

The *Faith and Thought Bulletin* first appeared in 1985 under the title *Faith and Thought Newsletter*. That new title reflected a wider coverage, since it contained some short articles, notes and book reviews, in addition to the news items, which previously would not have fallen within the purview of the journal. From the April 2005 issue it has been known as *Faith & Thought*.

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# FAITH and THOUGHT

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## Editorial

This edition reproduces the text of Ian Randall’s talk (which took the place of the 2018 symposium) setting out the origins of the Victoria Institute. We are indebted to Dr Randall for his careful work on this. In this era, when there is so much inflammatory communication on ‘social media’, and pressures on academic bodies to stifle debate, it is good to be reminded that our Institute had a reputation, from its beginning, for open discussion and fairness to opponents. Long may this continue.

Bob Allaway – (co-editor)

Hopefully you will have noted the new design and layout for this edition of the journal, we hope this makes the journal more attractive. I would be happy to receive feedback on this – positive or negative! Suggestions are always welcomed: [admin@faith@thought.org](mailto:admin@faith@thought.org).

Alan Kerry – (co-editor)

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## **'The Most Important Questions of Philosophy and Science': The Early Years of the Victoria Institute**

**Ian M. Randall<sup>1</sup>**

*Ian Randall is a Research Associate of the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and a Senior Research Fellow at Spurgeon's College.*

The period when the Victoria Institute began was a time of considerable religious and scientific upheaval in Britain. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859 and a year later a controversial theological volume, *Essays and Reviews*, appeared. The seven writers of this volume were six Anglican clergymen, and one layman, C. W. Goodwin, an Egyptologist who had resigned his Fellowship at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. All the essays represented the views of 'Broad Church' or 'liberal' Anglicans. Goodwin's essay, 'On the Mosaic Cosmogony', dealt with Genesis chapter one, which he saw as a speculation about the origin of the world by a powerful but primitive mind.<sup>1</sup> In 1862 J.W. Colenso, the bishop of Natal, published *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* in which he argued that the Pentateuch could not be regarded as historically true.<sup>2</sup> These and other publications provoked inevitable reactions. Over 11,000 Anglican High Church and Evangelical clergy signed a declaration which opposed the thinking of *Essays and Reviews* and affirmed the Bible as the Word of God. What later became the most famous debate about evolution was in Oxford in 1860, featuring as

*...affirmed the Bible as the Word of God.*

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Faith and Thought (the continuation of the Victoria Institute) for the opportunity to present this material in September 2018.

<sup>1</sup> For the volume and responses, see Josef L. Altholz, *Anatomy of a Controversy: The Debate over Essays and Reviews 1860–1864* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> J.A. Draper, ed., *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Inspiration* (London; T & T Clark International, 2003).

two of the main protagonists Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and the biologist Thomas H. Huxley, who became known as 'Darwin's Bulldog'.<sup>3</sup>

The period also produced new societies, one of which was the Victoria Institute, formed in 1865. Little has been written about the history of the Institute. I am delighted that Dr James Ungureanu is undertaking research on the Institute's history and I am grateful to him for some of his draft material.<sup>4</sup> This article looks at the background, beginnings, early emphases, impact and development of the Institute in its first three decades.

### **Background factors**

Although it is often thought that Darwin's work was most significant in challenging traditional Christian thinking about creation, it was after the publication of *Essays and Reviews* that several young men associated with the Royal College of Chemistry decided to produce a 'Declaration' which would re-affirm the harmony of science and scripture. The *Essays* sold 22,000 copies in two years after publication, more than Darwin's *Origin* would sell in its first twenty years. The Declaration, which was drawn up in 1864, asserted that it was 'impossible for the Word of God, as written in the book of nature, and God's Word written in Holy Scripture, to contradict one another, however much they may appear to differ'. This statement was far from being an attack on scientific endeavour. Indeed, it advocated scientific investigation, stating: 'We cannot but deplore that Natural Science should be looked upon with suspicion by many who do not make a study of it, merely on account of the unadvised manner in which some are placing it in opposition to Holy Writ. We believe that it is the

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<sup>3</sup> See the detailed account in Ian Hesketh, *Of Apes and Ancestors: Evolution, Christianity, and the Oxford Debate* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> See also, on the history, E.J.G. Titterton, 'The Early History of the Victoria Institute', *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* [hereafter *JTVI*], Vol. 82 (1950), pp. 53-74.

duty of every Scientific Student to investigate nature simply for the purpose of elucidating truth.<sup>5</sup>

Of the 717 people who eventually attached their names to this document, 420 were Fellows of recognised scientific and medical societies, including 66 members of the Royal Society, which as James Moore notes in *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*, represented roughly 10% of the British membership of this prestigious scientific Society.<sup>6</sup> Among the best-known scientists to sign were Sir David Brewster, who had been Principal of St Andrew's University and was then Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Adam Sedgwick, Woodwardian Professor of Geology at the University of Cambridge, and James Challis, Plumian Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy, also at Cambridge. It is a significant achievement that the prime movers in the Declaration, who were in their twenties and unknown in the scientific world, were able to achieve what they did. Two of them, Herbert McLeod and Charles Grove, worshipped at Westminster Abbey and had connections within Anglicanism, and Capel Henry Berger was a member of the Brethren.<sup>7</sup> They did not convince everyone by any means. John Herschel, the outstanding astronomer, said the Declaration added 'a fresh element of discord' in a Christian world that was already 'too discordant'.<sup>8</sup> Michael Faraday, while agreeing with the Declaration's sentiments, would not sign because as a committed Free Churchman he was

'a fresh element of discord'

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<sup>5</sup> 'The Declaration of Students of the Natural and Physical Sciences' (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1864), p. 3. See holdings in the Cambridge University Library, Manuscript Room. MS Add 5989.

<sup>6</sup> James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> W.H. Brock and R.M. MacLeod, 'The Scientists' Declaration', *British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 9, Pt. 1 (1976), pp. 39-66.

<sup>8</sup> Moore, *Post-Darwinian*, p. 84.

averse to anything that seemed to savour of the Established Church interfering in science.<sup>9</sup>

When the Victoria Institute was formed, it wanted to uphold the ideals expressed in the Declaration. There were clear links. One of the three vice-presidents of the Institute was Philip Gosse, a zoologist, who was a member of the same Brethren assembly as Capel Henry Berger. In 1857 Gosse published his *Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot*, which argued that God had created the world with only the appearance of great age.<sup>10</sup> The confident spirit that imbued the promoters of the Declaration also motivated those who established the Institute. Hannah Gay, in an article on the Declaration, notes that on one occasion Herbert McLeod asked some of his collaborators to sit in the front row at one of T.H. Huxley's lectures. He hoped that Huxley would 'pitch into us'. Huxley did not rise to the bait, but McLeod had made the point that there was a younger element with whom Huxley should be engaging, rather than writing off (as Huxley tended to do) his critics as 'old fogeys'.<sup>11</sup> James Moore suggests that the formation of the Victoria Institute was rooted in 'fear of intellectual developments since the appearance of the *Origin of Species* and *Essays and Reviews*'.<sup>12</sup> However, the spirit that animated the Declaration-Institute constituency in the 1860s was characterised more by pugnaciousness than by pusillanimity.

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Faraday to Charles Grove, 9 July 1864. Cambridge University Library, Manuscript Room. MS Add 5989.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Gosse was the father of Edmund Gosse, who wrote *Father and Son* (London: Heinemann, 1907). A modern biography of Philip Gosse by Ann Thwaite, *Glimpses of the Wonderful: The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, 1810-1888* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), shows that the father was not the repressive tyrant portrayed by the son.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah Gay, "The Declaration of Students of the Natural and Physical Sciences", revisited: Youth, Science and Religion in Mid-Victorian Britain', in W. Sweet and R. Feist, eds., *Religion and the Challenges of Science* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 19-38.

<sup>12</sup> Moore, *Post-Darwinian*, p. 85.

*'An influential Set of Chaps'...*

The Victoria Institute was not the only new society founded as a direct

response to the debates of the 1860s. Much more attention has been given to the X Club, which was formed in 1864 by nine friends, all of whom were leading figures in the field of science, including the physicist John Tyndall, and the philosopher Herbert Spencer.<sup>13</sup> Ruth Barton has called them 'An Influential Set of Chaps', which conveys both the atmosphere of these gatherings of men (the Institute was likewise all male) and also the reality of the X Club's considerable influence in bodies such as the Royal Society, the British Association and the Royal Institution.<sup>14</sup> James Moore, comparing the X Club and the Victoria Institute, viewed them as representing 'a polarization of sorts'.<sup>15</sup> Partly out of the X Club emerged a wider body, the Metaphysical Society, which lasted from 1869 to 1880. The members were influential Victorians and the papers (ninety-five in total) they produced aimed to foster open discussion of ideas pertaining to faith and science. Among the members were politicians such as William Ewart Gladstone and Arthur James Balfour, scientists such as Huxley and Tyndall, and church leaders of different denominations, notably the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Henry Edward Manning, the Anglican theologian, Frederick Denison Maurice, and the Unitarian James Martineau. Other members were the critic John Ruskin and the Poet Laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson.<sup>16</sup> Despite the high profile of the X Club and the Metaphysical Society, they both came to an end, while the Victoria Institute continued.

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<sup>13</sup> See for example J. Vernon Jensen, 'The X Club: Fraternity of Victorian Scientists', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1 (1970), pp. 63–72. The X Club continued for nearly three decades.

<sup>14</sup> Ruth Barton, "'An Influential Set of Chaps": The X-Club and Royal Society Politics 1864–85', *British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 23, Pt. 1 (1990), pp. 53–81; for a full treatment see Ruth Barton, *The X Club: Power and Authority in Victorian Science* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Moore, *Post-Darwinian*, pp. 84–5.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Hajdenko-Marshall, 'Believing after Darwin: The Debates of the Metaphysical Society (1869–1880)', *Cahiers victoriens et édouardien*, Vol. 76 (2012), pp. 69–83.

## The beginnings

The driving force behind the establishment of the Institute was James Reddie. He was born in 1820, near Dunfermline, in Fife, Scotland, the son of a Scottish landowner. James studied for the bar at Edinburgh University and his robust approach to debate reflected his background as an Edinburgh lawyer. On moving to England, he remained connected with Scotland as an honorary member of Dialectic Society of Edinburgh University. His wife was the daughter of a landowner in Norfolk. In London he entered the civil service and became Deputy Comptroller of Navy Pay.<sup>17</sup> He was seen as having 'distinguished himself at the Admiralty as an active and able advocate of reform and progress'.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that in his early life Reddie was a Presbyterian, but in London it seems possible that he became an Anglican. Six years after the formation of the Institute, Reddie died of a heart attack, at the age of fifty-one, and a close friend, William J. Irons, who was a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral, paid a fulsome tribute to Reddie's work. Irons recalled that they had been friends for half of Reddie's life, and how they had discussed the formation of a body like the Institute. 'I well remember', Irons, said, 'how, with that clearness and originality which distinguished him, he urged me in private, long before he pressed it in public, the need there would certainly be of a philosophical union among "all who name the Name of Christ", our common Lord'.<sup>19</sup>

It was on 24 May 1865 (on Queen Victoria's birthday), that Reddie distributed a pamphlet announcing the inauguration of a 'new Philosophical Society'. He wrote: 'It is proposed to found a new Philosophical Society for Great Britain, to be composed of Members or Fellows and Associates who are professedly Christians, and the great object of which will be to defend revealed truth from "the oppositions of science, falsely so called".' The use of the term

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<sup>17</sup> W.A.C. Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1972), p. 378.

<sup>18</sup> *The Guardian*, 5 April 1871, p. 397.

<sup>19</sup> William J. Irons, *Annual Address of the Victoria Institute* (London: Robert Hardwicke 1871), p. 1.

'Philosophical Society' was significant. The members were not only those in the scientific field. They were interested in questions of world-view. The *modus*

*'Free discussion will be allowed'...*

*operandi* of the Society was then set out: 'Papers will be read before the Society, discussing the most important questions of philosophy and science, without limit

as to the subjects, except that those will be especially considered and have a preference that appear to touch adversely the bases of the Christian faith. Free discussion will be allowed.' The discussions as well as the papers would be reported verbatim, and published in a journal. The proposed journal title at that stage was 'The Christian-Philosophy Review', but the title which later emerged was *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*.<sup>20</sup> Reddie became the honorary secretary of the Institute and contributed a few of the papers, as well as some other writings in defence of historic Christian beliefs.<sup>21</sup>

By the time of the Victoria Institute's first annual general meeting in 1867 the membership stood at around 200, and included 42 members of recognised scientific societies and twelve Fellows of the Royal Society.<sup>22</sup> It would gradually grow. The first president of the Institute was Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, perhaps best known for his work as an evangelical social reformer. David Bebbington describes him as 'the prince of philanthropists'.<sup>23</sup> Following the first meeting of the Institute, Lord Shaftesbury recorded in his diary: 'I dare as it were, to take Heaven by storm, and assume that God, for His blessed Son's sake, will prosper and advance the Institute, founded, as it is, to show the necessary, eternal and Divine harmony between

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<sup>20</sup> 'Proposed Victoria Institute or Philosophical Society of Great Britain'. Circular Letter, 24 May 1865 (London, 1865).

<sup>21</sup> See for example his *Fresh Springs of Truth: A Vindication of the Essential Principles of Christianity* (London: Griffin & Co., 1865).

<sup>22</sup> Moore, *Post-Darwinian*, p. 85.

<sup>23</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 120.

true Science and Revelation.<sup>24</sup> Shaftesbury had gained a first-class degree, but he was so occupied with practical work that, as he put it, he 'lost the art' of reading.<sup>25</sup> As well as Philip Gosse, the other initial vice-presidents were Charles M. Burnett, a medical doctor who had investigated the possibilities for help for those regarded as 'insane', and Walter Mitchell, who had an interest in the properties of matter.<sup>26</sup> Andrew Dickson White, in his notoriously tendentious *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*, stated that 'perhaps the most noted utterance' from the Institute was from Mitchell, who commented that 'Darwinism endeavours to dethrone God'.<sup>27</sup>

White offered no evidence as to why Mitchell was so notable in the Institute's history. A more reliable perspective is gained from James Reddie's manifesto of 1866, '*Scientia Scientiarum*', published in the *Journal* of the Institute. Reddie reiterated that the object of the Institute was 'to defend the revealed truth of Holy Scripture against opposition arising, not from real science, but from pseudo-science.'<sup>28</sup> Although Reddie's manifesto made some ill-judged statements about respected scientific figures such as Adam Sedgwick, he never referred to Darwin. Reddie's sights were set determinedly on writers in *Essay and Reviews*, such as Goodwin, and on Bishop Colenso. He argued that these Churchmen had 'implicit faith in what they consider to be scientific truth' and distrusted the scriptures. He proposed that if they had faith in 'the word of God as revealed in Scripture', they should distrust any 'so called' science which contradicted it. Reddie suggested that even those who did not see the

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<sup>24</sup> Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, Vol. 3 (London: Cassell & Company, 1886), p. 210.

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Finlayson, *The Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 336.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Mitchell, et. al., *Mechanical Philosophy: Including the Properties of Matter* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1856).

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Dickson White, *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, Vol. 1, p. 73. White's two volumes were first published in 1896 (New York: Appleton & Co.). Re-published by Cosimo in 2010.

<sup>28</sup> James Reddie, '*Scientia Scientiarum*', *JTVI*, Vol. 1 (1866-67), p. 5.

alternatives so starkly, nevertheless understood that it was 'most unsatisfactory' to have science and revelation at odds, and that 'something should be done to get rid of such contradictions'. This, he was keen to emphasise, was 'the end which is proposed to be accomplished by means of the Victoria Institute'.<sup>29</sup> A major issue was the apparent undermining of scripture within the Church of England.<sup>30</sup> Until the 1870s, Nonconformists could not be Fellows of Oxford or Cambridge, and since many influential figures in the Institute were from these universities, an Anglican focus was inevitable.

### Early emphases

This emphasis on offering a critique of 'Broad Church' thought can be seen in the example of George Warington, one of the youngest contributors to the early discussions within the Institute. In 1863, when he was aged twenty-three, Warington wrote *The Historic Character of the Pentateuch Vindicated*. This was a confident - but also carefully constructed - response to Bishop Colenso. Warington termed himself a 'layman of the Church of England'<sup>31</sup> His father and brother were Fellows of the Royal Society and he worked for the Society of Apothecaries in chemical testing of drugs at the Apothecaries' Hall in London.<sup>32</sup> In 1865 Warington won the Actonian Prize of 100 guineas, a prize awarded once every seven years by the Royal Institution for the best submitted essay in a specified area of religion and science. He wrote on the *Phenomena of Radiation as Exemplifying the Wisdom and Beneficence of God*.<sup>33</sup> The prestigious nature of this award is indicated by the fact that a later winner of

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<sup>29</sup> Reddie, '*Scientia Scientiarum*', pp. 8-9.

<sup>30</sup> Titterton, 'The Early History of the Victoria Institute', p. 54.

<sup>31</sup> George Warington, *The Historic Character of the Pentateuch Vindicated* (London: William Skeffington, 1863).

<sup>32</sup> See Anna E. Simmons, 'The Chemical and Pharmaceutical Trading Activities of the Society of Apothecaries, 1822 to 1922', Open University PhD (2004), p. 122.

<sup>33</sup> George Warington, *Phenomena of Radiation as Exemplifying the Wisdom and Beneficence of God* (London: William Skeffington, 1865).

the prize was George Stokes, then president of the Royal Society. The award thrust Warington into the public eye and he accepted an invitation to present an inaugural lecture in 1866 to the Victoria Institute on 'A Sketch of the Existing Relations between Scripture and Science'. This was a masterly overview of the various points of view.<sup>34</sup> The response to it included queries from Reddie, but affirmation from John Hall Gladstone, later the Fullerial Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution, and a declaration from the chairman that Warington had 'set forth very clearly the objections urged against Scripture, and the answers to them hitherto published, without himself drawing any conclusions', and that this approach 'most convincingly illustrates the value of such a Society as the Victoria Institute'.<sup>35</sup>

A year later Warington again addressed the Institute, this time on the subject of 'The Credibility of Darwinism'.<sup>36</sup> Although this, too, was largely a dispassionate outline, which did not seek to demolish or defend Darwin's views, James Reddie was concerned that it had presented Darwinism in too positive a light. He therefore presented a subsequent paper in response.<sup>37</sup> This action by Reddie did not mean that Warington's influence in the Institute came to an end. In the following year he was once more an Institute lecturer, on the topic of 'Biblical Cosmogony Scientifically Considered'.<sup>38</sup> He was also active in writing larger works, producing in 1867 a book (of 284 pages) on the inspiration of scripture. In this he argued that scripture was for 'faith and practice', not for 'other matters'. This was an important counter to those

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<sup>34</sup> George Warington, 'A Sketch of the Existing Relations between Scripture and Science', *JTVI*, Vol. 1 (1866-67), pp. 85-114. This page range includes the discussion of the paper.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102

<sup>36</sup> George Warington, 'The Credibility of Darwinism', *JTVI*, Vol. 2 (1867-68), pp. 38-62.

<sup>37</sup> James Reddie, 'The Credibility of Darwinism (In Reply to Mr Warington)', *JTVI*, Vol. 2 (1867-68), pp. 63-96

<sup>38</sup> George Warington, 'Biblical Cosmogony Scientifically Considered', *JTVI*, Vol. 3 (1868-69), pp. 337-69.

seeking to find 'scientific truth' in the Bible. Warington took the view that recognising 'accommodation or condescension to human weakness' in scripture was necessary in a proper understating.<sup>39</sup> By this time Warington, who was a Fellow of the Chemical Society, was on the move from his post in London to further his studies, and from 1868 he was at Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge. In 1870 he was president of the Cambridge Union and in the same year he published *The Week of Creation*, which re-worked and extended what he had given at the Institute on the cosmology of genesis. In relation to the 'days' of creation, Warington proposed that these were not 24-hour days but were 'divine days', which could be 'a million of ages'. The object of the record in Genesis was not to teach science but theology.<sup>40</sup> Warington continued to write, but his work was brought to an untimely end by his death at aged thirty-four while engaged in missionary endeavour in South Africa.<sup>41</sup>

It is certainly not the case, therefore, that the Victoria Institute was primarily a body holding to a seven-day-creation position. Ronald L. Numbers in his book *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism*, has a section on the Institute, headed 'Creationism at the Victoria Institute', and although he accepts that the Institute in its early years did not take an officially anti-evolutionary position he comments that it attracted a number of scientists sceptical of evolution, including the North Americans (as he terms them), Sir John William Dawson from Canada and Arnold Guyot, the Swiss-born Professor of Physical Geography at Princeton University.<sup>42</sup> Dawson published papers in the *Journal* of the Institute from time to time, and was a 'corresponding member'. As Principal of McGill College, Montreal, and the first president of the Royal Society of Canada, he was not a marginal figure, but rather was

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<sup>39</sup> George Warington, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Its Limits and Effects* (London: W. Skeffington, 1867), pp. 54, 77.

<sup>40</sup> George Warington, *The Week of Creation* (London: Macmillan, 1870).

<sup>41</sup> His last book before going to South Africa was *Can we Believe in Miracles?* (London: SPCK, 1871).

<sup>42</sup> Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), p. 141.

pivotal in Canada's scientific heritage.<sup>43</sup> Guyot never featured in the Institute's publications. It seems that Ronald Numbers accepted a statement that the early records and books of the Institute had been destroyed, which is not the case. Although somewhat unreliable on the early emphases of the Institute, Numbers is on firmer ground looking at the twentieth century. He notes that when George McCready Price, an American anti-evolutionist, tried to promulgate his views in the Institute in the 1920s he encountered very little sympathy.<sup>44</sup>

There were certainly those within the Institute in the 1860s-70s who wanted to

*...probably not untypical of many strange theories being discussed in other quarters.*

issue a challenge to Darwinian thinking. Also, some highly speculative theories, especially in the area of geology, were introduced into discussions in the Institute.

These might have discredited the Institute's work, but they were probably not untypical of many strange theories being discussed in other quarters<sup>45</sup> The idiosyncratic suggestions of Philip Gosse had little influence, despite his being one of the Institute's vice-presidents. The leadership of the Institute became more broadly based with the addition after its founding of two more vice-presidents: Charles Brooke, a surgeon and an inventor, who was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and Robinson Thornton, also a Fellow of the Royal Society, who taught at St John's College, Oxford, and became the first principal of the Royal Medical College at Epsom. Thornton was concerned to address issues of scepticism, which he did in an ongoing set of lectures, for example the 1869 Annual Address to the Institute on 'The Credulity of Scepticism'.<sup>46</sup> Indeed far

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<sup>43</sup> See Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *John William Dawson: Faith, Hope and Science* (McGill: Queen's University Press, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> Numbers, *Creationists*, p. 141, p. 387, fn 2.

<sup>45</sup> Titterton, 'The Early History of the Victoria Institute', p. 65.

<sup>46</sup> Robinson Thornton, 'On the Credulity of Scepticism', *JTVI*, Vol. 4 (1869-70), pp. 318-34.

from criticism of Darwin being a focus, the Institute in the 1860s gave attention to a wide range of issues. Charles Hodge, the leading Reformed theologian and principal of Princeton Theological Seminary, USA, wrote in 1874 that the Victoria Institute 'includes among its members many of the dignitaries of the Church of England, and a large number of distinguished men of different professions and denominations'. He described the papers given, 'many of which are very elaborate', he noted, and added that a 'very considerable latitude of opinion is allowed', for and against evolution.<sup>47</sup>

### **Instances of impact**

Assessing the impact of the Institute in wider religious and scientific circles is not straightforward. An encounter with T.H. Huxley in 1867 might give some indication of the view of the Institute held among members of the X Club. Huxley was addressing a meeting of clergy and lay people at the Anglican Sion College in London. About 200 were present to hear Huxley's address. His topic was 'the differences supposed to exist between scientific and clerical opinion'. James Reddie was there, as was William Irons from the Institute, and after the talk Reddie invited Huxley to give his thoughts to the Victoria Institute. Huxley declined. According to Reddie, who reported the conversation to the Institute, Huxley said it would be 'inconsistent with his dignity' to appear before what he called the 'tribunal' of the Institute. Reddie, in reporting this, told his Institute colleagues that his only motivation had been that Huxley could address another section of the 'reading and intelligent public'. Regarding the Sion College address itself, Reddie criticised Huxley for 'so utterly underrating the mental capacity and knowledge, and seemingly the honesty, of those whom he addressed'. In Reddie's view, Huxley 'did scant justice to his own side of the question' and 'utterly mis-apprehended, and so completely misrepresented the other'. Irons asked Huxley if he thought that members of the Sion College audience were so 'idiotic' that they could not comprehend scientific arguments,

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<sup>47</sup> Charles Hodge, *What is Darwinism?* (New York: Scribner, 1874), pp. 111-12.

or 'so thoroughly dishonest that comprehending them we would not own the truth'.<sup>48</sup>

It seems that this exchange was sufficiently heated that William Rogers, who was president of Sion College, would not allow an event to be held in which a response to Huxley was given. However, Irons was motivated to follow up on some issues he had raised. As a graduate of Queen's College, Oxford, and the recipient of a Doctor of Divinity degree in 1854, he had a profile in scholarly circles. He published extensively, and in 1869 he wrote what was reckoned to be his chief work, published through the Institute. This was on a subject which in the light of some deterministic evolutionary philosophy he felt was crucial - human responsibility.<sup>49</sup> A year later he gave the Bampton Lectures on 'Christianity as taught by St Paul', and one reviewer rather enigmatically considered that Irons' complex theological material 'drives a fresh nail into the coffin of popular Protestantism'.<sup>50</sup> Two years later Irons devoted an Institute paper to the 'Darwinian Theory'. If popular Protestantism had been in view in his Bampton lectures, here he addressed popular Darwinianism. Although he saw Darwin as an 'able naturalist', Irons was not convinced by what had been set out by Darwinians on the 'history of our Origin and Descent'. However, Irons encouraged enquiry into the gradual processes by which creation took place, and he argued that the Bible invited this kind of exploration.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> J. Reddie, 'On Geological Chronology, and the Cogency of the Arguments by which some Scientific Doctrines are Supported', *JTVI*, Vol. 2 (1867-68), pp. 335, 338.

<sup>49</sup> W.J. Irons, *An Analysis of Human Responsibility* (London: Victoria Institute, 1869).

<sup>50</sup> W.J. Irons, *Christianity as taught by St Paul* (Oxford: Parker, 1870); cf. comment in *The Churchman's Companion*, Vol. 3 (1871) p. 236.

<sup>51</sup> W. J. Irons, 'The Darwinian Theory', *JTVI*, Vol. 6 (1872-73), pp. 284-317, esp. pp. 301, 313.

Charles Darwin followed the proceedings of the Institute, at least in its early period. On 7 October 1867 he wrote to George Warington in remarkably

*I have no where seen so good an abstract...'*

friendly terms. Darwin wrote: 'I hope that you will not think me presumptuous if I cannot resist the pleasure of telling you how much I admire your argument of the

origin of species in the Transact. of the Victoria Institute. The whole case strikes me as placed in the clearest & most spirited light; & I have no where seen so good an abstract. I quite agree with your Chairman that you have put the whole argument better than I have done.' Darwin then said that there was one point on which he disagreed, and 'it is the only point on which I do disagree', which must have made Warington wonder what would follow. However, the only point on which Darwin disagreed was with Warington's statement that there was nothing 'original' in the latter's paper. Darwin concluded: 'With sincere admiration of your powers of reasoning & illustration I beg leave to remain dear Sir...'<sup>52</sup> Christopher Rios notes this surprising letter and comments: 'Unfortunately, the Victoria Institute failed to retain Darwin's admiration.'<sup>53</sup> The reason for Rios' remark is that a few days later Darwin wrote to Alfred Russel Wallace, one of the well-known evolutionary thinkers of the period, to say that 'Mr Warington has lately read an excellent and spirited abstract of the "Origin" before the Victoria Institute, and as this is a most orthodox body he has gained the name of the Devil's Advocate. The discussion which followed during three consecutive meetings is very rich from the nonsense talked.'<sup>54</sup> However, it is not that the Institute failed to retain Darwin's admiration. Rather, Warington impressed Darwin in a way he had not expected.

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<sup>52</sup> Charles Darwin to George Warington, 7 October 1867, in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, Vol. 15 (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 388.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher Rios, *After the Monkey Trial: Evangelical Scientists and a New Creationism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), p. 196, fn 39.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Darwin to A.R. Wallace, 12-13 October 1867. This letter was quoted by Francis Darwin, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, Vol. III (London: John Murray, 1887), p. 69, note.

The number of members of the Institute gradually grew, and this is evidence that its work was being accepted more widely. Where it was regarded, as it was by Huxley,

*...its work was being accepted more widely*

as a 'tribunal', or - as Darwin saw it - as a place where a high-quality paper such as that by Warington did not receive appropriate commendation, part of the reason for that might well be due to James Reddie's confrontational approach. As an example of this spirit, in 1870, when Charles Adolphus Row spoke at the Institute, taking as his title, 'On the Testimony of Philosophy to Christianity as a Moral and Spiritual Revelation', Reddie immediately engaged in a critical response because, he alleged, Row had seemed to speak of Christianity as opposed to Judaism. In response, Row, a regular contributor to the Institute's deliberations, found Reddie's remarks 'a mass of sophistries' and he remarked that Reddie seemed to thrive on bringing objections.<sup>55</sup> It appears that Reddie was not aware when he was in areas that were beyond his expertise. Row was a thinker whose work was widely appreciated in Anglicanism and his address to the Institute was one that made a substantial contribution to a central area of the Institute's interests. In 1877 he delivered the Bampton Lectures, taking as his theme 'Christian Evidences Viewed in Relation to Modern Thought.' On many occasions Reddie would have been well advised to affirm rather than antagonise serious contributors to the debates of the time.

### **Moving on**

Although Reddie's death in 1871 meant a great loss of the enormous energy which he brought to the Institute, it was also something of an opportunity to move on in new ways. Indeed in 1871, delivering the Institute's annual address, William Irons stressed that the Institute was committed to 'free discussion' and

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<sup>55</sup> C.A. Row, 'On the Testimony of Philosophy to Christianity as a Moral and Spiritual Revelation', *JTVI*, Vol. 5 (1870-71), pp. 44-104, esp. pp. 100-101.

allowed a 'breadth and variety of opinion' to be expressed.<sup>56</sup> Two years later it was Thomas P. Boulton, principal of the evangelical Anglican London College of Divinity, who gave the address, and it was reported that there had been 'a considerable accession of new members, among whom are several Professors of Oxford, Cambridge and other Universities, and also many well known in the literary and scientific world'.<sup>57</sup> Francis Petrie, the Institute's new honorary secretary, was keen to add to that number and wrote to James Clerk Maxwell, the outstanding physicist, inviting him to join the Institute. Maxwell, however, found the Institute insufficiently irenic.<sup>58</sup> Combative stances certainly continued. Charles Robert Bree, senior physician at the Essex and Colchester Hospital, presented a paper to the Institute on 'Darwinism and its Effect on Religious Thought'. He had previously written *An Exposition of Fallacies in the Hypotheses of Mr Darwin* (1872). There were long-standing issues between Darwin and Bree, with Darwin speaking of Bree's 'dull, unvarying abuse of me, and singular misrepresentation'.<sup>59</sup> In response to Bree's Institute paper, Irons warned against 'advancing our own interpretation of the Bible, and then arguing from it as established'. He noted that looking back 'through the whole course of religious thought during the last thousand years, we certainly find elements of Darwinism'.<sup>60</sup>

The Institute had always had close links with evangelicals, especially in the Church of England (Lord Shaftesbury being the outstanding example), but in the 1870s it established closer connections with some leading individuals in

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<sup>56</sup> J.W. Irons, *Annual Address* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1871), p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> T.P. Boulton, *Annual Address* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1873), p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> J.L. McNatt, 'James Clerk Maxwell's refusal to join the Victoria Institute', *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (2004), pp. 204-15.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Darwin, to J.S. Henslow, 26 October 1860, in Nora Barlow, ed., *Darwin and Henslow: The Growth of an Idea: Letters, 1831-1860* (London: John Murray, 1967), p. 213. Henslow had been Darwin's teacher at Cambridge. Henslow's son George was active in the Victoria Institute.

<sup>60</sup> C.R. Bree, 'Darwinism and its Effect on Religious Thought', *JTVI*, Vol. 7 (1973-74), pp. 253-85. The response by Irons is p. 270.

the Evangelical Alliance. John William Dawson spoke at the international Evangelical Alliance congress in New York in 1873, at which time he was beginning to explore a qualified form of theistic evolution.<sup>61</sup> In the same year the Institute published an address Dawson had given in Montreal.<sup>62</sup> Over the next decade his work appeared in five volumes of the Institute's *Journal*. An even more significant contributor to the Institute from the 1870s was Thomas Rawson Birks, who for nineteen years was the influential secretary of the Evangelical Alliance in Britain. His work in the Alliance came to an end in 1869, as a result of controversy over his book *The Victory of Divine Goodness*, which was seen as propagating views of restitution in the after-life that were too broad.<sup>63</sup> In 1872 Birks was appointed Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Theology in Cambridge, and from the mid-1870s he took an active part in the work of the Institute. Among his most significant papers in this period were on 'The Uncertainties of Modern Physical Science' (1877), which followed on from a series of lectures he gave in Cambridge University on 'Modern Physical Fatalism and the Doctrine of Evolution' (in which he offered a robust critique of Darwinian thought), and 'The Bible and Modern Astronomy' (1878), in which he investigated how the Bible uses popular speech about the cosmos.<sup>64</sup>

Robinson Thornton reinforced some of Birks' thinking in the same period, concluding his intermittent series on 'scepticism'. In the last of the series, on 'The Sorrows of Scepticism', published in the 1876-77 *Journal* of the Institute he argued that if the 'absolute being' was rejected, and 'the contingent' was all

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<sup>61</sup> Ian Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), p. 107; David Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 80-85, 109.

<sup>62</sup> 'J.W. Dawson's Annual Address as President of the Natural History Society of Montreal, May, 1872', in *JTVI*, Vol. 7 (1873-74), pp. 388-91.

<sup>63</sup> T.R. Birks, *The Victory of Divine Goodness* (London: Rivingtons, 1867); cf. Ian Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), pp. 119-33.

<sup>64</sup> T.R. Birks, 'The Bible and Modern Astronomy', *JTVI*, Vol. 11 (1877-78), pp. 402-438.

that remained, the sceptic was 'left to the contemplation of force in the place of Divine Will; and to the ultimate choice (an unhappy one) between Atheism, Pantheism, or Fatalism'. He contended that scepticism inevitably moved from 'the rejection of a written revelation, and a Personal Deity', to a position of 'denial of moral responsibility' and of 'eliminating sin by the simple process of asserting the non-existence of moral evil'.

His conclusion, appropriate for someone in the medical field, was that scepticism was offering 'to cure the griefs to which

*...views 'treated with the most scrupulous fairness'*

humanity is liable; the medicine, however, is no true balm, but rather like that narcotic which for a short time induces oblivion of troubles only to intensify them tenfold when the patient wakes to consciousness again.'<sup>65</sup> A similar theme was taken up in the same volume of the *Journal* by Robert Main, Director of the Radcliffe Observatory and a Fellow of the Royal Society. His theme was 'Modern Philosophical Scepticism'. He offered his congratulations to the Institute 'on its present position and prospects, and on the increasing consideration and respect with which its operations are regarded by men capable of judging'. He said that in the Institute all views had been 'treated with the most scrupulous fairness and respect'.<sup>66</sup>

Several leading figures contributed by speaking or writing for the Institute in the later 1870s and early 1880s. H. Alleyne Nicholson, Professor of Natural History at the University of St Andrew's, Scotland, was a 'Corresponding member' of the Institute.<sup>67</sup> Henry Wace, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at King's College London, was fully involved in the Institute. One paper he gave, in 1878, was on 'The Ethics of Belief'. On this occasion Joseph Angus, principal

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<sup>65</sup> T. Robinson Thornton, 'The Sorrows of Scepticism', *JTVI*, Vol. 10 (1876-77), pp. 234-50, esp. p. 248

<sup>66</sup> Robert Main, 'Modern Philosophical Scepticism Examined', *JTVI*, Vol. 10 (1876-77), p. 146.

<sup>67</sup> H. Alleyne Nicholson, 'The Place of Science in Education', *JTVI*, Vol. 10 (1876-77), pp. 318-39.

of the Baptist Regent's Park College in London, was part of the discussion.<sup>68</sup> Another contributor in that year was Professor James Challis, 'On the Metaphysics of Scripture'.<sup>69</sup> Two years later T. McKenny Hughes, who succeeded Sedgwick as Woodwardian Professor of Geology, Cambridge, spoke on 'The Present State of the Evidence Bearing upon the Antiquity of Man'.<sup>70</sup> By 1883 the Institute had 900 members, among this number being seventeen Anglican bishops. By this time more Nonconformists were involved in the Institute, for example Samuel Morley, a Congregationalist, and Alexander McArthur, a Methodist. Both of these were Liberal MPs. Morley, a wealthy manufacturer, was a substantial financial supporter of the Institute. The major new influence in this period, however, was George G. Stokes, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge. In 1883 he gave a seminal address at the Institute on the 'Absence of Real Opposition Between Science and Revelation'.<sup>71</sup>

In 1886 Stokes became president of the Institute. He had not signed the Declaration of 1864 as he was not convinced that it was God's plan to 'make the evidence of revealed truth apparent'.<sup>72</sup> However, he was a deeply committed believer, in the Anglican (originally Anglo-Irish) tradition. In his personal devotion he liked to study the New Testament in Greek. On Sundays he attended St Paul's Church in Cambridge, where he was a church warden,

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<sup>68</sup> Henry Wace, 'The Ethics of Belief', *JTVI*, Vol. 11 (1877-78), pp. 166-94.

<sup>69</sup> James Challis, 'On the Metaphysics of Scripture', *JTVI*, Vol. 11 (1877-78), pp. 196-245.

<sup>70</sup> T. McKenny Hughes, 'Evidence Already Obtained as to the Antiquity of Man', *JTVI*, Vol. 13 (1879-80), pp. 316-64.

<sup>71</sup> George G. Stokes, 'Absence of Real Opposition Between Science and Revelation', *JTVI*, Vol. 17 (1883-84), pp. 195-204.

<sup>72</sup> George G. Stokes to Charles Grove, 8 September 1864, Cambridge University Library, Manuscript Room. MS Add 5989.

and also the University Church and Pembroke Chapel.<sup>73</sup> He became the Lucasian Professor in 1849, a post previously held by Isaac Newton, and Stokes remained in this prestigious position until his death in 1903. He was often

*...it should not be assumed  
'that the error must be on  
the side of science'*

considered the authority on questions of optics, a topic which he addressed in some of his Institute lectures. Stokes was secretary of the Royal Society for thirty years and

then became its president. In his first address as president of the Victoria Institute, he insisted that if there was a conflict between 'what we understand as Revelation' on the one hand, and science on the other, it should not be assumed 'that the error most be on the side of science'. The error might be in human interpretation of the Bible.<sup>74</sup> Stokes saw no incompatibility between evolution and theism and in 1890 published in the Institute's *Journal* an essay 'The One Origin of the Books of Revelation and of Nature'.<sup>75</sup> Stokes' standing no doubt contributed to continued increase in the Institute's membership, which in 1891 was 1,400, and he was also able to draw in other eminent scientists, such as his friend Lord Kelvin, who in 1897 gave the Institute's annual address. This was seen as one of the notable occasions in the Institute's history.<sup>76</sup> The story had moved on considerably since 1865.

## Conclusion

The beginning of the Victoria Institute owed a great deal to the initiative taken by a group of young scientists who produced their 1864 'Declaration'. The

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<sup>73</sup> J. Larmor, ed., *Memoir and Scientific Correspondence of the late Sir George Gabriel Stokes*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907). There is a biographical section in this by Stokes' daughter, Isabella Humphry, pp. 1-49.

<sup>74</sup> G.G. Stokes, 'Annual Address', *JTVI*, Vol. 20 (1887), p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> G.G. Stokes, 'The One Origin of the Books of Revelation and Nature', *JTVI*, Vol. 22 (1890), pp. 11-23.

<sup>76</sup> Lord Kelvin, 'The Age of the Earth as an Abode Fitted for Life', *JTVI*, Vol. 31 (1899), pp. 11-38.

background was one of considerable debate, as much about theology as about science. This was reflected in the idea of the Institute as a 'Philosophical Society', not simply a forum for debate about science. The driving force in the early years of the Institute was James Reddie, a somewhat pugnacious personality. What he was able to achieve was to put in place a programme of lectures and discussions through which serious contemporary issues were presented. The speakers were often those with expertise in their field. Some, with George Warington being a notable example, were not known figures, but had very evident ability. Others were already established thinkers. From the 1870s, after Reddie's untimely death, the Institute developed in new ways. The confrontational element reduced considerably, although there were those such as T.R. Birks who were vigorous debaters. In the continued thinking about evolution that went on in the Institute, by the 1880s there was an acknowledgement of Darwin's 'Unrivalled skill as an observer', as John Duns, Professor of Natural Science at New College, Edinburgh, put it in an address at the Institute in 1887. But this did not rule out evaluation of his work.<sup>77</sup> By this time George Stokes, one of the most respected scientists of his time, was president of the Institute. In his Gifford Lectures, published in 1891 and 1893, he made it clear that his perspective was that evolution and theism were fully compatible.<sup>78</sup> As he outlined in a letter in 1901, evolution was a 'mode' or process, while the cause of life was God.<sup>79</sup> This represented the Institute's approach and ensured its standing at the end of the Victorian era.

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<sup>77</sup> John Duns, 'On the Theory of Natural Selection and the Theory of Design', *JTVI*, Vol. 20 (1887), pp. 37-8.

<sup>78</sup> This is clear from G.G. Stokes, *Natural Theology*, 2 Vols., the Gifford Lectures, published in 1891 and 1893 (London: A. and C. Black, 1891/1893).

<sup>79</sup> George Stokes to Arthur Tabrum, 4 January 1901, in Larmor, ed., *George Gabriel Stokes*, p. 90.

# PARTICLES OF FAITH

In this section we provide a selective summary of some recent articles and other pieces appearing in the media which address matters of Faith and Thought. If something like this catches your eye please email the editor for inclusion in the next issue of F&T. [admin@faithandthought.org](mailto:admin@faithandthought.org)

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## The Gifford Lectures 2018

### Tom Wright: Discerning the Dawn: History, Eschatology and New Creation

<https://tinyurl.com/y44outgm>

Tom Wright offered eight Gifford Lectures at St Andrews in 2018, available as videos from the University of Aberdeen website (see tiny URL above). In these, he takes a Christological approach to natural theology and epistemology, challenging the 'triumph of Epicureanism' that has led to such unhelpful divisions between science and faith. Of particular interest is Lecture No 6, A New Creation: Resurrection and Epistemology. Here Wright explores biblically the idea that the resurrection brings its own ontology and epistemology and offers us a new way of thinking about reality: the new creation emerges in

the midst of the old, reinterpreting and making sense of it. The resurrection is an act of love from God's side: and in it all our divisions are overcome by the image-bearer, suggests Wright. Knowledge of God can only be a holistic knowing, grounded in love – but Wright argues that we have screened this dimension out of modernity in favour of more forensic modes of knowing. A great series: guaranteed to challenge and provoke.

*Sally Nelson*

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## Hashtag Pray

### BBC Radio 4, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018 -

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0000n94>

This fascinating programme looked at the recent social media phenomenon whereby people respond to national disasters with

the hashtag #prayforlondon or #prayforparis etc. To who or what exactly are these 'prayers' directed?

In a recent national survey, for the first time, more than half the population ticked the 'no religion' box. So what does it mean when those same non-religious people tweet 'pray for London'? 'No religion' clearly doesn't mean 'no belief in the supernatural' for these people. Belief that loved ones become 'angels' after death is increasingly common. Even Stephen Hawking's death led one tweeter to express the wish that this avowed atheist might 'fly with the angels in the stars'. We were reminded of G K Chesterton's statement that when man stops believing in God he does not believe in nothing, he believes in anything.

Does this trend represent an opportunity for the church to reach out to these people to put doctrinal flesh on these bare bones of spiritual yearning? Or should we lament the fact that established religion is seen as so alienating to large sections of society that they will invent comforting beliefs irrespective of rationality?

## **Chaplaincy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for people of all religions and none.**

**British Medical Journal – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 -**

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k5223>

This paper appeared in the Christmas edition of the BMJ, normally an edition reserved for jokes, light-hearted papers and opinion pieces. It addressed the challenges of NHS chaplaincy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, noting that demand for pastoral or spiritual support from patients remains high, but the service is often perceived as offering only Christian support. Recently however, there has been an increase in the number of other faith chaplains, and humanist chaplains, and there is growing awareness among chaplains themselves of the need to be sensitive and non-judgmental to those of all faiths or none.

**The Religiosity of Academic Scientists in the United Kingdom: Assessing the Role of Discipline and Department Status.** *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 2018; 57 (4): 743  
DOI: [10.1111/jssr.12552](https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12552)

This was a recent survey of religious beliefs among UK scientists

(biologists and physicists). Whereas nationally about 18% of the general population say they do not believe in God, this rises to 45% of scientists, and those in elite departments are about twice as likely to never attend religious services as those from lesser establishments. Biologists tend to be less religious than physicists.

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## Book Reviews

**Ruth Valerio *Just Living – Faith and Community in an age of Consumerism – 2016 Hodder & Stoughton 328pp. ISBN 978-1-473-61335-5***



Ruth Valerio is a prominent Christian thinker and environmental activist. This book, based in part on her doctoral thesis, sets out a framework

for Christians who wish to live their faith well in a globalised consumerist society facing potential ecological disaster of many forms. This summary of mine is probably a turn-off for many; doctoral thesis sounds dry, and while we all recognise the ethical challenges of consumerism, nevertheless, that's just how it is. We feel powerless, apathetic, and discouraged by tales of doom and gloom. Well I want to reassure you, this is not that kind of book. Instead it is a very practical book (though the specifics of that practice will be up to the reader – it's not a recipe book for 'right living'). At the same time it doesn't water down the challenges we must rise to if we truly desire to 'live justly'.

The book is divided into three sections; context, theology and practice, and it is in the linking of these three themes that the book has its power. Being told 'here is the problem, these are some actions we must take' is inadequate without a sound underlying theology – addressing the 'why?' 'at a deep level. Thus, in chapter six Dr Valerio delves deep into Thomas Aquinas's reworking of Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia* (happiness, or 'well-being') to help us out. She identifies the virtues of temperance and justice as particularly relevant as we seek to live well in relationship with God, others, the creation and indeed ourselves. Simplicity is a key part of this good living, but it is not the trendy simplicity of the kind portrayed on the hugely popular YouTube videos which endeavour to teach us how to 'declutter' in order to achieve happiness. This approach is ultimately motivated by a kind of selfishness, whereas in Thomistic thought, we are aiming for simplicity as worship, as obedience, as sacrifice and as Christian love toward others and towards creation. 'For the Christian...the good life is not

necessarily the wholesome, fulfilled life: it might be a life spent for others that is painful and difficult.'

The final section turns theory to practice with chapters addressing global social concern, ecological concern, our attitude to money and materialism, ethical consumerism, our local community, activism and our use of time. These chapters are each peppered with ideas for action, and would work well in a study group, though it might be best to set realistically achievable targets initially. Despite Dr Valerio's best intentions, there can still be a tendency to be overwhelmed by the number of ways that consumerism has drawn our lives away from God; for this reader at least!

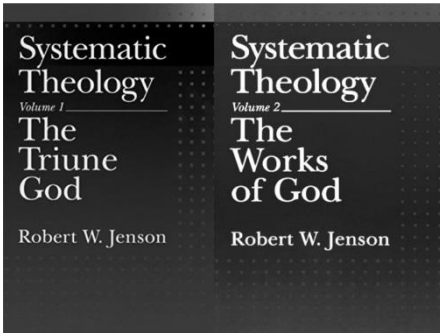
I highly recommend this book for its intellectually robust theology and down to earth practicality.

*Alan Kerry*

We are pleased to announce that Ruth Valerio will be one of the speakers at our 2020 Symposium on 'Catastrophe', to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Check the website for more details nearer the time.

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**Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Oxford University Press, Vol. 1, *The Triune God*, 1997 / Vol. 2, *The Works of God*, 1999**



I cannot remember who first drew my attention to the *Systematic Theology* of Robert Jenson (1930-2017). Having read it on loan from a local theological library, I was so impressed, I went out and bought it for myself.

In his essay on *How to Write a Theological Sentence*, Stanley Hauerwas proposes as “exemplary” for what such a sentence should be, Jenson’s “God is whoever raised Jesus from the dead, having before raised Israel from Egypt.” (*Systematic Theology, Vol 1*, p63) As Hauerwas points out<sup>1</sup> the key word is

“whoever”. Jenson does not assume we know who God is. What we think “God” means is likely to be wrong. The true God identifies himself to us by his resurrection of Jesus and his history with Israel. In Vol. 1, Jenson shows that God, as he meets us in the Bible, must be Trinitarian, and this applies as much to the Old Testament as the New.

Jenson has the practical aim of clarifying what the Gospel is that calls the Church into being and which the Church is called to proclaim. That is, no doubt, why I warmed to his thought. (He is also much easier to read than a lot of modern theology.)

Why am I reviewing this work here? Vol. 2 touches on *Faith and Thought* territory. “The gospel’s secularising of the world was a historical condition for the venture of Western technology; one does not shoot rockets at the moon if one takes it for a goddess.” (*Vol. 2*, p115) In Jenson’s sights are proponents of ‘deep ecology’ who, in crass ignorance of what the Bible actually teaches, want to revive the

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Work of Theology*, Eerdmans: Cambridge, 2015, pp127, 134f

discredited 'warfare' model of science and Christianity, while leaning towards pagan nature-worship. He shares their concern for the environment, for Genesis 2 teaches "we are *gardeners* of someone else's garden", but that should not lead us to embrace their ideology.

One of Jenson's major interests is Biblical speculation on the nature of time. This leads him to interact with the more popular writings of Stephen Hawking.

Reading this work of Jenson introduced me to a fascinating episode in the history of science and theology, of which I had not previously been aware. Jenson is a Lutheran, though he sees himself as a (conservative) 'ecumenical' theologian. A major cause of division between Lutherans and 'Reformed' Protestants was how they viewed the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Both parties rejected the Catholic view that the bread and wine were turned into the body and blood of Christ, while keeping their appearance, taste, etc. Luther believed that the body of Christ was present with and alongside the

bread. Zwingli appeared to believe that the bread remained nothing but bread, while Calvin, later, sought, as a compromise, to speak of a spiritual presence for those who received in faith. (Theologians reading this, please forgive my oversimplification.)

A key argument that the Reformed used against the Lutherans was that Christ was bodily at the right hand of the Father *in heaven*, so he could not be, at the same time, alongside the bread on earth. Enter a young disciple of Martin Luther: Johannes Brenz (1499-1570). Brenz and his friends had kept abreast of astronomical advances in their day, such as Copernican theory. They had grasped that the universe being revealed was vast. If heaven was conceived in spatial terms, somewhere 'beyond the stars', how could any sense be made of Bible passages such as 'he saw heaven being torn open' (Mark 1:10)? Brenz is just as scathing about over-literal interpretations of Christ's Ascension as any 21<sup>st</sup> century sceptic.

No, 'Heaven' is God's dwelling place, therefore, like God, it is everywhere alongside, but separate from, God's creation. However, God, in his grace, can create openings between the two

realms (Genesis 28:17; Revelation 4:1). One such opening was in the Holy of Holies in the Temple and Tabernacle, enabling God to be present in the midst of his people on earth, while still being in heaven. Another (said Brenz) was in the consecrated bread and wine of the Lutheran Communion Service, enabling Christ to be bodily present in the midst of his people on Earth, while still being in heaven. Thus, a medieval theologian dealing with an obscure point of doctrine managed to stumble across that device beloved of lazy science fiction authors in our own day, a 'portal' into another dimension! Jenson makes creative use of this.

Another factor making Brenz worthy of note is that he publically opposed the execution of heretics, although he might have been helped to that enlightened position by the awareness that he was himself probably seen as a heretic by many! If anyone reading this is able to write a simple article introducing Brenz and his circle, do please offer one to us.

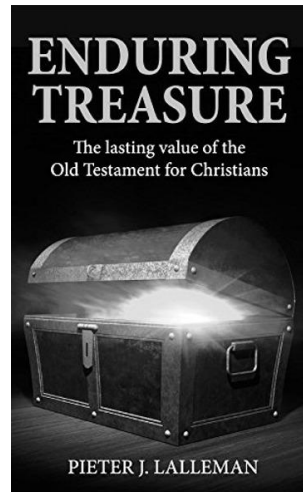
I should warn those of more narrowly evangelical views that Jenson's desire to find ecumenical solidarity leads

him to seek an accommodation with some Catholic positions, such as the possibility of prayer to the Saints. It would be a pity if that discouraged you from reading one of the finest, creative, modern defences of Biblical, Trinitarian orthodoxy.

*Bob Allaway*

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**Pieter J. Lalleman, *Enduring Treasure, The lasting value of the Old Testament for Christians*, Faithbuilders: London, 2017, ISBN 978-1-910942-76-5**



Pieter Lalleman, a Tutor at Spurgeon's College, London, is Dutch, and this is his own translation of a book he originally wrote in that language. This may account for its relatively easy English (apart from

"automaticity", p78!) I originally reviewed it for *Baptist Ministers' Journal*.<sup>2</sup> That review obviously stressed different things from this one.

Lalleman laments that, while the early church condemned the heretic Marcion for wanting to dump the Old Testament, "in practice many Christians have become followers of Marcion, whether we admit it or not." By contrast, he approves of another Dutch theologian, who saw the Hebrew Bible as "the actual Bible", with the New Testament as a sort of "explanatory" appendix.

He sees six ways of grouping Old Testament texts in their relationship to the New.

1. texts that are plainly predictions of the Messiah, e.g. Zech. 9:9.
2. those that are now seen to be Messianic, even though the original authors may not have intended that, e.g. Ps. 22.
3. commandments that the New Testament says still apply to us, e.g. Exod. 20:14
4. commandments that the New Testament says do not apply to us, such as the laws on 'unclean' food. He recognises that Christians may

disagree as to which category some commandments fall in.

5. those stories about individuals that never lose their interest - especially for Sunday School lessons!

Finally, his sixth group consists of those passages that New Testament writers overlook, because they do not impinge on their interests, but which may still have something to teach us today. This book is devoted to expounding these: 1. Creation, 2. The Name and Titles of God, 3. Sexuality, 4. Politics and the Stranger, 5. Scepticism and Doubt, 6. Laments, 7. Contradiction, 8. The Message of Esther, 9. The Jewish Canon, 10. Mixed Mistakes, 11. The Prosperity Gospel and 12. Jewish Festivals. The last three cover what he considers to be misused passages from the Hebrew Bible.

1. and 3. are most obviously in *Faith and Thought* territory. '1. Creation', stresses the rather obvious point that God's Creation is good, not something from which we are to seek to escape. He does note that Genesis 1: 28 may create problems in the light of modern environmental concerns. His answer to this is much like Jenson's, reviewed elsewhere in

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<sup>2</sup> *Baptist Ministers' Journal*, January 2018, p30

this edition. Helen Paynter's contribution to a recent Festschrift<sup>3</sup> gives an additional argument. She suggests that Adam's commission to rule the earth is now fulfilled in our calling on all to accept the Lordship of Christ, the New Adam.

My main gripe about 2. is, he dismisses "Father", as simply a title "carried over from the Old Testament into the New", but Jesus enabling any individual to address God as "Abba" (Dad) is surely radically new.

Anyone expecting '3. Sexuality', to give simple support to one side or other of current debates will be disappointed, but they might find helpful insights. Incidentally, his 'modern saying' on p.59 is actually from the Puritan Matthew Henry!

On the whole, this is a book I would happily recommend to 'ordinary' believers, even though I disagree with some of his opinions.

*Bob Allaway*

**Symposium 2020 (advance notice)**

**The Christian  
approach to  
Catastrophe**

**Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church London WC2H 8EP  
Saturday 16th May 2020**

**End Times | The Environment | Health  
Simon Woodman | Ruth Valerio | John Day**

**Faith&Thought**

RELATING ADVANCES IN KNOWLEDGE TO FAITH WITHIN SOCIETY

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<sup>3</sup> Goodliff (ed), *Rhythms of Faithfulness*,  
Pickwick: Eugene, OR, 2018, pp 223-236

# **MINUTES of Annual General Meeting for 2018**

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018 Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church,  
235 Shaftsbury Avenue, London WC2H EP

Council members present:      Rev R Allaway    (Chairman)  
   Rev J D Buxton   (Hon. Treasurer)  
   Dr A P Kerry     (Hon. Secretary)  
   Mrs J Mead  
   Mr T C Mitchell

2 other members were present at the Symposium, and remained for the AGM

**OPENING**      Rev. R Allaway welcomed members to the meeting, read from Psalm 19 and opened the meeting in prayer.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**      Copies of the minutes of the 2017 AGM were made available. These were approved and the minutes were signed.

**ELECTION**      The meeting agreed to the re-election of:

- a) President (Sir Colin Humphreys),
- b) Vice-Presidents (Prof. Malcolm A. Jeeves, Prof. Kenneth Kitchen, Prof. Alan Millard, Prof. J. W. Montgomery)
- c) Honorary Treasurer (Rev. John Buxton)
- d) Rev. Bob Allaway and Dr. Alan Kerry as Council members for a further three years.

**ANNUAL ACCOUNTS**      The annual accounts were presented by John Buxton. A summary sheet was circulated, and the full accounts were available for members. These include an 'explanation of accounts' which explains that the Prize Essay capital was originally donated in memory of four individuals who are named in the accounts in perpetuity.

- The financial situation is satisfactory.
- The accounts were accepted.
- The auditors Jean M Gill Book-keeping Services were approved as independent examiners.
- The treasurer was thanked for the time he devotes to these matters.

**ONLINE  
ACCESS TO  
JOURNAL  
ARTICLES**

Alan Kerry had circulated an Appendix A to the agenda prior to the meeting, which set out the Council's proposal that we would ask Rob Bradshaw of Theology on the Net to assist in scanning older issues of the journal to be made available online (those over 5 years old). Journal articles less than five years old will be made available to a members only page on the website. Supportive comments had been received from three members by email prior to the meeting. The meeting unanimously approved the proposal.

**ACADEMIC  
GRANTS**

Alan Kerry had circulated a second Appendix B which described the Council's proposal that we would use funds from the existing Essay Prize Fund to make available academic grants of £1000 each to individuals pursuing post-graduate studies in the field of 'Faith and Thought'. Email comments from five members prior to the meeting were broadly supportive but two had questioned who the grants might be available to and the order of appointing a supervisor and awarding the grant. The proposal is therefore modified to read as follows:

- a) Faith & Thought (The Victoria Institute) invites applications for up to two academic grants per year of £1000 each.
- b) Applicants should be undertaking post-graduate study of some form which addresses the interface between contemporary thought and the Christian Faith.
- c) Applicants are required to submit a brief proposal of up to 1000 words outlining the proposed study regarding aims, questions, methodology and impact of the potential insights gained from this work. This should include details of how the grant might assist the applicant in undertaking this work.
- d) Applications will be considered by Faith & Thought Council based on the following criteria:
  - i. the relevance of the proposed study to Faith & Thought's overall objectives
  - ii. the clarity and coherence of the applicant's proposal
  - iii. the impact the study will have on Faith & Thought's mission and the wider field of knowledge in this area

- e) Before awarding the grant, successful applicants will need to have a named supervisor in place willing to give a reference for the applicant (though the supervisor need not necessarily be from an academic institution, for example those undertaking sabbatical studies may identify a senior minister, or other person willing to affirm the application).
  - f) Successful applicants should make available an article based on their research / studies to be published by Faith & Thought.
- This was unanimously approved.

**CLOSE** The meeting closed with the General Grace.

## **Join Faith & Thought Council**

We are looking for new Council Members to help direct the activities of Faith & Thought. We usually meet for Council Meetings in January, May and September, normally in London. We are particularly looking for women or men with an interest in biblical archaeology, but applications would be welcome from anyone. Our constitution requires that Council Members sign a short declaration of faith i.e.:

1. I declare my faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour, my Lord and my God, whose atoning sacrifice is the only and all-sufficient ground of my salvation.
2. I will seek, both in life and in thought, to be ruled by the clear teaching of the Bible, believing it to be the inspired word of God.

If you are interested in applying, or know of someone who might be please contact our administrator on [admin@faithandthought.org](mailto:admin@faithandthought.org)

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## **Instructions for Authors**

We welcome contributions to the journal in the form of original papers, book reviews or short pieces for inclusion in 'Particles'. Please email any of these to [admin@faithandthought.org](mailto:admin@faithandthought.org)

Do not worry too much about formatting, but the following points are helpful:

- We prefer footnotes to endnotes where possible
- A short note describing the author, in about 25 words, should be included

## Faith & Thought Academic Grants

Are you engaged in or planning postgraduate study of some form into the area of Faith & Thought? Perhaps you're planning a sabbatical or enrolled on a course already. Maybe you work for an academic institution and would like to pursue your own study or research area? We are making available two grants per year of £1000 each to support such work. Maybe you know someone else who would benefit from this? At the 2018 AGM it was agreed that:

- g) Faith & Thought (The Victoria Institute) invites applications for up to two academic grants per year of £1000 each.
- h) Applicants should be undertaking post-graduate study of some form which addresses the interface between contemporary thought and the Christian Faith.
- i) Applicants are required to submit a brief proposal of up to 1000 words outlining the proposed study regarding aims, questions, methodology and impact of the potential insights gained from this work. This should include details of how the grant might assist the applicant in undertaking this work.
- j) Applications will be considered by Faith & Thought Council based on the following criteria:
  - a. the relevance of the proposed study to Faith & Thought's overall objectives
  - b. the clarity and coherence of the applicant's proposal
  - c. the impact the study will have on Faith & Thought's mission and the wider field of knowledge in this area
- k) Before awarding the grant, successful applicants will need to have a named supervisor in place willing to give a reference for the applicant (though the supervisor need not necessarily be from an academic institution, for example those undertaking sabbatical studies may identify a senior minister, or other person willing to affirm the application).
- l) Successful applicants should make available an article based on their research / studies to be published by Faith & Thought.

The Application Form is available on the website [www.faithandthought.org](http://www.faithandthought.org) We look forward to hearing from suitable applicants.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscribing to Faith&Thought is now simpler than ever. To receive the journal anywhere in the world is just £10 per year for Faith & Thought or £20 per year to receive both Faith & Thought AND Science and Christian Belief. Both journals are usually published twice a year (April and October) and membership also entitles you to FREE admission to the Faith & Thought annual symposium. Join online today with the PayPal button.

<http://www.faihthandthought.org/membership.html>

Alternatively, complete the form below and send it to the Treasurer at:

*Rev. J. D. Buxton, 15 The Drive, Harlow, Essex CM20 3QD*

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I enclose a remittance\* for £..... being the current year's subscription payable on 1st January and consent to my particulars being included in the record of members.

- Please let me have a \*Banker's Standing Order form / Gift Aid Declaration

Signature.....

Date.....

\*Cheques should be made payable to '**Victoria Institute (Faith & Thought)**' – please include both names as the bank require this.

