

## CAMBRIDGE APOSTLES: RELIGION

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**ABSTRACT:** *In 1820 and at Cambridge University in England, a secret group or society called The Cambridge Apostles appeared and attracted many British learned or intellectuals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This paper gives a brief account of the group, the foundation, and the procedures of their meetings, to focus more on their religious identity. Cambridge Apostles with its liberal endeavor, based first on real Christian grounds with the founder who acknowledged himself as the Bishop of Gibraltar, however, the members or the apostles turned later to acquire, what was commonly known, the religious doubt and went to question the old established Christian institutions.*

**KEYWORDS:** Cambridge Apostles, Apostles, literary clubs, literary group, Cambridge University, religion, religious doubts, 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, the elite.

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### INTRODUCTION

Before examining the religious views of the Cambridge apostles, it is very useful and interesting to identify those Apostles. Generally speaking, Cambridge Apostles, appeared in 1820 in Cambridge University, Britain, is in essence a conversational and intellectual group or society of mainly undergraduate students from Trinity College at Cambridge University and later joined by many others likes the university dons and literary men and even politicians, founded by George Tomlinson (1749 – 1863), an undergraduate from the same university. At its foundation, the members were confined to twelve students, but later the number grew to twenty-five or more, agreed to meet regularly once a week, on the evening of every Saturday to hear readings of a certain topic given by a student of same group, and consequently to be discussed and voted upon by the other members where the speaker functions as a moderator.

the group set its special rules; the speaker of the week must be assigned by the group, and session takes place at the time and place, Saturday Evenings, at the room of the speaker whose duties in addition of preparing the topic and reading it before the group and organizing the discussion and the voting, he has to offer a light meal called at that time ‘Whales’, sardine on toast, with coffee.

The topic of discussion and the speaker had to be assigned by the group. At the end of every discussion, the group choose the next topic of reading as well as the reader; and who fails to prepare

the topic have to be fined about five shillings; topics of discussion assigned by the group revolve around three important titles: truth, God, and ethics.

The new members of the Cambridge Apostles are chosen from the undergraduates by a secret voting. The candidates are chosen from those students who hold the 'spirits' of the group or those, on other words, who hold the ideas and mentality of the group, mainly those students we call liberals. The candidates called 'embryos' and after winning the vote are called Apostles. Students after graduation may leave the group then are called the 'angles' for they win wings like the real angles. It becomes customary that the group hold an annual dinner for all its members at the university or at London venue where they choose candidates for new apostles.

The group keep a 'leather' bound diary to record their procedures; topics of discussion, names of the members and speakers, voting records, and so on. The diary is stored in the reading room in a special place called archive cabinet at the university.

Apparently, the Cambridge Apostles looks Christian through the character of its founder and the bases of its foundation. However, propping deep on this intellectual organization, the reader may learn the other side or perhaps the other face of the society; its liberalism and religious doubts. This paper takes seriously the task of examining this other side to explore the real apostles' religion and demonstrate their religious doubts and their real liberalism.

First, how the Cambridge Apostles is Christian? If we look at the life and the character of its founder, we come to an understanding that George Tomlinson is a Christian figure of the first rate. For example, he was an English cleric, ordained in 1822, and became Chaplain to William Hawley; the Bishop of London in 1822; and Bishop at Westminster Abbey, one of the United Kingdom's most notable religious buildings in London, in 1842; and the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar from 1842 to 1846. All these religious titles bring to the reader that George is a top Christian leader so that he spread directly or indirectly his Christian teachings through the apostles to give at least a Christian color to the Apostles society.

Next, the Apostles and their number 'Twelve' carry religious signs. One may talk about the Twelve Apostles, mentioned in the New Testament who have been Jesus' closest followers, became the primary teachers of his gospel message. The Apostles sent by Jesus to spread his Christian teachings, are like Simon, Philip, Matthew Thomas, James and the others. Perhaps in this case, George Tomlinson assigns himself as Jesus and the twelve members of the society are his Followers to spread his learning.

Second, what is the other face of the Cambridge Apostles? Examining carefully the Apostles' main topics of discussion and the procedures of debate, we may arrive at a strong conviction that most of the apostles have experienced religious doubts common at that time of the Victorian era. It

became obvious that every time the apostles meet, they listen to a piece of reading presented by one member, centered on one of the main ideas; Truth, God, Ethics which tell their real creeds. Debating the existence of God may signify the apostles' loss of faith, for Christianity God's existence is indisputable, and debating such matters breaks the already established rules of the Christian religion. The problem here is not the way of talking about God, but rather the consequent voting represented by Agree, Disagree or Abstain. Every opinion, given through the paper of discussion, is voted upon by the other members of the group. The voting appears in form of Agree, Disagree, or Abstain. As previously mentioned, these regulations starting from the choice of the theme of discussion to the method of discussion and the voting are all set by the group, to make the Cambridge Apostles' liberalism, which leads to realization that they break the conventional rules of their own Victorian age. About the members' liberalism, Jack Kemble says: "No society ever existed in which more freedom of thought was found, consistent with the most perfect affection between the members; or in which a more complete toleration of the most opposite opinion prevailed." (Beer, John)

Everything was open for discussion, the discussion 'of things in general'. The theological, social and educational issues were the most important ones for the Victorian Apostles. The Apostles continue to discuss the Society's values in terms of reality and unreality, ..." Some members questioned the existence of Christianity: So are the sharp discontinuities in attitudes towards religious belief and personal relations...'they' never did anything but wonder whether Christianity was true and prove that it wasn't" Rosenbaum, The Bloomsbury Group.

The apostles perhaps try to doubt all their own old conventions and attempt to reestablish new ones in the light of the Victorian advance in sciences and philosophies. It seems that the Apostles, as their Victorian fellows, put everything for discussion including religion.

The Apostles named themselves as 'Brethren'. "The Brotherhood consistently represented tolerance, open-mindedness, critical thinking, and self-examination, which its members saw as essential in contributing to an individual's sense of identity and personal worth."(Endres).

With reference to the Apostles liberalism, John Beer quotes accounts that stress the Apostles' liberalism and their intimate friendships. Henry Sidgwick provides the most memorable picture in his memoirs (1906): "I can only describe it as the spirit of the pursuit of truth with absolute devotion and unreserved by a group of intimate friends, who were perfectly frank with each other, and indulged in any amount of humorous sarcasm and playful banter, and yet each respects the other, and when he discourses tries to learn from him and see what he sees. Absolute candour was the only duty that the tradition of the society enforced." Sidgwick thinks Such an environment obviously proved particularly hospitable to those who desired or needed to speak about what was then considered unspeakable. (Endres).

In addition to toleration and liberalism, the apostles possess great and strong personalities similar to those successful heroes who aspire to defend freedom of thought and democracy Sir Arthur Helps, who had been elected in 1833, dwelt on the personal qualities required for an Apostle: A man to succeed with us must be a real man, and not a 'sham', as Carlyle would say ... He was not to talk the talk of any clique; he was not to believe too much in any of his adventitious advantages; neither was he to disbelieve in them - for instance, to affect to be a radical because he was a lord. I confess I have no one word which will convey all that I mean; but I may tell you that, above all things, he was to be open-minded. When we voted for a man, we generally summed up by saying, 'He has an apostolic spirit in him,' and by that we really meant a great deal. The longest account was given by Henry Sidgwick, who also dwelt on their open-mindedness: *"I can only describe it as the spirit of the pursuit of truth with absolute devotion and unreserved by a group of intimate friends, who were perfectly frank with each other, and indulged in any amount of humorous sarcasm and playful banter, and yet each respects the other, and when he discourses tries to learn from him and see what he sees. Absolute candour was the only duty that the tradition of the society enforce."* Sidgwick praises their liberal minds: *"No consistency was demanded with opinions previously held - truth as we saw it then and there was what we had to embrace and maintain, and there were no propositions so well established that an Apostle had not the right to deny or question, if he did so sincerely and not from mere love of paradox."* Sidgwick also insists on the apostles sincerity: *"The gravest subjects were continually debated, but gravity of treatment, as I have said, was not imposed, though sincerity was. In fact it was rather a point of the apostolic mind to understand how much suggestion and instruction may be derived from what is in form a jest - even in dealing with the gravest matters?"*(Beer).

The Apostles regard themselves as intellectuals, even spirituals, or elites. This is shown in their discussions and conversations, their old friendships, and self-confidence, their wit and high seriousness, their criticism of conventional values and behavior. With these ideas, the apostles went to be an attraction to most famous writers of the time. Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary on the verge of her success as a novelist and critic in 1924, 'I shall be one of those people' she means the apostles.

Apostles as a society for the discussion of things in general; theological, social and educational issues were the most important ones for the Victorians, especially under the Influence of F. D. Maurice and his Christian socialism... They devoted more energy to

personal relations than their Victorian brothers; nevertheless,

'the one essential Apostolic quality' for them, as Strachey wrote

to Leonard Woolf after Cambridge in 1907, was 'the importance

of truth' Charm, decency, sincerity, loveliness, beauty...,

yet in principle it was truth more than anything

else that the Apostles sought. (Allen, p. 12)

According to Lytton Strachey, who did not admire him, Henry

Sidgwick brought the Society out of the Middle Ages, presumably because he shifted its discussions from theological matters, in which they had been modernizers, to ethical subjects. Sidgwick himself embodied the modernizing Apostolic spirit in his efforts as an educational reformer.

He resigned his Trinity fellowship, like Leslie Stephen, because

of its religious requirements; they were abolished and Sidgwick

remained at Cambridge to become the most influential don in

the cause of women's education and an early advocate of the

university teaching of English literature... What Sidgwick found irreconcilable without some kind of religious sanction were the claims of ethical egoism, and after a lifetime of speculation he had still not

made up his mind about the necessity of religious belief. G. E. Moore thought ethical egoism self-contradictory, and he criticized Sidgwick for thinking the introduction of God would

remove the contradiction (pp. 100-4)... Their accounts of the

Apostles continue to discuss the Society's value in terms or

reality and unreality,... Those people and

things outside the Society are merely unreal phenomena.

.... When an active member resigned from the Society, he did not return to

unreality but took wings and became an angel. Most of the

terminology here is an ironie melange of Christian Idealism and

homoerotic parthenogenesis, but the code words 'real' and

'unreal' remained important for society... So are the sharp discontinuities in attitudes towards

religious belief and personal relations... He never did anything but wonder whether Christianity was true and prove that it wasn't and hope that it was', Keynes exaggerated, and then speculated. (Rosenbaum).

Roy Johnson in 2016 wrote, "The spirit of radicalism was in the group from its earliest days. They debated the possibility of admitting women (motion defeated) and gave assistance to the Spanish revolutionaries of 1850... pursuit of both pleasure and 'the Good' – without specifying what it was."(Johnson 2016)

The apostles discussed many important matters in their meetings ranging from philosophy, religion, education, in addition to politics. All these matters went through a system of voting. Petre Allen mentioned some of these; the importance of monasteries to society, the abolition of slavery, the utilitarianism, adultery or seduction the conventional religion, God existence, the immortality of soul, Christian socialism and so forth. Religious questions were even more common in this period. "Is there any proof of the existence of a god other than that derived from an Emotional Need?".

Such thinking had won them a 'reputation for religious skepticism' that continued well after their adoption of secrecy. This 'religious scepticism' discouraged the theology in 'higher education'. The Apostles lost their religious rituals and went to sympathize with 'liberal forms of belief and even for unbelief. Religion became a kind of 'clerisy' to them. (Peter P118)

The Apostles could not even agree ( voting:4-0-2) that "Christian organizations" would play a valuable part in the England of the future." (Peter, pp. 99–123)

The apostles had begun with religious faith but later and gradually they lost that passion of the Evangelicalism to become skeptic and later to embrace religious doubt. And because of the heavy dogmas of Christian religion and the politics of the time, the apostles turned to agnostic liberalism due to the social changes and the advance in sciences and new philosophy. (Lubenow PP.356-370)

Lubenow concludes "The history of the Apostles between 1820 and 1914 illuminates the struggles between belief and doubt by exposing the interlocking trends in the social and cultural history of the nineteenth century... from belief to atheism." (Lubenow P.359)

To trace the religious views of the Cambridge Apostles, we have to look into the most important members real understanding of religion found in their literary works or their critical heritage. Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809 – 1892), the great English poet and the poet laureate of the Victorian age, joined the Apostles in 1829 after he went to Cambridge university and got acquainted with Arthur Hallam. "He had made a great impression on the society's members and came to be known as the



'Poet of the Apostles'. His relationship with Arthur Hallam, an influential member of the society, drew him into further close friendships." (Leadbetter)

Tennyson's views on religion shaped by his experience, but we still do not know what Tennyson believed. Looking at his poetry gives us some clues about whether or not Tennyson abandoned faith altogether. There, he says, lives more faith in honest doubt. Believe me, than in half the creeds. (In Memoriam A.H.H. 96.II.iii-iv)

In deed, they are some of Tennyson's better-known lines of poetry. We need to consider exactly what Tennyson is trying to communicate in the extract. 'Faith' and 'doubt' are commonly used but complex terms, and in his assertion, Tennyson is questioning orthodox creeds. Importantly, Tennyson does not neglect faith - he only questions the validity of a faith which has not been doubted.

The literary critic and poet T.S. Eliot said of 'In Memoriam':

"It is not religious for the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt. Its faith is a poor thing, but its doubt is a very intense experience. In Memoriam is a poem of despair, but of despair of the religious kind"... Eliot continued, "Discussing religion and faith within Tennyson's work is difficult to say the least. We can come to the conclusion that 'faith' and 'religion' were not synonymous for the poet, but it is impossible to fully derive Tennyson's own beliefs from his work." (Tennyson and Religion)

Tennyson, however, shows little evidence in his poetry or in any of his later personal writings that he considered prayer to be effectual, even though he did speak of it as "the highest aspiration of the soul." (Hallam Tennyson... P.324)

Tennyson in anger makes the following statement: If there be a God that has made the earth

and put hope and passion into us, it must foreshadow the truth. If it be not true, then no God, but a mocking fiend, created us, and I'd shake my fist in his almighty face, and tell him that I cursed him! I'd sink my head tonight in a chloroformed handkerchief and have done with it all. (Aspects of Tennyson 169)

On one occasion he said, "It is hard ... to believe in God; but it is harder not to believe, I believe in God, not from what I see in nature, but from what I see in man." (Hallam Tennyson, 1969)

Thus it is evident that Tennyson's views concerning heaven, as well as hell, are contradictory to orthodox Christian beliefs. (Wright P.11)

“For this reason Tennyson was labeled an agnostic, and if he had openly expressed his religious creed he might have been even less popular with the fundamentalists. He wisely chose not to formulate a creed because he realized that "people would not understand him if he did". (Wright P.1015) Cambridge and the Apostles remained a standard of value for Virginia Woolf. (Rosenbaum, Virginia Woolf among the Apostles)

Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1841), also a member of the Apostles, was an English writer, considered one of the most important modernist 20th-century authors and a pioneer in the use of stream of consciousness, is usually regarded as an agnostic, even an atheist, hostile to religion in general and Christianity in particular. (Jane de Gay, Virginia Woolf and Christian Culture)

Some other apostles kept their traditional loyalty to Christianity. Arthur Hallam (1811 – 1833) a faithful friend to Tennyson, intellectually exceptional, active poet, letter writer, an essayist joined the Apostles in 1829, was religiously described as conservative, Tennyson said of him as the ‘Christ figure and as type of Messiah, a man of faith and a divine human being’.(Tichelaar)

His poetry shows his religious views. “The bent of his mind was always religious ...deep and strong faith in the personal power and love of God. Tennyson wrote in In Memoriam: The God was shown within him to light his face. He dedicated himself to look for the truth and the truth of God.” (Thwing, pp. 271–80)

FitzGerald’s (1809 – 1883) independence of thought and frank confession of his doubts brought him reputation of agnosticism. When the Rector of Woodbridge asked him why he did not attend the local church, FitzGerald answered in anger: “Sir, you might have conceived that a man has not come to my years without thinking much on these things. I believe I may say that I have reflected on them fully. You need not repeat this visit.” Nevertheless, he was far from indifferent to the religious issues of his time. When he observed how clergymen had adopted “ritualism and Romish tendencies” as the result of the Oxford Movement, he became so disturbed that in 1849 he wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, complaining about the matter. On FitzGerald’s death, Robert Hindes Groom, Archdeacon of Suffolk, wrote: He lived so retired a life that the outside world not only did not know our dear old friend, but spoke hard things of him, as [if] he had been a very heathen man. Some years ago – and then Rector of Woodbridge called upon him and spoke, as it is termed, ‘faithfully with him’, for that he seldom if ever went to church. The sure result was that after that he never did go to church, at least at Woodbridge. So people said things of him which were not true.(Terhune P.50) The fact is that in spite of his loyalty to the Church, (he even set up a fund for construction of a new church building), FitzGerald could not overcome his fundamental Carlylean religious doubts. He wished to have a sudden death: “At any time,” he said, “the hair may break and the suspended sword fall. If it would but do so at once and effectually.” (Terhune P.51) On June 13, 1883, FitzGerald decided to go to the Crabbes for



his annual visit to meet his Sisters and talk over old Bredfield Vicarage days. George Crabbe took FitzGerald to the Rectory. The next morning when the servant went to wake up FitzGerald he found that the hair had broken and the suspended sword had fallen. FitzGerald had “crept silently to rest”, to borrow his own expression from the *Rubáiyát*, No. 22. In his writings, according to his biographer, a line from the Bible was found which FitzGerald had chosen to be his epitaph: “It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves.” (Terhune P345) These above stories of FitzGerald may bring us to a suggestion that he is not different from his contemporaries in matters of religion. He doubts perhaps the church teachings and keeps faith in God the Creator, and this is what many men of letters have done in the Victorian time.

As an undergraduate, Sidgwick had been elected to the “Apostles,” the secret Cambridge discussion society that did much to shape the intellectual direction of modern Cambridge. Sidgwick’s allegiance to this group was a very significant feature of his life and work (Lubenow 1998). The 1860s, which he described as his years of “Storm and Stress” over his religious views and commitments, were also the years in which his identity as an academic liberal took shape, and he got caught up in a range of causes emphasizing better and broader educational opportunities, increased professionalism, and greater religious freedom. (Schultz, 2021)

Henry Sidgwick (May 31, 1838 – August 28, 1900) was an English moral philosopher who developed a sophisticated account of nineteenth-century utilitarian ethics. Brought up in the Church of England, he drifted away from orthodox Christianity, and as early as 1862, he described himself as a theist. For the rest of his life, though he regarded Christianity as “indispensable and irreplaceable – looking at it from a sociological point of view,” he found himself unable to return to it as a religion. (Henry Sidgwick." *New World Encyclopedia*)

Sidgwick identified himself with the Rationalist camp, which was congenial to developing a thin Theistic account of religion emphasizing the moral government of the universe, personal survival of physical death, and the existence of a benevolent God. Indeed, he is confident “that the thought of civilized Europe is moving rapidly in its direction, and that it must inevitably spread and prevail,” though he also hopes “that it may spread with the least possible disruption and disorganization of existing institutions, the least possible disruption of old sympathies and associations.” He is also confident, as he makes plain in various works, that the day of theological censure and authoritarianism is passing. (Schultz, "Henry Sidgwick")

Sidgwick perhaps began his life as faithful Christian, but in later years and gradually he seemingly lost his strong belief in Christianity to embrace the common dose of doubt.

Prickett claims this society, the Apostles, founded to develop an understanding of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s social and religious thought. Coleridge (1772 – 1834) is known to most of us primarily

as a poet—author of such well-known poems as ‘The Ancient Mariner’ or ‘Frost at Midnight’—and

today his later career as a political and social thinker is largely overlooked,

yet in his lifetime this was the other way round: he was much better known

for his controversial social and theological ideas... Perhaps more remarkable, the foundation of the

Apostles pre-dates much of Coleridge’s best-known work in this area. Church

and State, for instance, probably his most detailed piece of political ideology,

belongs to the late 1820s, and was aimed primarily at attacking the proposal

for Catholic Emancipation... What seems to have been the main influence on the 1820

gathering seems to have been Coleridge’s two Lay Sermons, The Statesman’s

Manual—the first subtitled ‘The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and

Foresight’ and the second, ‘Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters’: A

Lay Sermon addressed to the Higher and Middle Classes on the existing

Distresses and Discontents.” ( Prickett, (2017)

E. J. Dahl (1957) in his Thesis ‘Faith and reason in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’ says Throughout his life Coleridge remained an "evangelical "mystic". The religious thought of Coleridge is discussed in the light of his growth from Unitarianism and pantheism to orthodox Christianity; he returned to the Church of England because of strictly religious considerations.”(Dahl,1957)

Another Cambridge apostle was John Mitchel Kemble (1807 – 1857), an English famous scholar and imminent historian, known for his major contribution to the history of the Anglo – Saxon and, the translator of great old English poem ‘Beowulf’. His friends described him as the most likeable Englishman, handsome, intelligent and friendly. Kemble, the scholar, joined the Society during his study at Cambridge and met many prominent and great English intellectuals of the time like Lord Alfred Tennyson and his friend Hallam and many others whom he shared the same taste of great love to Liberalism. Kemble’s passion to the ‘Apostles’ stems from their motto, Pursuit of Truth, that may mean checking and rechecking the realities of the old English established institutions including religion. Kemble as many members of the Cambridge Apostle went to question Christianity in addition to other things, so as to acquire what was called religious doubt, as his sister Fanny described him, “He is neither tory nor whig, but a radical, a utilitarian, an

adorer of Bentham, a worshipper of Mill, an advocate of vote by ballot, an opponent of hereditary aristocracy, the church establishment, the army and the navy, which he deems sources of unnecessary national expense”(Scattergood P. 3) Some said that Kemble wanted to be a priest. This doesn't mean that he likes Christianity, but rather as we think that he did so for a career to have a stable salary as it was the case in his time. Kemble, as it has been stated above, showed his interest in Mill's ideas, John Stuart Mill, the philosopher, who called for the individual freedom, and liberty.

*F.D. Maurice (1805-1872), the widely published theologian and Christian socialist, served as Professor of English literature at Cambridge. He was one of the earliest founding members of the Cambridge of Apostles, thinks that Christianity role is to construct society. He believes Christianity rather than 'secularist doctrine' is the 'sound foundation for social reconstruction'.*

*However, in his novel 'Eustace Conway', published in 1834, praised by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Maurice opposed 'the tenets of all the chief church parties'; and its publication stimulated 'attacks from the religious press', "Maurice was growing in disfavour with the chief religious parties, his Christian Socialism represented as implying the acceptance of various atheistic and immoral revolutionary doctrines; attacked in the Quarterly Review, 1851. (Maurice, King's College London Archives)*

“Christian Socialism,” though it was founded and so named by the London barrister J.M. Ludlow in 1850, and included Kingsley, was for much of its early existence driven by former Apostles, especially, of course, by F.D. Maurice. The title was deliberately provocative. ‘Socialism’ was a word for the most extreme anarchist beliefs in the 1840s. It was meant to shock, and for many of the middle classes it certainly did. It would be like “communist” in America of the 1950s, or “anarchist” today. (Prickett P. 50)

Maurice is one of the prominent theologians of the Church of England. He ‘pioneered a creative response to the critical challenges of modernity’ and defended the traditional Christian belief and the integrity of the Christian life and faith. (Morris)

Maurice seems to me not contestant in regard to his religion. he followed his father's Unitarianism and tried much to understand his father's ideas about the 'union of all persons' that all people are united and similar in thinking. However, he resolved to Coleridge common creeds and went to be a chaplain, his Apostle friends looked at him as an 'epitome of what a critical clergyman should

be'. Kemble says of him, 'the church will rarely have possessed a braver and more protecting champion' but his belief in Christian Socialism brought him lot of criticism, allegation about his heterodoxy raised in some journals and he received a vasioous attack from other friend for he stands against 'Mammonism'. Some found his sermons 'provocative' (Petre PP. 374-375)

Another important apostle, Erasmus Darwin (1804 – 1881) physician and brother of

Erasmus Darwin, A radical campaigner for equality, condemned slavery, supported female education and opposed conventional Christian ideas on creation. He embraced the humanistic belief in an individual's capacity for self-improvement and the fundamental role of education in raising human beings above the level of brute animals. The thrust of Erasmus' educational programme was the promotion of docta pietas, learned piety, or what he termed the "philosophy of Christ".

In regard to their Religious views, the apostles went through a substantial change in their history. At birth the apostles embraced Christianity as their sole religion, but later and gradually they developed religious doubt. Lytton Strachey talks about the beginnings of the apostles claiming that they were all religious 'in the proper way'. But later they lost their peculiarity of Christian faith when driven deep in the society of that time. Strachey says 'the Apostles in terms of their religious positions, were of all sorts and conditions of men' strongly religious, 'Evangelicalism dominated at least the early generation of them as it was the case in the beginning of the nineteenth century.( Lytton Strachey, P. 357) Later, skepticism found its way to their hearts and minds due to many inside and outside factors.

The first factor was the search for jobs, Peter Allen clarify the problem "the first ground out of which skepticism arose was professional: the status and standing of school masters and university dons had hinged on religion. Doctrinal requirements stood on the way of talent in these and other professions and, as a consequence, this was the contested territory in the struggle over belief and doubt." (Peter P. 358) ... The second factor was political. The multiplicity of religious trends led to a kind of misunderstand for the apostles. Evangelicalism, the Tractarian Movement, claims of papal infallibility all marked a world in which religion counted for more than less. Sectarian religion became more political and authoritarian politics became more religious produced disillusionment and a sense of isolation for people."( Peter P. 358)

The third factor was intellectual. Science and philosophy hunted the apostles minds and could divert their attention away from religion. Michel Kemble, j. W. Blakeley, Walter Leaf and many others of the philosophers and scientists helped a lot to turn the apostles' eyes to new phase of life beyond the conservative Christianity.

Peter concludes: “the history of the Apostles between 1820 and 1814 illuminates the struggle between belief and doubt by exposing the interlocking trends in the social and cultural history of the nineteenth century. A strong but declining proportion of the Apostles followed clerical vocations. These vocations varied; within them intellectual movements, especially philosophical criticism raised religion to a higher intellectual and professional standing. At the same time the elevation of it standing exposed doubt and agnosticism. It is the tempting to see nineteenth century history as leading inevitably from belief to atheism, but it is a temptation which is too whiggish and simple.” (Peter P. 359)

The Cambridge Apostles religious views may not defer from their Victorian society where they born and bread. Religion in the Victorian age suffered from substantial changes. Queen Victoria made learning compulsory and as result, many philosophers and scientists appeared with theories to challenges the existing social institutions, especial Christianity and the power of the church, and as natural result many Victorians began to question religion and consequently to drive away from church teachings to acquire non-religious thoughts and adopt what has been known ‘religious doubts’. This case may be applied to the apostles who initiated their society with Christian faith and later gradually diverted to lose their Christian faith to develop religious doubt.

As we have explained above the society laid its real foundations on real Christian religion as it is the case with its founder George Tomlinson who has been real Christian, obtaining many high Christian titles. However, later as the years went on, the Apostles went on the roads of their contemporaries to acquire religious doubts. So the journey of the apostles from faith to doubt mirrors to an extent people’s views in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the beginning to the end. It seems that the apostles helped in a way or another to make that changes in the society and bring about the religious doubts. However as we have seen above not all apostles accepted the changes, there are still some of them who remained conservative as it is the case with many other Victorians who kept their Christian faith.

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