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The Victoria Institute : The First Hundred Years

‘WHAT a book Bishop Colenso must have written, and how dishonestly his friends are acting in keeping back part of the poison lest the first dose should be too strong at first. . . . “If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded tho’ one rose from the dead.” They attack the Old Testament because they believe neither the Old or the New.’ So wrote S. P. Tregelles, the great textual scholar, when writing to his cousin, in 1862, in an attempt to express his consternation at the publication of Colenso’s first volume of *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. He was not alone in his views and such an attitude was widespread. One of the products of the orthodox alarm aroused by liberal scepticism in this way was the foundation of the Victoria Institute.¹

It would be wrong, however, to imagine that Colenso’s writings and *Essays and Reviews* (another source of alarm to early members of the Victoria Institute) represented a particularly new or revolutionary attitude. They were part of a much older process. *Essays and Reviews* was a liberal attempt to cope with problems that had been accumulating for more than thirty years.

The difficulties that presented themselves may be divided into two categories: scientific and philosophical. Sir Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), Robert Chambers’ *Vestiges of Creation* (1844), and A. R. Wallace’s *Annals of Natural History* with a number of other books had paved the way for Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, and the subsequent debate about the early chapters of Genesis.

The philosophical problems facing orthodox Christianity were much greater in the long run. The intellectual problems that had led people like F.W. Newman and George Eliot to contemplate a specifically non-Christian morality, together with the rationalist theology of Baur and Strauss, were obvious threats to orthodox Christian teaching. The idea of

¹ Tregelles never became a member of the Institute although he was invited in 1866 to the discussion of a paper on the subject of comparative philology (*JTVI*, i. 162).

a non-Christian morality was further aided by the Positivism of Comte and the Utilitarianism of Mill. Empiricist logic was cutting at the root of the whole idea of Christian revelation.

The reactions of Christians in England were varied. What might be called the 'Barchester' attitude was widespread. For many clergymen the question was just not relevant because their calling was a social one rather than a spiritual one. Other Christians retreated into the shadow of an unquestioned authority where they could hide. In the case of some of the Tractarians like Newman and Ward, the Roman Catholic Church was 'a port after a rough sea', while in the case of some evangelicals the problems were ignored, and the Biblical study of typology and unfulfilled prophecy became a form of escapism for the person who wanted to forget the suggestion that the Book in question might not be reliable.

There were some, however, who tried to face the issues, and their number included the founders of the Victoria Institute. There were numerous learned societies in London by 1865, but it was the claim of the founder of the Institute that none of them examined the claims of science while retaining any respect for Holy Scripture (*JTVI*, i. 5). This was to be the aim of the founders of the new society in their attempt to face the issues of intellect.

Unlike Newman, who in his *Grammar of Assent* (1870) took refuge in what he called an 'illative' sense as the basis for certainty rather than rational investigation, the founders of the new society believed in the oneness of knowledge, and expected empirical observation and deduction to harmonise with revealed truth. Indeed, Prebendary C. A. Row, one of the early members of the Institute, subjected Newman's book to highly searching criticism and concluded that it was 'impossible for me to express any other opinion of it than that, despite of its many beauties, its tendencies are highly sceptical' (*JTVI*, vi. 74).

The leading mind behind the establishment of the Institute was a man called James Reddie, who became its first Honorary Secretary in 1865. We know very little about him except that he had considerable energy and a very good sense of direction as far as his plans for the Institute were concerned. On Queen Victoria's birthday Reddie circulated some proposals for the formation of a society, whose objects would be: 'to recognise no human science as "established", but to examine philosophically and freely all that has passed as science, or is put forward as science, by individuals or in other societies; whilst its members, having accepted Christianity as the revealed truth of God, will defend that

truth against all mere human theories by subjecting them to the most rigid tests and criticisms' (*JTVI*, i. 30).

The fact that the founders of the Institute believed very strongly that all truth is one came out most clearly in a paper by Reddie entitled 'Scientia scientorum'. Here he argued that the science of sciences 'is the proper correlation of all the various sciences into one grand and consistent philosophy, which will be the interpretation of the nature of things as ordained by the one true God' (*JTVI*, i. 29).

In the same paper Reddie drew attention to the fact that the society was at least in origin part of a defence movement, but he argued that this would not make the Society's investigations less reliable than those of any other, because inquiry always involved some preconceptions and those who trusted science and mistrusted the Scriptures would be just as biased in the other direction. In a footnote, Reddie mentioned that some of those in sympathy with the Society generally felt that its primary object 'should have been to show positively how scientific discoveries illustrate and corroborate the truths of revelation'. He added that although the Institute originated as a defence movement, 'it by no means follows that this view may not yet prevail in the society' (*JTVI*, i. 9).

Reddie played a very important part in the early years of the Institute, as Secretary and Editor of the *Journal*. He read several papers and always took a lively part in the discussions of the Institute. Such a contribution was useful even though he often seems to have had a tendency to be rather irascible in debate. However he did not always have his own way in the running of the Society. One of his great complaints was that, in the past, science (usually qualified by the epithet—'falsely so-called') had held Scripture up to ransom, and that to resolve differences, the Scriptures had always been re-interpreted. He therefore maintained at the first Ordinary Meeting, that 'it may be considered as settled that we ought not to enter upon what are strictly questions of Scriptural exegesis' (*JTVI*, i. 103). The Rev. Walter Marshall, one of the Society's vice-presidents, who at that meeting was in the chair, disagreed with Reddie, 'I do not see', he said, 'how we can exclude it [the question of exegesis] from our discussions. We have not only to determine whether it is really scientific; but if so whether it is contrary to a fair interpretation of the Word' (*JTVI*, i. 110).¹

¹ One early paper dealing with an exegetical problem was the paper in 1870 (*JTVI*, v. 105) by a vice-president, the Rev. Robinson Thornton, dealing with 'The Numerical System of the Old Testament'. In the same volume of the

It was after the first Ordinary Meeting that the members celebrated the establishment of the Philosophical Society of Great Britain, by retiring to Willis's rooms for an Inaugural Dinner which seems to have been a very festive occasion. The Chairman first proposed the toast of 'The Queen' and then gave 'The health of the Prince and Princess of Wales and the rest of the Royal Family'. In each case the toast was loyally drunk and followed by an appropriate air rendered by a choir of vocalists with piano accompaniment by Mr Maxwell Müller. These in turn were followed by other toasts including 'The Army and Navy and Volunteers', 'The Progress of Christianity at home and abroad', 'Prosperity to the Victoria Institute', and 'The health of the noble Lord who presided' (*JTVI*, i. 71-79).

The noble Lord in question was, as might be expected, the Earl of Shaftesbury, the first President of the Victoria Institute. The entry in his diary for the following day read as follows: 'May 25th.—Yesterday took chair at Inaugural Meeting of Victoria Institute. 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 true Science and Revelation.' As a politician and public figure, patron and president of so many causes and societies of Christian foundation, Shaftesbury was unable to spend as much time with the Institute as he would have wished. He was usually in the Chair at the annual meeting, but could not manage much more than that. He made no pretensions to scholarship, and on these occasions would sometimes comment on the learning of the Institute and upon the inappropriateness of his position. As he remarked on an occasion long after the foundation of the society: 'I feel very much like a hen, that has hatched an eagle, which is now soaring aloft beyond my reach' (*JTVI*, xi. 82).

There is little of interest relating to the administration of the Institute except that it should be noted that it was very much in the hands of amateurs. What was called a 'Balance Sheet' is really an 'Income and Expenditure Account' and other signs of inexpertise are apparent. In the third volume of the *Journal* it was announced, in the Annual Report, that the Council had 'found it necessary to dispense' with the services of a clerk who previously had been paid by them to work for the Institute, and in the next Annual Report (1869) it was said that 'The Council

Journal (p. 349) there was what Professor F. F. Bruce has described as 'a sledge-hammer of a reply by another vice-president, the redoubtable Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.' (*JTVI*, 87. 149).

regret to have to add that upon an examination of the accounts kept by the former clerk, it was discovered that various subscriptions received by him were unaccounted for'. This somewhat difficult state of affairs does not seem to have lasted for long.

No less than thirteen papers were read to the Institute in its first year, and each paper was followed by lengthy discussion. Frequently the lateness of the hour is given as the reason for the alleged brevity of members' contributions to discussion, and it is hardly surprising that, after a few years, meetings were held in the afternoon instead of the evening, and that members were only allowed to speak for twenty minutes during discussion.

From the start, the Institute was not committed to any particular interpretation of Scripture, and members had complete freedom in the expression of their opinions. The first paper was given by a member of the Council, George Warrington, who maintained, much to the consternation of James Reddie, that evolution was quite compatible with the scriptural account of Creation, and though such views were always in a minority, they always had the opportunity to be expressed.

Apart from a number of notable exceptions, it seems that a large number of the papers read to the Institute, in the early years, were concerned with what may justly be termed as 'phobias'. There was not, at that time, the high degree of specialisation in scientific learning that there is today, and consequently people were inclined to dabble in subjects of which they had little knowledge. This meant very often that they did not really understand whether the evidence before them proved a theory or not. One of the earliest 'phobias' that is found in the *Journals* of the Institute is the fear of any theory of the igneous origin of primary rocks. In numerous papers and discussions, the idea that the earth might have had a nebulous origin was virtually laughed out of court, evidently because members of the Society were afraid of it.

Another 'phobia' entertained by certain members was the hypothesis of the 'conservation of energy'. In a paper by the Rev. J. M'Cann on 'Force and its Manifestations', delivered in 1872, the author, at the very outset of his address, said that this hypothesis, together with that of the 'Perpetuity of motion', was not an abstract reasoning devoid of interest to the moralist or the theologian. Both hypotheses, he maintained, were 'reasonings, if such they may be called, that would land him [the moralist or theologian] where he by no means wishes to go. In Biology they lead to Evolution, in Theology to Pantheism, in Philosophy to Materialism and in Morals to Necessitarianism'.

Similarly with evolution and the idea of development, the majority, especially the less critical of them, seem to have opposed it long before they really examined the evidence, because they were afraid of the Pelagianism to which such a theory might lead them, although there were always some like J. H. Gladstone, the Rev. G. Henslow and others who followed Warrington in maintaining that evolution was compatible with Scripture. Frequently, without realising it, members found themselves attacking the philosophy of Darwinism and its supporters, rather than sifting the evidence for evolution. Fortunately, there were always a critical few who questioned the validity of arguments regardless of whether they would support a Biblical position or not.

During the first twenty years of the Institute, the most popular subject was Geology and along with it Anthropology as both subjects related to the origin and age of man and the processes of creation. One of the most amusing papers was one given in 1869 by W. Macdonald, Professor of Civil and Natural History in the University of St Andrews. His subject was 'Man's place in Creation; Geologically, Chronologically Zoologically, Ethnologically, and Historically considered'. The paper was one enormous piece of speculation (as members were not slow to point out) suggesting that Polynesians, Patagonians, Obongo dwarfs, Yacoots, Mohawks, Chippeways, Mongols, Finns, Basques, Teutons and Tartars (amongst many others) were created in stages on the sixth creative day (Gen. i. 26) and that Sabbatic Adam was created on the seventh day (Gen. ii. 7-22), from whom were descended Armenians, Arabs, Chaldeans, Hebrews, and Abyssinians. From there the author went on with the aid of a most fertile imagination to consider the date, contents and route of Noah's ark. 'We may suppose that the ark floated upon the surface of the ocean by way either of the Straits of Gibraltar, or on the Sea of the Sahara . . . or it may even have been carried over the Landes into the Mediterranean and so Eastward . . . near the peak of Mount Ararat' (*JTVI*, iv. 212). The audience gave the Professor short shrift, and the upshot was that, at the end of the meeting, he withdrew his membership from the Society saying 'you have dealt me rather hard measure, but I will take care I never expose myself to it again'.

Very few of the papers were quite as comic as that and many of them were extremely learned. There were for instance those given by one of the early vice-presidents, the Rev. Walter Mitchell. It is hard to imagine how he read his paper on 'The Geometric Isomorphism of Crystals and the derivation of all other forms from those of the Cubical system'.

Almost the entire paper is in Algebraic notation, and the diagrams at the end of the paper are a masterpiece of printing. It is hardly surprising that the *Journal* reads: 'A discussion followed. . . . This discussion having been of a very general character, it has not been found necessary to insert it' (*JTVI*, ii. 448).

Such papers make it quite clear that the Institute was a learned society interested in knowledge almost for its own sake, and its aims were only apologetical in so far as it wanted to harmonise one science with another. Its status as such was recognised quite soon, and by 1875 the Institute was exchanging Transactions with almost all the leading learned societies in London (*JTVI*, viii. ix).¹ Its horizons too had extended as it now had honorary foreign correspondents, one of whom was the textual scholar Tischendorf of Leipzig.

One cannot help wondering occasionally whether the pastoral work of some of the clerical contributors suffered as a result of their learning. Frequently half of the papers in one year's journal were by clergymen, and as often as not the subjects are far from theological or even philosophical. On the other hand, it was often these men who came to subjects in the most critical and unprejudiced spirit, and free from preconceptions. The Rev. J. H. Titcomb and the Rev. W. J. Irons, a Prebendary of St Paul's, and Bampton Lecturer for 1870, were in this respect an important influence in the Institute. Neither of them had a brief for 'Darwinism', but both criticised very strongly a paper by C. R. Bree on 'Darwinism and its effects upon religious thought', for the simple reason that it assumed that Darwinism was 'in *a priori* antagonism with revelation'. They preferred to insist that it was 'in a period of probation' (*JTVI*, vii. 270-277).

Prebendary Irons was perhaps the most distinguished member of the Institute at this time, in the realm of philosophy. It is noticeable in the early years of the Society that philosophy was a comparatively small concern of the Institute. Members would debate Geology and Evolution for hours, sometimes having to resume a previous debate on another day. With philosophical subjects the number of competent debaters was limited. There were some able men like Irons, Prebendary C. A. Row, the Rev. Robinson Thornton, Headmaster of Epsom College, and

¹ This tradition has been maintained on various different occasions, and as late as 1938, the *Journal* of the Institute (Vol. lxx) included two papers which aroused no religious comment at all, being of a purely scientific nature. They were 'Difficulties underlying the Einstein-Eddington conception of curved space' and 'Synoptic Meteorology: The basis of weather forecasts'.

Prebendary Currey, Master of Charterhouse. It is immediately apparent that these men had fine, philosophical minds. They dealt interestingly with such topics as Mill's *Essay on Theism*, Newman's *Essay in aid of A Grammar of Assent*, *The Logic of Scepticism*, and *The Principles of Historical Criticism*. Such subjects, however, had a limited appeal. The discussions following two papers by James Reddie are an indication of where the interests of the early Institute really lay. His paper 'On Geological Chronology, and the Cogency of the arguments by which some Scientific Doctrines are Supported', was followed by some thirty-five pages of discussion, whereas, his paper on 'Utilitarianism' produced only four and a half.

In 1878 the annual address was given by the Rev. Principal J. H. Rigg and was entitled 'The present Position of Christianity and the Christian Faith in this Country' (*JTVI*, xiii. 50). It was an interesting paper and traced the progress of four different movements: first the Wesleyan revival; secondly, the Evangelical movement stemming from Simeon's Cambridge; thirdly, the philanthropic work that began with Wilberforce which was carried on 'by a host of noble men and devoted women—the most distinguished of all these ministers of mercy in the influence he has been able to exercise, having been . . . the honoured nobleman who now presides over this Institute'; and lastly the High Church Revival of the Tractarian Movement which, Rigg said, had been particularly effective in agricultural areas and amongst some of the lowest classes. The survey was reasonable enough, but the premises upon which it was based were questionable. The author maintained at the start of his paper that 'the position of Christianity in a country is not to be estimated according to the negative gauge of the absence of professed unbelief, but by the positive gauge of the amount of fruitful Christian energy and life among the people'. This premise meant that Dr Rigg failed to face certain facts. The Religious Census of 1851 had revealed how few people ever attended a place of worship, and the growth of open infidelity should have been a source of concern. Instead the writer derived comfort from the situation. 'Sixty years ago,' he maintained, 'more anti-Christian energy, in proportion among the educated classes, went into vice and fashionable frivolity than now. To-day our social anti-Christ develops more energy in the direction of critical infidelity; of intellectual rebellion against "the truth as it is in Christ Jesus".' He was untroubled by the fact that much of the morals of the Victorian age were unbelieving morals and he preferred to ignore the gross immorality of London which was recognised for what it was

by some contemporary writers but was papered over by the façade of Victorian respectability. After surveying the intellectual scene, the author could conclude: 'When we look back to the age in which Berkeley and Butler lived, we do not wonder that men should have been tempted to despair of Christianity. But how great and how reassuring is the contrast now!'

From the speeches that followed the paper, it seems that the Victoria Institute was at the time being borne along on a great wave of Victorian optimism, untroubled by the lack of impact made by Christianity upon the world at large. One speaker remarked: 'The hunting and sporting parson of that day in scarlet and buckskin would now be an anachronism, and probably would not be tolerated.' He seems to have assumed that a scientific or geological parson *would* be tolerated.

It may be felt that this incident has been treated at too great a length, but this has been deliberate, as the question is a significant one and bears upon the problem of what was the role of the Victoria Institute. As far as generalisations are possible it is probably fair to say that the early Institute failed to face the challenge of unbelieving philosophy as much as it failed to recognise philosophical unbelief. As a result we find that around the year 1880 the activities of the Institute began to find a different sphere of interest. Rather than argue with the infidel in philosophical terms, the Institute seemed to be more concerned about the historical origins of the Bible.

In 1799 a French soldier found, near the mouth of the Nile, an inscription generally known today as the Rosetta Stone. It was a trilingual decree in hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian and Greek, and was handed over, under Article XVI of the Treaty of Capitulation when the French were defeated in 1801, to the English, and eventually put in the British Museum. It was this stone that provided Champollion with the key to the decipherment of the numerous hieroglyphic inscriptions of ancient Egypt. Nearly fifty years later, in 1847, an English soldier, Sir Henry Rawlinson, managed, by a considerable feat of courage, to obtain a copy of the famous inscription on the Rock of Behistûn in Persia. This also was trilingual but, unlike the Rosetta Stone, was in Persian, Scythic and Babylonian. Rawlinson has often been described as the father of Assyriology. His decipherment of the Behistûn writing provided the key to the cuneiform alphabet, and considerable impetus to archaeological studies generally. It will thus be seen that the subject **that** was to occupy many meetings of the Victoria Institute, especially after 1880, was in many ways virgin soil.

Egyptology had occupied the Institute on more than one occasion. In 1871 W. R. Cooper, the secretary of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, had read a paper on 'Serpent Myths of Ancient Egypt' (*JTVI*, vi. 321) and in 1878 the Editor of the *Journal of Transactions* wrote: 'Last year we referred to the desirableness of a thorough inquiry being undertaken with the aim of gathering from various sources, especially from ancient monuments, information that would throw greater light upon the earliest days of Chaldean and Egyptian history, an enquiry including careful and systematic exploration in Assyria and Egypt; and it is pleasing to find that in Assyria a commencement has been made by one of the Institute's members, Mr Hormuzd Rassam' (*JTVI*, xii. x-xi).

Rassam was the man who took the Victoria Institute by storm on the 2nd of February 1880 when he read a paper on 'Recent Assyrian and Babylonian Research' (*JTVI*, xiv. 182). The vice-president, who introduced the speaker very briefly, was interrupted no less than three times by enthusiastic cheering at the prospect of listening to this remarkable man. Rassam was an Arab Christian, born at Mosul in 1826, who had helped Sir Austen Layard in his early excavations at Nineveh in 1845. He had then come to study at Oxford and offered his services to the British Museum. He returned to his own country on three archaeological expeditions to excavate Nimrud, Kuyunjik¹ and Nineveh. Naturally such a figure was somewhat exotic in Victorian eyes, added to which there was the lustre of patriotic devotion, as Rassam had been sent on service for the British Government to Abyssinia, where he had been imprisoned until freed by the victory of Sir Robert Napier in 1868.² He gave four papers to the Victoria Institute, and at first there were few who could discuss them in view of his

¹ On these expeditions rivalry between the French and British was very great as it had been between Layard and Emile Botte. At Kuyunjik in 1853, anticipating that the excavations of Vincent Place would bring his French rival to some important discoveries, Rassam got his own natives to dig by night a secret tunnel towards the site, starting from a different position. By so doing he forestalled his rival and uncovered the famous bas-reliefs of Ashurbanipal's Lion Hunt, finding in the chamber, heaps of tablets from the King's Private Library, all of which are now in the British Museum.

² An original letter written by Rassam at the time of the incident was published recently in an article entitled 'Letters from Magdala and Massawa', by A. M. Honeyman (*Bulletin John Rylands Library*, xlv. 2). Two fellow-prisoners of Rassam mentioned were Lieutenant Prideaux a distant nephew of S. P. Tregelles, and the Rev. H. A. Stern, who was a member of the Victoria Institute, and whose suffering Rassam mentioned in the discussion after his first paper to the Institute.

learning. Before long, however, the Institute became the scene of discussions between the most distinguished archaeologists of whom Theophilus Pinches, Colonel Conder, Sir Wallis Budge, W. St. Chad Boscawen (the assistant in the British Museum who, when he was dismissed, became a wandering beggar in Syria and was eventually sent back to England at the expense of the British Government), Professor A. H. Sayce, and Professor (later Sir) Flinders Petrie are the most well known.

Theophilus Goldridge Pinches, who wrote the article on Rassam in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Archibald Henry Sayce both became honorary Corresponding Members in 1889. Pinches was a man who denied himself the profitable career that he could have enjoyed as an engraver, and instead lived on the meagre income of an assistant in the British Museum. He spent his life deciphering, transcribing and publishing numerous cuneiform texts. Not being a traveller, he was free to assist the Victoria Institute a great deal, contributed over a period of thirty-eight years no less than twenty papers and figured a great deal in discussion. Some cuneiform inscriptions are still to be found most conveniently in the papers that he gave to the Institute. Far more impressive a career was enjoyed by Sayce, Professor of Assyriology at Oxford from 1891-1919. Having a very weak constitution, this brilliant scholar came to England, only for a short time each year, to deliver his annual lecture at Oxford. The rest of the time, on the advice of the doctor, he spent in the East. This did not inhibit his work, nor did his studies suffer. He was able to observe many excavations in progress. He copied the Siloam Inscription (standing in water up to the waist), and was the chief pioneer of the 'rediscovery' of the Hittite nation, long before Winckler's discoveries in 1905, or Puchstein's excavations in 1907, at Boghaz Keui (See Sayce, *Monuments of the Hittites*, 1881). Known to the natives as 'the mad priest', 'father of spectacles', and 'lord of the split tail' (the last referring to his clerical coat), his knowledge of the East was enormous and it was the great sorrow of other Assyriologists that in his later years he devoted himself to the study of, among other things, Polynesian civilisation, the cults of Java, Christological Buddhism, and Nestorian missionaries to China. Unfortunately he never contributed papers on these subjects to the Institute. His only paper was in 1889 and it dealt with 'The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Tel el-Amarna' (*JTVI*, xxiv. 12). Even then it had to be read by someone else who was very diffident about doing so because, he said, 'it is not only the subject matter that we look for and admire in his composition, but

his well-known rhetoric and delivery, which always charms irrespective of the facts with which he deals and the secrets which he—a master explorer—brings to light.' However the Professor was a most faithful member of the Institute and as late as 1924 he contributed to discussion.

Although Biblical archaeology was the Institute's chief interest from 1885-1910, this was by no means the only subject investigated by members. What is noticeable is the fact that it aroused a much larger volume of discussion than other subjects. There were papers on biology and anthropology as usual, and an Irish geologist, Professor Edward Hull (later the secretary and Vice-President of the Institute), gave over a period of some twenty-five years almost as many papers on geological subjects, the first being 'Notes on the results arrived at by the Palestine Exploration Fund¹ geological expedition to Petra' in which Hull had been involved. Other papers dealt with comparative religion and foreign cultures. Two important subjects that received occasional treatment but which aroused little discussion were physics and philosophy.

In 1880, two papers were read to the Institute by men who later became presidents of the society. One of them was George Gabriel Stokes. This brilliant mathematician had lost his Cambridge fellowship in 1857 when he married, but regained it under the new legislation in 1869. He was the first person since Sir Isaac Newton to be both Secretary and President of the Royal Society, and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. As Member for the University he sat in Parliament from 1887 to 1892, was created a baronet in 1889 and elected Master of Pembroke College in 1901. His subject when he addressed the Institute in 1880 was 'The bearing of the study of science upon religious ideas', and his paper received a little discussion. However, after he became President of the Institute in 1886, the Professor's papers on 'The Luminiferous Ether' (1894), 'The perception of light' (1895), and 'Röntgen Rays' (1896), provoked little more than respectful admiration. The only other member really qualified to comment on the President's papers was another distinguished physicist, Lord Kelvin (inventor of the Kelvin scale) who later contributed a paper on 'The age of the earth as an abode fitted for life' (*JTVI*, xxxi. 11).

A similar state of affairs occurred in the years from 1926 to 1936 when another President, Sir Ambrose Fleming, gave a series of brilliant Annual Addresses on such subjects as 'Relativity and Reality' (1928),

¹ The Pal. Expl. Fund also celebrates its centenary in 1965 and its investigations have always been of interest to members of the V.I.

'Matter, energy, radiation, life, and mind' (1929), 'Creation and Modern Cosmogony' (1930), 'Light' (1931), and 'Philosophical Conceptions of Modern Physical Science' (1936). There were few members of the Institute in a position to comment upon such papers, and it is tempting to conjecture whether the tradition that there is no discussion after an annual address originated in the learning of Stokes and Fleming.

On the other hand Fleming was by no means confined to scientific subjects, as he could speak quite as lucidly on the case for the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem as the site of the Resurrection (1929), the report of the Archbishops' commission on Christian doctrine (1939), and the Visions of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, and the seventy-sevens prophecy (1941). Fleming's great gift was to be able to present a complex subject like relativity, or the seventy-sevens prophecy, in terms that a layman could understand if he was prepared to think, and in addition he would draw some philosophical conclusions from the discoveries he was describing. More than once has this been the privilege of the Victoria Institute, and in this case it was a great honour to have such a distinguished man of science as its president, though Fleming would have strongly denied the fact.

In considering the scientific contribution of the Institute, we have jumped from 1906 to 1926 and after. In the period between those dates, there was a growing interest in astronomy, which is apparent in the work of the Institute. Following in the footsteps of Sir Robert Ball who was an honorary Correspondent until his death in 1913, a number of eminent astronomers delivered papers to the Institute. Sir David Gill spoke on 'The Sidereal Universe' (*JTVI*, xliii. 175). Dr Andrew Crommelin gave a paper on 'The Return of Halley's Comet' (*JTVI*, xlii. 18), and other subjects were treated in papers by Dr Sydney Chapman, Professor Alfred Fowler, Professor A. S. Eddington, and Sir Frank Dyson, the Astronomer Royal. An indication of the Institute's interest in the subject was the appointment of Edward Walter Maunder in 1913 as secretary. Maunder had been Superintendent of the Solar Department at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, had written a number of standard works on astronomy, and was also Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society, for a number of years. He gave nine papers to the Victoria Institute on a variety of subjects, and at the commemoration meeting in 1916 he maintained that the enormous progress of the previous fifty years had a definite bearing upon our knowledge of God, as such discoveries 'teach the lesson which St Paul preached two thousand years ago: "The invisible things of God from the creation

of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (*JTVI*, xlvi. 173).

Though today the scientific papers of the Institute may be of less value than perhaps some of the other papers, they were still a useful contribution as they were the product of careful research by fully qualified men.

The other paper read in 1880 by a future president of the Institute was on 'Evolution and Moral Science, being observations on Mr Herbert Spencer's "Data of Ethics"'. It was the work of the Rev. Henry Wace, who at the time was Professor of Ecclesiastical History in King's College, and later became Dean of Canterbury and one of the editors of *The Dictionary of Christian Biography*. His predecessor as president had been the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Halsbury. Though a distinguished lawyer and Christian, Halsbury never read a paper to the Institute, yet he took a great interest in its activities. When he died in 1921 at the age of ninety-eight he was succeeded by Dean Wace who was only eighty-five. Though President for only a short time, Wace was a most faithful member of the Institute. His early contribution had been on the philosophical side of its work, which at the time was its weakest, and the most neglected. He gave three papers on aspects of the study of ethics and in 1909 an interesting paper on 'Authority' in which he concluded: 'In a word the only indefeasible authority in the world is that of the will of God, which is manifested through various sources, such as the church under the guidance of the Scriptures, the state and the individual conscience' (*JTVI*, xli. 230). This provoked as might be expected a strong rejoinder from an expert on the subject of secular authority, Sir Robert Anderson, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. His ecclesiastical origins were somewhat different from the Dean's and he strongly rejected the idea that the will of God was manifested through the Church.

Wace's later papers concentrated upon the principles of Biblical criticism, as he was greatly disturbed by the general acceptance of the claims of the German critics which he maintained were quite unproven. In his interest in philosophy, however, the Dean was not alone. The Rev. J. J. Lias, Chancellor of Lincoln, had dealt with philosophical subjects in a number of papers¹, mostly while Wace was a member of the Institute. Others like Archdeacon Beresford Potter and Sydney T. Klein are instances of an increasing interest in this sort of discussion,

¹ One of these is referred to later on p. 180.

which was to be maintained in later years (1925-35) in a series of papers by the Rev. Charles Gardner.

As a result of this, a number of philosophers, like Clement C. L. Webb and the Rev. A. R. Whateley, were invited to address the Institute. Perhaps the most distinguished of these was Dean Inge. On two occasions he gave a paper, the second of which—'Freedom and Discipline', is a masterpiece of concise and provocative thinking¹ (*JTVI*, lii. 244).

The First World War marked, in more than one way, a significant point in the history of the Institute. Fewer members were free to attend and the *Journal* began to get considerably more slender. Numbers began to improve in 1920 but only a few took part in discussion. Frequently the same people would say the same sort of thing after a paper whatever the subject of it had been. This did not go unobserved, and in the conclusion of the Annual Report for 1924 (*JTVI*, lvii. 5) the Council remarked: 'It is a great relief and interest when new voices are heard, and the Council hope that in the future this may be the case.' Their hopes were only partially fulfilled. Increasingly, discussion was less informed and restricted frequently to one or two clergymen, a number of Brethren, and a galaxy of military and naval gentlemen. There were exceptions of course, especially in the archaeological side of the Institute's activities, but a number of the papers were by amateurs and show evidence of being so.

The First World War was in progress when the Institute celebrated its Jubilee. If there had been complacency in 1879 it had now disappeared. Optimistic ideas of progress had been shattered by the Great War and the subject of Germanism was discussed more than once. Throughout the jubilee addresses there is a note of concern, disturbance, and general dissatisfaction with the world around. One can discern an element of missionary zeal in the outlook of the Institute. In 1919 certain lectures read to the society were published in pamphlet form as 'Tracts for New Times', and in the Annual Report for that year the Council concluded: 'Since the publication of the last report the peace treaty has been signed and the nations are nominally friends once more. But there is no truce in the war with the powers of evil. Unbelief in the form of destructive criticism is unwearied in its efforts to discredit the authority of the Holy Scriptures, for the defence of which the Victoria Institute stands . . .' (*JTVI*, iii. 6). This was not a false optimism but genuine recognition of the problems facing the Church militant.

¹ This paper is referred to at a later stage p. 180.

One of the great names of the Victoria Institute in the post-war period was that of Alfred Taylor Schofield, who contributed sixteen papers on a variety of scientific subjects with particular interest in medical topics. An Associate for thirty-five years and Vice-President for nine, Schofield left the Institute the richer for his work. He has recently been described in a Christian magazine as 'A genial-spirited man, of a liberal mind, large hearted, and the friend of many who were known for their Christian service'. He provided an interesting link with the earliest days of the Institute, as he knew Philip Gosse, one of the two foundation Vice-Presidents; his description of Gosse was considerably at variance with the notorious account of Sir Edmund Gosse, in *Father and Son*.

Schofield was accompanied in his interest in medical subjects by a number of other members. There was Dr Amand Routh who gave a paper on 'Motherhood' (*JTVI*, liii. 71), Dr David Anderson-Berry who treated the subject of 'Experimental Psychology' (*JTVI*, liii. 12), and Dr Edwin Ash who addressed the Institute on 'Psychotherapy' (*JTVI*, lvii. 146). Medicine and Psychology have remained a fruitful ground for investigation and are still dealt with by members of the Institute.¹ It is therefore fitting that one of the four prize essays offered by the Institute should be named after Dr Schofield himself.

Before the first war Church History had been growing in popularity as a subject for discussion. In 1909 Arthur Galton took as his subject a contemporary question—*The Present Position of Catholics in France*—as a contribution to the study of the question of Church and State (*JTVI*, xli. 173). A year later the Rev. H. M. Gwatkin, Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History, was invited to address the Institute and his subject was *Arianism and Modern Thought*. The Professor suggested that the unitarian position of Arianism stemmed from a view of God as one cut off in his might and power from mankind, and therefore was suitable for the despotisms of the Roman empire and Islam. The truly Christian concept of government was one where the common good was the end of government, and the ruler concerned for the good of his subjects. There was no mention of the growing threat of the German empire, but it is difficult to forget that the Arian heresy was for a long time the German heresy (*JTVI*, xlii. 145). Another historian who addressed the Institute on several occasions was Professor F. F. Roget of the University of Geneva, who wrote three biographical studies of Swiss Protestants in

¹ The late Ernest H. White, M.B., B.S. (Vice-President) who died in May 1964 was one of the most recent members to maintain this tradition.

the nineteenth century, Frederick Godet, Alexandre Vinet, and Ernest Naville.

One of the questions that had exercised the early members of the Institute was how far Scriptural exegesis was the real business of the society. The growing verdict of the twentieth century was in favour of purely Biblical studies. The trend began early in the century, and can be seen in the great amount of interest shown by members in the three papers by a devoted member of the institute, Lt.-Col. Mackinlay, on the writings of St Luke (*JTVI*, xliv, xlix, li). Other people took up the general Biblical questions of authorship, the relationship of the synoptic Gospels to one another, the original language of Matthew, and even questions of prophecy.

Such studies went hand in hand with textual studies. In 1911 Mrs A. S. Lewis, who in 1892, with her sister, had discovered the Sinaitic palimpsest of the gospels in Syriac, embodied some of the fruit of her researches in a paper to the Victoria Institute on 'The Genealogies of Our Lord' (*JTVI*, xliv. 9). In the same year Professor George Milligan of Glasgow University gave a paper on 'The Greek Papyri, with especial reference to their value for New Testament Study' (*JTVI*, xliv. 62). The whole question of textual criticism which these papers touched upon was taken up by Sir Frederick Kenyon over twenty years later. An acknowledged expert in the subject, he was able to provide some assessment of the theories of Streeter and Kirsopp Lake.

The study of the text of the Bible was naturally related to the archaeological studies which had always been the most important contribution of the Victoria Institute. The Annual Report for 1924 contains the following observation 'The council are sometimes reproached that they fail to undertake papers on the many ethical and philosophical problems that press upon our attention. . . . The council does not think it lost time to turn aside now and again from more strenuous problems to questions of scientific and archaeological discovery . . .' (*JTVI*, lvii. 5). Certainly as far as archaeological studies were concerned, it was scarcely a question of 'turning aside' to them. The Institute had fully maintained the interest dating back to the early papers of Rassam, Sayce and Pinches.

Archaeology affecting the period of the New Testament had been the subject of the contribution of Sir William Ramsay, whose papers had dealt with discoveries in Asia Minor (*JTVI*, xxxix. 201; xli. 36). Another person whose subject lay in the same period was the Rev. Prebendary H. E. Fox (Vice-President from 1918-26). His paper was on 'The

inscriptions and drawings from the Roman Catacombs' (*JTVI*, xlvi. 103).

The relevance of archaeology to the Old Testament continued to be discussed by two of the older generation, Sayce and Pinches, whom we have mentioned before. Sir Flinders Petrie, who had become an honorary Corresponding Member in 1903, and had given the Annual Address, in that year, on his discoveries in Egypt (*JTVI*, xxxv. 9), read another paper to the Institute in 1929 on 'The Materialization of Old Testament History' (*JTVI*, lxi. 260). A year later Professor J. Garstang addressed the Institute on 'Joshua and the Higher Critics' (*JTVI*, lxii. 234).

Other papers were read by a number of less well-known members like the Rev. A. C. Robinson, the Rev. D. E. Hart-Davies, and E. W. B. Chappelow. At a later date came contributions by Air-Commodore P. J. Wiseman, and Professor Rendle Short. These were strictly non-professional, nevertheless important because their discussion of these subjects was informed and therefore useful.

It was natural enough that the two presidents who followed Sir Ambrose Fleming should be associated with Archaeology. Sir Charles Marston (President, 1941-46), who with his ample fortune encouraged excavations at a number of Biblical sites, had first participated in such work in 1924 when he went with an expedition to Jerusalem organised by the Palestine Exploration Fund. He had helped to finance other work including the excavations at Lachish and at Jericho, both of which he described in a paper to the Institute in 1934 (*JTVI*, lxvi. 124). His outlook was a very different one from that of his successor, Sir Frederick Kenyon, who was Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum from 1909-30. Kenyon was a professional where Marston had been an amateur. Kenyon believed that Christians should meet left-wing criticism and defeat it on its own grounds rather than try, as Marston had tended, to prove the Bible from Archaeology. Indeed Kenyon went further and said that he thought it was right to recognise that critics were 'legitimately raising questions which require investigation' (*JTVI*, lxxix. 227). Kenyon, like Marston, addressed the Institute on the subject of archaeological discoveries, but he dealt with those at Ras Shamra and at Mari (*JTVI*, lxxiii. 81). His real field was, as was mentioned before, textual criticism, and his later addresses were on the problems of Biblical criticism.

Just as the Victoria Institute had suffered from the upheaval of the First World War, so with the second. Meetings again had to be cancelled and papers had to be merely circulated instead. Similarly the *Journal* had

to be reduced in size. But the Institute survived to face yet another period of changed society. In the last twenty years the structure of English social life has changed enormously. Fewer and fewer people can afford to spend much time or money in amateur research, whether it is in Geology, Astronomy or Archaeology. More and more has specialisation set in with the result that we depend upon the professional for information on these subjects. With such changes the Victoria Institute has had to change its methods. Since 1958 there have been far fewer meetings and the *Journal* has become the vehicle for both papers and discussion. In a sense this has become inevitable when time is so short that reading has to take the place of attendance at a meeting. It is to be hoped that *Faith and Thought* will be as well supported as the old *Journal of the Transactions* was in the past.

The variety of the subjects under discussion in the past hundred years at meetings of the Victoria Institute is quite astonishing. It is an indication that the members' beliefs in the oneness of truth were something real and that they believed that all true knowledge is ultimately the knowledge of God in His creative wisdom and glory.

It is striking, however, how certain subjects discussed in the earlier years of the Institute are still with us today, usually accompanied by the same differing attitudes. For instance, the problem faced by the Chancellor of Lincoln in 1878 in his paper 'Mr Matthew Arnold and Modern Culture' (*JTVI*, xii. 269) is strikingly similar to the problem posed by the Bishop of Woolwich today. These words describing Matthew Arnold's proposals sound strangely familiar: 'Christianity is to exist still . . . but she must abandon her creeds—all of them—as the product of "popular" or "theological science" and she must content herself with that exposition of "the stream of tendency whereby we fulfil the law of our being . . ."' The vocabulary of 'images' and 'demythologisation' is not so far away.

When Dean Inge, after the first World War, spoke on 'Freedom and Discipline' (*JTVI*, lii. 244) he remarked, at one point, 'We ought not to be surprised that the Vatican was backing Germany all over the world'. Today, with another world war behind us, the recent play by Rolf Hochhuth, *The Representative*, has produced a storm of discussion simply because it made the same point that Dean Inge made some forty years ago.

There was a time when critics maintained that the Pentateuch was not reliable because there was no means of writing in the early times of which it speaks. Over fifty years ago, however, Sir Flinders Petrie

discovered the tablets at Tel el-Amarna which proved that such writing materials did exist. Not so long ago the Bishop of Birmingham maintained that the New Testament documents were forgeries of later centuries. Sir Frederick Kenyon exposed the Bishop's criticism for what it really was (namely 'imbecility of scholarship' beyond the bounds of 'bibliographical probability') by pointing to the overwhelming evidence of the papyri. In both instances unsupported hypotheses were demolished by facts.

It is difficult to conclude otherwise than that the needs of today are not ultimately so very different from the needs of an earlier generation, and that the aims of the Victoria Institute are as relevant today as they were a century ago even though our methods and emphases may have changed.