roberts, author of *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* explains what happened next. After the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, there had been a repressive backlash. Although the Bavarian Illuminati had ceased to exist, its goals and ideals lived on. The crowned heads of Europe, fearful of anything that might undermine their authority, employed ever-larger forces of secret police. The very measures they took to protect themselves against revolutionary secret societies created the oppressive environment that encouraged people to either contemplate revolution or at least not identify their best interests with the powers that be.

Throughout the nineteenth century in Europe, as country after country experienced some form of democratic, republican, grassroots revolution, as church and state found its power and authority daily reduced, the aristocracy, and their sympathizers, found it easier to blame some hidden instigators than to consider their own excesses.

But what were the radical earth-shaking ideals promoted by the Bavarian Illuminati?

Neither Robison nor Barruel denied that the professed goal of the order was to teach people to be happy by making them good — to do this by enlightening the mind and freeing it from the dominion of superstition and prejudice. But they refused to accept this at face value. Where Weishaupt and Knigge promoted a freedom from church domination over philosophy and science, Robison and Barruel saw a call for the destruction of the church. Where Weishaupt and Knigge wanted a release from the excesses of state oppression, Robison and Barruel saw the destruction of the state. Where Weishaupt and Knigge wanted to educate women and treat them as intellectual equals, Robison and Barruel saw the destruction of the natural and proper order of society. Knigge, who was one of its most prominent working members, and the author of several of its degrees, was a strongly religious man, and would never have united with it had its object been, as has been charged, to abolish Christianity. In his own defense, Weishaupt wrote: “Whoever does not close his ear to the lamentations of the miserable, nor his heart to gentle pity; whoever is the friend and brother of the unfortunate; whoever has a heart capable of love and friendship; whoever is steadfast in adversity, unwearied in the carrying out of whatever has been once engaged in, undaunted in the overcoming of difficulties; whoever does not mock and despise the weak; whose soul is susceptible of conceiving great designs, desirous of rising superior to all base motives, and of distinguishing itself by deeds of benevolence; whoever shuns idleness; whoever considers no knowledge as unessential which he may have the opportunity of acquiring, regarding the knowledge of mankind as his chief study; whoever, when truth and virtue are in question, despising the approbation of the multitude, is sufficiently courageous to follow the dictates of his own heart—such a one is a proper candidate.”

Documented evidence would suggest that the Bavarian Illuminati was nothing more than a curious historical footnote.

Conspiracy theorists though, are not noted for their logic and have decided that there is a connection between the Illuminati, the Freemasons, the Trilateral Commission, British Imperialism, International Zionism and (if you read the writings of Jack T. Chick of Chino California) communism that all leads back to the Vatican in a bid for world domination.

Today, conspiracy theorists label any group that they fear or hate as being Illuminati. The term Illuminati has become a buzzword with no historical context. It is also often a code word for Jew. The zionist-masonic conspiracy; the New World Order; ZOG, the Zionist Occupied Government; they all lead back to antisemitism and an inability to recognize that in politics there are winners and losers, and sometimes things just happen. Believe what you will but there is no evidence that the Illuminati survived its founders.

But they did win. At least in Western society. Separation of church and state ; emancipation of women ; defined limits on the power of the state over the individual. Equality and liberty, freedom of association, freedom of thought, freedom of speech. Weishaupt did not originate these ideals— they were born of the European Enlightenment. But he focused attention on them... and we are the benefactors.