COMMISSION ON UNITARIAN FAITH
AND ACTION IN THE MODERN WORLD

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UNITARIAN THEOLOGY IN 1964

Interim Report
of the
Theology Section

The General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

1964

FOREWORD

At the end of 1963 the Council of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches resolved to appoint a Commission of about 12 members to consider the place of the Unitarian churches in the modern world. This " Faith and Action Commission " was to work in four Sections, which would investigate and report on the subjects of (1) Theology, (2) Leadership, (3) Education, and (4) Religion in the Community.

The Commission quickly got to work ; and its Sections have been meeting regularly since December 1963. Each Section has now prepared an Interim Report for publication, and this booklet (which has been approved by the full Commission) embodies one of these four reports. All four reports are being distributed among the churches, fellowships and associations of the General Assembly during the autumn of 1964.

It is hoped that the reports will be widely discussed during the next six months, and that comments, and constructive criticisms and proposals, will be freely sent—any time up to 31st May 1965—to the Secretary of the Commission, the Rev. F. Kenworthy, The Unitarian College, Victoria Park, Manchester, 14. (Fuller details and advice about discussions and the submission of comments will be sent out from time to time by the Commission in periodical Bulletins.)

In June 1965 the Commission will start to prepare its full Report. The intention is that the full Report should be published in time for it to be thoroughly examined and debated at the General Assembly's Annual Meetings in April 1966.

The quality of the full Report will be determined by the quality of the comments which the four Interim Reports evoke from Unitarian groups and individuals all over the country. This document which you are holding in your hand at this moment is not just a bit of interesting reading, to be looked at and put away. It is a tool to be used—a flint to strike a shower of sparks—a torch to light a chain of torches of thought, argument and action running through the whole Unitarian community.

Fellow Unitarians, your help in this thing is vital. Now it's OVER TO YOU !

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October 1964

Interim Report of the Theology Section

WHY THEOLOGY ?

Unitarian : Do you think that people are really interested in theology nowadays ?

Commissioner : Oh, most certainly. Theology will always remain a perennially fascinating subject—and not just for a limited number of specialists either. Look at the tremendous stir created by the Bishop of Woolwich's book *Honest to God.*

Unitarian : But didn't this book arouse so much interest precisely because it appeared to repudiate traditional theology ?

Commissioner : That may very well be true, but theology is not exhausted by traditional theology. Much of the theology of the past is now, in the light of modern knowledge, bad theology—and as S. P. Whitehouse reminded us in his Essex Hall Lecture for 1960, the remedy for bad theology is not no theology at all but a better theology.

Unitarian : How would you define theology ?

Commissioner : Well, basically, theology means simply the discussion of religious ideas and theories. Anyone who claims to be interested in religion, and still more anyone who claims to have a religion, obviously must have some religious ideas.

Unitarian : But can't you have a religion which is simply a matter of emotion, experience or action ? I think that the best religion of all is primarily a way of life.

Commissioner : Ah, we have to be a bit careful here, you know. No doubt we would all agree that a good religion must express itself as a way of life—and obviously any religion worth having must include emotion and experience. But we must have some ideas to support our emotions and explain our experiences and justify our actions. And don't let's forget that Unitarians have always claimed to be specially interested in ideas and in the rational approach generally. Bernard Shaw says somewhere that we must always think about everything—and that we must think about everything as it really is, not just as it is talked about. We would agree with this, wouldn't we ?

Unitarian : Yes, I see what you mean. But why is it then that people are so often suspicious of theology ?

Commissioner : Well, there are a number of reasons for this. In the first place, it is obvious that most people are unwilling to think. They dislike mental activity and much prefer what someone has so wisely called " the comforts of unreason." In the second place, you have to remember, of course, that we are living in a scientific age. The prestige of applied science is now so great that most people tend to assume that the only truth is scientific truth—truth which can be measured or demonstrated. There was a time when theology was regarded as the queen of the sciences. But those days are gone. Nowadays, theology seems to be dealing with a world utterly removed from the world of science—merely a world of speculative possibilities—or even a world of impossible make-believe.

Unitarian : I see. But haven't Unitarians always insisted that there is no real conflict between religion and science ?

Commissioner : Oh certainly, and I'm sure that we must hold fast to this. Of course we do need to remember that some theological formulations are bound to clash with science. There has been plenty of evidence of this in the past. You obviously cannot square the Darwinian theory of the origin of man with the story of the Garden of Eden. It is precisely because there has been conflict between science and religion in the past—a conflict in which religion has repeatedly been forced to retreat—that theology is now at a discount.

Unitarian : But we would say, wouldn't we, that this doesn't really affect the essential nature of religion ?

Commissioner : Yes. As we see it, both religion and science are essentially realms of response to reality. They deal with one world and are in no sense separate or contradictory. Science measures and calculates and describes and predicts, but religion is concerned with the *total* experience of living. It is the quest of ultimate meaning and significance. This is why theology is so important. Even in a scientific age it is still needed.

Unitarian : Would you say that a Unitarian theology is likely to have a special appeal in a scientific age ?

Commissioner : Yes. I think I would. Our rejection of dogma and our refusal to accept any authority apart from the insights of reason and experience are obviously very much in keeping with the scientific attitude. But it would be rather arrogant to claim, as we have sometimes done in the past, that science points inevitably towards Unitarianism.

Unitarian : Well, I'm not so sure about that. I have a feeling that it is only a liberal religious attitude which can really be squared with science.

Commissioner : Perhaps you're right—but in that case, I wonder why it is that we do not make a much wider appeal. I suppose what we really need is some striking new way of clarifying our position, so that we can get over to people—and especially the intelligent enquiring outsider—what it is that Unitarians really stand for. This is precisely one of the things that the Faith and Action Commission is trying to do.

Unitarian : Well, what would you say should be our basic starting point ?

Commissioner : Well now, I think that we shouldn't begin with theology as such at all. We ought to direct our attention primarily to recent social history. After all, theological formulations are, to a great extent, the outcome of a certain special set of social conditions. Theology to-day is still struggling to come to terms with the Industrial Revolution. This is what really lies behind most of our contemporary religious difficulties. The really decisive factor has not been the tremendous advance in scientific knowledge over the past 400 years. The present crisis in religion is primarly due to the social changes of the last 100 years.

Unitarian : What exactly are you thinking of ?

Commissioner : Well, look at it this way. For the first 19 centuries of its existence, Christianity grew up in a world in which most people worked on the land and where the expectation of life was very poor. But now the situation has completely changed. In this country, less than one man in twenty now makes a living from the land. Very few men and women die before the age of 50. Most people's experience of life is based on the membership of very large communities and from contacts with a vast number of different people for various specialised purposes. In the old days, the family was the universal unit, but nowadays its function is much more limited.

Unitarian : And you think that all this can somehow be linked up with theology ?

Commissioner : Yes, and it's even more important than that. I am convinced that all the terrible events of the the past 50 years have stemmed in part from the failure of theology to move with the times.

Unitarian : You mean that men have gone to pieces in the modern world just because theology has not provided them with religious ideas which really meet their needs ?

Commissioner : Exactly. The official religious explanation of man's predicament just doesn't seem to make sense, precisely because it is rooted in a world that has disappeared.

Unitarian : But don't you think that even the official theologians are now trying to come to terms with the situation ?

Commissioner : In a way they certainly are, but it seems to me that there is more agreement about the inadequacy of what went before than upon the best line to follow now. The difficulties, of course, are very considerable, particularly for those who want to be orthodox. But it is obvious that fewer and fewer orthodox Christians nowadays really accept as literal fact such things as the Virgin Birth, a physical Resurrection, or miracles generally.

Unitarian : Now I'm glad you mention that. I'm often being told nowadays by my orthodox friends that you don't really need to believe this or that to belong to the Church. Yet I feel that they still go on repeating the same old creeds and formulas.

Commissioner : Yes, it's what you might call a kind of theological double-talk, isn't it ? I often think we ought to challenge them to come clean and tell us what they really believe. Part of the trouble, of course, lies in the fact that so much traditional religious imagery is quite outdated now. You may remember that when the New English Bible appeared, there were some criticisms of its literary standard.

Unitarian : Yes, I remember—and I must say that there are some passages which always strike me as being particularly feeble.

Commissioner : I agree—but you see I don't think it's necessarily the literary standard which is at fault. I suspect rather that it is simply a case of the unfamiliar language bringing home the threadbare nature of some of the religious imagery of the New Testament.

Unitarian : Yes, that's rather interesting. I seem to remember E. G. Lee pointing out in the *Inquirer* how ridiculous it seems to read, in Acts 12, of an angel " tapping Peter on the shoulder."

Commissioner : Exactly. But I don't think it is simply a matter which affects angels and the like. What about expressions such as " the Good Shepherd " ? Do you think these have any widespread appeal nowadays ?

Unitarian : Well, I suppose it depends very much on your background. It certainly means something to me, but I suppose the situation is bound to be very different for the man who is completely out of touch with the Christian tradition. I once heard someone say that nowadays we ought to change " The Lord is my Shepherd " into " The Lord is my Shop-Steward ! " I don't think it's just the unfamiliarity which makes me jib at this !

Commissioner : Well, yes, I wouldn't quarrel with you about that. But I do believe very definitely that, in an industrial age, we cannot go on for ever using pastoral metaphors and expect our religion to be vital and relevant.

Unitarian : Yes, I suppose that's true. But surely some people would say that part of the trouble with the modern world lies in the fact that we are so cut off from the rhythm of nature ? I know that the " back to nature " philosophy can easily degenerate into sentimental nonsense. But I don't think it's all nonsense. Might it not be that the pastoral bias of traditional Christianity is really an asset ?

Commissioner : Well, possibly—in a sense, yes. But I think what you have been saying really underlines my main contention about the Industrial Revolution. I do not maintain that everything that stems from the Industrial Revolution is good. The threat to personal identity and loss of individuality inherent in modern mass society are obviously among the bad results of the Industrial Revolution. This is a part of the new situation which religion has got to come to terms with.

Unitarian : Well, if there really is a new situation, then presumably we need a new theology.

Commissioner : Exactly.

Unitarian : What form do you think it will take ?

Commissioner : Well, of course that is a very difficult question. The Theology Section of the Commission has spent a lot of time trying to find an answer to it. You can see some of the results of our deliberations in this Report, where we have chosen a number of issues which we think are particularly relevant, while recognising that they are not in any way exhaustive. But for the moment, I will try to suggest three or four preliminary points. In the first place, I think it is important that we should not try to limit the scope of theology. I've already suggested that religion is primarily concerned with the total experience of living and that it represents the quest for ultimate meaning. Of course, this is one of the points on which a good deal of argument is going on at present.

Unitarian : What about ?

Commissioner : Well, there are those who say that theology should not concern itself at all with the nature of the universe. They claim that theology is primarily a matter of the relationship between man and his fellows and each man and his God.

Unitarian : And you don't accept this ?

Commissioner : Well, obviously theology must include this. But I think we should be wary of getting too involved in subjectivism and in what philosophers would call the existential approach. Theology has many affinities with metaphysics and it must not be afraid of enquiring into the nature of reality.

Unitarian : What does metaphysics mean ?

Commissioner : Metaphysics is the traditional name of that branch of philosophy which seeks to explain the nature and meaning of reality. For some time now, it has been the Cinderella of philosophy, but there are signs that it is coming into its own again.

Unitarian : How does this fit in with theology ?

Commissioner : I think it means that we can argue for the possibility of a genuine *natural* theology. We must seek to propound a theology of reality, based on reason and experience, which will challenge both those who insist that the only possible religious knowledge is that given through supernatural revelation and those who argue that religion is merely a matter of personal relationships.

Unitarian : Your first point, then, is that theology should concern itself with the question of the ultimate nature and meaning of the Universe ?

Commissioner : That's right. Now my second point is perhaps a bit obscure, but it is this : any new theology will have some problems with terminology. Language itself is always a living, changing thing. Very few words retain their meaning unchanged for long, nor does any one formulation of a subject necessarily mean the same thing to different people. This applies above all to theology, since the language of theology is somewhat peculiar.

Unitarian : In what way ?

Commissioner : Well you see, it's bound to be symbolic, isn't it ? It's the language of poetry and imagination rather than the language of fact. Just think of any familiar hymn and take its language literally—" Sometimes a light surprises the Christian while he sings " for example. Try and picture it literally, and it becomes ridiculous.

Unitarian : Yes. I see what you're getting at. This applies to all poetic language, doesn't it ?

Commissioner : To a certain extent, yes. When Tennyson says : " Slip into my bosom and be lost in me," he obviously doesn't mean it literally. But I think the point is of particular relevance to religious language, because people seem much less ready to acknowledge its metaphorical and symbolic nature than they are in the case of poetry.

Unitarian : Yes, that's interesting. It reminds me of those Unitarians who refuse to sing hymns about angels !

Commissioner : Exactly. And we have to remember also, you know, that religion has always made great use of paradox.

Unitarian : What exactly is a paradox ?

Commissioner : Well, the dictionary defines it as something seemingly absurd or contradictory, yet true in fact.

Unitarian : Can you give me an example ?

Commissioner : Yes. there are plenty of instances in the teaching of Jesus—" Whosoever would save his life shall lose it "—or " From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

Unitarian: Ah yes. I get it. What you are saying then is that in theological matters the very language we use is bound to make things difficult.

Commissioner : Precisely—or perhaps it would be more helpful to say that we need to recognise always that the language of theology is not the language of literal fact. Incidentally I have a feeling that we probably ought to be far more ready than we have been to incorporate into our religious thinking the vision, imagery and emotional force of contemporary literature.

Unitarian : Ah, now I think you've touched on something very important. I often feel that much contemporary literature, especially that of the so-called " kitchen-sink " type, is really grappling with what are, at bottom, religious problems.

Commissioner : Oh, I couldn't agree more. I think this in itself is a striking illustration of the way in which conventional religion has completely lost its hold on people. They feel a tremendous urge to discuss things in a completely new way. We are agreed then that we ought to pay more attention to contemporary literature ?

Unitarian : Certainly.

Commissioner : Now my third point is quite simple, though probably controversial. Not everyone will agree with me here, but in spite of what I have been saying so far, I do really believe that we should be on our guard against any precipitate rejection of the theology of the past. It is important that we should be familiar with the myths before putting them aside—when this is necessary. It is as well, in other words, to understand Athanasius before rejecting him. We need a richer relationship to our Christian past, and, paradoxically, we need it all the more if we plan a radical contemporary departure from it. Flexibility allied to continuity should be our watchword.

Unitarian : Well, I don't think I object to that—though I have a feeling that it will upset some Unitarians.

Commissioner : Oh, I'm sure it will. But we would hardly be true to our tradition if we all thought alike, would we ?

Unitarian : Of course not.

Commissioner : And now I come to my final point, which is again quite simple. It is this. I think there is a danger, you know, in the constant demand for a new " Unitarian statement of belief." A new theology should not seek to tell men what they ought to think or believe. It should aim rather to create the right environment for spontaneous development. We of all people must always believe that it is our duty to work out our own salvation—even if sometimes, if not always, it has to be in fear and trembling !

Unitarian : Well, I certainly say " hear ! hear ! " to that. In fact, I think we cannot do better than end our discussion in the way in which Bernard Shaw finished his book *Everybody's Political What's What* . . . " to be continued by them that can ! "

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What sort of issues ought theology to concentrate on ?
2. Is science a rival to religion ?
3. Is scientific advance a factor which should influence our thinking? If so, in what ways ?
4. Are there any reasons why the task of theology is especially difficult to-day ?
5. Are all theological formulations provisional and subject to change ? If so, why ?
6. What can a Unitarian theology offer which cannot be had elsewhere ?

I. THE IDEA OF GOD

(1) There is now a widespread feeling that what are called traditional ideas of God are outmoded—and this feeling clearly extends beyond our own community (as is shown by the discussions arising out of *Honest to God*). The Bishop of Woolwich has discussed what he calls supernatural (or " supranatural ") ideas of God as being " out there "—apart from and above the world. But much of what he inveighs against in the early part of his book, Unitarians (and others) have long ago rejected.

(2) It is, however, when the Bishop attempts to formulate a concept of God that will meet modern needs and prove acceptable to the contemporary intellectual climate, that he runs into difficulties—and those difficulties are as real for the Unitarian theist as they are for him. A certain number of Unitarians attempt to avoid the difficulties by rejecting theism altogether. Even many self-confessed humanists, however, do not go as far as this. The basic difficulty obviously lies not with the idea of God as such, but with the idea of a God who is in some sense personal. We probably need to recognise that there now exists amongst us a broad division of opinion between those who still adhere to the Hebrew notion of the Living God, whose attitude towards men is best expressed in terms of fatherhood—a God who (in Dr. Robinson's phrase) is " unconditional love "—and those who simply affirm the reality of an Eternal Spirit and of a purpose in evolution—or perhaps merely that the Universe is friendly, and that (again in Dr. Robinson's phrase) " Being is gracious."

(3) Perhaps the best contribution that Unitarians can make is to acknowledge openly this difference of opinion and to further, in a spirit of tolerance and goodwill, the " honest to God debate." In a sense this is what we have always tried to do. We are certainly in a far better position to do it than the orthodox, however radical, for we have no need, at any stage, to resort to theological double-talk.

(4) A basic part of the problem lies in the quest for a concept of God that will meet both intellectual and devotional needs. We might possibly achieve the latter without the former. In the past, we have

always laid great stress on the concept of a God to whom worship may be offered and prayers directed, and with whom it is possible to come into communion. A crucial question, which we may have to face, is whether this is any longer possible. It is certainly difficult to see how prayer and worship can be justified if traditional ideas of God are rejected entirely. But if we are to retain the idea of God, we of all people must obviously be the first to recognise (as G. K. Chesterton, no less, once affirmed) that the blackest infidelity of all—" worse than any blow of secularist, pessimist or atheist, is the infidelity of those who regard God as an old institution." We must be fully prepared to acknowledge that it is supremely in the realm of human experience and the relationship of man to man that God is to be discerned. But this is not to say that the relationship itself (*pace* Wren-Lewis and Paul Tillich) is God. A quotation from David Jenkins is perhaps appropriate : " If ultimate reality does have the character asserted of ' it,' then it looks very much as if it remains true that there exists a personal God who is other than and more than the stuff and phenomena of life, however true it must be that he is to be encountered only in and through this stuff." (*The Honest to God Debate* — S.C.M. Paperback, p. 202.)

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the source of our knowledge of God—reason or intuition ?
2. What are the most important qualities which you attribute to God ?
3. Is there any reason why theists and humanists should not share fruitful membership of the same church ?
4. Can a Unitarian still believe in petitionary prayer ?

II. THE PERSON OF JESUS

(1) Some restatement is necessary regarding the relation of Jesus to God, a question on which there appears to be widespread misunderstanding especially among the orthodox. Dr. S. H. Mellone pointed out long ago why the victory of Athanasianism over Arianism in the 4th century A.D. was crucial in the development of Christian thought. In maintaining the subordination of the Son to the Father (which at first sight seems to be in line with later Unitarian thought) Arius not only made him inferior to the divine nature, but also different from it.

(2) Athanasius, on the other hand, insisted that the Son was " of one substance " with the Father and that, in Christ, there was a vital union between God and Man. For Arius, Christ was a being different from both human nature and divine nature. But it was the teaching of Athanasius (" he became human in order that we might become divine ") which prevailed, and this has proved of fundamental importance in the history of Christianity. Its value, however, is completely obscured if it is asserted, as Athanasius himself and later orthodoxy asserted, that this relationship is a unique one, and that God was in Christ in a different way from that in which he is in other human beings.

(3) It has been the vital contribution of liberal and Unitarian thought to insist that the union of humanity and divinity in Jesus was not unique, and that the divinity which shone in his face shines also in varying degree in all the children of God. This facet of Unitarianism, however familiar to us, needs constant re-emphasis at the present time. For in the orthodox reaction of recent years, and still more in the " radical " theology of to-day, it is so often claimed that at one point, and at one point only, the divine has come into human life. This we must always reject as a denial of the true significance of Christianity itself as an interpretation of human existence, and of the light thrown on human nature and its relations with the divine by the life and work of Jesus.

(4) Arising out of this we also feel that it is especially incumbent upon us at the present time to reaffirm our belief in the abiding significance of the historical personality of Jesus of Nazareth. " Christianity has produced a ' Christ-Image ' which is a great and noble religious symbol. But this symbol is not the same as the actual man, and must not be allowed to hide him—for imagination must not obscure facts, and truth about persons is more important than symbolism." (Francis Terry.)

(5) The quest for the historical Jesus rather than the theological Christ has always been an important part of the task of religious liberalism, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that this quest is

not so fruitless as Albert Schweitzer assumed when he launched his famous bombshell nearly sixty years ago. The theological pendulum is swinging back again, and the notorious dictum of R. H. Lightfoot (" The form of the earthly no less than the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us. For all the inestimable value of the Gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of his voice ") is being widely repudiated. Christianity has never been merely a philosophy or a code of morals. It owes its tremendous power to the fact that, in spite of the confused and contradictory traditions, it presents us with the personal challenge of a profoundly disturbing human prophet, who appeared at a specific point in history. The Jesus of history is not, and never claimed to be, a universal type of human perfection, but, as one who challenges tradition and orthodoxy and shows astonishing insight into the ways of God and the nature of man, he will always remain a continuing source of moral and spiritual inspiration.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you consider that the Unitarian teaching about Jesus is the most important part of our witness ?
2. Is Jesus as important to Unitarians as he is to other Christians ?
3. What are the points about the life and teaching of Jesus which we as Unitarians ought particularly to stress ?
4. Is the essence of Christianity to be found in the teaching *of* Jesus or *about* Jesus ?

III. THE NATURE OF MAN

(1) Traditional theology is grounded in the concept of original sin, i.e. the idea that man in his very nature is essentially evil and totally alienated from fellowship with God. This condition is usually ascribed to some primeval disaster, a " Fall " from a state of original

righteousness. Hence the necessity for a decisive intervention on the part of God to secure man's redemption. This doctrine, or "scheme of salvation," is unacceptable to Unitarians. In their assessment of man's nature and their criticism of traditional ideas of the Atonement, they have made one of their most significant contributions to religious thought.

(2) Many Unitarians would hold that any teaching about the nature of man must have two aspects, personal and social. The personal aspect of his nature probably changes very little. It springs from his genetic constitution and from his experience of family life, especially his early relationships with his parents. It is doubtful whether in historic times these factors have changed in any decisive way. But the social aspects of man's nature do change. There is a sense in which each successive generation is able to take advantage of what has gone before. As Coleridge remarked, a dwarf sees further than a giant when he has the giant's shoulder to mount on. Knowledge in some spheres is cumulative and may come to affect the constitution and functioning of society and this in turn may alter the nature of man. The religious thinking of man, for example, is in an important measure a social product. The idea of continuous revelation, which is a distinctive feature of Unitarian thought, implies a view of the nature of man as including elements which can develop and change as each generation reflects upon the religious achievements of its predecessors.

(3) We should admit that on occasion Unitarians have been too optimistic in their estimate of human nature, and have too readily adopted a Utopian belief in the perfectibility of man. Nevertheless, while recognising the violence, perverseness and irrationalities of human nature, they would claim that it is not true to the facts of the situation to assert that man is essentially evil. There are those who interpret the defects of man's nature wholly in terms of his animal origin. Clearly, we must acknowledge that man has an affinity with the animal kingdom and indeed is part of a process which has been going on for two thousand million years, yet the essence of sin must be sought in the emergence of human self-consciousness rather than in any survival of animal instincts. In this connexion we are bound to acknowledge the relevance of psychology, which in this century has thrown much light on the problems of individual and social behaviour.

(4) For Unitarians, their view of the nature of man is closely allied to their view of the person of Jesus. It would be wrong to stress only the darker aspects of man's nature while ignoring the sublime achievements of the human spirit. A cardinal factor in our interpretation must be the potential capacity of all men to achieve a divine-human relationship such as was manifested in Jesus ; of Jesus indeed, it may truly be said that his divinity is his humanity.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you challenge the popular assertion that " human nature never changes " ?
2. What sort of topics would you expect to be included in a satisfactory doctrine of man ?
3. Do you agree that beliefs about the nature of man are closely allied to beliefs about God ?
4. Which would you say is nearer to the truth—the statement that man is essentially evil or that he is essentially good ?

IV. THE CHURCH

(1) The primary function of a church is the worship of God and the deepening and development of the spiritial life. A Christian church is one that seeks these aims in the spirit of Jesus. The Christian Church as a whole has some claim to authority. It can claim the authority of long experience and of a continuous existence going back through nineteen centuries to the time of Jesus himself.

(2) While we obviously cannot accept any supernatural theories regarding the origin of the Church, we know that Jesus did gather round him a band of men who were to share his faith, his work and his spirit, and that after his death, his spirit continued as an active force among them. Ultimately they rallied their scattered forces and carried on his work. In this community, the world-wide Christian Church had its origin. It has been the instrument through which the spirit of Jesus has remained active, and had it not been for the Christian Church the memory of Jesus would probably have perished from the face of the earth. What is more, it is well that we should remember that even the fiercest critics of the Church are generally basing their attack upon the ideas and values which they have in fact learned from the Church. The Church itself needs criticism, and the critic can generally do more good by allying himself with some group trying to reform it from within, rather than by merely attacking it from the outside.

(3) Theoretically, the Church has always allowed a place for the work of the Holy Spirit, guiding it into new truth. But in practice, it has always been unwilling to admit that anything it once taught as true may be true no longer. Its authority is greatly weakened by the fact that the Spirit so often seems to guide Christians to different conclusions. What is more, at the present time, the Christian community is deeply divided into " churches," which differ amongst themselves in matters of doctrine and organisation, in " faith " and " order." Some lay claim to have inherited a divinely ordained system of government, and to administer divinely appointed sacraments necessary for membership—or even for ultimate salvation. On the basis of the New Testament evidence, such claims are highly disputable. As a foundation for the Church to-day, they are the subject of constant criticism and debate and, in spite of the growing ecumenical movement, they hold out little if any hope of securing universal assent.

(4) The Unitarian idea of the Church must rest on some quite other basis. A Unitarian church does not claim to confer supernatural benefits upon its members, or to provide the only way to a true knowledge of God or the achievement of the good life. It recognises, also, that men can, and do, come to God and live the good life without a church. Indeed, it is sometimes said that it is the function of the church to train men to do without the church—just as Dr. Travers Herford used to say that it was the function of a minister to train our congregations to do without ministers. It still remains true, however, that " it is not good that man should be alone." Integration must have a social as well as an individual function, and the New Testament is full of references to " fellowship " and to " one another."

(5) In religion, as in all human activities, it is in a community that man attains his deepest and richest life. While men differ in intellectual ability, they can yet be united by a spirit of love and common discipleship. But it is important to remember that a church is not just a social service committee. It exists to supply, primarily through worship, that which can give depth and meaning to the whole of life. It should inspire us to be ever seeking the new truth to which the Divine Spirit is leading us, in co-operation with other like-minded seekers—and even with those who do not feel at present the need for all that a church has to offer.

(6) While it is true that variety of religious expression will always be inevitable and that no church should ever act intolerantly towards other churches or faiths, it is the Church alone which can offer the one true bond of unity between all men, a bond which is neither racial nor economic, nor political. It is a bond which rests upon the one factor that potentially can transcend all differences of race, creed and class—namely, that all men are sons of God and temples of his Spirit.

Questions for Discussion

1. What things does a church do which no other body can ?
2. Why is membership of a church important ?
3. Does a Unitarian church labour under any special handicap or enjoy any special advantages as compared with other churches ?
4. Ought there to be in our churches an agreed basis for membership of the church ? If so, what should it be ?
5. Should a Unitarian church be a centre of social activity as well as a worshipping community ?

V. WORSHIP

(1) This is a crucial issue. It raises problems which are only partly theological. When considering the possibility of advance and extension, we must always bear in mind that there are many who will gladly embrace our particular religious ideas—especially our attitude towards traditional Christianity—but who just do not see the point of public worship. On the other hand, there are also those—probably far more numerous than we realise—who, while accepting our religious ideas, do not identify themselves with us, because they find our worship cold and bare and grievously lacking in artistic standards. These folk are willing to overlook the theology of traditional Christianity (which they do not accept anyway) for the sake of the spiritual refreshment which they derive from traditional worship.

(2) The actual position of our churches with regard to worship seems, at the present time, to be somewhat paradoxical. With many of our congregations, deep and sincere worship would seem to be the least vital of their activities. Yet there is still a great interest in worship amongst us, especially among young people—and even, strangely enough, among those who have doubts about the idea of God. The answer which we give to the problem of the nature of God is clearly very closely bound up with the attitude which we adopt towards the question of worship. (*Cf.* Section I above.)

(3) If we do decide that part of our *raison d'etre* as churches is the practice of the presence of God—and it is perhaps significant that we now place less emphasis on the centrality of preaching in our services—then we ought to be prepared to give far more careful consideration than we have done in the past to the theory and practice of worship, and to the exploration of the implications of the " I-Thou Relationship." And if we do decide that worship is a vital and necessary activity, then we must seek to do all in our power through education and training and increased use of professional expertise, to raise the aesthetic and musical standards of our congregations. As Dr. W. E. Orchard once observed : " We are anxious about those who do not go to worship. We ought to be much more anxious about those who do." We also ought to be giving fresh thought to the question of the architecture of our buildings.

Questions for Discussion

1. What criticisms can be made of contemporary Unitarian worship ?
2. Should the act of worship always be the central point in the life of a church ?
3. In our movement, do the needs of worship conflict with the tradition of reason ?
4. What can be done to deepen and enrich the life of worship in our churches ?
5. Does the use of a liturgy help a congregation to participate in worship—or are there other ways of achieving this ?
6. How can our worship be made more attractive to young people ?

VI. ETHICS

(1) The consideration of moral issues has always formed one branch of traditional theology—and this is something which can usually be counted upon to arouse greater interest than the more obscure and

abstract questions concerning the nature of God. It is significant that some of the most heated discussion arising out of *Honest to God* has turned upon Dr. Robinson's approach to Christian morality.

(2) The characteristic Unitarian attitude of open-mindedness has not always extended to ethics but, on the issue of the so-called new morality, Unitarians ought unhesitatingly to range themselves on the side of those who are willing to consider all moral problems without bias and preconceived judgments. Most of us will also reject emphatically the suggestion that the new morality is in fact nothing but the old immorality.

(3) When people talk of ethics in a Christian context, they are usually thinking of the practical application of the teaching of Jesus, and it is often claimed by those on the left wing (theologically speaking) of Christianity, that the really vital aspect of the Gospel is the simple moral teaching of Jesus. It is interesting to reflect, therefore, that Jesus gives singularly little guidance on specific moral issues. The question of divorce is about the only practical problem on which we have a specific pronouncement, and even here, owing to textual difficulties, we cannot be absolutely sure of his precise attitude. But this absence of specific moral pronouncements is exactly what we should expect. The attitude of Jesus was always " why judge ye not of yourselves what is right ? " He was not concerned to legislate for specific issues (" Who made me a judge or a divider over you ? ") and we must always make our own application in the light of his general principles.

(4) As Dr. Robinson points out in his S.C.M. booklet *Christian Morals To-day*, in Christian ethics the only pure statement is the command to love. " Let us recognise," he continues, " that we should all like to escape this conclusion. Life would be very much simpler if as a Christian one could say that certain things are in all conditions and for all persons always and absolutely wrong " (p. 16). But this is precisely what we cannot say, for, in the Bishop's own words, " the Christian ethic does not consist of these sort of invariable propositions " (p. 17). It is also worth pointing out that there is a sense in which the Christian gospel goes beyond ethics. As a Christmas prayer in *Orders of Worship* reminds us, there comes a time when " justice must be forgotten in love."

(5) Unitarians, therefore, should beware of the facile assumption that all that is required is a simple application of the teaching of Jesus. We need to take our ethical problems much more seriously than this. We must avoid hasty judgments and give real thought to the subject. Dr. Robinson concludes his booklet with a reference to what he calls the sensitive men and women who have voted with their feet and left the Church. " They feel," he says, " that they must work out their own salvation, and find their own ethic . . . with deep moral seriousness " (p. 47). We must make it clear that this is precisely the attitude that Unitarianism commends.

Questions for Discussion

1. What sort of leadership in matters of conduct should a church provide ?
2. What should a church teach about conduct as opposed to intention ?
3. Is sexual conduct a matter especially within the purview of the church ?
4. Is there a distinctive Unitarian witness in ethics ?

VII. OUR RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

(1) Some Unitarians now argue that we should seek, as a movement, to shake off our Christian antecedents, and advance " beyond Christianity." While we acknowledge that this view is held by some with deep conviction, we ourselves feel that the course of action which it envisages would be profoundly mistaken. It is true that many orthodox Christians deny that Unitarians are Christians, but it is important that Unitarians themselves should not believe this. We should never acquiesce in attempts to exclude us from the Christian Church. As Channing said, " I will not be severed from the great body of Christ. . . . I belong to the Universal Church ; nothing shall separate me from it. . . . No man can be excommunicated from it but by himself."

(2) We should feel both able and anxious to draw upon the whole repository of Christian teaching, in the present as well as in the past, believing that this is a real part of our tradition, and not something foreign to it. Our historic function has always been the promotion of the great dialogue within Christianity, the dialogue by which new ideas, or new expressions of old ideas, come to birth. In the past, we have held distinctive views about the Trinity, the Atonement, the " Saved," the " Gathered Church," the sonship of all men, sin, the

advance of scientific knowledge. Many of these views are now commonplace elsewhere, or are becoming so. Some are still little accepted. The Unitarian part in the dialogue has been fruitful for the Christian Church as a whole, and is likely to remain so, as long as we are clear about our true function.

(3) Our aim should be to continue to make a full and useful contribution to the dialogue, recognising that our religious language is bound to remain essentially Christian. We must continue to evolve, therefore, within the abiding framework of our Unitarian past. We believe that we are far more likely to attract agnostics and humanists into our churches, if, while making it clear that all men are welcome without reservation, we are also clear about our historic role, and do not strive for a formulation which gives offence to no one, or which is aggressively novel. As Emerson said in his famous Divinity School Address : " All attempts to contrive a new system are as cold as the new worship introduced by the French to the goddess of Reason—to-day pasteboard and filigree, and ending to-morrow in madness and murder. Rather let the breath of new life be breathed by you through the forms already existing, for if once *you* are alive, you shall find they shall become plastic and new."

Questions for Discussion

1. This section is " conservative." Should it have been radical ?
2. Is the connection with the general Christian tradition of value to us, and if so, why ?
3. What are the most important things we have to give to other churches ?
4. What are the most important differences between Unitarianism and the other Christian Churches (doctrinal, to do with toleration, organisational, etc.) ?

VIII. RELATION WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

(1) Our view here is implicit in what has already been said under Section VII. We believe that we should be on guard against the facile assumption that all world religions really say the same thing, and that our ultimate aim should be some kind of super world-faith, made up of an amalgam of existing religions. As Tillich has pointed out, it would be fatal to relinquish one's own religious tradition for the sake of something which would be no more than a concept divorced from the realities of human experience.

(2) What the present situation demands is neither a victory of one religion over the others, nor the destruction of all particular religions, but a growing and continuing dialogue and communication between all religions. In the furtherance of this dialogue, liberal religion is particularly fitted to play a part, for it recognises that here is an aspect of Christianity that has been there from the start, however much it may have been overlaid by dogmatic and polemical stresses—namely, a readiness to discover the workings of God's spirit wherever it is to be found. There have always been those within Christianity ready and eager to attribute to divine activity and divine prompting all that is best and noblest in non-Christian faiths and philosophies. It is this openness to other expressions of faith and other interpretations of the meaning of man's existence that is required in the present world situation. It will lead not to a blending of various elements, but to a fruitful interchange between them. This would lead to self-criticism and self-understanding, and thus, ultimately, away from rivalry between religions to active collaboration in social and practical issues—and this in turn would be a significant step towards relieving the tensions that bedevil the world situation.

(3) In other words, both within Christianity itself, and also in the realm of world religions, our aim should be the acceptance of variety and the promotion of tolerance and goodwill, with reciprocal respect for the validity of the traditions and witness of others. " As nothing is more irreligious than to demand general uniformity in mankind, so nothing is more unchristian than to seek uniformity in religion." (Schleiermacher.)

Questions for Discussion

1. What is meant by " beyond Christianity " ?
2. Do you think it is possible to build a vital and satisfactory religion on the basis of the " highest common factor " of all existing traditions ?

3. What is there of value to us in other world religions ?

4. What can we give them ?

5. Are there any steps which we as Unitarians should take in this connexion ?

6. Are all world religions in contact with the same Divine Spirit ?

IX. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(1) Some difference of opinion also seems inevitable on this topic. While we are obviously all agreed that a liberal faith must have social implications and must express itself in social action, we are now less agreed on the extent to which our primary aim should be social—i.e. the establishment of the Beloved Community through the promotion at every level of better human relationships.

(2) We do definitely believe, however, that the idea of progress must not be rejected. We are convinced that the faith which finds meaning and purpose in evolution, sees a transcendent significance in the time-process, and looks to the " one far-off divine event," is a reflection of a genuine insight of Hebrew prophecy and not merely a discredited hang-over from 19th century optimism. But, when this has been said, it still remains true that some place must also be found in our concept of the Kingdom for what some New Testament critics have called Realized Eschatology. The idea of the Kingdom as a present spiritual reality rather than a future event has much to commend it, for in spiritual no less than other matters, men will not be for ever fobbed off with the promise of jam to-morrow but never to-day. Perhaps the true conception of the Kingdom lies in a combination of " the now and the not yet "—which, as someone has said, has always been the dominant characteristic of Christian eschatology.

Questions for Discussion

1. Is it the business of a church to get involved in social issues ?
2. Has Unitarianism a teaching directly relevant to the major social, political and international issues of the world to-day ? Should it have such a teaching ?
3. Is a church an outward-facing or an inward-facing group ? Is our first duty to ourselves, or to others ?
4. How would you interpret the prayer " Thy kingdom come . . . on earth " ?

APPENDIX

TYPES OF CONTEMPORARY UNITARIANISM

We have been asked to add a brief catalogue of the main types of contemporary Unitarianism. We have distinguished the six types which follow. The titles may be considered in some cases rather arbitrary, but we hope that the type of thought which we have in mind will be recognisable.

1. **Liberal Protestant Christianity.**

Essential Christianity, purged of its extreme supernatural elements—Jesus in no sense God, but a source of continuing insight and inspiration, and to this extent a true revealer of God and one who can appropriately be called Lord and Master—strong emotional attachment to the Christian tradition, and belief in the profound significance, if not the uniqueness, of this tradition— though with the understanding always that " the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word."

We believe that this still represents the position of most practising Unitarians in this country—though it must, of course, be remembered that this type of outlook is also found in other denominations, where it is usually known as Modernism.

2. **Existential Unitarianism.**

The " myth " interpretation of Christianity—belief in the abiding symbolic significance of much traditional dogma, particularly that relating to Jesus, when considered against the background of man's peculiar situation in a world of mystery, suffering and death.

This also is found in circles other than Unitarian—and is probably much more common outside Unitarianism than within.

3. **Non-Christocentric Theism.**

Religious philosophy based on a definite belief in a personal God, regarded as a Universal Spirit, but with much less emphasis than in (1) on the centrality of Jesus—orientation towards Jewish rather than Christian tradition—though it has been argued that this type of Unitarianism is best thought of as a survival of the Stoic philosophy of the Graeco-Roman world.

4. **Universalism.**

Belief in the profound significance of *all* religious dispensations—with some sort of federation of all existing world religions as the ultimate goal.

This attitude, though often commended by Unitarians, probably does not reflect any very dominant trend in this country.

5. **Humanism.**

A type of religious agnosticism, reflecting intellectual doubts regarding the validity of the traditional notion of a personal God—which may or may not amount to specific rejection of theism. Acceptance of the Greek dictum " man is the measure of all things " and belief in the profound empirical significance of human values and institutions, and the ideal of the greatest good of the greatest number as a practical goal.

Though very flourishing in American Unitarian circles and very vocal in this country, it probably still represents the outlook of a small minority. Its sympathies often lie outside religion altogether (e.g. with Rationalism, the Ethical Movement and the philosophy of Sir Julian Huxley)—but it has received much encouragement from the " radical " theology now being canvassed in otherwise orthodox circles, with its conception of God as the Ground of Being rather than a person.

6. **Unitarian Pragmatism.**

An attitude which springs from the acceptance of the scepticism of modern analytical philosophy regarding the validity of metaphysical notions and any attempt to provide an ultimate explanation of the

universe. Religion to be thought of in pragmatic terms as something which meets human need and obviously " works," especially in relation to the great crises of human life such as birth, mating and death. Some sort of faith has to be built up, therefore, forged out of such elements in the Christian or other traditions as have been found empirically acceptable and emotionally satisfying.

This attitude, which has affinities with the American philosophy of Pragmatism, and is often advocated in some types of psychological teaching, is hardly characteristic of our movement as a whole—except in so far as there is an ever-increasing tendency to discount theology and ultimate explanations. But something akin to it has been canvassed by some individual Unitarians.

This report is being distributed among the churches and fellowships of the General Assembly for discussion and comment. Further copies may be obtained from the Lindsey Press, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C.2., at 9d. per copy or 7/6 per dozen, post free.

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COMMISSION ON UNITARIAN FAITH AND ACTION IN THE MODERN WORLD

2

PEOPLE and ORGANISATIONS

Interim Report of the Leadership Section

The General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

1964

FOREWORD

At the end of 1963 the Council of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches resolved to appoint a Commission of about 12 members to consider the place of the Unitarian churches in the modern world. This " Faith and Action Commission " was to work in four Sections, which would investigate and report on the subjects of (1) Theology, (2) Leadership, (3) Education, and (4) Religion in the Community.

The Commission quickly got to work ; and its Sections have been meeting regularly since December 1963. Each Section has now prepared an Interim Report for publication, and this booklet (which has been approved by the full Commission) embodies one of these four reports. All four reports are being distributed among the churches, fellowships and associations of the General Assembly during the autumn of 1964.

It is hoped that the reports will be widely discussed during the next six months, and that comments, and constructive criticisms and proposals, will be freely sent—any time up to 31st May 1965—to the Secretary of the Commission, the Rev. F. Kenworthy, The Unitarian College, Victoria Park, Manchester, 14. (Fuller details and advice about discussions and the submission of comments will be sent out from time to time by the Commission in periodical Bulletins.)

In June 1965 the Commission will start to prepare its full Report. The intention is that the full Report should be published in time for it to be thoroughly examined and debated at the General Assembly's Annual Meetings in April 1966.

The quality of the full Report will be determined by the quality of the comments which the four Interim Reports evoke from Unitarian groups and individuals all over the country. This document which you are holding in your hand at this moment is not just a bit of interesting reading, to be looked at and put away. It is a tool to be used—a flint to strike a shower of sparks—a torch to light a chain of torches of thought, argument and action running through the whole Unitarian community.

Fellow Unitarians, your help in this thing is vital. Now it's OVER TO YOU !

A. H. Birtles
Verona M. Conway
Martin Davies
Herbert Dove
Roger Fieldhouse
Bruce Findlow (*Vice-Chairman*)
L. A. Garrard
Peter B. Godfrey
A. J. Hughes
Arthur J. Long
Alastair Ross (*Chairman*)
E. A. Wrigley
F. Kenworthy (*Secretary of the Commission*)

October 1964

Interim Report of the Leadership Section

PART I

LAYMAN AND MINISTER

Introduction

Unitarian : The names of the other sections of the Commission are pretty clear, but yours doesn't tell me very much. Just what does ' Leadership ' cover ?

Commissioner : In general, the question " Where does the leadership come from in the Unitarian movement ? " But in particular, two separate subjects. First, *who* gives leadership ; ministers or lay-people or both ? Second, through what kind of organisation is leadership given ? Briefly, we are concerned with leadership in terms of people and organisations.

Unitarian : So this is just another introspective look at our own behaviour as a religious movement ? Another examination of churches and committees and councils to see why they don't work ?

Commissioner : No, we began with people, people like you and your minister, and that is what this first part of our report is about. We thought it important to try to find out first what a Unitarian church member is like to-day and what he does in his church and District Association and in the General Assembly.

Unitarian : A good many of us don't *do* anything at all as far as I can see. Well, I suppose we support our own church to some extent, but for the District Association and the General Assembly we do little or nothing. It is as if we have never heard of them.

Commissioner : Yes, this has some truth in it and we had to think about it before we were finished. But first we looked at Unitarians in their churches, and before we could get far with that we had to see what kind of a community a Unitarian church is.

Our Churches

Commissioner : We noticed that our individual churches seem to bring together people of the same social class, but as Unitarians move from place to place they sometimes find it difficult to fit into the new Unitarian church.

Unitarian : This shouldn't be so. A church should be able to absorb all kinds of people. There should be no class consciousness. Besides, if we are all middle-class in our churches we should find one another very much alike !

Commissioner : We agree with you that the ideal of the church is of a community in which people are accepted for themselves, and in which, therefore, all should be able to find a place. But observations seem to show that our churches (and those of other denominations except perhaps the Roman Catholics) cannot usually attain this ideal. It is a question for us all. Can we overcome the class nature of our churches ? If so, how ?

Unitarian : Are you saying then that our churches are shut up in some way so that people cannot get into them even when they want to and when we need people as much as we do ? What is the use of all our publicity if this is so ?

Commissioner : Certainly some of our churches are closed in some degree, or even rather tightly. We think that sometimes they are too much like clubs and too little like churches, and we would emphasise that a church is *not* a club.

Unitarian : I've never thought of that before. What is the difference between a church and a club ? I know that one may have an altar and the other a bar, but we don't have churches with bars—yet—so in what way are some of our churches too much like clubs ? What is the church supposed to do anyway ?

Commissioner : We think that a Unitarian church is concerned with " values," with worthwhile " values " from which spring the fundamental satisfactions and joys of life. A Unitarian congregation should be concerned with celebrating these values in its worship and quickening people's consciences regarding them, so that they will live by them in their daily lives. A church's activities should produce joy and satisfaction and enthusiasm for living. It falls short and is no more than a club when the life of the church becomes an end in itself ; when its members are simply concerned to keep the church going out of a sense of duty rather than a sense of purpose, and when the life of the church is simply meant to keep members occupied or entertained or happy with each other. Putting it another way, the

so-called Family Church can be a family which lives a happy and useful life more in the world than in the home, or it can be a family which, though happy in itself, keeps itself to itself. You can guess what happens to this kind of family (or church) when new members try to come into it or when the present members grow old.

Unitarian : I'll have to think about all that before I can say whether I agree with you or not. But I've always thought that we have a " cause " or " message " to serve and proclaim, and that this is what Unitarian churches and people are for. People will be enthusiastic about what they believe in, not just belong to. We look to our minister to proclaim what we stand for to others ; we keep churches going and open so that there will be places where our message can be heard ; and we support ministers to preach and teach what we believe.

Commissioner : Don't go too fast now ! The next thing we considered after we had thought about the role of the church was the place of the minister and the kind of man he is. A good many people (and you sound like one of them) seem to think that lay-people are in the church to help the minister to do something ; but some active thinkers in other denominations have suggested that, if we agree that the church has something to do in the world around itself, this view must be reversed. They say, these thinkers, that the minister is there to help the lay-people " to be the church in the world " ; that the job of the minister is not to keep the members happy in the church while he proclaims their faith to the world outside, but to help them to be visible Unitarians, so to speak, at their work and in their homes and among their neighbours.

Unitarian : Then isn't the minister a leader after all ? You make him sound like a staff officer at the rear rather than a company commander at the front. These may both be leaders in a way, but it's the man at the front who looks like a leader, and we usually seem to want the minister to be that kind of figure ; the officer a bit apart from the N.C.O.s and other ranks.

The Minister

Commissioner : I don't like your military metaphors very much. If we can come back to the church and its way of speaking, the first thing to say is that the minister is a layman inasmuch as he belongs to the church or congregation or body of Unitarians as much as anyone else who is in it. He is not sent from heaven to be the minister, he comes out of a congregation to train for the ministry, and then becomes the servant of another congregation.

Unitarian : But it is usually said that he has a " calling " and in many ways, both inside and outside the church, he is regarded as " different." Usually he is dressed differently, at least some of the time, and the very term " layman " is meant to distinguish other church people from the minister. If he is a layman at all he must be something more as well.

Commissioner : All right. Let us say that the minister is a member of the church like any other member, but that his *role* in the church is that of minister. Then we have to see how his role is different from that of the other members. In practical terms, he is usually the full-time paid worker of the church, and this means certain important things. It means that he, more than anyone else, will encompass the whole life of the church, will know everybody, will know what is going on, will be involved in many activities. He helps new members to find their place in the church ; their first contact is with him. Often, he is the driving force, even in such matters as caring for the church fabric and raising church income.

Unitarian : But what is the use of training him in theology and preaching and pastoral work if he then spends his time and energy with builders and accountants ? There are spiritual things for him to do ; lay-people should deal with these other, material, matters.

Commissioner : Certainly, when the minister is involved in these things like fabric and finance, it may be a sign of a lack of leadership or a sense of stewardship among the lay-people ; but we think it also has to do with the minister's position as a full-time worker for the church. After all, he becomes a minister because he cares very deeply about churches and their life. He is likely to be more interested than most people even in the fabric and finance, especially if he does not make such sharp distinctions between the spiritual and the material as you do !

Unitarian : But if he tries to do everything he may neglect the special tasks he has which lay-people cannot do, such as the preaching and visiting for example.

Commissioner : He shouldn't try to do everything—and he shouldn't have to do everything. But we should remember that ministers are different kinds of men with differing skills and talents, and their role cannot be defined too narrowly. They will exercise their ministry, do their work in and for the church in a variety of ways, and make their own judgments about the value of the different parts of their many-sided job ; even about the relative value of preaching and pastoral work.

Unitarian : You make the minister sound like an official or an executive, but surely most of us still regard him as a spiritual teacher and leader, even in Unitarian churches ? And I would be surprised if he does not think of himself in this way.

Commissioner : Yes, he has a spiritual role and spiritual leadership is expected of him. A man becomes a minister because he wants to spend his life concentrating upon that aspect of life, rather than any other. He is " set apart " and trained, to read and think and cultivate and understand the spiritual life and to serve people in and through the church in that part of their lives. But how this leadership is exercised in our kind of churches needs some thinking about both by ministers and by lay-people. It seems to be the case that some Unitarians believe what their minister believes. They make him their authority in matters of belief. Is this because they expect him to " speak with authority " from the pulpit, handing down, as it were, " the word of God " to them ? Or, in a church which lacks defined beliefs identified with the church, is it inevitable that the members of a particular church will be those who happen to agree with that which its minister believes ?

Unitarian : I want to hear him speak with authority, not from some special revelation of his own, but from his training and understanding and his own way of life. But all Unitarians would surely agree that things are not true just because the minister says them ; we have to make up our own minds ; he should show us the way in spiritual things, but not take us there himself. The difference between an AA route man and a courier-driver in fact. But it is probably true that church members come and go a good deal as ministers come and go, and that seems to indicate that their belief sometimes rests on his.

Commissioner : And it raises the question of how long a minister should stay in one church, and whether there should be some direction of ministers so that the richest churches do not always have the best ministers. But turning to the wider role of the minister in the church, sociologists tell us nowadays that healthy groups have two leaders or two kinds of leadership ; the ' instrumental ' leader who stimulates thought and finds solutions to problems, and the ' expressive ' leader who keeps everybody happy. The former is effective, the latter is popular. Is the minister to fill both of these roles as a leader in the church ? Can he do so ? If not, should the church have two leaders, one a layman and the other the minister ? Perhaps this is already the case by custom rather than theory ?

Unitarian : It throws some new light on the subject to think of leadership in this way, in terms of what people do rather than what they are called. At first glance, these two leadership functions seem to be interchangeable as far as ministers and laymen are concerned ; either could be the one or the other ; but in the end the fact is that the minister has a full-time concern for the church (and is a paid worker) while the layman is a part-time voluntary worker. What about this difference of commitment to the church ?

Commitment

Commissioner : The big issue, we think, in this matter of commitment, is not the difference in degree of commitment of ministers and lay-people, but whether we look upon ourselves as Unitarians or as members of such-and-such a church. Why do we become church members ? We seem to have a need to worship, or to belong, or to participate, or our need is some combination of these. So we join a particular church or fellowship. So far (apart from the special case of the National Unitarian Fellowship) we have no kind of membership which makes a person a Unitarian without association with a church or fellowship. Perhaps there should be ?

Unitarian : But the life of our movement is in churches and fellowships and belonging to one of these involves some kind of commitment or responsibility or participation.

Commissioner : Yes, but what kind of commitment or responsibility ? You said at the beginning that many Unitarians do little or nothing for the District Association or the General Assembly. Perhaps this is because the highest loyalty we ask of Unitarians is loyalty to a particular church or congregation. We feel very strongly that the view should be encouraged that particular churches and fellowships are local expressions of a national and international ideal, which is the liberal approach and method in religion. We think that we should be much more active than we are in making our church members into committed Unitarians whose loyalty and support (granted their part-time and voluntary status) are to the District Association and the General Assembly as well as to their own congregation.

Unitarian : Surely we have been doing this already for a long time ; and yet, somehow we have largely failed to produce a full response among Unitarian people ? Why ?

Commissioner : There are facts in our history which incline us to local loyalties and besides, this is a natural human response. But it may also be true that some deficiency in Unitarian beliefs and teachings has made it more difficult for people to give allegiance to the wide and high ideal than to belong to their local church. We are not saying now that every Unitarian layman or woman should have an equal and identical commitment to the Unitarian cause, but we can see no way of uniting the strength of church and District Association and General Assembly except by the commitment of many church members to the whole Unitarian cause.

Unitarian : Now you are taking us not only outside the local church to think of leadership in the District Association and the General Assembly but also out of the past and present to look at the future. But I suppose that is the purpose of this discussion anyway ?

Leadership in the Future

Commissioner : Yes, out of our survey of present ways and conditions it should be possible for us to find the best path for our future. When your thoughts have been added to ours that is what we have to try to do, but meanwhile, out of the thinking of the Leadership Section come these ideas about the future roles of leadership of ministers and laymen in our Unitarian movement;—

1. Leadership in church or District Association or the General Assembly should come from who ever is equipped to lead whether it be a minister or a layman. We must emphasize that, so far, we Unitarians have done little or nothing to train lay people for our churches and leadership in them. Some have brought necessary skills and knowledge into our churches from their daily lives, but at many levels in our movement progress and service are blocked or delayed by the lack of trained lay leaders.

2. We believe that the distinction between minister and layman has been too sharply made. Often in the life of our churches and movement it does not matter whether a minister or a layman carries out some particular task. Nowadays, with the appearance of some new situations, the separateness or indeed the professional status of the minister is sometimes hard to distinguish. What is the difference between a man who is called a lay pastor who has charge of a church and is in full-time lay occupation, and a man who is called a minister and has charge of a church and is in full-time lay occupation ? We do not think that the day of the full-time minister is coming to an end

but it may be that we shall have to face a situation in which we have many fewer full-time ministers. The possibility is suggested to us not only by lack of candidates and lack of money but also by lack of job satisfaction where church memberships are small and the church without significance in its own community.

3. We see a need for greater understanding in our churches of the identity of interest of ministers and lay-people. Their concern for worship and faith and service is the same in kind, though sometimes different in degree. Ideally, we think, the minister should be a member of his own church like anyone else—as is the case in some places already.

4. We have observed that in the local church in matters of leadership the minister is often excluded by rule from full participation, but that in District Associations and in General Assembly administration he can participate as an equal with lay-people. We ask, is the restriction in his own church simply due to the fact that he is a ' paid officer ' or does it rest upon some erroneous theological idea that he is a man apart, too spiritual to be involved in worldly things ?

5. It is sometimes said that District or General Assembly leadership is too dominated by ministers (District Associations often being represented by ministers on the Assembly Council), and we ask here, is there some balance to be kept between different interests or categories of people, or are we right in saying, as we have done above, that leadership at every level should come from who ever is equipped to lead whatever his title or lack of it ?

6. In concluding this Part of our Interim Report about leadership by ministers and laymen we would like to add two observations which seem to us important. First, there should be room for as many people as possible to participate in leadership, by delegation of responsibilities and by limits on the time a person can remain in office. Second, we must ask ourselves honestly whether, in practice, our level of tolerance is such that we can stand the differences of opinion and the atmosphere of change which positive leadership (be it lay or ministerial) is certain to produce.

Some Questions for Discussion

1. Is your church a 'class church'? If so, what are you doing about it? Or do you accept this state of affairs as inevitable?
2. Who gives the leadership in your church? What do your church rules say about making policy and taking decisions?
3. What difference does it make in your church when you do not have a minister?
4. Is it difficult in your church to find well-qualified people to teach, preach and administer? Do you have any procedure for training future church secretaries and treasurers or lay preachers?
5. What is the minister's position in relation to the church committee and the trustees in your church? Has it changed at all in the last 75 years?
6. What are the "values" which are celebrated in the worship and life of your church?
7. What does the statement "The minister is a servant of God" mean to you?

NOTE. See also the questions in paragraphs 2, 4 and 5 of text.

PART II

CHURCH, DISTRICT AND ASSEMBLY

People and Organisations

1. There will be some who will regard the first part of this report as a mere introduction to what follows in this second part. These will be the people who think that the answer to all our problems is an organisational answer ; only find the right pattern of organisation and government and all will be well. But there will be others who will feel that this second part is unnecessary. These will be the people who think that organisation is immaterial if you have the right people doing their best ; no form of organisation is effective unless the people in it are efficient and intelligent and enthusiastic. We recognise the existence of these two points of view and the fact that there are two sections to our report shows that we find something of value in each of them. Moreover, we have dealt with people first and that is some indication of where our own convictions lie.

2. We cannot emphasise too strongly that, while we have given considerable thought to the forms of organisation and administration in our churches, District Associations and General Assembly, we do not believe for one moment that some new pattern of organisation will, by itself, bring about the revival of the Unitarian movement. But, at the same time, we cannot escape the thought that some of the weakness in our movement to-day is attributable to bad organisation ; that the capacities for leadership of some skilled and devoted Unitarians are wasted by methods of administration and communication which prevent their skill and devotion being fully used. It is no use having talented people in Essex Hall if the fruits of their talents do not reach down into the churches ; it is no use having enterprise and spiritual vitality in particular churches if our pattern of organisation does not allow something of it to pass into the whole movement.

A Failure in Communication

3. In recent years there has been general acknowledgement of a real failure in communication within the Unitarian movement. It has

many aspects. Decisions of the General Assembly Council (or even the Assembly itself) do not always result in due consideration and appropriate action in the churches and District Associations. They become mere words that wither and die somewhere between Essex Hall and the churches and Associations where they should be given life. The needs and circumstances of particular churches are not always understood at Assembly level. Churches do not always supply the Assembly with as much information as they should ; it is not surprising, therefore, if the Assembly makes some generalisations which appear useless when they reach some churches. District representatives to the General Assembly Council bring little or no news, resolutions or opinions from their districts and take back little or no report ; sometimes it cannot be helped because each body has arranged its meetings without reference to the other and time defeats even the most efficient representative. Churches inform the British and Foreign Unitarian Association of some threat to their property such as a Compulsory Purchase Order and think that they have informed the Assembly ; the District Association is left to find out by accident or when some eleventh-hour cry for help goes forth from the church. Little information seems to pass between churches or between districts ; churches only a few miles apart may be in closer touch with Essex Hall than with each other or with the District Association to which they belong.

4. It is easy to blame this failure in communication on individuals, to criticise " them " at headquarters or to make sweeping generalisations about the failure of " the churches " to do this or that ; but it is reasonable to think that, whatever the shortcomings of individuals may be, some of the trouble lies in the way we are organised or, more accurately, the way our churches and District Associations and General Assembly have grown up. A pattern of denominational and church life which seemed satisfactory when churches were strong and members and ministers were plentiful now seems unable to cope with the strains and challenges which the present hard times for organised religion have brought us. In this report we wish to bring out some basic principles underlying the life of our liberal religious movement of churches, with the hope that any need for reorganisation or development will then be clearly seen and the necessary blueprints made by those best equipped for such a task.

Our Approach to the Subject

5. Our discussion might have started from the argument that our churches have such and such a form of history and are joined in a particular way in District Associations and an Assembly, and, therefore, we must discover what it is that we can do as a movement, given this structure. But we have chosen the opposite course. We have asked

ourselves, what are the functions of our churches and District Associations and General Assembly ; what is it that they are meant to do within themselves, with each other, and in the world in which they are set? If we can answer this question we can then see perhaps what kind of organisational structure will make our movement more effective. In other words, we are considering the relationship between function and structure in the life of our churches, District Associations and General Assembly, and we are putting *function* first because we believe that ours is a living movement with particular tasks to perform. As other reports will no doubt show, our churches and whole movement exist to serve people ; the buildings, the committees and associations are means to this end, not ends in themselves.

Function and Structure in the Local Church

6. We have already said a good deal about the nature and work of the local church in the first part of this report (see pages 2 and 3) and we have seen there how much depends upon individual people in that comparatively small organisation. If we think of the function of the church again now, keeping in mind also the District Association and the General Assembly to which it belongs, we can say that the church has five broad tasks to perform. That is to say, the functions of the local Unitarian church are as follows :—

(*a*) To bear witness in the community to Unitarian beliefs and principles, through its worship and its works.

(*b*) To serve all the people who come within its concern, whether they are Unitarian church members or not.

(*c*) To create within the church a community of people expressing and reflecting the Unitarian beliefs and principles proclaimed to the surrounding society.

(*d*) To co-operate with other Unitarian churches in the same area, through the District Association, to maintain and spread the Unitarian cause generally and regionally.

(*e*) To participate in the work of the General Assembly as both a giving and a receiving unit.

7. If these activities be accepted as the functions of the church we can then set forth some principles regarding organisation which will allow and encourage the fulfilment of these ends. In doing this we are not passing judgment upon any particular churches, or upon the various kinds of church management which exist in our congregations. But we hope that our readers will ask themselves how well their own church fulfils its functions and, if it seems to fall short in some respects, that they will go on to consider whether defects of organisation or lack of

leadership are to blame. The principles relating to organisation (or structure) which seem to us to go with the functions we have outlined are these:—

(*a*) The church should be led and governed in such a way as to allow its tasks to be carried out as fully as possible. This means that in the government of the church there must be provision for making plans, for carrying them out and for finding the financial means for maintaining and extending the work of the church; for organising activities within the church, for making it known in the community around it, for being represented at district and assembly level and contributing to the work at those levels, and, not least, for maintaining a full measure of communication within the church itself, between the church and community, and between church, District Association and the General Assembly.

(*b*) These requirements call for skilled leadership both lay and ministerial, the participation of many people since so much of the work is voluntary, regular meetings to make plans and to execute them, active consultation with the whole membership at regular intervals so that the support of everyone for the church is fully engaged, and the frequent publication of information so that church and community and district and assembly all know what has to be achieved, what is being done, and what is intended.

(*c*) A particular point which arises from the outline of five functions in paragraph 6 above is the principle that the resources of the church (of people, skills, time and finance) should be spread over all five functions as far as possible rather than concentrated on one or two only. There is a natural tendency for a local church to look after itself, to concentrate its resources upon its own survival and satisfaction, but when we think of the church along with its regional and national associations and responsibilities it is clear that self-interest and self-preservation are bad principles as much for the local church itself as for the movement to which it belongs.

(*d*) Effective organisation in the local church means the achievement of full activity not only within the church but also in the local community in which it is set; and not only that, but also a full participation in the regional life and spread of Unitarianism and in the indispensable national organisation maintained by the General Assembly and its headquarters. The local church needs to be so organised and led that information and inspiration can both come into its life and go out from it, and that its activity is effectively linked to that of the District Association and the General Assembly both for what it can give and for what it can receive.

Function and Structure in the District Association

8. In the course of our discussions we have become more and more convinced of the vital importance of the District Associations in our movement, standing as they do between the churches and the General Assembly and responsible as they are for the regional activity and development of the Unitarian movement. Without making a detailed study of them, but pooling our own knowledge and experience, we saw how historicallly they have taken different forms from place to place and expressed their aims in different ways. We noticed that their boundaries make some districts too large perhaps to be fully effective, and that some churches are so placed that they do not fit satisfactorily into any existing District Association. We saw how the presence of a full-time District Minister or Secretary may increase the efficiency and volume of district activity. We noted that the rise of the General Assembly since 1928 has reduced the importance of the District Associations in the minds of some Unitarians, but that in recent years district bodies have seized the initiative sometimes, notably in the matter of increasing stipends and making better use of ministerial resources. The key to our future, we believe, lies in our regional organisations, whether they be the existing District Associations or some development from them. In what follows, the term ' District Association ' will be used to mean any Unitarian regional organisation, present or future.

9. The District Association has these five broad tasks :—

(*a*) To bring together churches on an appropriate regional basis for mutual help and common activity.

(*b*) To bear witness to Unitarian beliefs and principles regionally, as distinct from a local or national witness.

(*c*) To do those things for the good of the movement which cannot be done at a local or national level (e.g. the organisation of regional meetings and rallies and publicity, the planning of joint and team ministries and the administration of them).

(*d*) To be an effective link between churches and the General Assembly and to create effective links between churches in geographical proximity to each other.

(*e*) To promote the establishment of new centres of Unitarian witness and work.

10. If the present District Associations are considered in the light of this statement of their tasks it will be seen that some are structurally sound for such a role but that others, for historical or other reasons, need some measure of re-organisation or development. The kind of regional organisation which will be able to carry out these five tasks will be one which has the following structural characteristics :

(*a*) Its area of responsibility will be such that all the churches within it will be able to participate in the District Organisation, both giving and receiving.

(*b*) It will have machinery, such as a Quarterly District Council Meeting, through which representatives of all the member churches will be able to share in the planning of policy and taking of decisions ; and an executive body, elected by the District Council, meeting more frequently to administer district affairs. Ideally, it will have a full-time executive figure, a District Minister or Secretary, similar to an American Regional Director and with duties similar to those which the London District Minister now has.

(*c*) Its meetings will be arranged in co-ordination with those of its churches and those of the General Assembly Council so that the district body is an effective agent for passing upwards the views and needs of its churches and passing down the plans and ideas and help issuing forth from the General Assembly Council and Committees.

(*d*) It will command the interest and talents of the best Unitarians in its member-churches and, through them, exercise real leadership both among its own churches and in Assembly affairs.

(*e*) It will have the financial support from its churches and from the General Assembly which its key role deserves and needs.

11. All this may seem a far cry from the District Associations and activities which some of our readers know, and like a new world to other readers who know only their own church and the General Assembly and are hardly aware that District Associations exist. These two circumstances, taken together or separately, point to the significant gap in our denominational life and organisation which a weak regional level of activity has created. Nobody is to be blamed for the present state of affairs ; it has come about through deeply-rooted characteristics in our churches and unforeseen effects of the creation of a strong national organisation in 1928 out of two earlier national organisations. But when the acknowledged failure of communication in our movement is explored it becomes very clear that our individual churches and our General Assembly organisation both need strong and effective District Associations for good communication and for future growth.

Function and Structure in the General Assembly

12. When Unitarians refer to their General Assembly they usually think of a headquarters building in London and its staff. They may also think of the General Assembly Council and its Committees and

Departments, and at a certain time of the year the General Assembly may mean for them the Annual Meeting of the Assembly. Unitarians seldom think of *themselves* when they refer to the General Assembly, but, in truth, as our Presidents remind us year by year, *we*, in our churches, *are* the General Assembly. Its members are affiliated churches and fellowships, District Associations, and individual Unitarian subscribers. This must be kept in mind now while we consider the function and structure of the General Assembly, because here we are concerned with headquarters and organisation, the Council, the Committees, the Annual Meetings ; the relations of these to each other and to the life and work of the churches and District Associations.

13. The present structure shows us a headquarters organisation staffed by a General Secretary and three Assistant Secretaries, with limited secretarial assistance. The Annual Meeting of the Assembly, consisting of ministers and delegates from churches and District Associations and certain other organisations, is the governing body of the Assembly, but it elects triennially ministers and lay people who, with a representative from each District Association and from certain other bodies constitute the General Assembly Council. The members of the Council serve on one or more Departmental Committees, each of which meets between three and six times a year according to its duties. The Council meets at least three times a year and receives at each meeting reports from all the Committees and approves or rejects recommendations from them. The Council makes a report annually to the Assembly at the Annual Business Meeting. The present tasks of the Assembly are reflected in the titles of the Departmental Committees which are : Finance and Administration ; General Purposes ; Publications ; Publicity ; Grants and Extension ; Religious Education ; Youth ; Social Service ; and Ministry.

14. As we see it, the functions of the General Assembly are as follows :—

(*a*) To link Unitarian churches, District Associations, fellowships and organisations together on a national basis for mutual help and strength ; and to provide a channel of communication for District Associations and churches.

(*b*) To bear witness to Unitarian beliefs and principles on a national scale and to represent the Unitarian movement at a national level.

(*c*) To do the things which cannot be done at a local or regional level (e.g. the provision of ministers, the publication of literature, the promotion of national publicity, the administration of pension schemes, the arranging of meetings on a national scale).

(*d*) To administer trust funds of various kinds which belong to the whole movement.

15. Much that the Assembly does to fulfil these functions is well done ; the existing structure of organisation is effective. But it seems to us that acceptance of our description of the functions of the General Assembly points to an organisational framework which has not yet been fully developed. Development along the following lines seems to us desirable, perhaps essential:—

(*a*) The Council of the Assembly should become more truly representative of the churches and the District Associations, and a body in which, at regular intervals, the broad outlines of policy are planned and approved. It should be the place where those responsible for administration on a national level are made aware of the needs and views of the churches and where representatives of the churches and districts help to plan future developments in the Unitarian movement.

(*b*) This means that the Council should consist of people (whether laymen or ministers) elected in such a manner that they will be, together, truly representative of the whole body of churches and fellowships. How this can be done is for others to work out (one suggestion is that a Council of 24 should be elected regionally) ; we are concerned here to establish the principle.

(*c*) It also means that meetings of the Council must be arranged in relation to meetings of district organisations and enough information circulated before and afterwards to enable Council members to consult with those whom they represent and to report back to them afterwards.

(*d*) The administrative structure of the General Assembly centres upon the Secretaries and Departmental Committees, and while membership of these is certain to overlap with membership of the Council, the distinction between planning and administration should be kept clear always. It follows that the Committees should be free to act within the limits of policies and plans approved by the Council and the budget approved by Council and Assembly.

(*e*) Membership of these administrative Committees calls for a combination of representative opinion and particular knowledge and skills, and this suggests that most of the members of the various Committees might be chosen by some procedure of election or co-option, but that there should also be two or three Council members on each Committee as the representative element in them.

(*f*) When the separate functions of Council and Committees are recognised and proper regard paid to the need for long-range

planning and policy-making in depth at a national level, there are good grounds for suggesting that a Council Committee should be established to co-ordinate (but not control) the work of the Committees and the Headquarters staff.

(*g*) Behind both Council and Committees lies the Annual Meeting of the General Assembly as our highest Council, and further development is needed on lines already begun to bring it about that the Annual Meetings are an occasion for major discussions of policy at the highest and most representative level of which our movement is capable. Approving what has been done should usually be a formality at these meetings ; planning for the future the real business, suitably prepared for in advance in the churches and District Associations.

(*h*) Bearing in mind the view set forth earlier that it is the District Associations which must be developed as the real centres of leadership in our movement, the structure of our National Headquarters organisation should not be any larger than really necessary ; everything that can possibly be done regionally or locally should be done there ; unnecessary centralisation should be discouraged always.

Organisational Leadership — from where ?

16. Very independent Unitarians still like to think that leadership and power rest with each particular Unitarian congregation, but there is now a long record of grants-in-aid and other events to show that this is rarely the case to-day. A new generation has appeared which looks to Essex Hall for leadership and authority, but those who work there tell us time and time again that the powers of the General Assembly are found to be severely limited when action in particular churches is needed. Those who are most active in District Associations would like to see their organisations receiving more support and respect and given more opportunity and power to lead, but in a good many cases their member churches will not accept leadership from the District Association, and the Assembly, by its direct dealing with churches, unwittingly encourages this kind of attitude.

17. We Unitarians are uncertain to-day which level of our movement to look to for the dynamic leadership which we so sorely need. If there is any doubt about this, it can be banished by reference to particular questions. Where does the power of leadership lie in relation to, say, the placement of ministers, the closing of redundant churches, the establishment of new ones, the re-building of destroyed or demolished churches, the establishment of stipend levels, the resolution of disputes within churches, the behaviour and well-being

of ministers, the formulation of policy on such matters as publications, publicity, expansion and development ? In these particular cases does leadership and the last word lie with a church, or with a District Association, or with a General Assembly Secretary or Committee or Council ? We are not asking rhetorical questions ; we have not been able to find the answers to these questions and from this and other evidence we deduce that, just as there is uncertainty among Unitarians about the relative roles of ministers and lay people, so also there is uncertainty about the relative authority and capacity of churches, District Associations and the General Assembly. This is why communication within our movement has broken down and why a sense of purpose and direction is felt to be lacking.

18. In this report we have set forth some arguments and offered a broad outline of the structure which we think would serve our movement best in carrying out the tasks which, in our view, are properly ours to perform. You may not agree with us and, if that is the case, we challenge you to set out for us some better principles or plans for the more efficient working of our churches, District Associations and General Assembly. As we said at the beginning, we do not think that better organisation is the answer to all our problems, but we do believe that there are organisational uncertainties to be resolved and organisational weaknesses to be overcome, and that no real progress will be made by our movement until these things have been done.

Some Questions for Discussion

1. How important is good organisation for church and denominational life ?
2. How much do you know about your own District Association and the General Assembly ?
3. Have you any suggestions for helping church members to become better members of the Unitarian movement ?
4. Have you seen or read *A Manual of Church Membership* ?
5. How much do you think the life of your church is influenced by its membership of a District Association and the General Assembly?
6. In your church and District Association is it easier to find people for jobs or jobs for people ?

NOTE : See also the questions expressed and implied in paragraphs 17 and 18 above.

This report is being distributed among the churches and fellowships of the General Assembly for discussion and comment. Further copies may be obtained from the Lindsey Press, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C.2., at 9d. per copy or 7/6 per dozen, post free.

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COMMISSION ON UNITARIAN FAITH
AND ACTION IN THE MODERN WORLD

3

THE ENLIGHTENED CONSCIENCE

Interim Report
of the
Education Section

The General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

1964

FOREWORD

At the end of 1963 the Council of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches resolved to appoint a Commission of about 12 members to consider the place of the Unitarian churches in the modern world. This "Faith and Action Commission" was to work in four Sections, which would investigate and report on the subjects of (1) Theology, (2) Leadership, (3) Education, and (4) Religion in the Community.

The Commission quickly got to work ; and its Sections have been meeting regularly since December 1963. Each Section has now prepared an Interim Report for publication, and this booklet (which has been approved by the full Commission) embodies one of these four reports. All four reports are being distributed among the churches, fellowships and associations of the General Assembly during the autumn of 1964.

It is hoped that the reports will be widely discussed during the next six months, and that comments, and constructive criticisms and proposals, will be freely sent—any time up to 31st May 1965—to the Secretary of the Commission, the Rev. F. Kenworthy, The Unitarian College, Victoria Park, Manchester, 14. (Fuller details and advice about discussions and the submission of comments will be sent out from time to time by the Commission in periodical Bulletins.)

In June 1965 the Commission will start to prepare its full Report. The intention is that the full Report should be published in time for it to be thoroughly examined and debated at the General Assembly's Annual Meetings in April 1966.

The quality of the full Report will be determined by the quality of the comments which the four Interim Reports evoke from Unitarian groups and individuals all over the country. This document which you are holding in your hand at this moment is not just a bit of interesting reading, to be looked at and put away. It is a tool to be used—a flint to strike a shower of sparks—a torch to light a chain of torches of thought, argument and action running through the whole Unitarian community.

Fellow Unitarians, your help in this thing is vital. Now it's OVER TO YOU !

A. H. Birtles
Verona M. Conway
Martin Davies
Herbert Dove
Roger Fieldhouse
Bruce Findlow (*Vice-Chairman*)
L. A. Garrard
Peter B. Godfrey
A. J. Hughes
Arthur J. Long
Alastair Ross (*Chairman*)
E. A. Wrigley
F. Kenworthy (*Secretary of the Commission*)

October 1964

Interim Report
of the
Education Section

PART I. ADULT EDUCATION

Unitarian: It is a bit surprising to find your report starting with "adult education." When church people talk about education it usually means Sunday School work or religious education in schools.

Commissioner: Yes, that is true, and we were expected to begin in the usual way, but we found out very quickly in our discussions that there was much to suggest that the most pressing educational need concerns our adult membership. Unitarian members are of two kinds: those who have grown up in Unitarian churches, and those who have come into Unitarian churches in adult life. Both kinds are often uncertain about the meaning of Unitarianism and unable to give articulate answers about their church and their faith when asked. And when we looked for the reasons for this state of affairs it was clear that not much adult education goes on in our churches.

Unitarian: But what about services and sermons? Surely if we go to church regularly or often, in this way we learn about Unitarianism? Worship is in some way educational in our tradition; after all, our critics often say that we get lectures rather than sermons.

Commissioner: Yes, but it seems to us that worship in our churches perhaps falls between two stools, just because there is little or no adult education apart from it. On the one hand, worship cannot be a very effective method of education by its very nature (though we agree that it can contribute to the process of education), and on the other hand, the lack of convinced and articulate church members seems to affect the quality of worship so that it fails to meet the deepest needs of those who share it.

Unitarian: Well, assuming you are right about this need for adult education, what do you propose to do about it?

Commissioner: To meet this situation we propose that there should be a deliberate policy of education in our churches. This means thinking of education in the church as important in itself, and providing ways and means of doing it, just as we provide ways and means for carrying on regular services of worship.

Unitarian: Do you mean a back-to-school campaign for Unitarian church members up and down the land? Evening classes, chalk and blackboard methods and all that? I hardly think we shall take kindly to that!

Commissioner: No, all through this report, when we say education we do not mean formal instruction or traditional schooling. We use the word to mean a dialogue which should help everyone to have access to raw materials of facts and ideas, by means of which they may clarify their own thought and increase their knowledge and sense of responsibility as Unitarians.

Unitarian: This is a new idea, isn't it? Expecting Unitarians actively to learn about their faith and their church in adult life? Doesn't it conflict with our traditional freedom which allows us to do as little or as much about our religion as each individual wishes? Isn't it the first step towards uniformity of belief to expect Unitarians to go through some kind of educational process?

Commissioner: Someone has said that religion ought to be a matter of hard work if it is to be worth while. In other words, good religion is something to work at and not an inactive thing. It is basic to our faith that membership in our churches should not make any demands as to doctrine, but we feel that it is reasonable and necessary to demand some commitment to Unitarianism which goes further than just the payment of a subscription and attendance at church.

It seems to us that our kind of religious movement which has thrown off so radically all external authority needs, more than any other religious movement, a convinced and "educated" membership. So far, we have failed to achieve this. It is not incompatible with our emphasis on freedom. After all, it must be to the enlightened conscience and not to the uninstructed one that the appeal must be made.

Unitarian: It sounds as if you want all Unitarians to be as knowledgeable as their ministers, but ministers have the benefit of a thorough training in a theological college, and I suppose we expect them to be convinced and "educated" witnesses of our faith. But a church is a church, not a college, be it of theology or further education!

Commissioner: Theological colleges and the training of ministers is another subject about which we are not going to say anything separate. But it has been in the back of our minds while we have discussed lay training, because much of what we think a Unitarian should know is common to ministers and lay people. Both need to know something of doctrine and church history, of church life and administration. There is a good deal more for a minister to learn; so much, indeed, that there are particular problems about training—how long it should be, where it should be done, what the curriculum should be, and so on.

Unitarian: Well, ministers may want to say something about those particular problems out of their own experience, but what strikes a layman in what you have said so far is that you seem to be saying that Unitarian lay people should not just go to church but also to school, that we must learn as well as worship in the church.

Commissioner: Yes, that is so. We believe that some kind of educational activity should have a recognised status in all our churches, on a par with Sunday services. We think that, for most of our adult members, being a Unitarian and a member of the church should involve a willingness to set aside time to join in some kind of learning activity such as discussion sessions, and, if possible, to read and prepare for them. But first we have to recognise that there is this need for more education in our congregations.

We cannot, of course, thrust a programme of education on to everyone, but we hope that a beginning will be made with the four reports of this Commission. For what the Commission is asking is that as many Unitarians as possible will read and consider and discuss these reports and pass on their opinions and conclusions. This will take time and energy and organisation, and it will have to be done in different ways from church to church, but it will be educational in our sense of the term. We hope that discussion of these reports will make the need clear to many Unitarians and show how it might be set in a larger programme of education.

Unitarian: And how will this affect new people wanting to join our churches? Will they have to attend something like confirmation classes and pass some kind of course before they can become church members?

Commissioner: No, we think *becoming* a member of a Unitarian church should be as simple as possible, but that *being* a member, as we have said, should mean certain kinds of commitment. So we would propose that for new members there

should be a two or three year training period *after* they have joined the church. Joining would mean accepting an obligation to learn in a systematic, though not rigid, way what it means to be a Unitarian.

Unitarian: Well, if we allow, for argument's sake, that education in the church should be as important as worship for us, who is going to do the educating?

Commissioner: We suppose that in many churches the initiative would lie with the minister, and this is natural enough. But in places where there is no minister, or where the minister is not able to take the initiative, we hope that there will be a lay person who can and will. After all, the purpose of an educational programme such as we recommend is to strengthen our movement by increasing the number of informed lay Unitarians.

If you have read the Interim Report of the Leadership Section you will know what we mean when we say that a much stronger body of informed lay members in our churches will be vitally important in maintaining and improving the worship and general life of churches, fellowships and other groups which have no ministerial leadership.

Unitarian: All this seems to indicate that the programme of education is to cover a wide field of subjects. It is not just a matter of learning what Unitarians believe and being able to explain this to others?

Commissioner: No, there are three broad divisions in the kind of syllabus we envisage. First, there are many questions of history and organisation, including the nature and history of our movement and of particular churches; second, the nature of our church life from local and national points of view; and, third, questions of personal religion and the spiritual life, including prayer, worship and beliefs.

We recommend a centrally prepared single programme covering two or three years, to be used in the churches in whatever way is appropriate to the local situation. It would be helped by the support of a good denominational newspaper, or at least some co-ordination in the field of Unitarian periodicals and publications, and therefore we end this part of our report with a syllabus of education in outline. In the next part we present a survey of the situation regarding periodicals and publications.

Outline of a Suggested Programme of Religious Education for Unitarian Adults

A programme in three parts; nine topics to each part.

It is suggested that each part could provide material for nine monthly meetings, beginning in October and running to June. The parts need not necessarily be taken in the order shown below.

PART ONE. WHY ARE WE UNITARIANS?

The history of Unitarian men, movements and ideas, on the basis of accounts of Unitarian people when possible.

1. Servetus, Socinus.
2. John Bidle.
3. Priestley, Lindsey.
4. The B. & F.U.A.
5. The National Conference.
6. 20th Century Unitarianism.
7. Who built *our* church and why?
8. Unitarians in Christendom.
9. Unitarians and World Faiths.

PART TWO. ON BEING A UNITARIAN.

The nature of church and denominational life on a practical and informative basis.

1. What our church is.
2. What our church does.
3. Keeping it going.
4. Living with others (G.A. and D.A.)
5. What these others do.
6. Special interests (S.S., Y.P.L., W.L., etc.).
7. Special occasions.
8. Unitarians in the community.
9. On making new Unitarians.

PART THREE. A GROWING FAITH.

A course in personal religion and the spiritual life in the context of Unitarian thought and practice.

1. Belief.
2. Experience.
3. The idea of God.
4. Religious language.
5. The good life.
6. Corporate worship.
7. Private prayer.
8. Living in the world.
9. Living for others.

Some Questions for Discussion

1. Do you feel you are being well or badly informed about Unitarian beliefs, principles, practices and institutions?
2. Does our stress on personal freedom leave us at a disadvantage compared with other bodies?
3. Ought Unitarians to be prepared to devote a specified time (monthly or weekly) to education in matters of faith and morals?
4. Would you like your minister to devote more of his time to straight instruction?
5. Does " adult education " convey to you merely the process of absorbing lots of facts, or rather the making of new discoveries through thought and discussion? Could you think of a better title than " adult education "? Could you outline a better programme than ours?
6. Which subject in the outline programme on page 5 is the most important?
7. What do you expect your minister to do? Do you find him well trained to do it?

PART II. UNITARIAN PUBLICATIONS

Unitarian: Right! What next?

Commissioner: The next on our list is publications.

Unitarian: Ah yes, publications. Do you mean magazines and periodicals, or books, the kind of things the Lindsey Press does?

Commissioner: Well, we've been looking at both, because we feel that both kinds of publication could play a big part in the kind of self-education we had in mind. Let's take magazines first. What do you feel about them in general?

Unitarian: It's hard to say really. I take both the *Inquirer* every week and the *Unitarian* each month. Quite a lot at our church don't take either, and a good many take one or the other, but not both.

Commissioner: Why do you take both yourself?

Unitarian: You could call it 25 per cent duty and 75 per cent interest, I suppose. I don't pretend that I read every article from beginning to end, but who does, even in *Woman's Own* or the *Daily Mirror*? I enjoy both our papers and they're not long: six pages of reading a week in the *Inquirer* and, say, ten pages a month in the *Unitarian* is not an enormous effort. And there's a lot of good stuff in them, even if sometimes you have to dig for it . . .

Commissioner: Shall we try to forget the actual papers for a moment? Imagine that there were *no* Unitarian papers at all and we were starting from scratch. What would your ideal paper be like?

Unitarian: That's a fast one. Well now . . . I think I would still like to have one weekly paper and one monthly paper, the weekly to be lively and topical, and the monthly to be rather more leisurely, with more solid stuff in it.

Commissioner: Yes, I see. We talked quite a bit about this. The weekly, we felt, should be a *newspaper* for the denomination, telling people what was going on as soon as possible after it had happened, and keeping readers up to date with events that were coming along shortly. And what else would you want in it? Comments by the Editor on denominational matters, and perhaps on current events as well (but not just duplicating what you get in ordinary magazines)? News about personalities in the denomination? What particular churches are doing that is unusual or significant?

Unitarian: Yes, all of that. I would envisage a bright, readable paper, of course, with some substantial articles. I'd like tc see, too, news of what's going on in churches in my district, not jus how much my own church made at its Bring and Buy, but news which would help to give a corporate feeling to our region. And a live column of letters to the Editor, constructive and prompt, not too much argumentative stuff.

Commissioner: And what about the monthly?

Unitarian: Now the monthly I would envisage more on " Reader's Digest " lines (I don't necessarily mean the contents!). It would be more leisurely altogether; it wouldn't have to strive to be topical, because the weekly paper would have the topical stuff in it. It would be more " timeless ", if you see what I mean. That's where you'd find the longer articles by our leading ministers and lay people, and by good outside writers as well.

Commissioner: You'd expect a more comprehensive picture in the monthly of the deeper things that Unitarians and liberal religious folk and progressive social thinkers were writing about and doing?

Unitarian: Yes, something you needn't feel you've got to finish by Saturday night, because you'll be collecting another bit of homework at church on Sunday morning!

Commissioner: I see. Now this sets off two trains of thought, doesn't it? If we look at our actual Unitarian papers (we did this on the Commission, too) we find, almost, that you are asking for a weekly paper like the *Unitarian* and a monthly magazine like the *Inquirer*! The roles are exchanged. And the other thing is that the kind of picture you draw (I know it was meant to be an ideal picture) is of the two papers managed in a businesslike way and put together by skilled professional journalists. The *Daily Mirror* may, on the surface, look as if it is written by children for children, but the reason that it sells five million copies is that it has business brains behind it, and is written and laid out by highly-skilled professionals.

Unitarian: I do realise that. I don't know about the inside running of our two papers, but I imagine they are operating on a shoe string, and written mainly on a part-time basis, or by full time people who are doing two or three men's jobs each.

Commissioner: You are not far wrong. We tried to find out some details and will come to these later on.

Unitarian: Then is there anything we can do to improve the situation? I feel that, as with so much in the denomination, hard work is being done by a small number of people for very little pay or

glory. If you criticise, you sound horribly ungrateful, but if you say nothing things just stagnate. There must be a good deal of writing talent available (look at " 62 " and the Foy Society and the UYPL periodicals). Can't we harness this in a better way, and encourage people up and down the country to join in a bit more?

Commissioner: There's a lot in that. It's not simply a question of more money: the *Unitarian* is comparatively prosperous, though the *Inquirer* depends far too much on private generosity to keep it out of the red. It's a question of better liaison, unclogging the channels of communication, using the human resources we already possess, putting people more closely in touch with each other. It's somehow symbolic that " Unitarian Headquarters " proudly proclaims its existence just off the bustle of the Strand, while the *Inquirer* is edited in an attic in a quiet Bloomsbury square and managed by an independent private company which has no obligation to lift a finger to help the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. (It does help, of course, but the point is that it doesn't have to.) But we'd better pass on to the other aspect of publications—the books and pamphlets.

Unitarian: Here again, I don't quite know how to start. We have a bookstall in our church, and we try to keep it attractively stocked with Unitarian publications. Occasionally a visitor will spend two or three shillings—that's quite an event—but the congregation itself doesn't buy much. I don't know if that's the common experience. If Unitarians won't buy their own books, who else is going to?

Commissioner: Your church is not unique; it's good to hear that you have an up to date bookstall at all. We have made some inquiries about the sale of Lindsey Press books. (Lindsey Press, by the way, just means the Publications Committee of the General Assembly) and we were surprised to find what small numbers were sold. Some of the figures are given later in this report: I hardly dare mention them out loud—I'll have to ask you to look them up yourself. Anyway, let's do what we did over the periodicals. What would you like to see us publishing if you had an absolutely free hand?

Unitarian: That's a vast question. I don't think I can throw out more than a few ideas, and then perhaps you can add to them. In the first place, I'm not entirely clear why we should have a publishing house attached to the denomination at all. I should need to work out that one quite carefully. Still, I do think that if, as Unitarians, we stand for something quite unique, we should, if only as a matter of courtesy to the curious inquirer, have a number of fairly cheap publications explaining why we exist and who we are.

Commissioner: We do have a number of books of this kind—*The Beliefs of a Unitarian* (Alfred Hall), *What Unitarians Believe* (Dorothy Tarrant), *Unitarianism: A Faith with a Future* (Bruce Findlow) and *Unitarianism: Some Questions Answered.*

Unitarian: Yes, and I think for the newcomer who has grown up in traditional Christianity we don't do so badly. You could say the same for the recently joined Unitarian church member from a similar background: the books and booklets by Arthur Long, A. P. Hewett, F. T. Wood, L. A. Garrard and *Essays in Unitarian Theology* and *A Free Religious Faith* will all appeal to the thoughtful newcomer whose main need is to be liberated from a credal religious frame.

Commissioner: You sound as though after that there is not much to offer.

Unitarian: That's all too true. Soon the newcomer begins to feel that he wants something more positive than mere liberation from compulsory doctrine, and what can we give him to read then? There is very little. As for the inquiring layman who is *not* grounded in traditional Christianity, we hardly talk his language at all. If he doesn't want to be liberated from the Apostles' Creed, we don't know what to do for him ! And then there is a third category, the born Unitarian: here again, we have little to offer.

Commissioner: Well, what do you want your ideal Lindsey Press to publish?

Unitarian: If I am to be frank, I just don't know. I read quite a bit myself, but not very deeply. The ordinary paperbacks do most of what I want. If I want potted theology, I can get it from Collins or S.C.M. paperbacks; if I want potted sociology, I can get it from Penguins—and so on. I don't think I want the Lindsey Press to compete in these fields. And yet—I do feel that there is scope for more than just publishing elementary Unitarian propaganda.

Commissioner: This is a matter which has exercised us quite a lot, as well. It is easy to say that the Lindsey Press should get with it, and put out more attractive covers and format. And there is a good deal of truth in that. The ordinary reader is used to the standard paperback size and thickness, and we should go further to meet him than we have done. But what are we going to put inside our attractive books when we have agreed to print them? There's the question.

Unitarian: Perhaps the answer lies in the response that the Commission arouses. It may be that as the churches get down to discussing the Commission's work, various fields of interest will declare themselves.

Commissioner: That could well be so. Discussions on theology might arouse a demand for publications on particular aspects not covered by Collins or the S.C.M. Press. And all sorts of things may spring from our ventures into adult self-education: it may be that the Lindsey Press will be occupied for several years to come in producing material for discussions at church level.

Unitarian: This may be shirking the issues, I don't know. But I do feel that there's not much point in publishing just for the sake of publishing, just to show the flag.

Commissioner: Meanwhile, if there's going to be a lull in Lindsey Press publishing, it might be a heaven-sent chance for the Publications Committee to streamline its organisation, to look into production methods, comparative costs, problems of book design, marketing methods, advertising, and so on. Then, when we eventually discover what we want to publish, we should at least have an efficient machine ready to do the job.

Some Questions for Discussion

1. Why do present-day Unitarians buy so little Unitarian literature?
2. Speaking personally, do you want (*a*) a weekly Unitarian periodical only; or (*b*) a monthly Unitarian periodical only; or, (*c*) both a weekly and a monthly? Why would you make that your particular choice?
3. If you had to edit the *Inquirer*, with an absolutely free hand, would you want to make any changes in the paper? If so, what are the four main changes you would make?
4. What features are most interesting in a denominational paper —articles on (i) social service (ii) theological matters (iii) church functions and bring and buys (iv) controversial topics (v) current affairs (vi) personalities in Unitarian churches (vii) unusual achievements by individual churches or groups; or (viii) what else?
5. With so much cheap and interesting literature being put out by other publishers, is there any need for a publishing concern of our own? Wouldn't occasional book lists be enough?

Appendices to Part II

(1) *The Inquirer*

The *Inquirer* is the only Unitarian and Free Christian weekly paper. It costs 6d. a week, or (by post) 36s. 10d. a year. It is the property of a private limited company, The Inquirer Publishing Co. Ltd. The authorised capital of the company is 2,500 shares of £2 each. The issued capital consists of about 1,300 shares, some fully paid up and others not. The shareholders appoint 12 directors, who appoint an Editor: they meet regularly (usually once a month) to manage the affairs of the company. It is understood there are very few shareholders other than the 12 directors.

The paper runs at a loss, which is met from a subvention fund, supported by 110 private subscribers. The loss (actual trading loss) was £680 in 1961, £1,076 in 1962 and £1,052 in 1963.

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches does not subsidise the company. It pays the company for the insertion of official announcements in the paper from time to time. The Assembly holds no shares, appoints no directors and has no say in the running of the paper.

(2) *The Unitarian*

The *Unitarian* is published once a month. It costs 3d. a month or, by post, 5s. 6d. a year. Many churches place bulk orders at a lower rate. It is the property of the Manchester District Association of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, which appoints an Editor who is assisted by an Editorial Board. The journal aims to serve the whole Unitarian movement in Britain and not the Manchester region only.

In 1963 there was a loss on the year's working of £40, and the price per copy was put up to 3d. from 2d. in July 1964. The loss was mainly due to an increase in the size from 8 to 12 pages which cost about £100. This was met to the extent of about £60 by increased sales and advertising.

(3) *The Lindsey Press*

The following table gives details of the sale of some Lindsey Press publications in recent years. Column A gives the total copies of each listed title sold in the 5 years ended 30th September, 1963. Column B attempts to give a " yearly selling rate " for each title during the last twelve months of the 5-year period. Figures in brackets are *estimated*; otherwise, the figures are as supplied by the Lindsey Press. Prices shown are those current in 1964.

Sales of some Lindsey Press publications, 1958-1963.

* indicates that the title was published after the beginning of the 5-year period and has, therefore, not been on sale for a full five years.

A=Copies sold in five years (1958-1963).

B=Selling rate in last year (1962-1963)

	A 1958-63	B 1962-63	Price
1. Crabtree, Herbert: The Doctrine of the Trinity	260	(52)	1/–
2. Essays in Unitarian Theology: Ed. Kenneth Twinn	727*	51	8/6
3. Findlow, Bruce: Unitarianism: A Faith with a Future (June 1962)	1,243*	921	1/6
4. Free Religious Faith, A: The Report of a Unitarian Commission, 1945	314	37	8/6
5. Garrard, L. A.: The Gospels Today	267	(53)	1/6
6. Hall, Alfred: The Beliefs of a Unitarian (2nd Ed. 1293+3rd Ed. 296)	1,589	335	5/–
7. Hall, Alfred: Personal Immortality	109	(22)	1/–
8. Hewett, A. Phillip: An Unfettered Faith	1,104	91	8/6
9. Holt, Raymond V.: The Story of Unitarianism	870	152	1/–
10. Holt, Raymond V.: A Free Religious Faith in Outline	75	(15)	1/–
11. Kenworthy, F.: Freedom, Authority and Liberal Christianity	190	(38)	1/6
12. Kielty, John: British Unitarianism	571*	62	2/6
13. Long, Arthur: Faith and Understanding (April 1963)	267*	(360)	7/6
14. Mellone, S. H.: Unitarian Christianity and the Twentieth Century	160	24	1/–
15. Tarrant, Dorothy: Unitarian Faith in Unitarian Hymns	293	39	1/–
16. Tarrant, Dorothy: What Unitarians Believe	3,690	(600)	9d.
17. Unitarianism: Some Questions Answered (September 1959)	10,995*	(2,500)	9d.
18. Wood, Frederick T.: A Manual of Church Membership (March 1963)	329*	(300)	3/6

N.B.—Long, *Faith and Understanding*, sold 116 further copies in the 4 months October 1963 to January 1964; in the same period Wood, *Manual of Church Membership*, sold 72 copies.

(4) *Circulation and Distribution of the "Inquirer" and the "Unitarian",*

	Unit.	*Inq.*
CAMBRIDGESHIRE		
Cambridge	—	25
CHESHIRE		
Altrincham	170	18
Birkenhead	12	10
Chester	12	4
Dean Row	12	—
Dukinfield	—	22
Hale	130	—
Hyde—Gee Cross	12	4
,, Flowery Field	25	12
Knutsford	6	10
Macclesfield	100	5
Mottram	12	—
Sale	75	5
Stalybridge	—	9
Stockport	12	—
Wallasey	12	4
West Kirby	12	13
DERBYSHIRE		
Buxton	9	—
Chesterfield	200	—
Derby	12	—
Glossop	12	—
Great Hucklow	8	2
DEVONSHIRE		
Cullompton	—	3
Exeter	—	12
Plymouth	—	12
Sidmouth	—	12
Torquay	—	10
DORSET		
Poole	—	6
DURHAM		
Stockton-on-Tees	—	18
Sunderland	12	—
ESSEX		
Ilford	—	8
Southend	—	8
GLOUCESTERSHIRE		
Bristol:		
Lewin's Mead	—	21
Clifton	—	12
Cheltenham	—	8
Gloucester	25	9
HAMPSHIRE		
Bournemouth	—	12
Newport, I. of W.	12	9
Portsmouth	—	8
Ringwood	12	—
Southampton	12	12

	Unit.	*Inq.*
KENT		
Bessels Green	—	6
Chatham	—	6
Dover	12	—
Maidstone	18	10
LANCASHIRE		
Accrington	—	6
Ansdell	25	12
Ashton-under-Lyne	—	8
Blackpool N.S.	6	4
Bolton:		
Bank Street	60	17
Unity Ch.	20	—
Halliwell Road	24	—
Bury:		
Bank Street	—	8
Chesham	25	18
Chorley	30	4
Chowbent	25	—
Colne	30	—
Denton	150	—
Hindley	100	—
Horwich	12	4
Lancaster	18	—
Leigh	25	—
Liverpool:		
Ullet Road	—	22
Hope St.	—	9
Toxteth Pk.	—	9
Hamilton Rd. Mission	—	11
Mill St. Mission	12	6
Bootle	6	6
Gateacre	25	8
Manchester:		
Cross St.	26	18
Blackley	25	—
Chorlton	50	—
Failsworth	18	—
Gorton	300	—
Pendleton	25	13
Platt	12	8
Urmston	28	—
Renshaw St.	100	—
Wythenshawe	50	—
Monton	—	15
Mossley	12	—
Newchurch	30	—
Oldham	24	—
Padiham	—	12
Park Lane (near Wigan)	22	11
Preston	12	12
Rawstenstall	16	7
Rochdale	8	11
St. Helens	—	8
Southport	36	16
Stand	12	25

	Unit.	Inq.
LANCASHIRE (contd.)		
Swinton	100	6
Todmorden	12	9
Walmsley	80	—
Warrington	—	8
LEICESTERSHIRE		
Hinckley	45	—
Leicester:		
Gt. Meeting	10	14
Narboro' Rd.	—	4
Loughborough	—	4
LINCOLNSHIRE		
Boston	—	10
Lincoln	15	3
LONDON		
Brixton	15	12
Essex Church	12	12
Forest Gate	—	4
Golders Green	6	20
Hackney	8	—
Islington	—	3
Kilburn	—	6
Lewisham	—	12
Newington Green	6	9
Strand	9	—
Stratford	—	5
Wandsworth	6	6
Wood Green	—	9
Welsh Congregation	—	6
NORFOLK		
Norwich	6	18
NORTHUMBERLAND		
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	6	60
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE		
Mansfield	25	6
Nottingham	14	26
OXFORDSHIRE		
Banbury	—	4
Oxford (Manchester College)	15	11
STAFFORDSHIRE		
Newcastle	30	—
Walsall	—	6
West Bromwich	12	5
Wolverhampton	6	7
SUFFOLK		
Ipswich	3	—
SURREY		
Croydon	100	22
Richmond	100	18
SUSSEX		
Billingshurst	6	—
Brighton	—	13
Ditchling	—	12
Hastings	11	13
Horsham	12	—
Lewes	—	5
WARWICKSHIRE		
Birmingham:		
Church of the Messiah	—	27
Waverley Road	12	—
Coventry	100	15
Warwick	—	9
WESTMORLAND		
Kendal	18	8
WORCESTERSHIRE		
Dudley	—	10
Kidderminster	—	6
Kingswood	6	9
Lye	25	—
Oldbury	—	6
YORKSHIRE		
Bradford:		
Chapel Lane	25	14
Broadway Ave.	50	12
Stannington	—	7
Doncaster	12	—
Halifax	—	11
Huddersfield	5	7
Hull	—	12
Leeds:		
Mill Hill	25	—
Hunslet	6	—
Lydgate	10	—
Mexborough	—	4
Pudsey	12	—
Rotherham	20	12
Sheffield:		
Upper Chapel	14	18
Unity Church	10	12
Fulwood	—	7
Wakefield	50	—
ABERDEENSHIRE		
Aberdeen	—	32
ANGUS		
Dundee	—	8
LANARKSHIRE		
Glasgow	—	36
MIDLOTHIAN		
Edinburgh:		
St. Mark's	—	38
Fellowship	—	18

	Unit.	*Inq.*
CARDIGANSHIRE		
Llwynrhydowen	—	3
GLAMORGANSHIRE		
Aberdare O.M.	—	3
Aberdare H.P.	—	10
Cardiff	—	6
Pontypridd	—	2
Swansea	—	18
Trebanos	—	2
ANTRIM		
Belfast:		
All Souls	—	21
Rosemary St.	—	12
DOWN		
Comber	—	3
DUBLIN		
Dublin	—	9
AUSTRALIA		
Adelaide	—	10
Melbourne	—	2
NEW ZEALAND		
Auckland	—	12
CANADA		
Montreal	—	20
Edmonton	—	5
Vancouver	—	3
General Assembly:		
Copies Abroad	—	9
Scottish Libraries: (McQuaker Fund)	—	4
Double Subscriptions (sent as church copies)	—	12
Lindsey Press	50	—
Central Postal Mission	36	—
Women's League Fellowship Section	20	—
Western Union	400*	—

* Copies of the *Unitarian* are not shown against individual Western Union churches.

The "Inquirer" total circulation figures:

Sales through Churches	1,601	Postal Subscribers	485 (home)
Sales through Wholesalers	574	Postal Subscribers,	159 (overseas)
Sales by the Lindsey Press	144	Copies to Libraries,	20

The above figures relate to a week in February, 1964, and fairly represent the position.

The overall printing order is for 3,080 copies with slight weekly variations. 10 years ago the figure was 3,328 (averaged) and in 1962 it was 3,238.

There has been a total net loss in circulation of 240 since the price was raised from 4d. to 6d. in July 1963.

The "Unitarian" total circulation figures:

Total as listed	3,909
Individual copies	200
Total circulation	4,109 (March 1st, 1964)

It may be inferred from the above that many churches circulate the *Unitarian* with their calendars.

(5) *Faith and Freedom*

Faith and Freedom, sponsored 17 years ago by the Old Students Association of Manchester College, Oxford, as a journal of liberal religion for Unitarians and Free Christians in this country, was adopted from the outset by the Ministerial Fellowship and the Past and Present Students Union of the Unitarian College, and, for 15 years, was supported by the American Ministers Association. Throughout it has been the main bridge for exchanging views on the changing religious and theological situation across the Atlantic and is the main means of communication with liberals round the world, including Unitarians behind the Iron Curtain. It has won gradually increasing support from liberal minded laity here and elsewhere and is keenly supported by a number of nominally orthodox ministers and laity.

With financial support from the Daniel Jones Fund (average £125 p.a., at present £100) it has managed to pay its way with a low subscription rate of 7s. 6d. for three issues, including postage.

Breakdown of Circulation of "Faith and Freedom" Volume 17 (1963-64)

Great Britain	
Ministers on the Active Roll of the G.A.	127
Retired Ministers	30
Lay Pastors and Lay Preachers	92
Lay Subscribers (including 13 Chapel Book Stalls)	413
Public and College Libraries	12
Abroad	
U.S.A.	190
Commonwealth and South Africa	45
Europe and elsewhere	80
Complimentaries	23
	1,012
In addition about 70 single copies are sold each year, including back numbers, which is the equivalent of another 23 subscribers	23
Total	1,035

PART III. YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

Unitarian: Now that we have come to the familiar subject of Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs, are you going to propose a system of religious education like the one you want adult Unitarians to tackle?

Commissioner: No, it's not as simple as that. When we came to look at the religious education of children and young people in our churches we found such diversity that we wondered if anything useful could be said at all. History and geography have established some firm patterns already.

Unitarian: I can guess what you mean by geography. In different parts of the country we go about it in different ways; Sunday morning or afternoon, with or without parents, for the children of members or the children of the neighbourhood, in large numbers and in handfuls.

Commissioner: Exactly. And you can add to that many different kinds of buildings and methods and materials and ways of governing the Sunday School. History links on to all that at some points. Originally the Sunday School had a secular task; teaching poor children to read and write in the days before free education.

Unitarian: That explains some of the large gloomy buildings and the fact that they are not beside the church at all, but half a mile down the street. But what happened about religious education of Unitarian children in those days?

Commissioner: Unitarian parents brought their children to church with them for the service and taught them at home. If you can find a born Unitarian in his sixties to ask, you may find that he has never attended Sunday School in his life!

Unitarian: And I suppose that you are going to tell us when we have become educated adult Unitarians we should return to this way of giving religious education to our children?

Commissioner: It may come to that! But first let us go back past the buildings and teachers to the children and young people themselves. We asked ourselves what it was that we adult Unitarians wish to do for our children in the field of religious education. We thought that if we could answer this we would then know something about the kind of religious education needed and the way to provide it.

Unitarian: Most Christian parents would say that they want their children to grow up to be Christians like themselves; and that means Anglicans or Methodists or Roman Catholics, according to which church the parents belong to.

But Unitarians seem to have two minds about this. Some want the Sunday School to turn their children into Unitarians, but others are so afraid of indoctrinating their children with Unitarian ideas that they do everything they can to avoid showing them their own beliefs or revealing that they value the Unitarian church to which they belong. Which side did you come down on in this matter?

Commissioner: We recognised this dilemma, but we modified it by formulating some wider aims. We thought that our religious education should try to do three things which (in order of importance) are:

1. To help our children to grow into " whole " people.
2. To encourage them to develop liberal attitudes.
3. To try to make explicit the Unitarian ethos as being something of value in itself, and to encourage church membership at a later stage.

Unitarian: That seems reasonable and comprehensive, but some of us might say that if you concentrate on turning children into good Unitarian church members (which you place last in importance) your other two aims are bound to be achieved.

Commissioner: Now you are bringing us back to that traditional dilemma and yourself coming down firmly on one side. It is open to argument whether the kind of religious education which will persuade young people to join their own Unitarian church will also make them liberal minded and " whole " persons. If you have to choose between making a " whole " person or a church member, we think the former is the more important every time.

Unitarian: Well, I'm sure we would all agree with that, but it isn't always clear that a choice like that must sometimes be made.

Commissioner: It is part of the wider situation which all parents and children have to meet. The strong desires of young people to break away from parental influence and to test for themselves all that their parents say and do. And the desire of the parents, often, to shape their children into persons like themselves, adopting their ideas and tastes and interests.

Unitarian: Is it as part of their rebelliousness then that so many young people give up their parents' church?

Commissioner: It is one of the reasons for young people leaving churches and it is more likely to happen if parents seem to indicate that it is wrong for their children to question their inherited thoughts and practices of a religious kind, and if parents, or a minister, seem to believe that young people who test the church by leaving it in their teens are somehow bound never to return.

Unitarian: But when you see them go it needs a lot of faith to believe that they will come back.

Commissioner: Well, it is like much else in growing up. Some will reject their parents' way and find another. Some will test the church and then accept it for themselves, or a church like it. Good Unitarian religious education (the ideal perhaps) will give young people something real to put to the test and some capacity to do that freely, tolerantly and wisely.

Unitarian: It does sound nearer to the ideal than the real. In actua practice, many Sunday School teachers must feel glad to see any results at all for their labours, especially when their class is made up of children whose parents have no connection with the church.

Commissioner: Yes, our particular dilemma was that we recognised that our churches have a duty to serve all the children who come within their care, but we are also convinced that parents should play a larger part in the religious education of their children than they do.

Unitarian: You want your knowledgeable Unitarian parents to teach in the Sunday School perhaps? Or those parents to give their own children religious education at home and Sunday School to be abolished or turned back to the service of non-Unitarian children?

Commissioner: Our thoughts were positive and forward-looking, we hope, and not as sweeping or dogmatic as you anticipate.

We want to see parents sharing their faith with their children in family life; in particular we thought that children should acquire their moral standards from their parents rather than through Sunday School lessons.

We also see a real place for religious education in the church, whether it be called Sunday School or something else; and we are concerned about situations in which this work in the church is done (admittedly with devotion) by people too young or untrained, or too long established and tied to old methods and attitudes. We heard of situations in which Sunday School teachers never attend church worship or are not, in fact, Unitarians at all.

Some way of ensuring better standards of training needs to be found and more Unitarian parents might share in the religious education of children in the church as well as at home. Even parents unconnected with the church might be brought into discussions and encouraged to feel that they have a positive role in religious education.

We think that the new Religious Education Department has much to do for children in our churches, but, like us, it will have to recognise and accept a large measure of diversity as to ways and means in particular places, but strive to make more explicit the common aims which are implicit in much that is being done already.

It seems reasonable to expect that material for this level of religious education should be co-ordinated and issued by the R.E.D. but produced from the skill and experience of Unitarians in various places.

Some Questions for Discussion

1. Some people say " religion is caught, not taught." Do you agree? How can we try to ensure that it is infectious?
2. Religious instruction in United States schools is forbidden by law. If that happened over here, would you be (i) delighted, (ii) quite pleased, (iii) neutral, (iv) rather worried, (v) horrified?
3. What place, if any, should the Bible have in Unitarian teaching of young people and children?
4. Do you think that our congregations take enough interest in the religious education of children and teenagers? If not, what do you think we should do about it?
5. If you are a parent, do you feel you have any responsibility for the religious education of your children?
6. Do Sunday Schools still have an effective part to play in the life of our religious community?
7. Is the sparsity of young people in Unitarian churches due to weaknesses in their education in religious matters?
8. Are you for or against religious education in primary and secondary schools?
9. What do you think Unitarian religious education should do for children and young people?
10. Some people say that Unitarianism is a " faith for adults." Do you agree? If so, what should Unitarians do about the religious education of their own children?

11. When children become too old for Sunday School, what, if anything, should be done to " keep them in the church "?
12. What percentage of the members of your church grew up in a Unitarian Sunday School?
13. Are there parent-teacher meetings in your church about religious education? If not formal meetings, are there informal discussions between parents and Sunday School teachers about Sunday School work?
14. Do you think there should be some equivalent to the Confirmation Class in Unitarian churches? If so, why? and what?
15. For which age group do we make the least provision in Unitarian churches? (i) babies, (ii) toddlers, (iii) Sunday School children, (iv) teenagers, (v) young adults, (vi) parents, (vii) middle aged people, (viii) the elderly?

PART IV. EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

1. " Educating the public " may sound a presumptuous aim, but we prefer it to some more lofty phrase, such as " spreading our message," because we feel that there are barriers to the spread of our message formed by sheer ignorance of the facts about our movement. What are these facts; to whom do we especially want to explain them, and how best can we do it?

2. An obvious starting point is the name " Unitarian." Dictionary definitions are far too narrow at present, and we must make it known that our non-credal basis is far more important to us than our non-Trinitarianism. We should like a much better understanding amongst the public of our main principles of " non-subscription," individual freedom of thought, respect for all forms of sincere religion, openness to the impact of new knowledge, and so on.

3. We need also to make it known that although our principles include freedom of belief, there are nevertheless certain things that are almost universally believed by Unitarians. One is, that we ought to try to live our lives in accordance with the ethical teachings of the gospels, and in harmony with the spirit that was in Jesus. Another is, that though we need to use our reason as a critical tool to sieve away superstition and delusion, a faith that gives value and meaning to life cannot be built up by our intellectual powers alone.

4. Then we should like people generally to know what our churches are like; who runs them, what kind of services we have, what role our ministers play. We want it understood that we are not weird, in spite of our freedom, and that we have developed by historical processes within the main Protestant tradition. We also have a strong tradition of welcome and friendship, expressed in words by those of our churches whose notice boards bear the words " Here let no man be stranger." We aim at genuine equality amongst all our members, and we make it as simple as possible for any one to become a church member. Nevertheless, any form of Christianity worthy of the name demands that its adherents should be fully committed to try and live by their faith; for Unitarians such a commitment is a basic necessity, for this is all that gives coherence to a fellowship of people whose religious beliefs vary over a very wide range.

5. When we turn to ask who the people are to whom we want to tell these things, the short answer is—everybody. However, for those who already find happiness with some other religious body, we mainly want to ensure that they know in outline what our name implies and the

principles by which we stand. But to those to whom we have something to give, we want not only to make plain the bare facts about our movement, but to give them a live sense of our welcoming attitude and the deep commitment which it takes to make a real Unitarian.

6. Those whom we might help if we could make contact with them are, firstly, the great body of people who, at present, stay away from church altogether. Some of these may have enough belief in the value of religion to want their children to have some religious education from a church as well as a school. Some may not be indifferent or antagonistic to the idea of church worship, but many want greater freedom of thought than they can find in the orthodox denominations. Many such people do not know of the existence of the Unitarian church.

7. Then, secondly, we have much to offer those who are, at present, inside other denominations, but not happy there because they find it hard to accept orthodox creeds and doctrines. Or again, there are sometimes married couples, brought up in different denominations, who would find it possible to worship together in our free and tolerant atmosphere, without either partner having to give up their individual beliefs.

8. We wish to educate the public in the meaning of our name, the principles of our religion, the beliefs commonly held by all (or nearly all) Unitarians, the life of our churches and their forms of management, the tolerant, welcoming aspect of our tradition, and the nature of our commitment as Unitarians to truth in word and deed.

9. What means are we to use to make these things known to the public generally, and in particular to the categories of people who need our churches and movement? Before we offer any answer to this question let us note three things. First, for good publicity there must be something good to make known; therefore, what we do as a movement and as churches matters more than the publicity we organise. Second, while some publicity is to be had for nothing, most organised public relations work costs money, sometimes a good deal of money; and thirdly, we need to recognise that there is an art, a flair, an expertise in this field, and if we decide to educate the public thoroughly and efficiently we may have to decide as a consequence of that to use professional people and methods, and to pay for them.

10. We, not being experts, offer some general statements of principle as to method and some specific suggestions, not as representing a blueprint or even the outline of a blueprint, but as a basis for discussions which, we hope, may help us to formulate recommendations in our final report which will lead to action. We are sure that we Unitarians

should educate the public about ourselves, our churches, our movement; therefore, with the help of all who share this view we want to arrive at the methods which will achieve this end.

11. We would enter a strong plea for more general uniform use and presentation of the name " Unitarian " and also the production of a short matter-of-fact statement describing our movement. Something purely factual, as for a book of reference, not boastful or comparative or persuasive; a statement which will tell anybody what we are like whether they need us or not. There are still many people in Britain who have never heard of the Unitarians or who, if they have heard the name, have no idea at all what it stands for; more general use of the name in one style of lettering and type, together with an information card freely available would, we feel, begin to dissolve this general ignorance (for which we can only blame ourselves).

12. We acknowledge the good work of our comparatively new Publicity Department in producing material such as posters, badges and blocks for general use by our churches, notably the symbol of the Flame of Freedom; we hope that churches will make more use of such materials and by their demands encourage further development along these lines. The diversity of our faith is firmly established and a chief characteristic of the Unitarian movement, but we need to understand much better in our churches than we have so far that uniformity of *presentation* will help the spread of our faith rather than undermine it. Further development in this field seems both possible and desirable (once the basic principle has been accepted) in relation to posters, church notice boards, church calendars, advertising, blocks, badges, stickers and stamps. We want Unitarian material for the public to be instantly recognisable by as many people as possible up and down the land without our paying huge sums of money to display it on television. It is surely not impossible to achieve a great deal in this direction if the members of 300 churches, scattered throughout Britain, will all use material which, though diverse in content, bears the same name and has the same general appearance everywhere.

13. We cannot ignore the mass media of communication when we think of reaching the public, even though we recognise formidable barriers to be overcome. We must rule out altogether paid television advertising on the grounds of cost alone, and we must recognise, for the time being at least, that the appearances of Unitarian people or ideas on radio and television *as representing our movement* are likely to be few and fleeting. But there is some evidence that Unitarians can find a place from time to time on radio and television as individuals (sometimes described as Unitarians, sometimes not) when they have something to contribute and the skill to present it in an acceptable way.

If or when local sound radio is established in Britain, these opportunities will be greatly increased in the various regions of the country and we should be ready to make use of these chances when they come as well as to make full use of present possibilities.

14. It may be that it is more important at the present time for our movement to do all that it can to help individual Unitarians to break into radio and television than it is to work for a greater place for the movement itself in these fields. The latter end may well be more easily achieved when more individual Unitarians are better known personally in broadcasting circles. The recent Television Training Course for thirteen of our ministers was greatly appreciated by all those selected to take part in it. It might be useful for the General Assembly to set up a small committee of people with experience in broadcasting to keep a continual eye on radio and television developments and opportunities and to recommend, to the Assembly or particular churches from time to time, practical steps which could be taken with respect to training, contacts and formal applications.

15. But while we explore slowly and patiently these possibilities of reaching thousands or millions of people in one broadcast, there is much which we can all do in the field of public relations wherever we are, and whatever our talents. At the very least we can make sure that our neighbours, relatives and friends know what a good Unitarian is like, and how a good Unitarian church serves its people. Grassroots public relations of this kind are indispensable—all the paid publicity in the world is of no avail without them. More particularly, there is great scope for ministers and churches to participate in activities in their own towns and cities as Unitarians, not aggressively or competitively, but taking the name and character of Unitarians outside the church building and congregational life into public places, situations and activities. As speakers and lecturers, ministers may have many opportunities to do this and for lay Unitarians there are committees and organisations and enterprises in which to participate, either representing the church or simply as their own Unitarian selves. In this field of personal public relations, it is local effort and imagination which count; it is not a matter of waiting for leadership or inspiration or advice from London or elsewhere, but rather of getting among the public right where our particular churches and fellowships happen to be.

16. In the end, how to educate the public depends not only upon knowledge and skill and resources, but also upon the will. In the end we have to ask ourselves whether we want the public to know more about us and whether we want to seek and find and draw into our fellowship those members of the public who, for one reason or another, should be Unitarians. If we do want to achieve these ends, we then have to ask ourselves whether we are prepared to pay all that it costs to do

these things well. It costs money; how much of our personal and church income are we prepared to spend on educating the public? It costs time and thought and energy; how much of these will be given to public relations, planning and work? It nearly always means change, adaptability, the sacrifice of some hallowed patterns of church life, when we set about making sure that people generally have the right idea about Unitarians and their churches, and when we open up a way for new people to come into our churches and fellowships and associations to be accepted as they are and to become equal members with us in one body. Are we willing to pay all this to bring our churches and movement back into public life again? This is the question which most needs to be answered by us all.

Discussion

We have added no specific questions for discussion to this section as we feel that enough are implied in the text, and particularly in paragraph 16, to arouse thought and opinion. In this important field of public relations we need your considered views and some account of your experience.

This report is being distributed among the churches and fellowships of the General Assembly for discussion and comment. Further copies may be obtained from the Lindsey Press, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C.2., at 9d. per copy or 7/6 per dozen, post free.

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COMMISSION ON UNITARIAN FAITH
AND ACTION IN THE MODERN WORLD

4

THE UNITARIAN CHURCHES IN SOCIETY TODAY

Interim Report
of the Section
on Religion in the Community

The General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

1964

FOREWORD

At the end of 1963 the Council of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches resolved to appoint a Commission of about 12 members to consider the place of the Unitarian churches in the modern world. This "Faith and Action Commission" was to work in four Sections, which would investigate and report on the subjects of (1) Theology, (2) Leadership, (3) Education, and (4) Religion in the Community.

The Commission quickly got to work ; and its Sections have been meeting regularly since December 1963. Each Section has now prepared an Interim Report for publication, and this booklet (which has been approved by the full Commission) embodies one of these four reports. All four reports are being distributed among the churches, fellowships and associations of the General Assembly during the autumn of 1964.

It is hoped that the reports will be widely discussed during the next six months, and that comments, and constructive criticisms and proposals, will be freely sent—any time up to 31st May 1965—to the Secretary of the Commission, the Rev. F. Kenworthy, The Unitarian College, Victoria Park, Manchester, 14. (Fuller details and advice about discussions and the submission of comments will be sent out from time to time by the Commission in periodical Bulletins.)

In June 1965 the Commission will start to prepare its full Report. The intention is that the full Report should be published in time for it to be thoroughly examined and debated at the General Assembly's Annual Meetings in April 1966.

The quality of the full Report will be determined by the quality of the comments which the four Interim Reports evoke from Unitarian groups and individuals all over the country. This document which you are holding in your hand at this moment is not just a bit of interesting reading, to be looked at and put away. It is a tool to be used—a flint to strike a shower of sparks—a torch to light a chain of torches of thought, argument and action running through the whole Unitarian community.

Fellow Unitarians, your help in this thing is vital. Now it's OVER TO YOU !

A. H. Birtles
Verona M. Conway
Martin Davies
Herbert Dove
Roger Fieldhouse
Bruce Findlow (*Vice-Chairman*)
L. A. Garrard
Peter B. Godfrey
A. J. Hughes
Arthur J. Long
Alastair Ross (*Chairman*)
E. A. Wrigley
F. Kenworthy (*Secretary of the Commission*)

October 1964

Interim Report of the Section on Religion in the Community

INTRODUCTORY

Unitarian : So this is Report No. 4. I must say that it's quite a relief to find myself tackling the last of these Reports. Did you feel the same when you had finished writing it ?

Commissioner : We did indeed! Partly, of course, because it was the last; but also because " Religion in the Community " is a subject which lends itself wonderfully to live discussion, but not so wonderfully to clear and concise formulation afterwards. It is no secret that the group who had to produce this particular report had the most difficult time of all when it came to putting their views down on paper.

Unitarian : I wonder what the trouble was . . .

Commissioner : I think you'll soon find out. It might be best if you were to look through the main part of the report first. That would give us some solid points to discuss later. Otherwise we might spend hours simply discussing what we mean by " religion " and " the community ".

Unitarian : I was wondering about that—whether " religion " would mean " religion as a whole " (with Unitarians forming a group within the larger religious community, and sharing a collective responsibility with the " mainstream " or " British Council " churches), or rather " our kind of liberal religion ". " The community ", too, is a bit indefinite ; is that the whole population, or people in need, or those who live round about our churches, or all who are " Unitarians without knowing it " ?

Commissioner : You're describing some of the ambiguities which made the job so difficult. Now you can have a first look at the way we set about it, and we can talk again later.

I. THE UNITARIAN MOVEMENT TODAY

1. It is becoming increasingly clear that there is an underlying mood of radicalism in the Unitarian movement; for much of the time this mood remains below the surface, but it now seems to be making its presence felt more and more frequently at local, district and national levels. We believe that the denomination is ready and waiting for a big step forward: Unitarians are no longer content to pursue their ideals in splendid isolation, but see the need to relate their faith to the community of which they are a part.

2. It has been our task to try to relate liberal religion to community life, and we have become convinced that much of the malaise that grips our Unitarian churches stems directly from the degree to which they have been cut off from the life around them.

The Denominational Melting-Pot

3. We are well aware that many religious liberals are outside our movement, and have no wish to join us; they believe that they can fulfil their hopes more satisfactorily in other church settings, or in none. We are also aware that a great deal of rethinking and heart-searching is going on in the Christian Church, and that the next ten years may see remarkable changes in denominational alignments in this country. No one can tell at this time what course the cause of religious liberalism will take, and we believe that Unitarians must not shrink from doing all in their power to strengthen it during the next decade—even though this may involve a radical reappraisal of the present denominational line-up in Britain.

4. But for the moment our concern is for the Unitarian movement, to reinforce it, to ensure that it makes full use of its ample resources, and to increase its impact on the community. We want to do all this, not because of any need to tighten our sectarian approach, but because we believe that it is still the best way to make sure of the proper continuation of the liberal tradition in religion.

Church Life

5. At many times in the past our churches have led the communities of which they were proud to be a part; the great tragedy of today is that those same churches are often cut off from the society around them. The perpetuation of their own life, and the celebration of their former greatness—these have become their primary aims.

6. Their activities tend to be esoteric and divisive, and occasionally might almost have been designed to confirm the non-churchgoer in his non-churchgoing. Their time-table has taken no account of the changing pattern of weekly life (how many churches have regular week-night services—and how many city-centre churches have made all-out efforts to cater for the white-collar worker in the working week ?). They pay only lip-service to the needs of the visitor, content in the cosiness of their closed community (how many of our churches follow the Quaker example of providing a short printed explanation of their worship pattern ?). In all these ways, churches emphasise that they are not vehicles for the practice of liberal religion in the community, but self-perpetuating societies for a few men and women who come together with a mixture of motives and memories.

Language

7. Nowhere is the divisive nature of the church so evident as in its use of outmoded language. It is well known that different sub-cultures retain their identity by their distinctive tongue, and, as Father Geoffrey Beaumont said recently in Essex Hall, as soon as you hear " thy " and " thou " and words ending in " -eth ", you know you're in church. We believe that it is quite contrary to Christian teaching to maintain such separated tendencies, and the clearest sign that our churches were once more relating themselves to the community would be that they were using ordinary language in their prayers, from the pulpit, and in their written communications.

8. If the faith of Jesus has value for us today, it must be related to today's problems, and translated into today's language. " The things that are eternally true must be expressed in words that are eternally new."

Communication

9. In an age when communication by means of the written word, television, and radio, is all-important, we believe that our churches and the General Assembly must be prepared to give much more thought to these vital means of contact with the outside world. There is a great need for many more publications, attractively written, about contemporary issues in society; design must be improved, and responsibility for publishing must be in the hands of experts rather than of willing amateurs. Concern about our public image is not mere status-consciousness: it reflects a concern to communicate with the outside world, and to bring home to others the importance of our liberal ideas.

Reason and Feeling

10. Unitarians have always been concerned to present a rational faith. But it is necessary at the same time to take account of the emotional needs of ordinary people; in these are to be found the heart and soul of religion's role in the community. In some ways a good deal of our literature has overstressed the " rational " side of church life and religious faith; much of the material we put out is arid and stodgy, with not nearly enough emphasis on the lives of ordinary men and women.

11. Our best services of worship, on the other hand, tend to be *more* personal and meaningful than those of orthodox churches (our marriage services for instance), and achieve something of a dialogue between minister and congregation. Nevertheless, there are many areas of worship where there is room for development, and we hope that a good deal of discussion will be centred on ways in which our church services can be related more closely to community life.

The Church and Mobility

12. The most striking factor in contemporary life is the great increase in social and geographical mobility, together with the continual pattern of social change. Inevitably this brings strains and stresses into the lives of men and women to a degree hitherto unknown; the high incidence of mental illness, the widespread dependence on drug-taking, and the increase in areas of community conflict (leading to the growth of prejudice and crime), all bear witness to the craving of ordinary people for support, reassurance, and a sense of belonging. At the very time when the liberal church is so badly needed, it is ironic that it, too, is adversely affected by changing social conditions. Nonconformity grew up and flourished in another age, and Unitarian churches are designed—architecturally, administratively, and, to a certain extent, ideologically—for a more static society than the one we know today. It is sad that even some of our recently built churches have tended to follow too traditional a pattern, and have taken insufficient account of contemporary needs.

13. Often it seems as though " the arched roofs and stone-built walls " immunise the church from the changes in the world around it. Unhappily for the traditionalists, it is all too clear that in the long run such an escape from " the world " cannot be found; and many church buildings are now being used as warehouses, garages and TV studios.

14. We refer briefly at various points in this report to changes that may be needed. But already it is obvious that many of our

churches are beginning to see the way forward; and the right approach is likely to succeed. This is evident from those of our churches whose presentation of our faith has managed to bridge the gap between the laurels of the past and the needs of today. For example, in Sheffield, the Upper Chapel took the lead in forming the Civic Society, and has played a major role in relating community needs to the vast programme of planning that is now going on in that city. In Lewisham a Festival of the Living Arts has been established as an annual event, and the church has taken the lead in founding an Abbeyfield House for old people. In Liverpool the Mill Street Domestic Mission has completely refashioned its pattern of life to meet the needs of a huge redevelopment area. And in many of our churches Amnesty groups are working for the release of prisoners of conscience.

15. We believe that we must make increasingly determined efforts to offer our fellowship to those outside our community. Many of them live far away from an existing church, and we hope that steps will be taken to see that the Fellowship Movement gathers momentum quickly. We must learn to differentiate between the needs of different areas in the provision of buildings and leadership: as far as possible, every major regional centre should have a central church with the highest standards of work and worship; and fellowship groups and small churches should be related to population needs, rather than to accidents of growth and organisation in the past.

16. The need within the wider community for a new approach to religious faith is clearer than ever before. At present, it is the orthodox leaders who are making the running, but there is still no doubt that no one is in a better position than the Unitarian movement to give a lead—provided that, for a time, it can forget its noble past and turn its attention to the far more exciting tasks that await it in the present.

II. THE PASTORAL ROLE OF THE CHURCH

17. Every church faces the dilemma of its two functions: that of serving all men, irrespective of their sins, and that of leading society into a better way of life, and condemning, if necessary, the existing social pattern. That is the dilemma of reconciling the pastoral and prophetic roles. There have been times when the ideals of the prophets have led them into the way of puritanical intolerance, and the needs of ordinary men and women have been ignored; and there have been other times when the church has been so busy ministering to its people that it has not seemed to notice the sickness or cruelty of society.

18. We believe that the two functions must go side by side; at any one time, or in any one leader, the one may outbalance the other, but equilibrium must quickly be re-established if the church is to fulfil its task. And perhaps the great need of today is to reassert the prophetic word of our faith, while at the same time reinforcing and extending our pastoral work in the world.

19. In this report, we have separated the pastoral from the prophetic, but we affirm that, in reality, the two must grow together, and—what is more important—must be allowed to interact freely with each other.

The Serving Minister

20. The ideal of the minister serving his congregation is as strong as ever; but it is now almost universally recognised in the Unitarian movement that the ideal bears little relation to reality. The whole question of lay and ministerial leadership has been fully considered by another section of the Commission in Report No. 2. Suffice it to say now that many of our ministers find that much of their pastoral work is inevitably concerned with non-Unitarians: Unitarian ministers are involved in the work of the National Marriage Guidance Council, Oxfam, and Old Age Pensioners' Clubs, and in the giving of religious education in schools. All this is admirable in itself, but it leads us to ask whether it means that our Unitarian framework has proved inadequate for the pastoral needs of the twentieth century. We sometimes wonder whether our " full-time " ministers who undertake work outside the movement might not be better employed within the church, in such a way that their special skills and experiences could be fully used. It might be argued that our ministry in its present form does just that; it enables each man to find his particular niche, whether it be in pastoral work, preaching, administration, or public service. But there might well be value in having a more clear-cut definition of what we expect from our contemporary minister, and of providing a more carefully designed framework in which he can move.

21. We are concerned that the traditional pastoral needs of both Unitarians and non-Unitarians should be fully met—the comfort of the sick and the bereaved being of overwhelming importance; and although we feel that this may still best be done by a minister, we think the time has come to tackle the serious problem of lay participation in the pastoral work of the church.

22. The increasing use of laymen as leaders in the movement (either as lay-ministers such as John Sturges at Portsmouth, as ministerial laymen such as Jack Robbins at Newington Green, or as just plain laymen, as with Grenville Needham in Essex Hall) must force us to redefine our entire approach to pastoral work in the community. Churches like Broadway Avenue, Bradford, seem to thrive on lay-leadership, but others have grown so accustomed to the idea of semi-autocratic (if benevolent) rule by a minister that there is a risk that they may decline and die when left to their own resources. This is one field (and there are others) where we could well take lessons from the Society of Friends.

The Serving Church

23. We are particularly concerned that many of our churches seem continually turned in on themselves. Our pastoral work must always be for the community at large, and it is especially important that we should make full use of our premises: the Liverpool Domestic Mission is a living example of what can be done in any of our big cities or towns.

24. The greatest service to the community can, however, still be offered in our approach to worship, and by the strengthening of spiritual values. Here again, the question of our size affects the possible approach; and we wonder whether much of our potential impact is not lost because we persist in pretending that our services are intended for a much larger congregation than actually attends. Our worship would have that much greater value if it were held in a more intimate setting than is possible in some of our larger churches. Similarly, we suspect that we are failing badly in the question of group support for the individual with personal problems; social work has only recently discovered the importance of group therapy, and the churches (who knew its value long ago) have boundless opportunities for its use. Individual problems of personal ethics are often raised in a youth club setting, and there is every reason why the church, too, should provide moral support for its members in this way. The fact that one rarely mentions one's own weaknesses in church (except perhaps in the privacy of silent prayer) is a left-over from the days of " puritanism ", and ought to survive no longer.

Social Action

25. We have no doubt that Unitarians have as great a contribution to make in the sphere of social service as they have always done;

furthermore, we feel the Social Service Department is right in saying that more is being done now than we often imagine (see *Unitarian Social Service in the Sixties*, published by the Unitarian Social Service Department: 2s). As we see it, there are two great needs in the field of social action: communication and leadership.

26. Good communication is vital. We know far too little of the kind of work being done by our churches in, for example, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Bristol, and Birmingham. The Social Service Department has launched its new *Bulletin* and this will serve a real need if it shows church leaders what can be done. But we regret that the denominational newspaper *The Inquirer* so rarely publicises the really important things that many of our churches have undertaken; we would hope that it could produce a regular feature on actual projects that are under way. *Inquirer* readers must often long for more " hard news " between the high-powered thinking that its articles contain, and its gossip-column notes on bazaars, ministerial changes and nonagenarian funerals. Perhaps a regular column on " Religion in the Community " could report what is going on in Golders Green, Chesterfield, Kendal and elsewhere—whether it be a controversy over fluoride, the provision of meals for old people, or the development of a new hostel for the mentally sick. *Unitarians want to know what other Unitarians are doing*, and any failure to pass on this information is a serious error. It is not enough to do good work in secret: we must " spread the news " and make use of our own newspaper to do so. Good writing is good work.

27. Good leadership is equally vital. At the local level, social action will always depend on the leadership of a concerned member or group of members; but there is a need for stimulus and encouragement from the centre, and we feel that the Social Service Department is playing a valuable part in this way.

The Social Service Department

28. The Reverend Arthur Peacock has set out the Unitarian Social Service Department's tasks as follows:—

(1) To study matters of social concern upon which guidance to the Assembly and its churches is needed;

(2) To study matters referred to it by the Assembly for consideration, and to report and recommend action where necessary;

(3) To represent the Assembly on bodies concerned with social questions, to which the Assembly is affiliated;

(4) To organise conferences and study groups;

(5) To encourage congregations to study social problems, and to engage in corporate activity in their neighbourhoods when and where possible;

(6) To encourage individual Unitarians to participate in some social work, either in a voluntary capacity or in a professional way; and

(7) To urge ministers once in every year to set a service apart when questions of social responsibility can be brought before the congregation.

29. We see no way in which these aims can be improved on the Department's small budget. More could be done if the General Assembly could see its way to increasing the annual grant (£240) made to the Department; we would hope that this could be done at the earliest possible opportunity. Mr. Peacock has made it clear that the work of the Department is expanding all the time, and we asked him about the future role of the U.S.S.D. He told us:—

I believe the kind of residential study group which the Department has recently established is likely to become an annual feature of its work. In 1963 *it brought ministers and social workers together to study matters of common concern; and in* 1964 *ministers and laymen again came together to study problems relating to town planning and city development. The benefit of such study groups is that we are bringing together people with specialised knowledge on current issues who can share ideas and experiences, and work out points of policy and action. Already proposals for* 1965 *are being considered.*

I think we are going to see a development of corporate social action by Unitarians. The volunteers going out to India (to help the Rev. Margaret Barr in the Khasi Hills) are a first step to this, and I hope for a considerable extension of this work.

The Department is linked with the social work among the Forces which Hibbert House fosters, and I hope that, as other corporate efforts are sponsored, they will operate within the framework of the Department.

A Commission has been studying family problems, and their report has recently been published. I believe more research work of this kind is likely, and that we have the job of trying to make our churches more aware of such matters, and more concerned to take action.*

I hope that from the work of the study groups, we shall be able to build up a panel of specialists whose help can be sought as the Department engages on new activities.

30. We are satisfied that the Unitarian movement can still be, and in many places still is, a framework for action—in different ways. For example, we see the work of our Peace Fellowship and our Temperance Association as being entirely in accord with our liberal principles, even though many Unitarians may find themselves out of sympathy with the specific aims of these bodies.

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* *Man, Woman and Child.* Unitarian Social Service Department, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London W.C. 2. 1964. 2s 6d.

31. In order to stimulate further social action, we believe that local groups of Unitarians should involve themselves much more in intellectual conflict and creative thinking—in particular about controversial topics. It has been suggested to us that much of the ferment among young Unitarians today stems from their long tradition of group discussion and week-end conferences, in which honest disagreement has frequently led them into action. Something of this spur might be needed among the older generation if we are (borrowing Richard Hoggart's phrase) " to release the springs of action."

III. THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF THE CHURCH

32. It is the church's continuing task to speak out against the evils that man creates in his own society: " As soon as the church stops being truly challenging, it loses much of its appeal. It must go on calling for the Kingdom of God." Many Christians are appalled at the low level of morality in industry and elsewhere; at the high incidence of dishonesty, betrayal and deceit in the scramble up the ladder of ambition; and at the greed and selfishness that seem to go hand-in-hand with the profit motive in commerce. We, too, echo this feeling—as, indeed, do many Humanists and non-Christians. But we are aware of the complex nature of the problem, and we cannot believe that there is a simple answer to it. The Christian's dilemma in the affluent society is by no means a straightforward one, and it has been excellently expressed by Ivan Knowlson in his essay " The Manager Faces the Workaday World ", published in *Faith and Freedom* (issue of January 1964).

33. We believe that honesty and trust, human understanding and goodwill are the prerequisites of a healthy society. To the extent that these qualities are absent from our community life, the church must prophesy concerning the inevitable misfortunes that will surely follow. It may well be that this *is* a time for prophecy, for unequivocal condemnation of materialism and greed in the commercial world. But the problem is a massive one and, whatever else may happen, no church, in its eagerness to speak out against corruption in society, must ever lose sight of the pastoral needs of ordinary men and women. " Whatever happens anywhere else, this wound must be healed, this mountain climbed, this sea must be sailed . . ."

34. And herein lies the task of liberal religion: to rise to the challenges of each new day, taking them as they come. Often they will be personal matters in our own lives: sometimes they will be crises in the lives of others who need our help: occasionally they will be social issues—in our local community, in Britain, in the world. Seen in this way, the prophetic merges into pastoral work . . . the urge to speak out goes hand-in-hand with the desire to help.

Our Social Witness

35. Our ideological approach to society stems from our belief in God as the Father of all, and from our insistence that Man has a responsibility to Man. Our social witness must be, by its very nature, pragmatic and immediate, and our recognition of the complexity of human nature prevents any simple description of where we stand, except in relation to specific issues.

36. We trust that all Unitarian laymen and ministers will continue to express themselves freely on matters of public importance. The freedom of our pulpit is a tradition that we should guard with our lives. We are not happy about the present provision for expressing our witness at the national level. Votes on public issues can be (and are) taken at annual meetings of the General Assembly, and at meetings of the G.A. Council. So far as they go, these are fine (although we would hope that our concern with " world issues " such as poverty, the UN and apartheid, will never shield us from the often more pressing problems that face us in our own community—mental illness, the plight of the elderly, colour prejudice—all of which are problems that are likely to increase in intensity in the years ahead).

37. But we feel that the members of our national Assembly should be able to rest assured that a Unitarian point of view can be expressed promptly on vital issues as and when they arise. At the moment this responsibility rests with the Secretary and the Presidents, but there is always the risk that they might hesitate to speak out on contentious issues because of a division of opinion within the movement. Accordingly, we suggest that the G.A. Council should appoint a Unitarian Advisory Committee on Social Issues; just as the Home Office Advisory Committees do not in any way bind the government to a fixed policy, so too such a Unitarian Committee would leave members within the movement free to determine their own positions.

38. The Committee should have, say, three members, with power to co-opt others for short-term service; its main task would be to express a Unitarian position on major issues as soon as possible after they have arisen; but a secondary possibility would be for it to give full consideration to a number of ongoing subjects, and to produce booklets on these for use within the denomination as discussion material. It would not aim to cover a subject as deeply as the Social Service Department has sought to cover the problem of family life, but there is obvious scope for co-operation between the two committees, and we would advise that the Social Service Department should appoint one of the three members. As the work is likely to be arduous, testing and responsible, it is important that members should not stay on the committee longer than, say, two years. Some secretarial assistance would be required.

IV. LOOKING AHEAD

39. We are convinced that social action and social witness have been, are, and always will be, closely linked with the theory and practice of liberal religion, but we do not believe that, in themselves, they are sufficient justification for the church's continued place in the community. The role of the church as a worshipping community is more complex than its role as a social servant—more complex and more challenging. For in the affluent society, although problems of physical health, world poverty and inequality still demand the liberal's voice and action, it is in the spiritual sphere that the most exciting tasks await us.

40. Untrammelled by Christian myth or dogma, the Unitarian churches are in a unique position to build a faith for the new age. We are well aware of our present inadequacies, and it may be that a great deal of thought and research will be needed before our churches are fitted for the spiritual needs of men and women in the twentieth century. But that the need is there, we are certain. The stresses of society and man's inadequacy to cope with them are evident when we observe the toll of loneliness and boredom, the tragedy of marital breakdown and mental illness, the rootlessness prompted by social and geographical mobility, the inhuman recourse to prejudice and brutality, and the apparent need for blind dependence on a supreme human authority in politics (and—no less dangerously—in the Christian church itself). Somehow, the liberal church must start to tackle this world in which it seeks to propagate its faith; the need is great, and we have been half-hearted far too long.

41. Our role in the community requires us (at General Assembly level, in the District Associations, and in Prior's Scrambling) to be certain that our fellowships and churches offer a spiritual home for all ordinary men and women who are in need of it. *It is our bounden duty to have a liberal religious centre in every centre of population throughout the country*; this must, almost certainly, mean that we shall have to staff our movement on an entirely different basis from that at present used. District Associations might become the employing bodies, and it would be their responsibility to see that all parts of their areas were adequately served. The D.As. were once thought of as missionary associations with the task of spreading the liberal faith in their neighbourhood. This concept of their purpose ought to be revived, and the modern equivalent of the old Van Mission might once again go out into the streets and tell how our faith is related to the ordinary community. We have great assets in man-power, money and premises—if only we will make proper use of them.

42. We realise the controversial nature of these ideas—they would imply that many of our existing churches would be re-sited, rebuilt or (in some cases) used as district headquarters. But it is vital to obtain the widest possible discussion of such tentative schemes throughout the movement, because of the need to stimulate new thinking, and so provoke new ideas and plans all over the country.

43. We insist that our Unitarian movement of churches has a unique contribution to make to the community today, provided it can organise itself wisely and well. *The church is for ordinary people*: its worship, its service, its community life stem from that basis; and, on that basis, it has a crucial role in contemporary society.

Unitarian : Now then: I've read your report, and I must say at once that I quite see the difficulties you spoke about. Here and there I found myself thinking " surely there isn't quite the proper emphasis there " or " that's not the way I should have put it "; but when I began to think out a more satisfactory approach it was not easy. I was reminded of the occasion when a motorist in a Gloucestershire village asked the oldest inhabitant the way to Cirencester and received the reply: " If Oi were going to Coirencester, Oi wouldn't start from 'ere."

Commissioner : If it was your choice, where would you start from ?

Unitarian : Well, it did occur to me that the report was too much concerned with the way things looked from inside the church; should it not have looked first at the community, its needs and challenges and then said " *here* and *here* are crying needs which the church should be able to meet ? "

Commissioner : I think you have put your finger on something there: we felt like that to some extent ourselves. But, like the motorist in your story, we thought we had to start from where we actually were, even if it was not the ideal spot. But it is certainly open to churches to begin at the other end, as it were, and to set out their results; and we hope that some will do that and give us a rounded picture.

Unitarian : I don't pretend that *that* way will be any easier; but I should like to have seen a more thorough description of the weaknesses of community life as it is now lived. Many of them are obvious enough. And then we could begin to think how the churches could offer to provide the remedy.

Commissioner : Weaknesses, you say ? What do you have in mind ?

Unitarian : To give one example, there is the all-pervading element in modern living which is often called " materialism ". Everywhere you turn, the be-all and end-all of life is presented as the acquisition of material comfort and security. You get it in advertisements and T.V. commercials, in the city pages of the papers, in the articles in the glossy magazines (and in the recent General Election it was one of the big underlying issues, wasn't it ?). The message is always that it's " smart " to own such and such a car, or to live in such and such a fashionable district, or to furnish your home in the latest admired style.

Commissioner : But do you think that sensible people take all that seriously ?

Unitarian : I'm afraid lots of people do—and those who don't take it seriously have still to choose between pretending to accept it and deciding to fight it. No one can get right away from it—it is everywhere.

And then look at the relations between management and labour. Money is the deciding factor in every issue. As soon as a trade dispute arises, each side seems to declare " my side, right or wrong ". Management takes up a posture in defence of profits—labour takes up a posture in defence of wages. Each sees how much it can squeeze the other side. It is a far cry from " To him who asketh of thee thy coat, give him thy cloak also " or the parable of the labourers in the vineyard.

Commissioner : I'm interested that you should bring this up. We certainly gave a good deal of thought to the challenge of materialism, as you call it. The contrast between the present gadget-ridden world and the simplicity (as it now seems to us) of first-century Palestine is very marked. But we couldn't find any easy way of summarising the problem, or of suggesting a solution. We didn't want to preach a kind of Luddite gospel; no one now believes that boiling clothes in an ancient copper is essentially Christian, while doing the same job in a quarter of the time in a modern washing-machine is pagan and materialistic.

Unitarian : Oh, I quite agree. But there does seem to be a need for a new spirit in industrial relations, and I feel that a church should say so.

Commissioner : I must confess that we were in two minds about this. Some of us were in favour of a public attempt to draw attention, by some kind of regular expression of views at a national level, to the need for bringing " the simple Christian ethic " into industrial relations. Others felt that this would not achieve very much (even if we could define the " simple Christian ethic " in a generally acceptable way), and that there was a risk that this would give us a too-easy feeling that we were " doing something ".

Unitarian : Perhaps you're right about the doubtful value of making general pronouncements. But there must be *some* way of drawing attention to this need for a better spirit in working life.

Commissioner : I think the feeling among us was that if we did embark on something in this field we should be prepared to do it at a local and personal level.

Unitarian : I suppose that the first thing is to persuade people that there is a problem at all.

Commissioner : Yes. Or perhaps we should stop thinking in terms of " problems " and " solutions ". Could we somehow get people thinking about work relations in an " open-ended " way ?

Unitarian : Open-ended ?

Commissioner : By that I mean asking questions which aim at getting people to think *creatively*, not questions which have one " right " answer which you have got to find in order to earn full marks. We did draw up a number of questions of this kind, as an experiment.

Unitarian : I'd be interested to see them; perhaps some others might like to look at them as well.

Commissioner : All right, we'll set them out later in this report,[1] just as an aid to self-examination, not as a request for detailed answers.

Unitarian : Will you be giving a list of questions for congregational discussion as well ?

Commissioner : Yes, we have made up quite a long list[2] for discussion groups to choose from.

Unitarian : Good. Did you think of suggesting to congregations that they make surveys of the work of other denominations and find out what social service agencies are doing in the community field ?

Commissioner : That was considered, yes; but we thought it was a matter that congregations would want to work out for themselves. It is certainly useful to know what other people are doing; there is no virtue in remaining shut up in an ivory tower, aloof from others who are working in the same field.

Unitarian : If a community job is being well done by another denomination, or a secular agency, do you think that Unitarians should set up an agency in the same line ?

Commissioner : I think we were generally agreed that we should resist the temptation to keep up with the Joneses in this kind of thing. We are not wealthy in money and pairs of hands (though as the report rightly says, our potential resources are probably greater than we realise); and it would be absurd to start unnecessary projects in the spirit of " anything you can do I can do better." There are plenty of real needs that no one is meeting, and some of these may well be found a few yards from our own front doorsteps, if we will only open our eyes a little wider.

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[1] See page 19 : " My Church and My Work ".

[2] See page 21 : Some Questions for Discussion.

Unitarian : Do you think that there are some needs that we are particularly equipped to meet just because we are Unitarians ?

Commissioner : I think that that might be a very fruitful line for a congregation to follow up. If " liberty " is a peculiarly Unitarian quality, for instance, there are plenty of types of liberty that are threatened at the moment, at home and abroad. Then again, we may achieve just as much if we simply reflect that we are human beings living in a world of human beings. I don't know . . . Good luck to you, anyway, and to your congregation. Do help us, we shall need all the help you can give.

Unitarian : Thanks for those good wishes. We'll see what we can do . . .

"MY CHURCH AND MY WORK"

A questionnaire for individual self-examination

NOTE.—The purpose of this list of questions is simply to start off a train of thought for an individual, or a train of discussion in a small group. It is not a public opinion poll, and the Commission are not asking for detailed answers to be sent in; but general reactions will be welcome, and so will suggestions for amendments or additions.

1. Do you feel that your liberal religion—the fact that you are in regular close contact with a liberal worshipping community—is something which concerns your private life only, or is it relevant also in your relationships at work ?
2. Do you find that from this regular association you have derived a ' philosophy of life ' which is positively helpful in your work ?
3. In what way ?
4. Does your work ever face you with courses of action which fall below the standard of conduct which you feel your religion requires you to maintain ?
5. Can you give any instances ?
6. Is your line of work one in which you might prosper more, or become more popular, if you did not keep to a high standard of conduct ?
7. In your work, do you find that " religious people "—people known to have a firm church connection—are more, or less, efficient than average, or simply average ?
8. Are they easier to work with with as colleagues ?
9. Are they easier to work under ?
10. Are they better than average as subordinates ?
11. In your factory, office, business, etc., is the general climate of opinion towards church people either neutral, or friendly, or hostile, or cynical, or what ?
12. If you feel that in your field of work a religious spirit should be fostered, how could this best be achieved—
    (*a*) by introducing ' religion ' directly into the workplace, for instance by a visiting minister or chaplain ?
    (*b*) more remotely, by influencing your own congregation ?
    (*c*) through your trade, profession or business organisation ?
    (*d*) in some other way ?

13. Do you find, in your work, that there is any *non-church* group or society or association (local or wider) whose members are notable for imaginative, kindly action ? If so, how do you explain this ?

14. Can you indicate briefly what kind of religious spirit you would like to see widespread in your field of work ? Is it, for instance, closely linked to the life and teachings of Jesus, or based on a belief about the nature and potentialities of Man, or a belief about the reality of active divine guidance in human affairs ?

15. Is there any vital question this questionnaire has failed to ask ?

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is a church *for* ?
2. If a church is valuable, is a liberal church something especially valuable ? If it is, why is that so ?
3. Is it enough for a particular church simply to minister to its existing members and to any who happen to find their way to it ?
4. In what ways would the suggestions about " Language " (paragraphs 7 and 8) affect the services of worship in your church ? If they were adopted, would you be pleased, or horrified ?
5. If you feel that a church should be doing something *more* than ministering to its own members and chance visitors, what kind of additional things should it be doing ?
6. Should it be " proclaiming " or " doing " ? Should it perhaps be proclaiming *and* doing ? Is the passing of public resolutions (see paragraph 36) a form of escape from taking action ?
7. Is there something special that your church is already proclaiming locally ? Or something that it *should* be proclaiming locally ?
8. Are there any things which you think the Unitarian movement should be proclaiming nationally ?
9. Is there something special that your church is already *doing* locally—or could be doing locally ?
10. Are there any urgent things which you think the Unitarian movement should be doing nationally ?
11. Would you like to know more about things that Unitarian congregations are doing successfully up and down the country ? Would it help your congregation to have regular details of work which other churches are doing ?
12. Do you think that a liberal church can help people at work, as employers or employees, to cope better with problems of right conduct which arise at work ? What do you think of the questionnaire " My Church and My Work " on page 19 of this booklet ?
13. Do you consider that the values and motives that prevail in industry today, and the relations between employer and employee which result from those values and motives, are consistent with Christian ethics ?

14. Do you agree with the statement (paragraph 41) that it is our bounden duty to have a liberal religious centre in every centre of population throughout the country ? Does it worry you, for example, that there is no Unitarian church in Blackburn (population 106,000), Dagenham (108,000), Luton (131,000), or Stoke-on-Trent (265,000) ? And none in the counties of Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Cumberland, or Herefordshire—or in Scotland outside the four large cities ? If it does worry you, how can we do something about it ?

This report is being distributed among the churches and fellowships of the General Assembly for discussion and comment. Further copies may be obtained from the Lindsey Press, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C.2., at 9d. per copy or 7/6 per dozen, post free.

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