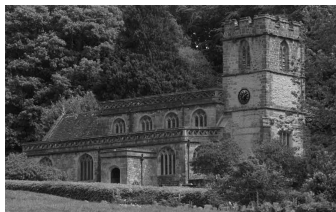


## **The Church of England creation of the 1811 National Society for Promoting Religious Education: a philanthropic act, or self centred protectionism?**

If we look back at the events in recent history which led to the Church of England becoming involved in main stream education for the masses in England and Wales, a time when the most recent bout of religious indoctrination began which led to so many of the adults of today being religiously conditioned to support Christianity, we find a very different motive for the involvement of the Church of England in mass education to the one which the Church of England alludes to in their communications and publications today; and we also experience just how recent the current re-branding of the Church of England message, to one of a persona of love, forgiveness and charity actually is!

During the 19th century, Britain saw an unprecedented expansion in the number of Church of England churches throughout England and Wales. It is important to highlight this, because there is no one alive today who witnessed the visual landscape of towns and villages prior to this church expansion programme. Walk into a village today, and your eyes will be greeted with a pleasing landscape with an idyllic church building at its centre; couple this visually pleasing image with the indoctrination of compulsory collective Christian worship and religious instruction from your schooldays, and you might subconsciously conclude the scene you are looking at, with the church at its centre, is a scene that has existed throughout time from medieval Britain through to today. But such a subconscious view would most likely be wrong, and the scene you are viewing is likely to be less than 200 years old. In most cases, prior to 1811 - 1875, the church building you are viewing did not exist, whilst the village did.



Why was there so much building and restoration of churches in the 19th century? One needs to consider that in the 19th century there was still a great fear and suspicion of Roman Catholics, and a staunchly religious - and Protestant - Parliament and

Monarchy perceived a sense of competition from the Roman Catholic Church, and also from Non-Conformist Anglicans. The Anglican Church still held three state services during the year in the 1800's: one on Guy Fawkes' Night, 5 November (originally an anti Pope pageant); one on the anniversary of the execution of King Charles I; and one on the anniversary of the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. These were very symbolic historical events; the aim of their veneration was intended to illustrate the ties of the Church of England, with the monarchy at its head, to the state.

Non conformists were not permitted office in the House of Commons until 1828; after 1828 this privilege was extended to Jews and eventually to atheists. So, prior to 1828 the Government was 100% religious, 100% protestant and 100% Church of England; the law of the land guaranteed this regardless of the religious/non religious make up of the population of the time.



Even after the concessions from 1828 onwards, the make up of the House would still have been overwhelmingly Church of England for the remainder of the century. When we hear the phrase constantly spouted today from the religious faithful that, Britain is historically and traditionally a 'Christian country', it really only refers to the minority ruling classes, not the masses; the actual religious views of the masses are not recorded in any form, save the court proceedings which prosecuted religious dissenters. This should lead us to conclude that our ancestors did not believe from choice, but from necessity.

At the start of the 19th Century, the population's perception of religion was changing as people soaked up the strong counter arguments from the enlightenment of the late 17th and 18th century; enlightenment views were reaching the masses, and taking effect. National support for religion was beginning to fade; a situation which (as far as the religiously bias Parliament and Monarchy of the 19th Century were concerned)

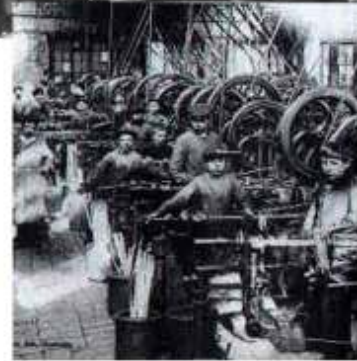
needed to be addressed with positive counter action. This counter action came to fruition with the construction, and restoration of new Church of England churches on a scale hard to imagine. At the beginning of the 19th century there were about 10,000 (925 needing restoration, so 9075 serviceable) parish churches in the country. By 1872, 3204 new churches had been built, and 925 disused churches had been entirely restored. 4129 new Church of England churches in a period of 72 years; In addition to this monumental construction/restoration programme, in 1811, the government allocated the new task of 'educating the masses' to the Church of England; this gave the Church of England carte blanche to indoctrinate all the children of the poor and working classes of England and Wales, and so ensuring an antidote to the views of the enlightenment, and the filling of Church of England pews well in to the future.

From a survey conducted in 1875, the total cost of building and restoration was reported to be slightly more than £24 million; this would extrapolate out to be in excess of £1 billion – of tax payer's money – in today's terms.

In 1807 the 'Parochial Schools Bill' was being debated in parliament, with a motion that the state should offer an education facility to all children, in order to help the poor improve their standard of living. The bill did not progress well for two reasons: firstly, there were some pretty vile characters in the House of Commons at the time who argued that educating the poor would be folly as it would give them the means with which to be unhappy with the station that life had allocated them; and it would therefore be unkind to do this. They postulated that the nation needed the poor to stay uneducated in order that they continue to conduct their manual labours with gratitude, absent such knowledge and ideas which could possibly turn them rebellious.

Mr William Davies Giddy, MP for Bodmin said: *"For, however specious in theory the project might be, of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would, in effect, be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture, and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity; it would render*

*them insolent to their superiors and, in a few years, the result would be, that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power towards them, and to furnish the executive magistrates with much more vigorous laws than were now in force.”*



This view from the religiously bigoted in high office was not the thoughts of just a few of the - staunchly Church of England - wealthy classes; it was endemic of the time.



Consider the verse from the hymn ‘All things bright and beautiful’ which has long since been removed from the hymn due to the vile sentiment of the prose:

*The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high and lowly,  
And ordered their estate.*



This hymn was written by the wife of the Bishop of Derby in 1848, and this particular verse is truly disgusting.

Please also note at this stage, for later reference, the concern over the masses being able to read ‘*publications against Christianity*’ if taught how to read; this demonstrates two facts: such publications existed in 1807 in enough quantity as to cause such concern, probably as a result of the enlightenment from the tail end of the 18th century, and it concerned parliament, and the clergy, that people were reading them, and taking note of them.

Other MPs, with more humane personalities and agendas, agreed that it should be the duty of a state to offer the chance of education to all of its members, but would not support the bill because the cost would be prohibitive to the nation.

The Marquis of Titchfield added: “*I think much benefit might result from general education, but that benefit might cost too dear.*”

The Church of England observed the proceedings from the sidelines with the utmost interest; in 1811 the Church of England created the ‘National Society for Promoting Religious Education’, or just ‘National Society’ as it is now known, with a stated mission of supplying free education to the children of the masses. It portrayed this mission, and still does portray it today, as a purely philanthropic action; but was it? Take particular note of the name: ‘promoting religious education’ not ‘promoting education’.

The Church of England could have levelled the scales and offered a free education facility to the masses at any time in its 277 year history from 1534 to 1811. But, prior to 1811, the position of the Church of England in society was secure and unshakable; largely due to its own readiness to invoke oppressive use of the blasphemy law; for reference: Percy Bysshe Shelly's expulsion from Oxford following his publication of a pamphlet titled 'the need for atheism' and two terms in jail for Robert Taylor in 1828 and 1831 for preaching Deism; this fanatical use of the blasphemy law was also prolific in the 277 years prior to 1811 and it ensured the status of the Church had never been in jeopardy. To illustrate the ferociousness with which the blasphemy laws were enacted in the 1534 to 1811 time frame, consider the fate of James Naylor in 1656. James was charged with blasphemy for staging a re-enactment of the Palm Sunday procession in which he played the role of Jesus. James was also a thorn in the side of the Church of England for openly protesting against slavery and having a sizable following of Quakers who saw him as divinely touched. His punishments after conviction of blasphemy were: flogging, having the letter 'B' branded into his forehead to represent the word 'blasphemer' so all who saw him were aware of his 'crime' and having his tongue bored through with a red hot iron. This was the lesser punishment; he was informed that he was lucky not to have received the death penalty.

Countless others were not so lucky, and were murdered by the Church of England of the time. The last man to be burned in London for blasphemous heresy was Bartholomew Legate in 1612; the last man in England burnt for heresy was Edward Wightman of Burton-on-Trent also in 1612. William Laud, the future Archbishop of the Church of England ordered Edward Wightman to be excommunicated and condemned to be burned at the stake following approval by King James I. Wightman's two murderers therefore held the office of Arch Bishop of Canterbury and King of England! Moreover, this 'King of England' considered himself so devout that he gives us, as a nation, the modern English version of the Bible, the King James Bible.

After 1612, the act of burning heretics publicly ceased, more due to the outrage it caused amongst the public than for any remorse by the religious authorities for their victims. Rather, after 1612, heretics were tried in private and quietly imprisoned.

However, the punishment of burning for heresy still officially stood until it was abolished in 1677. But the divinely ordained murder of citizens did not stop in 1677.

Thomas Aikenhead was a Scottish student from Edinburgh, who was prosecuted and executed at the age of 20 on a charge of blasphemy in 1697; he was the last person in Britain to be executed for blasphemy; but then, there were also witches and warlocks which needed to be dealt with by the religious authorities of the Church of England. In Exeter, in 1684, Alice Molland became the last person executed for the pathetic accusation of witchcraft. The last execution for witchcraft in Scotland was in 1722. That is just 4 lifetimes ago!

However, the inhumane application of Iron Age religious bigotry did not stop in 1722 and many people were still to suffer harsh punishments for heresy up to and including 1921, a mere 90 years ago! The last person in Britain to be sent to prison and ordered to serve 'hard labour' for blasphemy was John William Gott in 1921; John did not live long following his last of many imprisonments for crimes against religion. We have to consider that 1921 is just over one life time ago! So the current persona of love, forgiveness and charity portrayed by the present incumbents of office within the Church of England, is a very recent re-branding of an organisation that was, until 90 years ago, vile, murderous and thoroughly greedy.

Due to the duress with which it forced its station, the Church of England was more than happy to leave education as a luxury for the rich. The mind set of the masses, the poor, was well in line with Church dogma, and in no way considering a move away from Church adherence. But, then came the enlightenment, and eminent educated people began to challenge the position of the Church in society, and, more worryingly for the Church, its core message. This was conducted in a considered and industrial manner with the use of publications and pamphlets which were widely circulated and available to anyone with the ability to read, to read, digest and discuss. Indeed, even in a small community of completely illiterate inhabitants, it only required one member of that community, or a traveller to that community, with the ability to read, possession of such a pamphlet, and a social gathering of the illiterate from the community, in order to spread such sedition against the Church among the poor and the working classes. The Church of England would not be able to outlaw or stop such meetings and readings, and the subsequent communication of enlightenment ideas.

They realised that the (staunchly against educating) MPs plan of attack, being to not educate the masses, would not, in itself, be sufficient to combat the spread of damning anti God literature from reaching the ears of their congregations.

We should therefore strongly question and investigate the possibility that the creation of the National Society, and subsequently the Church controlled education of all children, was not a yearning from the Church to offer a gift of itself to the nation, but rather a self centred, knee jerk, protective reaction from the Church designed to combat the negative effect on organised religion which arose from the enlightenment of the 18th century, and the possible future damage to organised religion which might result from the then [1811] government's debate on addressing the problem of widespread poverty, via the supply of free education to the children of the masses. Particularly when we consider the stated aim of the creation of the National Society at its conception as given by the then Church authorities, and that stated aim was "*that the National Religion should be made the foundation of National Education*"; and the goal it set itself was to: "*found a Church school in every parish in England and Wales.*" Also, we should contrast this message of apparent good will, empathy and desire to do good in the world with the then head of the Church of England and incumbent Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Manners-Sutton and his role as head of the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to Foreign Parts', which owned hundreds of African slaves, which it put to work in the Church of England's plantations. The slaves belonging to the Church of England were easy to identify, they had the word 'society' branded into their backs with red hot irons.





When the emancipation of the slaves arrived in 1833, the next Archbishop of Canterbury for the Church of England, William Howley, held out his hand to take £8,823, 8s. 9d from the tax payer's purse in compensation to the Church of England for the loss of its stock, being the surviving 411 slaves it still owned; So an organisation which professed the sanctity of human life, was quite happy to treat humans as balance sheet assets, and place a price on their worth when forced to dispose of such assets. The point being: this organisation and its front of good will, empathy and desire to do good in the world was a complete smokescreen, and a total sham; The Church of England of 1811 was in deed, as opposed to word, thoroughly ruthless and vile. Countless slaves never made it to emancipation and died at the hands of the Church of England's employees on the plantations. Just as the Church of England branded its name into the backs of its slaves to mark them as Church of England property, so too it wanted to brand its theology into the minds of every child in England and Wales, to claim them as fully indoctrinated members of its cult, and future spiritual stock.



The hypotheses emerging from the above is therefore: some eminent members of society were questioning and shaking the foundation of the Church, education was only available to the rich, there was a desire from the government to educate the masses as a means of combating poverty, the Church of England feared the possibility that the children of the masses would be educated towards the views of the enlightenment and that this would lead to the ultimate demise of the Church within a generation, and demolish their position in society, particularly among the masses.

The Church in 1811 was extremely wealthy in cash, land and property and held significant political influence; it was therefore in a position to take action to alleviate its own fears; the Church therefore stood forward and offered itself as the conduit with which to deliver the government's desired 'education of the masses'. Their ulterior motive was: if they controlled the education of the children of the masses as

far as secular subjects were concerned, they could manage, counter and temper access to the knowledge being put forward by those of the enlightenment, they could also supplement this process with the preaching of the Christian theology to the children via lessons in religious instruction, and at the same time, they could subject the children to daily acts of collective Christian worship. In short, the Church used their wealth and influence to high jack the mass education programme which was already on the cards, and in doing so: used it to censor the effect of the enlightenment, indoctrinate children on a mass scale on a daily basis and thereby ensure a constant flow of religious adherence into the future, and ultimately their own survival.

We now also recall from the start of this communication the nationwide church building programme which ran at exactly the same time in our history; new schools to indoctrinate future congregations in, and new church pews for them to sit in! In their efforts to combat the effects of the enlightenment, the Church of England used the ill-gotten wealth they had gained from their plantations and slave ownership, to flood the country with new church buildings and sought to take full control of children's education. So, the creation of the 'National Society for Promoting Religious Education' was not philanthropic at all, but rather, completely arrogant and selfish in motive, and it still is today! The aims of the National Society are still: "*the National Religion should be made the foundation of National Education*", and to achieve this, the National Society (Church of England) desires to found "*a Church school in every parish in England and Wales.*" This is the Church of England's true rationale for religious education: the indoctrination of children; and it is the camouflaged reason which is never put forward by the Church of England in media debates today; why? Because it sounds, when being voiced, to be exactly what it is; a desire from the Church of England to indoctrinate! Rather, the Church of England will always use alternative arguments such as, '*it is important to teach children about religion in order to teach them to respect people of faith, and general good morals*' or some such equivalent argument.

However; given that:

- Today's literal version of a historic Jesus is demonstrably fictitious plagiarism of ancient allegorical versions of a mythical Christ.

- Literalist Christianity was forced onto the people of the Roman Empire upon pain of death and torture.
- The Church of England still used oppression to force its views onto the population up to and including 1921.

It is now time for our government to end Church involvement in: the education of children, matters of state, and the tax payer's purse.

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Actively campaigning against the religious indoctrination of children.