

THE HIBBERT TRUST
A HISTORY

Alan R Ruston

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FOREWORD

The Book of the Hibbert Trust published in 1933 provided the only printed record of the work of the Hibbert Trust. It contains basic documents but is incomplete as a history.

The Trustees welcomed the agreement of Alan Ruston to produce a more complete and updated account of the work of the Trust since its foundation giving him a free hand as to the form it would take.

This book provides a stimulating account of many unfamiliar episodes in Unitarian history including the controversial background to the setting up and early operation of the Trust. It is interesting to note that some of the issues involved are reflected in current controversies within the Unitarian movement. Further, Mr Ruston having analysed the successes and failures of the Trustees' endeavours has provided valuable points as to future developments.

The Trustees warmly appreciate the thoroughness with which he has pursued his researches in writing this book.

Stanley J. Kennett
Chairman

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The first account of the origin and history of Robert Hibbert and his Trust appeared in 1874. It was written by Jerom Murch (later knighted) and consisted mainly of a memoir of Robert Hibbert, and the two chief first trustees, Mark Philips and Edwin W. Field. He wrote it in order to meet:

“A strong desire to know something about Mr Robert Hibbert both by my co-Trustees of the Educational Fund, which he founded, and by the gentlemen who have already been aided by it. The same desire will probably be felt by future Trustees and recipients; nor can it be forgotten that the task of collecting the requisite information, even now somewhat difficult, may soon become impossible . . . Unfortunately I am now almost the only Trustee who had the pleasure of his personal acquaintance.”

(from the preface).

He also included a brief history of the Trust to date, together with the trust deed and schedule, and one of the few pieces of written material by Hibbert that is known to exist. Much of Murch's account was included with an update in *The Book of the Hibbert Trust*, prepared for the trustees in 1932 by Rev. Dr W. H. Drummond, then the Trust's secretary. Both of these works are important sources of information though neither could be considered an objective and evaluative history prepared by someone not involved in the administration of the Trust. It must also be pointed out that Dr Drummond used the Trust minutes as his only reference source.

These limitations, together with the fact that supplies of the 1933 book are nearly exhausted, prompted the Trustees to consider a new history of their Trust that would include many of the developments that have taken place in the last fifty years. At the request of the Trustees I undertook to prepare an account of the many facets of the Trust's work from its foundation. Thus this present work is an entirely fresh piece of research, that does not depend upon or repeat material published in 1874 or 1933. It will be necessary to refer to the 1933 book in order to see the text of the

wills of Robert Hibbert and George Case as well as the original schedule as they are not repeated here. Neither have the various schemes under which the Trust has operated been included. Required by Hibbert's will to be reconsidered every twenty-five years, there are five schemes in all — dated 1879, 1893, 1921, 1944 and 1968 although there were revisions in intervening years. The schemes of 1893, 1921 and 1944 are not essentially different so a detailed consideration of the minor changes that took place has not been attempted. The 1968 scheme was a radical re-appraisal, which for the first time brought the regulations into the main body and made the whole thing much smaller. The 1968 revision is included as an Appendix; it is on the basis of this that the Trust operates today.

The research and preparation of the text took over two years to complete, commencing at the beginning of 1981. All the Trust records have been made available to me, and I must particularly thank Rev. James McClelland, the Trust secretary, for all the time, effort and support that he has given me. I am grateful to the following people and institutions who have helped me, either by providing information or with help and advice, undoubtedly they have made my task much easier: Dr S. J. Kennett, Mr M. H. Winder (the senior trustees), Mrs Amy Howarth, Rev. Dr L. A. Garrard, Rev. Andrew Hill, Dr Williams's Library, Council for Voluntary Welfare Work with H.M. Forces, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and Manchester College, Oxford. Many others have assisted me in different ways, but they are too numerous to mention. I thank them all. The usual caveat must apply that the conclusions are mine, and not those of anyone who has helped me.

Jerom Murch in 1874 asked at the end of his preface — “who was Mr Robert Hibbert?” It is doubtful whether anyone writing today could supply a full and adequate answer to this question though I have tried to paint a reasonable and accurate picture from the few sources available. But what is a more realisable task is to present an evaluation of the work of the Trust that bears his name over the one hundred and thirty years of its life. This I have attempted in the pages which follow.

Oxhey, Watford, Herts.
31st January 1983.

Alan Ruston

Abbreviations used in the text

Abbreviations for organisations, manuscripts and printed works frequently referred to are as follows:—

BHT	<i>The Book of the Hibbert Trust</i> , printed for private circulation 1933 (159 pages, including the wills of Hibbert and Case)
GA/GENERAL ASSEMBLY	The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (from 1928)
HH	Hibbert Houses
HJ	<i>The Hibbert Journal</i>
HMC	Unitarian Home Missionary College, situated in Manchester. It was established in 1854 as the Unitarian Home Missionary Board, becoming the College in 1889. See also UCM below
HT	Hibbert Trust
HTM	Hibbert Trust Minutes, held by the Trustees in their office at 14 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG
MCO	Manchester College, Oxford (from 1889)
MNC	Manchester New College, situated in London 1853-1889 in Gordon Square
TUHS	<i>Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society</i> , published annually from 1916
UCM	Unitarian College, Manchester (from 1926)

1. ROBERT HIBBERT AND HIS TRUST

Robert Hibbert would be an almost forgotten man if it were not for his Trust Fund. It has given him a form of immortality with his name being perpetuated in published works that circulate in religious and academic circles the world over. Born in Jamaica in 1769, he was the grandson of Robert Hibbert (d. 1762) of Stockfield Hall, Lancashire, and the posthumous son of John Hibbert (1732-1769) and Janet (died circa 1780), daughter of Samuel Gordon.¹ Left an orphan at an early age, with a considerable fortune from the family mercantile house based in London, he was a pupil of Gilbert Wakefield in Nottingham from 1784 to 1788. Undoubtedly, it was during this period that Robert was first influenced by the radical Nonconformist religious opinion of his famous schoolmaster. It is, however, uncertain whether Robert was of Dissenting stock. Proceeding to Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1788, he created friendships with some of the radical thinkers of the time, including a life-long one with William Frend (1757-1841) who had become Unitarian by this time and was later removed from his University fellowship for his opinions in 1793. Hibbert graduated in 1791 (he had to declare himself a member of the Church of England in order to do so), and went back to Jamaica and the family firm the same year. He acquired considerable property in the West Indies including a large number of slaves. Returning permanently to England about 1805, with his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Ballard Nembhard, he bought a country estate at East Hyde, near Luton, Bedfordshire in 1806.² Although still connected with the family firm he had a large income from his West Indian property, but in the 1830's his financial position was weakened as a result of the end of slavery. He sold East Hyde in 1833 and lived in London, mainly in Welbeck Street until his death there on 23 September 1849 at the age of 79. He was interred at Kensal Green Cemetary.³ No portrait of Robert Hibbert is known to exist.

Very little is known of Hibbert's life between 1805 and 1849, but

C. G. Montefiore writing in *The Hibbert Journal* in July 1933 sums it up:

“His life included very many acts of quiet, thoughtful, unobtrusive and unself-advertising benevolence. Of wide sympathies, kindly, tolerant and gentle, he was also a sturdy liberal in politics and a sturdy Unitarian in religion; he had rather strong views about established churches.”

Frend’s favourite elder daughter Sophia (later Mrs de Morgan) provides a more personal memory:

“In my very early days, barley sugar was in the ascendant, and associated with the recollection of it is the beaming, kind face of the founder of the Hibbert Lectures, Mr Robert Hibbert, who was a very old friend of my father’s. He was fond of children, and, having none of his own, did everything in his power to spoil those of his friends, giving them large supplies of figs, barley-sugar and candy-sugar.”⁴

He did not take his MA degree as it would have involved him signing the Thirty Nine Articles. Ironically, whilst owner of East Hyde, he had by right his own gallery in Luton Parish Church though there is no evidence that he ever used it. As a Justice of the Peace he attended Quarter Sessions at Bedford between 1814 and 1830. In January 1819 he founded a charity at Luton to provide almshouses for 24 widows. The charity is still in existence and the almshouses (built 1885) are situated in Hibbert Street, Luton, named obviously after the charity’s founder.⁵

William Frend, as well as other Unitarians, pressed Hibbert to renounce his ownership of slaves, a property that was considered immoral, but he was unconvinced. However, in 1817 on Frend’s advice he sent to Jamaica a Unitarian minister, Rev. Thomas Cooper, to improve the lot of slaves on his estate by giving them religious instruction. Cooper returned to England in 1821 and no replacement was sent out; his report, published in 1824, produced a heated controversy. The tide of popular opinion in England was working against slavery and profits were falling. He had sold all his estates in the West Indies by 1836 with some financial loss and lived for the remainder of his life on diminishing invested capital.

But what of the Trust that bears his name? The long controversy over the Lady Hewley Charity, culminating in the Dissenter’s Chapels Act 1844, had prevented the formation of trust funds for the benefit of Unitarians and their chapels over a long period for fear that they could be alienated from their original purposes by a

hostile court ruling. After the passing of the Act various rich Unitarians felt that they wanted to do something for the benefit of the movement, now that it was safe to do so. An elderly and childless Robert Hibbert who had so many friends and long connections with Unitarians and their churches was in this category. His aim in 1846 was “to elevate the position and the public influence of the Unitarian ministry” and his original idea was to increase the stipends of a number of ministers. “I fear that there is a lamentable lack of funds among us hereticks” (letter to Jerom Murch, 30 April 1846). His friends advised on the setting up of a Trust Fund and the chief moulding force was Edwin Wilkins Field (1804-1871) who was to play such an important role in the evolution of the Trust. Field was against adding to stipends or making grants for students to go to a theological college as the Fund would just become a dispenser of charity, and would “tempt into the ministry men of inferior breed and abilities”. He urged that the right thing to do was to create “a higher intellectual bearing in the very best and topmost of the men who go into the ministry” so that they may become “cultivated scholars, men knowing the world and accomplished gentlemen”; for “nothing could be more important than to secure the review by able religionists, of the great public moral subjects of each succeeding day, from what may be called the Unitarian platform”. Finally, he advised against the use of the word “Unitarian” in the Trust deed — “Our Law Courts would be sure to fix some improper meaning on it”.⁶

An old friend, Captain James Gifford of Jersey, early in 1847 recommended a fund to improve ministerial incomes. The Giffords were keen Unitarians and Hibbert stayed with them in 1838. Others also recommended the creation of a stipend augmentation Fund but Hibbert generally accepted Field’s advice and rejected the idea.⁷ But Hibbert was very clear on one point — all recipients of benefits must be heterodox. “He said he was an old pupil of Gilbert Wakefield’s and had strong views on that point”. James Taplin, writing in *The Inquirer* on 19 September 1874 put it more strongly: “Mr Hibbert was utterly averse to Trinitarianism in any of its ancient or modern phases, whether a Tritheism of persons or manifestations, characters, and modes of being. He has been heard to say, again and again, that not a copper of his money should ever be used for the support and diffusion of Trinitarian orthodoxy.” So firm was this view that all Field could do was to get the title Hibbert wanted for his Fund — the Anti-Trinitarian

Fund — put in the Schedule and not in the Deed itself. C. G. Montefiore concludes that “Hibbert was more of a good fighting Unitarian than is common nowadays”. There is little doubt that Hibbert wanted Unitarians alone to benefit from his Trust and that only anti-Trinitarians could be his Trustees.

Realising how Unitarian thinking had changed with the years, Robert Hibbert did not want to tie his Trustees, and decided to give them wide latitude in the interpretation of the Deed. Besides affirming anti-Trinitarianism, Hibbert wanted his fund to help create a Unitarian platform so that its beliefs and principles could be spread widely as the Established Church declined to what he believed was its final nemesis. Very elitist by modern standards, the Trust was to develop and foster the best applicants for the Unitarian ministry. The scheme he set out in the Schedule, as a sort of general idea of what he individually had in mind, might be changed or even neglected, but however the proceeds of the Fund were applied, it must be in ways which the Trustees held “to be most conducive to the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form, and to the unfettered exercise of private judgment in matters of religion”.⁸ This now famous phrase associated with the Hibbert Trust (the Anti-Trinitarian title was dropped in the 1850’s) has always been the kernel of its activities, against which all its work and effort has to be measured. What can “Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form” mean? The Trustees have tried to fathom the complexities of this simple statement, and express its meaning in terms of their own time. C. G. Montefiore, an Anglican onlooker, asked many of the right questions in 1933:⁸

“Are the words a mere synonym for Unitarianism? Is it necessarily the case that in religion what is simplest is truest? May not truth be many-sided and even complex? Perhaps the most “intelligible” form of Christianity to a philosopher would be exceedingly unintelligible to the man in the street. But these problems must be left unanswered. Meanwhile the educated English-speaking world is the richer in that the Trustees took a generous view of what is “most conducive to the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form.”

How the Trustees did this and departed from the rigidities placed in the Schedule to the Deed by the founder is the story of their decisions and activities in the twenty or so years after Robert Hibbert’s death.

References

1. For accounts of Robert Hibbert’s life see J. Murch’s Memoir in *The Book of the Hibbert Trust* (1933); the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* by Alexander Gordon; *Memorable Unitarians*, R. Spears, 1906, pages 192-4; Robert Hibbert and his religious background by S. G. Lee, *The Hibbert Journal* 1953, pages 319-328. For an account of the Hibbert Family in Jamaica see articles in *Caribbeana* (1916) by Miss Mabel Nembhard, and V. L. Oliver.
2. *Victoria History of Bedfordshire*, Vol. 2 page 357.
3. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, November 1849, page 552; *Christian Reformer* 1853, pages 246-249.
4. *Three Score Years and Ten; reminiscences of the late Sophia Elizabeth de Morgan* (1809-92); edited by Mary de Morgan, London 1895, p. 23.
5. For Hibbert’s connection with Bedfordshire see, *Victoria History*, Vol. 2, p. 375 and H. G. Tibbutt’s article on Bedfordshire links with Unitarians, TUHS 1969, pages 123-5.
6. S. G. Lee, *ibid.* page 320.
7. Letter *The Inquirer*, 1 August 1874, page 500: TUHS, 1971, page 26.
8. Review of *The Book of the Hibbert Trust*, C. G. Montefiore, *The Hibbert Journal* July 1933, pages 627-629.

2. THE EARLY YEARS

Robert Hibbert created his Trust by making a legal declaration on July 19th 1847 but it was not to come into effect until after both his own and his wife's death. Mrs Elizabeth Jane Hibbert died on 15th February 1853 which allowed the two trustees named in the will — Mark Philips of Snitterfield and Robert Philips of Heybridge — to choose sixteen others to become trustees with them. A printed letter was sent out to selected leading Unitarians all over the country (even before Mrs Hibbert had died), and it was possible to assemble a sufficient number to meet for the first time on 7th July 1853 at University Hall, Gordon Square in London. Out of the eighteen trustees, seventeen attended and executed the Deed. Four were made custodians of the Fund, who together with the trustees living in London formed “a committee to consider and report upon the best scheme for administering the funds and carrying on the business of the Trust”.

The trustees did not really have a lot to go on. The Deed was quite short, its main features being that:

“(i) The Trustees of this Deed shall henceforth and for ever pay and apply the dividends, interest and income, thenceforth to arise from the said Trust Fund, as they in their uncontrolled discretion shall from time to time deem most conducive to the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form, and to the unfettered exercise of private judgement in matters of religion, and upon no other trust whatsoever.

“(ii) Each twenty-five years, the Trustees shall revise and thoroughly reconsider any and every scheme they may have adopted, provided that none of the income or principal fund be spent on buildings.

“(iii) The Trustees may appoint fresh people to their number, occasioned by death or retirement on account of age or bodily infirmity, though no minister of religion is to be appointed or remain a Trustee.

“(iv) Concurrence of two thirds of Trustees, provided that six at least are present at a meeting, is sufficient to all interests and purposes, though four Trustees must be present at any other

meetings.

“(v) As the mode of giving effect to the paramount object, I hereby declare, by way of suggestion, but not at all by way of direction to the Trustees, that if and when and so long as they in their absolute discretion shall think fit, they may adopt and act upon the scheme set forth in the Schedule.

“(vi) The cost of half-yearly dinners, as mentioned in the Schedule, to be met out of the income of the Fund.”

The Schedule is shorter than the Deed, consisting of twenty-four brief sections. Both the Will and Schedule are set out in full in *The Book of the Hibbert Trust* pages 111-122. The non-binding Schedule stated that the Fund was to be called the Anti-Trinitarian Fund. Three or more divinity scholarships were to be established, the candidates being graduates of universities, “where degrees shall be for the time being granted without requiring subscription or assent to any articles of religious belief or submission to any test of religious doctrine.” Candidates shall be subject to examination and when appointed to and holding a scholarship shall not be “a settled or stated minister of any congregation”. Each candidate is to show to the satisfaction of the Trustees, and must declare in writing that he deliberately intends thereafter to exercise the office of a minister of religion among those who shall profess themselves to be Christians, but shall not profess any belief in the doctrine of the Trinity in any sense of that doctrine now commonly considered orthodox. This declaration is to be confirmed every six months backed up by a written report to be presented by each scholar on his progress over the same period.

As to the trustees, their meetings were to be advertised and open to the public and anyone not attending for two whole years at the half-yearly meetings shall cease to be a trustee. The trustees shall dine together half-yearly inviting late and present Scholars and Examiners as they think fit as their guests.

E. W. Field was the chief influence on Robert Hibbert in the formation of his will. What Field recommended is contained in a long letter he wrote to *The Christian Reformer* and published in April 1853, some sections from which have already been quoted in the previous chapter. The same issue contains a succinct account of the Trust's creation. Why all this information was being laid before the Unitarian public in a newspaper not apparently to Field's taste can be gathered from his covering letter to the editor, dated 3rd March 1853, which was also published in the April issue:

“According to my promise, I now transmit you a copy of a paper of suggestions as to gift for the advantage of the Unitarian ministry, drawn up by me in 1847, at the request of the late Mr Hibbert . . . I dare say that many or most of your readers will, more or less, differ from my views as to the decline of the influence of our ministers, and of our modes of thought, on the general public; and also as to the value, with reference to that influence, of endowments directed to increase ministers’ stipends, or to give annuities to their widows or families”.

In conclusion the editor, Rev. R. B. Aspland, stated “we do not profess to adopt all Mr Field’s opinions”; Aspland’s own view was made clear when he described the Trust as being for the “promotion of Unitarian Christianity”.

Field was apparently justifying himself, as the announcement of the contents of the Trust Deed early in 1853 provoked disappointment and opposition in some quarters when it became clear that the Fund was not going to be used to help existing Unitarian chapels and ministers. The Committee of Trustees meeting on 19th July 1853 decided to ask leading Unitarian ministers for their views on how the Trust should develop, possibly to allay the concern.¹ Their replies were printed and inserted in the first minute book. Many of the ideas and suggestions contained in these letters were used by Trustees as the basis for new ventures for the rest of the century. But the main points to come out of them was a general support for adoption of the Schedule, and also for giving financial assistance to Manchester New College. At their second full meeting on 7th December 1853, the Trustees agreed to adopt the Schedule but ruled that funds would not be given to endow professorships at the college. They decided to drop the Anti-Trinitarian title and did nothing about announcing their meetings in advance and making them open to the public.

In the first few years of the Trust, activity centred on the method of selecting scholars and on the appointment of examiners for the scholarships. The early minutes show frequent meetings were held but are not very revealing about the differences and arguments that must have taken place between the Trustees. The working of the Trust, especially the idea of the dinners, was modelled on Dr Williams’s Trust which had for so long been such an influence on Nonconformity. Procedures were adopted which were similar to those developed by the older Trust as some Trustees, like Richard Martineau, sat on both bodies. Perhaps the key question at that

time, and still today, was the connection of the Trust with the Unitarian movement, and to what extent “Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form” was synonymous with Unitarian Christianity. That E. W. Field and the important and active Mark Philips (1800-1873) were Unitarians, there is no doubt. Field awaits his proper biographer, but the role he played in the passing of the Dissenters Chapels Act 1844 as well as in the foundation of University Hall in 1849 was a vital and important one for the Unitarian movement. But he did not sit easily in the same camp with the assertive, sectarian, Scripture-based Unitarianism of *The Christian Reformer* tradition:

“Though he was a sincere Unitarian, he was, like Dr Channing, ‘little of a Unitarian’ in the sense of laying immeasurably more stress on the religiousness of the heart and life than on any intellectual conclusions whatsoever . . . True to the Presbyterian tradition in which he was brought up, he was strongly of the opinion that no congregation should attempt to bind after generations to any doctrines or forms under penalty of renouncing ancestral property.”²

Field possessed tremendous energy, which he applied to a large number of activities and was the Trust’s honorary secretary from the start until December 1853 when Rev. D. Davison was appointed the first paid secretary. As he moulded Robert Hibbert’s thinking, so he pushed and pressed the Trustees to follow his views. “His strong way of putting things was sometimes rather overpowering and rendered it a formidable task for those who sincerely differed from him to stand their ground.”² Though Field and his fellow Trustees were, in the main, Unitarians of the non-dogmatic unsectarian type and attracted to the theological views of Rev. James Martineau, there were other reasons for their belief in a low key approach. Unitarians in general had become unsettled by legal disputes in the courts and had lost the assurance to proclaim their faith under their own name. Rev. Fred Kenworthy sums up the atmosphere of the 1840’s and 1850’s:

“The Dissenters’ Chapels Act removed a paralysing fear, that the ancient meeting houses which had become Unitarian would be lost to the movement. On the other hand, the struggle for the Act had discouraged doctrinal propaganda: men were afraid of clear and definite teaching lest it should become dogmatic and imperil the principle of freedom on which the claim to posses-

sion of the old meeting houses mainly rested. One result of this attitude is to be noted in the report of Rev. Hugh Hutton, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association's home agent 1852-56. He described one bar to progress as 'the avowed disinclination of a large number of the better educated and more wealthy members of our churches to give any part of their sympathy or support to efforts aiming at the diffusion of a knowledge of our religious principles in a doctrinal form or under the Unitarian name'.³

Field and his fellow Trustees did their "utmost to keep the Trust out of the Court of Chancery as it had been founded when the litigation respecting our endowments was still recent".⁴ Field had got Robert Hibbert to put in the Deed itself that the Trustees should not be liable to be called to account in any Court of Equity for their actions. The tendency to avoid the Unitarian label helped to loosen the Trust's ties with the movement. This was not the Founder's intention though the discretion he gave his Trustees allowed it to happen. Not that all the Trustees were of the same mind; the first open argument was on this very subject in 1855-56 when Thomas Wrigley moved that the words "Anti-Trinitarian" be put on all documents after "Hibbert Trust".⁵ This was lost by three votes to six, and at the same time the claim by North of England trustees for their travelling expenses was lost by six votes to seven.⁶ The argument over the latter went on for years, and it is likely that had not so many Trustees from the North of England (mainly cotton manufacturers from the Manchester area) resigned in the early years of the Trust, a more distinct Unitarian and regional slant would be discerned in Trust decisions. The South of England Trustees thereafter had a dominating interest in the Trust and during its long history the Trust has rarely met outside London, although there is nothing in the Deed or Scheme to require this concentration on the capital. From its earliest days a significant proportion of the Trustees have lived outside the London area. The argument over travelling expenses, covered very adequately in *The Book of the Hibbert Trust* pages 52-54, was really a North versus South debate. It probably reflected a social division as well as one in attitude towards organised Unitarianism. Possibly Field's stand and character had something to do with it. Some of the Trustees and many outside in the churches felt that Field and his supporters were leading the Trust along strange paths, and that he in particular had indelibly stamped his up-

dated, legalistic Victorian version of English Presbyterianism on the frankly sectarian trust that Robert Hibbert had intended.

These undercurrents of feeling did not stop the Trust setting up and running successfully the divinity scholarship scheme. A stringent series of examinations was set each year by distinguished scholars, who gave long and detailed reports to the Trustees on the candidates' performance. The range and depth of knowledge required even to sit the examinations was considerable. The 1865 examination, for example, required "a substantial acquaintance" with each of the following subjects: Greek, Latin, English History, Hebrew, German, Greek Testament, Scripture History, Logic and Moral Philosophy, Mathematics and Natural Philosophy.⁷ The list of successful scholars, many of whom became Trust Fellows, both up to 1874 and beyond reads like a roll-call of the leading Unitarian ministers of a later period (see BHT pages 153-155). Taken entirely from amongst the students of Manchester New College, they were all excellent scholars. Critics argued that there was an over concentration on the pursuit of academic excellence. One such was J. J. Tayler who wrote to James Martineau,

"I think the Trust's an excellent institution, and capable of the best fruits. I also have the best opinion of the intentions of the present managers. But I am not perfectly satisfied with its present working. Its connection with the spiritual wants of our churches does not seem to me sufficiently direct and close. I think it very undesirable that a young man who obtains a scholarship under this Trust should have a prospect of indefinite leisure before him for the prosecution of his studies".⁸

But the Trust's financial support for the higher education of the leading applicants for the Unitarian Ministry helped to make many of them into "refined accomplished scholars", who were later able to make a real contribution to liberal religious thought. Some even produced learned attacks on the Trinity which would have really delighted Robert Hibbert.

One of the key questions in the early years was the relationship with Manchester New College. Pressure came from leading ministers and others for the Trust to endow a professorship at the college. This was rejected by the Trustees, but the divinity scholarship scheme was formulated in such a way that, before 1872, it was virtually impossible for any student other than from Manchester New College to benefit. This was because the adopted

Schedule required that all had to be graduates, and that the degree could not be of a university that demanded subscription to any religious belief. Only the University of London was able to meet this criterion. Connections between the Trust and the college were close as Robert and Mark Philips were associated with the running of both. Applications, though rare, from the other British Unitarian college were not entertained. "We have in our body two educational institutions — MNC and the Unitarian Home Missionary Board — which are not only distinct in aim and course of study, but their students are generally taken from very different classes of society."⁹ In 1868 an application for a form of scholarship from one of the best students of the Home Missionary Board reading for his BA degree at Owens College, Manchester, was received but was turned down on the basis that "the trustees consider that the leading aim of the Trust is to encourage among the ministers who are its objects as high a degree of scholarship as possible and that they are not at present disposed to apply the funds to any student who has not taken a university degree" (HTM 23rd June 1868). This is the first instance of preference, discernable throughout the Trust's history, for supporting through scholarships the students of Manchester New College over those from other colleges. It was not until much later that scholarships were awarded to students of other colleges, although the Trustees were prepared to make a grant to enable a student of the Unitarian Home Missionary Board to take a London degree in 1882.

But there were tensions between Manchester New College and the Trust. Joint committees consisting of representatives of both were regularly set up to solve outstanding issues. In 1872 the Trust took part in one such committee to consider the proposal to remove the college from London to Oxford (see BHT pages 58-60). Nothing, however, came of the initiative. Concern was constantly being expressed that the Scholarships were confirming the original fears of leading ministers and laymen that the Trust's system was creating over-academic ministers not geared to the practical ministry and effective preaching. In his original letter to the Trust of 15th September 1853, Rev. James Martineau put the point clearly: "I am convinced that the purely academic life destroys the healthy balance of nature, and induces a sort of phthisis, under which either religion becomes feverish, or the moral substance of a man grows attenuated and feeble". Various proposals to remedy this situation were made over the years but to

no avail, and for various reasons the Scholarship arrangements remained essentially the same until 1872 when the system of written examinations was dropped.

In 1872 with Oxford and Cambridge being opened to Nonconformists and others for the first time, the Trustees resolved that "in order to attract Scholars from a wider area than that which has hitherto supplied them with candidates, the Trustees shall have power to grant Travelling Scholarships tenable for two years, but extenable to three, in some foreign University, with a view to such a course of study as may be approved by the Trustees" (HTM 24th June 1873). The conditions of the scheme are set out in *The Book of the Hibbert Trust* pages 61-64. This idea, suggested first to the Trustees by Rev. R. B. Aspland in June 1853, was innovatory in that the Travelling Scholarships were not to be limited to those who wished to become ministers of religion. However, to ensure that the recipient was in harmony with the general principles of the Trust, a written declaration had to be made that "he does in matters of Theology and Religion exercise private judgment free from any fetters of written or unwritten declarations of faith and for the better cultivation of such judgment is anxious to devote himself to the scientific study and treatment of such matters in the spirit of unprejudiced search of and pursuit of truth in so far as he may be able to discern it by means of the widest learning he can attain."

This attempt to widen the Trust and bring into the sphere of liberal religion the best products of the ancient Universities was imaginative and quite unique in its time and must be recognised as such. It was a pioneering venture in a rigidly sectarian age and its historical importance has not been fully recognised. Eleven candidates were attracted from the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and four were given the first Travelling Scholarships.

However none were associated in any way with the Unitarian movement, and most, although able in personal conscience to make the declaration, were members of the Church of England. This may not have worried the Trustees, but the whole idea came under strong attack from certain Unitarians, as they saw this as yet a further device of the Trustees to alienate the Funds intended for them by Robert Hibbert. The leader in *The Inquirer* of 5th September 1874 discussed the subject at some length:

"the declaration could be signed by an avowed Comtist, who

regards all religion and theology as moonshine as well as by a devout Trinitarian, who conscientiously regards the Creeds as no fetters upon his inquiries but as an expression of primitive Christian opinion, invaluable aids to preserve him from wandering into the mazes of Socinian and Theistic error . . . Not one of the four has the slighted connection with Unitarian or Liberal Christian Churches, nor is there the slightest guarantee that they propose to devote themselves to the interests of that free theology which Mr Hibbert earnestly desired to promote and which all his Trustees, we presume, have equally at heart . . . It is possible that the recent action of the Trust may be approved by those who think it narrow and sectarian to countenance our own neglected ministry, and to promote the interests of our own free Churches.”

On 3rd October 1874, *The Inquirer* editor, Rev. T. L. Marshall went even further:

“It appears to us that the four non-Unitarian Travelling Scholars and the Unitarian Trustees are now equally responsible for the misapplication of the Hibbert Anti-Trinitarian Fund . . . We may add that evidence is constantly accumulating in our hands of the intense dissatisfaction felt at the recent action of the Trustees by those who are best acquainted with the history of the Fund, and the opinions and intentions of the enlightened Founder.”

This outburst from the editor was in response to a letter from one of the recipients of a Hibbert Travelling Scholarship, R. W. Macon, which appeared to confirm all the Unitarians’ worst suspicions. He wrote: “I am destined for the Anglican Ministry as little as for the Unitarian Ministry, though I trust that the advantages which I am at present enjoying may be of very immediate bearing upon any educational or literary work in store for me”. All this was part of what could be called the Unitarian attack of 1874 on the Trust. Occasioned by the publication of the memoir on Robert Hibbert, written by Jerom Murch, the question of the Travelling Scholarships was one of the main planks of the virulent assault on the Trust in the Unitarian press which went on for months. Several people, including James Martineau, pressed the Trustees to introduce Travelling Scholarships for Unitarian ministers or Hibbert scholars bound for such a ministry, but to no avail. Long articles, editorials, letters emanated from the pro-

tagonists on each side. The year of 1874 marks a watershed in the history of the Trust, as besides the memoir and the attack from organised Unitarianism, there was a change in the make-up of the Trustees. Field was drowned in 1871, Mark Philips died in 1873 and altogether in the period 1870-1875 there were five new trustees. Between 1870 and 1877 half the membership changed; this meant the advent of new ideas and actions that were to expand and enlarge the work of the Trust.¹⁰

References

1. *The Book of the Hibbert Trust*, edited W. H. Drummond, 1933 page 44 gives the names of those asked for their views.
2. *E. W. Field; a memorial sketch*, Dr T. Sadler, London 1872, pages 128-130, 132-134, 141. BHT pages 65-73 gives further background detail on his life.
3. Story of Unitarianism; Ebb and Flow, Fred Kenworthy, *The Inquirer* 6th June 1959 page 181.
4. Leader, *The Inquirer* 5th December 1874 page 785.
5. Field in 1846 advised Hibbert against the Anti-Trinitarian stand. “I wished him to fix his ban on the doctrine of the Atonement, as being a doctrine not merely metaphysical and practically incomprehensible like that of the Trinity, but one which goes to the very nature and scheme of the Divine government, and to the very fundamental principles of right and wrong. He, however, selected the other dogma as his touchstone.” Field letter to *Christian Reformer* 3rd March 1853. Hibbert did not require his Trustees to be Unitarian though he knew it would be unlikely for any but a Unitarian to join in an Anti-Trinitarian Trust.
6. HTM, Meeting 25th June 1856.
7. HT Examination Schedule 1865, Dr Williams’s Library. Ref. 93.A.36 and 37.
8. J. J. Tayler to J. Martineau, 8th August 1861.
9. *The Inquirer*, 26th September 1874, page 631.
10. Other innovations had been made in the period up to 1874. Book grants to former Scholars were introduced in 1869, and continued in subsequent years on the suggestion of Rev. C. Wicksteed.

3. THE EXPANSION OF THE TRUST

C. Jerom Murch (1807-1895, knighted 1890) as “almost the only Trustee who had the pleasure of Robert Hibbert’s personal acquaintance” decided in the early 1870’s to assemble an account of the Founder’s life as there was a “strong desire to know something about him by my co-Trustees, and by gentlemen who have already been aided by the Fund.”¹ A competent historian, his work is one of the main sources we have on Robert Hibbert. Printed for private circulation only, it was favourably reviewed at some length in *The Inquirer* in the issue of 25 July 1874, the reviewer concluding “Mr Hibbert has benefitted so many by his Trust, and that Trust itself is so remarkable, in the spirit of freedom which it breathes and inspires, that our readers have reason to regret that Mr Murch’s memorial is for private circulation.”

This let the cork out of the Unitarian bottle of frustration which had been so tightly stopped since 1853 through lack of information. For the first time a full account by a Trustee and former Secretary of the Trust setting out the will and how the Trustees had interpreted it over twenty years was available.

The question of the Trust’s relationship with the Unitarian movement dominated the issues of *The Inquirer* for September and October 1874, and some of the arguments first put forward at that time have remained live issues until modern times.²

Firstly it was argued that the Founder’s intention to benefit the Unitarian ministry had been, in large measure, frustrated. A long editorial appeared on 5 September 1874 which stated: “a portion of the public which this journal professes to represent seems at a loss to know what special advantage has resulted to our churches, or what contributions have been made to the noble literature of a Free Theology, which would not have been given to the world had the Trust never existed”.

Of the 27 people listed in the memoir who benefitted from the Fund in the first 21 years, the writer of the editorial concluded that three have withdrawn from the Ministry and that Mr William Sharman (grant recipient 1865-67), “formerly a Red Republican

orator of Hyde Park, and now a railway clerk in one of the Western states of America, has not yet favoured the public with any contribution to theological literature in return for the grant he received in aid of theological studies, which seem to have been prematurely interrupted by political aspirations” (William Sharman was briefly a minister in the USA and subsequently of Unitarian congregations in the UK).

After considering the Travelling Scholarships, it is presumably the editor, Rev. T. L. Marshall (1825-1915), who concluded “we cannot refrain from saying that we know of no Trust in modern times which has been more widely, although no doubt unintentionally perverted from the objects of the Founder”.

The second area of attack was that the Trustees had ignored or wrongly interpreted much of the Will and Schedule and had gone their own perverse way to the detriment of Unitarianism. The knowledge that Rev. James Martineau and other leading ministers had advised on the award of scholarships upset those who disliked Martineau and his theological position, so that the attack on the Trust became part of the bitter theological controversy of the day. Rev T.L. Marshall, editor of *The Inquirer* 1856-1888, wrote in 1892 “I freely confess that had I to go over the same career again I should adopt a more reconciling spirit in reference to the curious discussions that once threatened to divide us.”

Scholars familiar with detailed textual criticism of the Bible used the same methods on Hibbert’s will. The Schedule which recommended that the Trust’s meetings should be open to the public was much discussed as this provision had never been put into force. Many correspondents wished to be informed when the next Trust meeting was to be made open to the public. But the chief objection remained the travelling scholarships given to mainly orthodox laymen, and the objectors wanted to know where in the will, in its letter or spirit, this was allowed. A correspondent in the issue for 5 December 1874 went over every one of the twenty four clauses of the Schedule and showed to his own satisfaction how each had been departed from by the Trustees. But he added: “Almost the only clause which seems to have been rigidly adhered to is the twenty-second, instituting annual dinners at the expense of the Trust. We may leave it to our readers to imagine the singularly appropriate terms in which ‘the pious memory of the Founder’ is proposed and received by Trustees who have departed from every principle which he regarded as fundamental.”

This same unsigned article summed up in strong terms the major objections to the decisions of the Trustees believed by many Unitarians at the time to be crucial in the operation of the Trust. "It seems to us to be capable of indubitable proof that the benevolent and enlightened Founder of this Trust never for a moment contemplated the three following objects which the Trustees this year carried into effect.

- a. the opening of the Trust to religionists of all denominations,
- b. the creation of lay Scholarships, altogether dispensing with the intention of following the ministerial profession,
- c. the offering of a premium to cowardice and insincerity by bestowing scholarships upon men who are ready to profess liberal opinions for the sake of valuable emoluments, but are not prepared to leave the Church of England and other creed-bound communions, in order to devote themselves to the study of Theology, in the spirit of unprejudiced search after truth."

Did all this controversy have any effect on the Trustees? It would appear not very much; they changed nothing in that they continued to offer travelling scholarships to non-Unitarians, and did not open their meetings to the public, although repeatedly challenged to do so. They did, however, reduce the emphasis placed on the travelling scholarships which occupied a diminishing place in the Trust's priorities in future years, though the reasons for this are unclear. If anything, it is likely that the attacks confirmed the Trustees in their course, and made them more secretive in their deliberations which in turn made the sectarian Unitarians of the period more distrustful. Certainly it cut the Trust off from this wing of Unitarianism, and increased the influence of the Martineau school and Manchester New College over its thinking, although there is plenty of evidence to show that the Trustees were always determined to follow an independent line.

Not only did the new Trustees of the 1870's help to introduce travelling scholarships, but also the principle of paying Trustees their travelling expenses was accepted in 1875 which had been so divisive an issue in the 1850's. The period 1874 to 1880 was one of the most fertile and active times for the Trust in that the idea of the Hibbert Lectures was first suggested in 1875 and in 1877 arrangements were concluded with Rev. Charles Beard, Editor of *The Theological Review* for the Trust to pay for certain articles to appear. This last decision may not appear to have been particularly

important at the time, but it was the first occasion that financial support for a liberal theological periodical was given by the Trust; the principle was acknowledged to be an important one in later years.

It was Rev. Joseph Estlin Carpenter (1844-1927), who had connections with the Trust for over 50 years, that first suggested the Hibbert Lectures in a letter to the Trustees. But it was Rev. James Martineau who did the real work of turning the idea into a practical proposition; thus Martineau can be considered to be the midwife of the Hibbert Lectures. The Trust Minutes for 22 June 1875 record that the Trustees "would be disposed to welcome occasional dissertations on prominent theological subjects by able and judicious men and that the matter be more fully considered at a future Meeting." Discussions continued with various ministers, and a memorial in 1878 asked the Trustees to support such a venture. Memorials, i.e. a letter signed by a large number of distinguished people, were a popular Victorian device sent to august bodies to get things done. The Trust encouraged these memorials and even required them long after they had gone out of popularity for each new venture or idea (some they rejected after requesting their presentation).

But the proposal for the Lectures was strongly supported by the Trustees. The memorial dated December 1875 signed by some of the leading religious thinkers of the day was published in *The Inquirer* on 16 March 1878 as well as in national newspapers. Expressing appreciation of the rich literature coming from Germany and Holland, it stressed that:

"Such institutions as the Bampton Lecture at the University of Oxford, and the younger foundation of the Congregational Lecture among one branch of orthodox Nonconformists, have done much to direct the public mind to the defence of certain well-defined views of Christianity. We believe that a similar institution might prove of high service in promoting independence of judgment combined with religious reverence by exhibiting clearly from time to time some of the most important results of recent study in the great fields of philosophy, of Biblical criticism and comparative theology . . . A course, consisting of a series of not fewer than six lectures, might be delivered every two or three years in London, or in the chief towns of Great Britain, and then published."

As early as January 1876 it had been decided that Professor F.

Max Müller (1823-1900) of Oxford should be the first lecturer on the “Origins and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religions of India”. As he was unavailable until 1878, the trustees hoped that Dr Martineau would deliver the first lectures in 1877, but he declined, “urging that, if he did, the success of the experiment would be endangered.” (Trust Minutes 20 June 1876).

The first series of lectures were delivered during April, May and June 1878 in the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey by Müller. They caused a sensation nationally and had a profound effect on the intellectual religious life of the nation. This high claim is justified because of the nature and impact of Müller’s approach and material which was revolutionary when compared with the overwhelmingly orthodox Christian thinking of the 1870’s. *The Times* of 19 April 1878 announced that applications for the free tickets had been so numerous that each lecture would be delivered twice on the same day. *The Daily News* on 13 March 1878 welcomed the Lectures as a new departure and not linked to a “defensive Christian position”. Such was the interest created before their delivery that *The Times* on 25 April 1878 spent upwards of 500 words describing Hibbert, the Trust and its work based on Murch’s memoir, with a quotation from the will. On 25 April 1878 the first lecture was delivered, and on the following day *The Times* included one and a half columns describing the scene and what was said. Many dignitaries of the Church of England were present. “It deserves remark that at least half the audience were ladies, several being titled. Of the 1500 ticket holders, about one tenth were clergymen. The lecturer was warmly cheered both morning and evening”. Every lecture had a full attendance, and *The Times* reported each one at length. (It reported all the Lectures up to 1891 in considerable detail.) The only sour note was provided by the Anglican *Church Times* who concluded that the Trust was an arrangement “for the delivery of lectures on religious subjects in an irreligious spirit”. The lectures caught the public imagination although they were in no way easy to follow. Müller, one of the founders of the modern study of early religions, said of the Lectures “I have said what I have longed to say for many years . . . The more I see of the so-called heathen religions, the more I feel convinced that they contain germs of the highest truth. There is no distinction in kind between them and our own religion.”³

The religious atmosphere of Britain in the 1870’s was stuffy. Müller and later lecturers provided something new and unrelated to the endless arguments over Darwinianism that had been going

on for so many years. The early Hibbert Lectures were probably the most notable contribution that the Trust has made to the religious life of Great Britain. Their value lay not specifically in their content, though that was important in itself, but in the opening they gave to scholars mainly in the field of comparative religion to present new thinking to a large audience, not composed entirely of clergymen. Müller’s lectures were translated into several languages and had a wide circulation in India.

The trustees were very pleased with the results of their initiative and the Trust Minutes of 24 June 1879 show their thinking as to the future of the Lectures:

“Setting aside the refinements and formalities of merely ecclesiastical systems, the Trustees start with the assumption that it is impossible rightly to understand the origin and nature of Christianity and the essential principles of its development without a careful and comprehensive study of the pre-existing and concurrent religions of history . . . The Trustees can scarcely indicate the sequel of their plan in general terms more effectively than by quoting the following paragraph for which they are indebted to Professor Müller (Lecture 1, page 50). ‘Each religion had its own growth, each nation followed its own path through the wilderness. If these Lectures continue as I hope they may, other and better analysts of the human mind will hereafter disentangle and lay before you the manifold fibres that enter into the web of the earliest religious thoughts of man; other and more experienced guides will hereafter lead you through the valleys and deserts which were crossed by the great nations of antiquity . . . in their search after the infinite, that infinite which surrounded them as it surrounds us on every side and which they tried and tried in vain to grasp and comprehend.’”

To this end, they set up fifteen further heads on which lectures should be delivered and most were covered in those held in the period up to 1894. Known as the first series of the Lectures, they were concluded because the Trustees believed the schedule set in 1879 had been met. All were published and their standard and content established the name of Hibbert all over the world.⁴

They sold for many years after their initial delivery (some were reprinted), and the Trustees maintained a very detailed stock record. At each meeting, the Trustees noted the sales of individual copies but were also generous in their free distribution to ministers

and libraries. This is not the place to assess the importance of the individual lectures but those delivered in the period 1878-1888 are recognised to be of particular and lasting value. M. Renan, whose *Life of Christ* was one of the seminal Christian works of the 19th century, was invited to lecture in 1880. It was his first visit to England, and in the preface to the book of Lectures he wrote. "These Hibbert Lectures are in fact a kind of chair, occupied each year by a new professor, who speaks only of what he has specially studied. I therefore felt myself highly honoured when the trustees of this useful institution invited me to continue a work so nobly inaugurated."⁵

Not that many Unitarians were interested in the lectures, and a wing of the movement felt that they were not "Christian" enough in emphasis. Thus the attack on the Trust started all over again in the period 1879-1881, this time by the weekly *Christian Life* edited by Rev. Robert Spears.⁶ The lecturer in 1879, M. Le Page Renouf was a Roman Catholic, prompting the *Christian Life* on 14 September 1878 to conclude sarcastically, "The Trustees, by their appointing as their lecturers first an Oxford Professor and now a Roman Catholic, probably aim at avoiding offence to their orthodox friends".

Most of the correspondents on this subject were anonymous so Spears may have written some of them himself. Here are a selection which give some idea of feeling represented in the *Christian Life*:

- a. "I sincerely regret that Mr Hibbert ever founded such a trust." An Old Unitarian, 22 November 1879.
- b. "Surely those who desire to study the ancient heathenism of India might institute a course of lectures without entrenching on a fund dedicated by express desire of the donor to the spread of Christianity in most simple and intelligible form." An Observer, 29 November 1879.
- c. "Valuable as have been the lectures, and some other purposes for which the funds have been expanded, they were certainly not in accordance with the expressed wishes of the donor." WS, 16 April 1881.
- d. "Lectures upon heathen mythologies delivered in the London season, however interesting to the world of literature and fashion, hardly come within the scope of educating young men for the Christian ministry." A reminder, 12 February 1881.
- e. "I have gone carefully through the will of the late Mr Hibbert,

but without discovering any hints for applying the trust funds to teaching Oxford young girls French pronunciation." (the Lectures that year were delivered in French) J. G. Evans, 17 May 1884.

Would Robert Hibbert have approved of the Lectures? Only Mrs de Morgan, who was the recipient of barley sugar from him as a child, has commented on the matter. She became orthodox in later life so could be considered a reasonably independent commentator. She wrote in 1887:

"The Anti-Trinitarianism the teaching of which Hibbert contemplated was *very* simple . . . And the lectures given have been such to impart the most valuable knowledge in the most interesting form; but it is not easy for one who knew Robert Hibbert well and intimately with the singleness of his aims and the earnestness of his character, to reconcile the substance of the lectures with the promulgation of opinion which he contemplated . . . The circumstances of his bequest furnish material for thought on the possibility of the fulfilment by trustees of the intention of a legacy, especially when the design has reference to opinion . . . I was not long ago speaking of the inevitable misapplication of Hibbert's bequest with a clergyman who was well able to appreciate the use made of it, but whose opinions I believe to have been far more agnostic than those held by my old friend. After telling him of Mr Hibbert's simple, unmystical creed, I said:

'How do you think he would like this contravention of his wish?'

'I think', my friend said, 'that he would turn in his grave.'

'Perhaps' I said, 'if he were ever in it.'

But I went on, and hope I was not alone in the belief I expressed, that as the testator's range of vision was probably now much wider than it had been when he made his will, he would be satisfied by perceiving that his legacy, given to extend the knowledge of the Gospel, would do so more certainly, if less directly, by making known the origins of all those forms of religion which prepared the world to receive it, than if the money had been devoted to the repetition of arguments in support of his own views. Whichever way we look at the question, there is no doubt that a trust for the promulgation of opinions is a difficult thing to deal with."⁷

It would be wrong to suggest that the travelling scholarships or the lectures dominated the thinking of the Trustees in the period 1875-1914. The story of *The Hibbert Journal* founded in 1902 is dealt with in a later chapter. Manchester New College was always an interest of the Trust from the start and the Trust Minutes for 11 December 1877 record that “this meeting has heard with much satisfaction that it is proposed to remove MNC to Oxford and that the Trustees will be prepared to entertain favourably any definite proposal for assistance to that object . . .”

Nothing happened on the move to Oxford for various reasons until 1889 and the financial support of the Trustees, though requested, was not given. However, the removal of Manchester New College from University Hall, Gordon Square and the Hall’s subsequent purchase by Dr Williams’s Trust meant that the Trust had to negotiate with the new landlord for its office. This was done successfully and to this day, Dr Williams’s Trust remains the Trust’s landlords. Relations between the two Trusts have always been excellent, especially when the same Unitarian minister has been secretary of both.

The June dinner of the Trust, for so long held at the Trafalgar Inn, Greenwich, in 1890 took place at Oxford and so commenced a period which lasted beyond the First World War during which Manchester College, Oxford and its activities were the dominating influence on the Trust. Very little was done, particularly in academic matters, without the help and assistance of the Council or staff of the college. In 1893 the college asked the Trust to appoint a Hibbert Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History as a permanent member of staff of the College for a period of nine years. The Trustees agreed and Rev. J. Edwin Odgers was appointed both to lecture to ministerial students and to give public lectures in Oxford. Manchester New College had been pressing for such an appointment since the 1850’s and was at last successful. With the completion of the schedule of annual lectures in 1894, this new permanent lectureship was considered a fitting replacement that would be a continuous influence on religious thinking in Oxford. Odgers remained the Hibbert Lecturer at Oxford until 1906, submitting long and detailed reports on his work each year.

It was accepted that grants could be made to institutions as much as individuals, and the Hibbert Lectureship at Manchester College can be considered the first in this category. Others include a grant commencing in 1899 towards a teacher of religious instruction at Willaston School, a private school founded by Philip

Barker, a Unitarian. Support was given for decades, but the Trustees were constantly concerned as to level and quality of the religious education which they supported. In 1906 a grant was made to support *The Inquirer* for three years. Except for short periods, this grant has been continuous to this day and must be considered as one of the major financial supports given to the Unitarian movement by the Trust. Hibbert would certainly have approved.

However, it is the Case Fund which has been used to provide much of the financial assistance given to the Unitarian movement. George Case (1824-1883) was successively an Anglican and R.C. priest, resigning his orders on both occasions because of personal doctrinal differences with the Churches in question. Loosely associated with the Unitarian church in Gloucester and individual Hibbert Trustees living in the area, it is doubtful if he was ever a Unitarian, but admired the openness and unsectarian nature of the Trust. He left a considerable sum of money to the Trustees “upon trust to apply the income in such manner as they in their uncontrolled discretion should from time to time think best for the fundamental object of the promotion of Free Thought, and the search after Truth, and of unfettered learning and frank utterance on matters connected with religion, or with the nature and development and highest culture of man.” The capital came to the Trustees in 1899, and was set up as a separate Trust to support causes for which it was considered inappropriate to devote the main trust funds. However, its major use in the early years of its existence was to pay Rev. J. E. Carpenter as Case Lecturer on Comparative Religion at Manchester College in 1900, a position which he held until 1924, and the support of the *The Hibbert Journal*. Thus for a period two lecturers were fully maintained at the college in subjects that had long been the concern of the Trust.

Manchester College also had support for shorter lectureships from distinguished visitors. A special visiting Lectureship in Philosophy was held by Professor Sir Henry Jones of Glasgow during the first decade of the century. In 1908, the world famous Professor William James of Harvard gave a short series of Hibbert Lectures by invitation at the college that was a major feature of Oxford University life that year. J. E. Carpenter reported “Nearly 400 were present in the library and many could not get in at all . . . Subsequent lectures were held in the Schools and a very large audience bade him goodbye at the end of his six lectures.” The lectures were later published and William James wrote to the

Trust expressing “his personal gratification at having the honour of such an appointment”. Support at Oxford did not end there as a Theological Summer School was held at Manchester College in 1909 for 11 days with 91 people present from many denominations and from all over the world. The event, repeated three years later, would have been impossible without the Trust’s grant. Support was continued for each school that was arranged up to the last one held in 1927.

Financial help was given to the Presbyterian College at Carmarthen, but the Home Missionary College at Manchester was not assisted despite the appropriate memorial in 1907. Some Unitarians saw a deep prejudice on the part of the Trustees against the Home Missionary College continuing over a long period. A series of Jowett Lectures, created by Mrs Humphrey Ward, and held from 1898 at the Passmore Edwards Settlement in London on religious subjects were supported by grants from the Trust from 1904 to 1909; J. E. Carpenter was an early lecturer.

Scholarships and grants were still being given to the best students for the Unitarian ministry taken in the main from Manchester College, Oxford. Perhaps the most interesting case is the grant made to Miss Gertrude von Petzold from 1902-1904 to study in Germany. A student at the college she was given a small grant by the Trust which was later turned into an exhibition. She wrote from Germany in 1904: “All I can say for the present is that I feel extremely grateful to the Hibbert Trust for the opportunity they have given me these three years of supplementing my MCO training.” In 1904 she was appointed Minister of the Free Christian Church, Leicester, and it is recognised that she was the first fully accredited woman minister of a denomination in Great Britain. It was an advanced position for the Trustees to take in supporting her, though it was not without heart searching and a demand from some Trustees to re-examine the basis on which scholarships and grants were awarded.

In 1911 a new series of annual Hibbert Lectures commenced and six had been held by 1919. Discussed and planned from 1907, they covered some of the aspects not covered in the first series on the early history of the major world religions. Dr P. H. Wicksteed’s lecture in 1916 was on a rather different subject concerned with St. Thomas Aquinas. Certainly this second series, set up following Manchester College, Oxford advice, did not attract the attention that the first had done. The times were different and similar

lectures were now quite common in the growing number of British universities.

By the First World War, the Trust was established, secure and known worldwide. The Trustees came from the same social class within Unitarianism as in the 1850’s and were just as legal in background and temperament. The minutes up to 1900 show that many important decisions were made by the Trustees on a majority of one at their meetings. This meant that resignations were bound to occur though not without a legal opinion (1876) which concluded that resignation could only take place through age or infirmity or by non-attendance.

The first twenty five-year review of the scheme took place in 1879, when another legal opinion stated that the Trustees should advertise for suggestions as to changes which should be made. Following press advertisements, 18 letters were received. P. H. Wicksteed’s suggestion was the only one effectively taken up and this concerned the award and tenure of the Divinity Scholarship; when implemented this meant that the services of the examiners were no longer required. Subsequent changes in the regulations were few and not major in effect.

The Hibbert Trust had created its own tradition, resting on the twin pillars of support for excellence and a rigorous independence of any sectarian influence or control. Its uneasy but close relationship with the Unitarian movement had not been settled; it is doubtful whether it will ever be worked out completely to everyone’s satisfaction. But the Trust had found a distinct place in the British religious scene which was increasingly being recognised by religious thinkers of all types and persuasions.

References

1. *Memoir of Robert Hibbert, founder of the Hibbert Trust, with a sketch of its history*, by Jerom Murch, Bath, 1874. The memoir was reprinted in its entirety in BHT.
2. Though no reference to the bitter attacks in the press appears in the Trust Minutes, the Trust records contain a neat package of all the relevant issues of *The Inquirer* for 1874. The strength of feeling that the activities of the Trust created in some Unitarians before 1914 can be gauged from the following comment in a private letter to me (1981) from the daughter of a leading Unitarian minister at the turn of the century: “My folk felt that they (the first nominated Trustees) should never have accepted the Trust and the whole denomination has laboured under the cloud of unexpressed duplicity ever since.”
3. *Life and letters of F. Max Müller*, edited by his wife, 1902, Volume 2, page 54.
4. *Everyman’s Encyclopaedia 6th edition* (Dent) 1978 has a heading “Hibbert Lectures” stating that they were for the “purpose of discussing, and if possible, settling, doubtful points of religion, quite apart from any sect.” Besides a passing reference to *The Hibbert Journal*, the rest of the work of the HT is ignored.

5. *The Times*, 14 June 1880. All the Lecturers and their titles are set out in BHT page 157-158 (up to 1932). Those delivered after that date are in an Appendix to this volume.
6. "Throughout its career *The Christian Life* was the organ of an aggressive Unitarianism of the Scriptural and conservative type" — *The Unitarian Movement in the Religious Life of England*, H. McLachlan, London, 1934, page 223.
7. S.E. de Morgan, *ibid.* pages 23-28.

4. THE HIBBERT JOURNAL

The idea of the Hibbert Trust supporting a learned periodical devoted to theology or philosophy reoccurs regularly in the Trust minutes during the late 19th century. In 1877 the Trust came to an arrangement with the editor of *The Theological Review* to pay for certain articles to appear, and this system operated until the *Review* closed in 1879.¹ At the meeting of Trustees held on 22 June 1880 "a numerously signed memorial" was presented by Mr Russell Martineau, asking for "pecuniary aid towards the establishment of a Journal devoted to subjects connected with the literary and historical criticism and exegesis of the Bible and of the history of the Christian Church". James Martineau supported this application as he had similar requests in previous years, but the Trustees were fully involved in mounting the Hibbert Lectures and declined to take the matter further.

But it was a letter from Rev. George Dawes Hicks (1862-1941) dated 18 June 1900 which found the Trustees receptive to the idea of subsidising a "theological review". Not having a series of Lectures on hand, the Committee set up a special committee to consider this idea as well as a resolution from two Unitarian ministers to hold a new series of Lectures. Meeting in July, the Trustees asked Hicks to prepare a more definite scheme and for the secretary to contact Williams and Norgate "as to the financial arrangements of *The Theological Review* formerly published by them and the financial prospects of another review".² At the same time, the Committee concluded that it "would not meet the purposes of the Trust to enter upon a second course of Lectures, upon subjects, some of which at least, have been more or less already treated at length in the course now completed and in its range and character widely appreciated".

Further meetings and discussions with Hicks and others in 1900 resulted in the conclusion that "the general support of those interested shows that the name of the Hibbert Trust should be attached to the *Review* to secure contributors and a circulation similar to that of the Lectures". Drs Drummond and Upton informed the Trustees that a new review would be "of particular

value to the Unitarian community by reviving our traditional desire for a learned ministry; by encouraging our younger ministers to keep up their theological studies and affording them an opportunity of taking their part in the furtherance of religious knowledge, and perhaps by gradually awakening among our educated laity, a more active interest in the great questions which require new modes of presentation or still await solution". A subsidy of £300 a year was made available, and the usual formal memorial so loved by Trustees was presented in July 1901: "There can be no question that the liberal Religious Movement in England is suffering without a journal . . . The Hibbert Trust is largely and widely known, the liberal principle that governs its administration is admitted, and the fact that the *Review* had it as its support and countenance would at once secure for it recognition in quarters where otherwise it would meet none."

Arrangements were complete by the end of 1901 and Rev. Lawrence Pearsall Jacks (1860-1955) appointed editor with Rev. Dr Dawes Hicks and Rev. W. G. Tarrant as assistant editors with an editorial board in support. The Trustees declined absolutely to be the proprietors and this was left, after the usual legal opinions had been obtained, in the hands of one of their number, H. P. Greg. So the scene was set for the launch of a journal to be mainly but not exclusively of Unitarian bias and interest. But right from the start, Jacks had different ideas. Long a Unitarian minister and one of Martineau's former students, he told the Committee of the Trustees firmly in May 1902 "that it seemed desirable that the outlook of policy of the *The Hibbert Journal* should be wider and more comprehensive than had at first been contemplated by the original promoters of the scheme; and that the Journal rather than represent a particular school of theology or group of thinkers should be thoroughly catholic and stand for the general unity of all reverent men". He objected immediately to the Editorial Board packed as he saw it with Unitarians by the Trustees. The Trustees were inclined at first to oppose Jacks as to the people he wanted on the Board but he got his way in the end, Dr W. H. Drummond being the only Unitarian member (the full membership is listed in *The Book of the Hibbert Trust* pages 102-103). Jacks was also apparently not keen on the well respected but assertively Unitarian Rev. W. G. Tarrant, and he was retired as assistant editor after seeing the first few editions through the press. R. D. Darbishire, a trustee since 1874 resigned over the Trust's support for the Journal, but the grant for its successful launch was increased in

the hope that a minimum circulation of about 700 copies could be achieved. The Trustees gave the new editor his head and a free hand to set the tone of the new venture.

L. P. Jacks has written extensively about the commencement and the first numbers of *The Hibbert Journal* — "my appointment as editor greatly surprised me".³ It was an uncertain venture as there were no recent precedents, especially for the type of journal that the editor had in mind. In retrospect, forty-five years later, he wrote on the appointment of his successor: "His qualifications for the work are far more substantial than mine were when I began. Indeed mine were so exiguous that I know not at which to wonder the more — the temerity of the Trustees in appointing my or my own in accepting the appointment. But the truth is that in 1902 none of us knew what we were letting ourselves in for. I well remember how we made our first budget, not without dark misgivings, for 500 copies, and were amazed beyond measure when 2000 were sold of the first number, 3000 of the second and so on."⁴

A Journal bearing the Hibbert arms on its cover and devoted from the start to being "A Review of Religion, Theology and Philosophy" met a clear need with the new century. The rise of Modernism, not tied to a denomination, required a serious forum to express itself. When Jacks and Hicks wrote in the first issue "We shall judge of opinions by the seriousness with which they are held and the fairness and ability with which they are maintained. Among extant varieties of religious thought none is selected by us as the type to which the rest should conform . . . The Journal's opportunities will be reserved for the thought which lives and moves", they struck a chord which was widely echoed in religious life. Certainly a journal centred on Unitarian thinking as many, including several of the Trustees, wanted would not have had the success that *The Hibbert Journal* did up to 1914. It is difficult to re-create today the sense of excitement that the appearance of the Journal elicited (similar to the response created by the Hibbert Lectures in 1878) now that competing papers, intellectual and international, talks, lectures etc. abound. People from all denominations devoured the first issue which appeared in October 1902, especially the extensive review of recent theological and philosophical periodicals prepared by Dr Hicks which was a unique feature that had disappeared from other journals with the end of the 19th century. Even *The Inquirer* unreservedly welcomed the Journal's appearance.

The editor found he had taken on a formidable task in addition to being the full time minister of the large and prestigious Church of the Messiah, Birmingham.

“The response to the new project from the religious world was on a scale that none of us had expected. Articles began to pour in from writers both clerical and lay, who had long been needing just such a free medium of expression as *The Hibbert Journal* afforded. Except in a small way I was without experience in editing, and such advice as I could get from other editors, to whom I applied first, was not much to the purpose: they were all working on different lines from mine. . . . The volume of the work rapidly increased, it made incessant and exacting calls on my energies and I saw that it would be impossible to carry it on for long in conjunction with my other work as Minister. . . . In 1903 I was offered the post of Lecturer in Philosophy at Manchester College, Oxford. . . . The post would give me more leisure, especially in vacations”.³

The first issue, reprinted within weeks of appearing, announced that it would offer to religious thought a genuinely open field, in which frank discussion could further the cause of truth.

“We stand”, the editors declared, “for three positive truths: that the Goal of thought is One; that thought, striving to reach the Goal, must for ever move; that, in the conflict of opinion, the movement is furthered by which the many approach the One. . . . In the mode of conducting this Journal the implication will be that movement, in accordance with intellectual law, betokens health and vitality in religion. At the same time, we are on our guard against defining the direction such movement ought to take — whether as a return to old positions or as a departure for new. Carefully avoiding the pre-judgment of that question, our aim must be to reflect the movement of religious thought in its continual approach to firmer ground”.⁵

In analysing the first issue, *The Christian Life* concluded that “the whole number reaches a high standard of excellence. Religious philosophy and Biblical criticism combine to form its staple. Literature does not bulk largely in it, and history is somewhat conspicuous by its absence.” This sums up the early issues of *The Hibbert Journal* and was the reason for its success. Literature and history were treated in other journals but religious philosophy and Biblical criticism on liberal open lines were not. A leading histo-

rian of Nonconformity has summed up the intellectual climate of the time.

“In philosophy, the scene was exhilarating: a sturdy Neo-Hegelianism confronted a number of healthy young antagonists. In the religious world, the Liberal Protestantism of Harnack and the Catholic Modernism of Loisy and Tyrrell were foreshadowing in unexpected ways the New Theology of Campbell and Orchard; the future seemed to belong to the religious liberals also. In this confident, lively intellectual atmosphere, *The Hibbert Journal* was born.”⁶

In the early issues articles came from the leading scholars of the day. Jacks was instrumental in introducing the work of the important French thinker Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) into the English speaking world and this was mainly done through *The Hibbert Journal*.

“I first came into contact with Alfred Loisy soon after his excommunication from the Church of Rome in 1908. . . . though little was known in England of his work, I knew enough to convince me of his importance as a possible contributor to *The Hibbert Journal* I invited him to become so. From that time onwards his contributions were frequent. There was always an increase in circulation when they appeared. Perhaps it is not too much to claim that his articles in *The Hibbert Journal* played a considerable part in making his work known in the English-speaking world.”⁷

Dean Inge of St. Pauls became a regular contributor before the First World War right up to the time of his death in 1954, having provided over thirty articles in this period. However, it was the physicist, Professor Sir Oliver Lodge (1851-1940), whose contributions were most associated with *The Hibbert Journal*. A member of the Editorial Board, the first issue contained a characteristic article from his pen — “The outstanding controversy between science and faith”. “His contributions to the Journal, especially in the early period of its existence, and mostly within the framework set by his first article, were frequent. About this a jest was at one time in currency. In 1913, the head of a Scottish University, when conferring an honorary degree on a member of the Journal’s staff, made the following observation ‘Logical *The Hibbert Journal* may or may not always be, but oliver logical it certainly is’. The jest contained an element of truth.”

An expanding readership expanded even further when the Journal became the centre of one of the major intellectual arguments within Protestantism, and a special issue was released in 1909 entitled *Jesus or Christ?* based on material that had already appeared. Containing contributions from most of the leading Biblical scholars of the time, it was discussed, agreed with or refuted the world over in every type of journal and periodical. Thus, within seven years, the Trustees' initiative put in tangible form by Jacks, had created a journal which had become one of the central vehicles for intellectual debate within liberal Protestantism. However, if 1909 can be considered the peak of the Journal's achievement, it was at this time that a complementary but rival journal appeared on the scene.

To cater for modernists within the Church of England, the Modern Churchman's Union had been founded in the early years of the century. By 1908, the membership was decreasing owing, it was generally agreed, to the lack of a magazine. "The President (Sir T. Dyke Acland) maintained that our needs in the magazine line were being adequately achieved by the newly founded *The Hibbert Journal*. But Professor Percy Gardner believed what is needed for our purpose is a Liberal, Church of England magazine: *The Hibbert Journal* is not that. The upshot was the first issue of the *Modern Churchman* which appeared in April 1911 under the editorship of H. D. A. Major."⁹

Although there was friendly co-operation over the years, with Jacks and Major arranging articles to appear in each other's journals, much of the Anglican allegiance to *The Hibbert Journal* slowly slipped away to the other Journal. This was slight at first, but as Modernism declined in later years, the Established Church's readership tended to leave *The Hibbert Journal*. What the *The Hibbert Journal* did supply for many years after 1918 was a link between modernist Anglicans on the one side, and the Liberal Christian and Unitarian elements within Nonconformity on the other. Jacks sat very loosely within his own Unitarian denomination, but did not find himself wishing to join any other, so was well suited to forge and supply this link. He gloried in being religiously and denominationally unclassifiable.

There were few articles by Unitarians in the first twenty years of the Journal's life. Perhaps those submitted did not meet Jacks' high standards, or perhaps he positively discriminated against them so as not to be accused of Unitarian bias. There is no way of telling at this juncture. However, with the 100th number appear-

ing in 1927, the Trustees decided to give a dinner in honour of the Journal and its editor. The Trustees meeting at Manchester College on 24th June 1927 passed the following resolution:

"On the occasion of the issue of the 100th number of *The Hibbert Journal*, the Trustees desire to congratulate the Editor, Dr Jacks, on the conspicuous success of his work during twenty-five years. They recognise that the pre-eminent position of *The Hibbert Journal* in the English-speaking world is due to his large conceptions of policy, his great gifts as a thinker and writer, and the singleness of mind with which he has devoted himself to the interests of the Journal and the ideals which it represents. The Trustees also desire to place on record their gratitude to the Assistant-Editor, Professor G. Dawes Hicks, for the ripe scholarship and the distinguished philosophical gifts which he has used so generously in the service of *The Hibbert Journal* from the beginning."

Scholars and churchmen at the dinner that night (it was a distinguished gathering) paid similar tributes many summing up the place that the Journal occupied in intellectual life.¹⁰

Dean Inge: "From the very first *The Hibbert Journal* assumed an absolutely unique position in periodical literature. There had been nothing like it, and it had conferred a great benefit on English scholarship and English theology. It had been from the first an open forum in which almost every variety of opinion had found free expression. As he looked round at the table it was a most remarkable assembly. There was not a single heresy which had been justly anathematized by the Church that was not represented there. Half of them ought at that moment to be burning at the stake outside Balliol, and yet here they were at Manchester College, quite safe."

Dr W. L. Sperry, Dean of Divinity at Harvard: "It is to me a very wonderful and a very beautiful thing that a journal edited 3000 miles away from its readers should speak with such persuasion to those on the other side of the water."

Dr Jacks in replying put his individual religious position clearly and concisely, a position that had ensured the success of the Journal, but one that infuriated his own denominational constituency who were ready, as he admits in his autobiography, to counter and ruin his plans on this account. Jacks was an individualist, difficult and very egotistical perhaps, but he was one of the most important religious figures of his time in Great Britain.

He stated "In 25 years I have come into contact with so many different currents of religious life and thought, and had to consider so carefully the value of what they had to offer that I have become totally unfitted for the work of a propagandist on the lines of any one of them. Sometimes this constant contact with other modes of thought than my own has caused me to forget what denomination I belong to, even at times when I ought to have remembered".

An analysis of the thousands of articles and reviews which have appeared in *The Hibbert Journal* would be an impossible task.¹¹ All that can be achieved in a brief account like this is a delineation of the main trends which can be discerned through its years of publication. As a very old man, Jacks could see trends in what was contained in the Journal reflecting the changing times. These trends over forty years in his view were:

1. The large part played by the laity as contributors;
2. The growing disposition to learn from the religion and philosophy of the East;
3. Changes in the British religious climate and atmosphere
 - (a) From 1902-10 the dominant interest had been religion and science;
 - (b) From 1910-14 the historical foundations of Christianity
 - (c) From 1914-20, ethical, social and political philosophy
 - (d) From 1920-40, the consciousness of moral catastrophe as a prelude either to the revival or decay of religion.¹²

If these were the trends, who were the people who expressed them?

"A random selection would show that during Jacks' editorship among politicians, A. J. Balfour, Ramsey Macdonald, Theodore Roosevelt and J. B. S. Haldane all contributed notable articles. Liberal Catholicism was represented by A. Loisy, G. Tyrrell and Friedrich von Hügel, Anglicanism by Archbishop Temple, Dorothy Sayers and Dean Inge. Montefiore spoke for liberal Judaism, Rabindranath Tagore and Radhakrishnan for Indian thought. Different philosophical approaches were expounded by William James, Henri Bergson, R. G. Collingwood, Bertrand Russell, Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers, while among men of letters were to be found the names of G. K. Chesterton, John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, Charles Morgan and G. M. Trevelyan."⁶

Hicks was responsible for the reviews and the half yearly survey of philosophical literature was for long a feature; he remained

Assistant Editor (for a period he was shown as Joint Editor) to Jacks until 1941.

There is little detailed information about the administration of the Journal up until Jacks' retirement in 1947. No record of an Editorial Board meeting is known to exist and a separate American Editorial Board existed on paper at least until 1918. Jacks was so much his own man that he never worked well with committees. As to the financing of the Journal, this was entirely in the hands of Henry P. Greg. In making a report to his fellow Trustees in 1919 he wrote,

"Before publishing, the Journal had to be entered at the Stationers Hall and this meant that the question of proprietary rights had to be faced before publication was possible. I urged the Trustees to accept this responsibility, but they absolutely refused to do this. I was thus obliged to decide whether I would undertake the responsibility or allow it to fall into the hands of someone outside the Trust. I decided to accept the responsibility and thus the Journal was registered in my name, and I became technically and legally the sole proprietor with the absolute power of doing whatever I liked with the Journal. In three years' time I found I was financing it to the tune of about £1000 with the prospect of still further burden, and I put the case before the Trustees and they decided to make me an out and out gift of £500."¹³

However, after 1909 finances improved and the grant from the Trust was reduced from £300 to £150 and some capital was built up. R. M. Montgomery on behalf of the Trustees paid Greg a tribute in 1919, "He has expended an enormous amount of thought and labour on behalf of *The Hibbert Journal* without any remuneration whatever and without any thought of remuneration. For this the Trustees are deeply indebted to him — indeed owe him a debt of gratitude which can never be repaid. He has made the Journal a success."¹³ Thus, Henry P. Greg deserves to be remembered as the chief architect of *The Hibbert Journal* after Jacks and Hicks; without his offer in 1902 it might never have got off the ground, and if it had done so, failed financially as so many other similar periodicals do within five years. Although an accountant kept the books, Greg continued to take some personal responsibility for the Journal until the 1930's, being one of four trustees appointed in 1920 to act as proprietors. They were appointed to hold any reserves and manage the business affairs as Trustees for

the Hibbert Trust. In 1919, Jacks was paid £200 salary (later raised to £300) plus a commission, and Hicks £40. The Trust minutes make it clear that the financial position of the Journal fluctuated considerably, throughout its life. Some years Jacks took an excellent commission, whilst on other occasions he did not even take his salary. For most of the 1920's and 1930's there was mostly a small surplus in the region of £100, although 1938 saw the first deficit for some time.

The Trust minutes record the circulation of the Journal for most years after 1919 (even to the last copy sold each year after 1925). Starting off with 2000 for the first issue in 1902, circulation reached 7000 for the last issue of 1905, increasing to 8000-10,000 in 1907, helped by an increase in American interest. In 1909 of the 8000 copies sold, 2000 went to America. Figures after 1910 are difficult to find, but there are indications that there was a drop in circulation during the First World War, resulting in a loss of £564 in 1920 on a total circulation of 6300. By 1924 it was in profit again though from now on the circulation was always downward. Dropping to 5700 in 1927 the change over to *Constables* as publishers in 1925 from *Williams and Norgate* made little difference to the decline in circulation despite strong efforts to reverse the trend. The following figures tell their own story: 1930 5200; 1932 4500; 1934 4000; 1938 3600. In order to halt the decline, which was now being reflected in financial deficits, *Constables* were dropped as publishers in 1938 and *Allen and Unwin* took over. In 1941 circulation was down to 2700 increasing uniquely by 100 the following year, and part of Jacks' honorarium was paid directly by the Trustees. After the War, figures picked up to 1938 levels, and so in 1947, on a fairly high point, Jacks retired after being editor for 45 years, at the age of 87.

A special dinner was held in his honour and tributes flowed in from all over the world. It was a fearful wrench for him; in his letter of resignation of 29 March 1947 to the Trustees he wrote — "To part with the work which has been so large and so intimate a factor of my life will have for me, almost the character of a bereavement. But I perceive it to be necessary." He added to this in a letter to J. M. Connell, "to hang on any longer would be indecent, younger men would firstly resent it. I am not conscious of failure, but at my age one may fail without being conscious of it."¹⁴

A luncheon at Oxford held on 12 December 1947 saw Jacks at his best and his speech is printed in full in *The Inquirer* 10 January 1948. Perhaps the best estimates of him and *The Hibbert Journal*

appear in the January 1948 edition of the Journal, pages 97-102 containing short tributes from a whole range of people:

Dr Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham: "When Jacks started *The Hibbert Journal* in 1902 there began a transformation within English religious thought. Perhaps we may best describe it by saying that Unitarianism became Christian humanism. The older Unitarianism, in spite of men like James Martineau, had tended to be dry and dogmatic; Jacks enlarged the tradition and produced a journal in which Christian scholarship was so fearless that at times it ran riot . . . In brief, Jacks created a religious journal of a new type and well deserves the esteem in which he is held by a large number of distinguished contemporaries."

Dean Inge: "It is difficult to exaggerate the service which *The Hibbert Journal* has rendered to untrammelled and honest thinking, not only in this country. It has been rightly called the finest forum for intellectual debate in the world."

Professor H. L. Stewart: "During wellnigh half a century, Dr Jacks has shown such judgment as has made *The Hibbert Journal* unique in interest and instructiveness throughout many countries. Its outstanding quality has been its readiness — even eagerness — to set before its readers each of the discordant schools of thought not at its weakest but at its strongest, choosing as spokesmen for each its ablest and most determined leader."

Jacks' position was unique in English academic life, combining a gift for editorship with a fluent and easy writing style. He created *The Hibbert Journal* and put it, and kept it, in the forefront of intellectual religious life. However there is every reason to believe that he knew the Journal could never occupy a really significant place in the intellectual life of the English speaking world again and that younger minds and hands would have to grapple with the problems.

The mantle of editorship in 1948 fell on Rev. George Stephens Spinks (1904-1978) who had been an active and successful Unitarian minister, as well as a lecturer at Manchester College, Oxford. To follow Jacks was no easy task. In July 1952 (paradoxically on his leaving the editorship) in the Jubilee Number which republished famous articles which had appeared over fifty years, he expressed his view of the future of the Journal to be "of an Interpreter, a Guide to Understanding; its task to show which questions call for *what* answers; to pinpoint objectives and indicate trend directions; and to illuminate the traffic jam which arises from confusing the different standards of empirical knowledge and

religious faith.” Starting his editorship full time in 1948, Dr Spinks reported to the Trustees on 16 December 1949, “the slight fall in the average circulation for 1948-49 which he considered to be due in part to the increase in price, and to competition from other periodicals, five new ones having come into existence in the last eighteen months, with two more announced for the coming year”. In the middle of 1950, he went on half time as editor, but later in the year decided to leave the Unitarian Ministry on his way to becoming an Anglican priest. Though no specific barrier to remaining editor, his changed religious affiliation led him to offer his resignation, which the Trustees accepted without dispute. In appointing another editor in difficult financial circumstances, the Trustees at a special meeting (2 February 1951) decided to declare what the policy of the Journal should be. “While *The Hibbert Journal* should remain entirely free from any kind of denominational attachment, it should stand unambiguously as the exponent of liberal religion. While the high standard of its contributions should be maintained, there should be a larger proportion of articles dealing with Liberal Religion in all its aspects, designed to be of interest to the non-technical reader, with less emphasis on purely philosophical, psychological or other technical questions.”

This was clearly an attempt to widen the range of the Journal and to make it more popular. Some believed that the dry effect of *The Hibbert Journal* was made worse by the constant effort to cram as much as possible on a page making the later issues harder to read than the earlier ones. But there was a challenge here and Rev. Lancelot Austin Garrard (b.1904) was asked to become editor and he accepted. A Unitarian Minister of long experience he commenced on the editorship in 1952 combining it with being Tutor (and later Principal) at Manchester College, Oxford. At the time he indicated that “articles may be on any subject of religious, philosophical, literary or sociological interest, so long as they are well written and of reasonable length (2000-8000 words). There is a certain preference for the unorthodox and, in the widest sense, the liberal point of view; though anything which challenges this in a courteous and well-written style is acceptable.”¹⁰ Looking back in 1980, Dr Garrard wrote that: “he concluded that *The Hibbert Journal* did have its value, both as a semi-popular introduction to philosophical and sociological trends and as being the one thing that still gave Unitarianism a claim to some intellectual eminence.”¹⁵

There is no doubt that Dr Garrard was an enthusiastic editor,

maintaining the Journal’s intellectual standing while bringing in articles of a sociological and historical nature, and in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s educationalists on the future of education. But the trend of sales continued downwards and the Trust was now in the position of substantially supporting each issue of the Journal, earmarking a significant proportion of its income to it as printers’ costs were rising steeply. The circulation was 3100 in 1952, 2900 in 1954, 2700 in 1956, 2400 in 1958 rising to 2600 in 1959 when a change in the American agency (to the Unitarian *Beacon Press*) accounts for the difference. In the early 1960’s applications were being made by the Trustees to other Trusts for support towards the Journal but with no success. Sales in 1961 were down to 2400 when the editor announced his resignation for mid 1962 due to pressure of other work.¹⁶

Once again the Trustees decided to look at the future of the Journal, and there was a difference of view amongst them as to its future. Some wished for immediate cessation, but in April 1962 the Trustees decided to carry on for a trial period of three years with a new editor, Rev. Harry Lismer Short (1906-1975) who had some very different ideas for the future development of the Journal. Also Tutor (and later Principal) of Manchester College, Oxford he knew he was in a make or break situation. He wrote in the April 1962 issue:

“I hope to be able to maintain the high standard of scholarship set by previous editors, and also to provide new features which will increase the interest and value of *The Hibbert Journal*. I believe that the Journal has an important function, to uphold the liberal point of view in theology and philosophy and allied fields of thought and life . . . Certain changes are to be made in the appearance and contents which it is hoped that readers will welcome. . . . By economy in the use of space, without serious reduction in reading matter, it is possible to reduce the price. This will it is hoped lead to an increase of circulation.”

The new format did produce some new readers, circulation going up to 2600 in 1963, when the sub title was changed from “a quarterly review of religion, philosophy and theology” to “rational, liberal, empirical”. The content of the Journal became increasingly historical, reflecting the new editor’s interest and background as well as more specifically Unitarian, greatly emphasizing a general trend that can be discerned in various issues since the 1940’s. Dr Short also sometimes wrote an editorial which many

felt to be contentious and a real departure from past practice. However, it was a brave attempt to redress a circulation decline dating from just after the First World War; it was the rising inflation of the 1950's and 1960's that made it a desperate one, and without doubt doomed from the start.

American sales started to fall first and the editor, then others, took over the U.S. agency, and they were later to become over half the total circulation. It was British sales that fell most, and delays in the issue of the Journal due both to the editor and the publishers did not help matters. By 1966 sales were down to an average of 2100 and Dr Stanley Kennett, Chairman of the Trustees Committee for the Journal, was exploring various means to keep it going in one form or another. Dr Short, by now Principal of Manchester College, Oxford, had heavy responsibilities and it is likely that he could not give to the Journal the attention he would have wished. Suggestions in 1967 that the Unitarian movement should itself produce a periodical, which might incorporate *The Hibbert Journal*, were rejected by the Trustees "as they were not prepared for it to be regarded as a denominational periodical". Finance from this source was thus not available, and the various ideas for a joint publishing venture with the International Association for Religious Freedom came to nothing. In 1967, *Allen and Unwin* were no longer really interested in publishing the Journal, it being the only journal that they then published; applications to other publishers produced little response. At the Trustee Meeting held on 5 July 1968 the end came:

"In view of the position that the publishers did not wish to continue except at a very great increase in price. . . the Committee having considered whether the Trustees should look for an alternative means of printing and publishing, decided not to recommend this course. The Committee had also considered a proposal made by the editor that he should assume full responsibility for the publication of *The Hibbert Journal* subject to review by the Trustees at stated intervals. The Committee did not feel that they could recommend this course either and therefore decided to advise the Trustees to suspend publication with the summer number . . . On a vote this resolution was carried unanimously."

The Hibbert Journal played an important role in the history of religious thought in Great Britain this century. This is widely accepted; the 1974 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the

section on 'History of Publishing' world wide, in the subsection 'Scholarly and literary magazines' lists the Journal as its first item under Great Britain. Once again following the introduction of the Lectures in the 19th century, the Trustees made a pioneering effort in creating the Journal in a field where nothing else existed at the start of the 20th, and then appointing the most brilliant editor possible and letting him get on with the job in his own way so ensuring its success. In the period up to 1914, *The Hibbert Journal* was a pre-eminent publication but in the 1920's it never held the same position again although continuing to make a notable contribution to religious thought.

The decline of the Journal can be considered to lie with publication elsewhere of important philosophical articles; before 1914 there were few other periodicals where such long and considered works could appear. The cover may have remained unchanged with the years, but the contents did alter with historical and sociological articles creeping in and the number of pieces written by Unitarians increasing to appeal to a Unitarian audience as the number of Anglican and mainstream Nonconformist readers declined. *The Hibbert Journal* had a specialist readership based on philosophy and theology: as this element within the churches declined so the readership dropped off. Also after 1945 the Modernist wing within the Church of England and the liberal Christian element within Nonconformity lost its impetus and declined in numbers so that there was a much reduced constituency to which to appeal. Although generally recognised to be Unitarian in background, Unitarians did not feel *The Hibbert Journal* to be their own and many had a negative attitude towards it especially under Jacks' editorship.

When the modern ecumenical movement arrived as a potent factor in religious thinking in the 1960's, the ethos of *The Hibbert Journal* was remote from it. The new movement appealed to all theological standpoints and aimed at removing the physical denominational barriers ("do not do those things separately which can be done together"). The modernism of an earlier period expressed in the Journal attempted to bring together people within the accepted denominational barriers with similar philosophical and theological attitudes and viewpoints. Thus *The Hibbert Journal* had little to say to the generally emotional, often anti-rationalistic and specifically Christian ecumenical movement, especially as the Unitarian background that increasingly

was its support was opposed to the organic union ideals of the new ecumenism.

The Hibbert Journal had served its purpose, and it is unlikely that the radical but brave changes made in the 1960's by Lismer Short hastened its decline. It might even have disappeared before 1968 if edited in a pedestrian or traditional way. The real question to ask is what constitutes the Journal's permanent legacy. Ian Sellars, writing in *The Inquirer* 28 September 1968, saw it lying in three areas:

- a. its very breadth of outlook and catholic tastes have precluded in its readers a narrow specialisation to which we are all prone, and kept them abreast of recent studies in disciplines other than their own;
- b. it was always distinguished by a certain ethical compassion, which I believe is beginning to mark more and more of its contemporaries;
- c. *The Hibbert Journal* encouraged interconfessional and inter-religious dialogue, may in fact have helped them make the very term 'dialogue' the modish word but helpful reality it has now become."

The words of Dean Inge have already been used to describe the Journal and have been widely quoted elsewhere. They still are the best summary of what it achieved at its best and are an appropriate epitaph:

"It is difficult to exaggerate the service which *The Hibbert Journal* has rendered to untrammelled and honest thinking, not only in this country. It has been rightly called the finest forum for intellectual debate in the world."

Robert Hibbert would have appreciated the positive reference associated with his name and Trust to untrammelled and honest thinking, especially from a Dean of St. Paul's.

References

1. "More clearly than any other Unitarian journal did *The Theological Review* reveal the range and depth of scholarship in the ranks of Unitarian ministers and laymen in the 19th century, most of whom had been educated at Manchester College." (*Unitarian Movement in the Religious Life of England*, H. McLachlan, 1934, pages 199-201).
2. *The Theological Review* was issued from 1864-1879, and edited throughout by Rev. Charles Beard (1827-88). A successor to *The Christian Reformer* in 1866, (at which time it became a quarterly) it had a wider base than just the Unitarian movement. Thus through it *The Hibbert Journal* was in direct line to *The Christian Reformer* and the Unitarian periodicals of the early 19th century.

3. *The Confessions of an Octogenarian*, L. P. Jacks, London, 1942, pages 165-167, 218-225. A detailed account of the formation of the HJ is contained in a letter by Hicks, quoted in C. Titford, *History of Unity Church Islington*, pages 68-72. (London, 1912).
4. *The Inquirer* 10 January 1948, text of Jacks' speech on laying down the editorship.
5. HJ Vol. 1, No. 1, editorial.
6. *The Inquirer*, 28 September 1968, page 4, article on the HJ by Ian Sellars.
7. *Near the Brink, Observations of a Nonagenarian*, L. P. Jacks, London, 1952, page 57.
8. HJ, October 1940, page 1.
9. *Modern Churchman*, March 1957, page 199, article by H. D. A. Major.
10. *The Inquirer*, 9 July 1927, page 441.
11. Manchester College, Oxford, has a card index of all articles and reviews which appeared, under author, covering the period 1902-62 contained in seven boxes, as well as ephemeral correspondence mainly with publishers covering the period 1920's to 1960's.
12. Quoted in HJ, October 1960, page 4, article by Rennie Smith.
13. Printed report in Trust Minutes, 20 June 1919.
14. Jacks to J. M. Connell, 1 May 1947, letter in Dr Williams's Library MS 24.103.27
15. Letter to A. R. Ruston, 23 August 1980.
16. HJ, April 1962. The Trustees express their "warm appreciation to Mr Garrard who has amply sustained the high standards of interest and scholarship for which the HJ is renowned."

5. HIBBERT HOUSES

“At the beginning of the Second World War some Unitarians, who were anxious that Army chaplains of their own denomination should be appointed, approached the War Office officially with that suggestion. A committee was formed of which Sir W. P. Colfox, Bart. MP (1888-1966) was chairman and Herbert Gimson, secretary. They were met very fairly by the authorities, who said that certainly there should be Unitarian Army chaplains, provided that one condition could be fulfilled. That condition was that at any one place, at any one time, there could be collected a substantial number of Unitarians to whom these chaplains might minister. Of course it was impossible for our small community to give this undertaking, and so the plan had to be abandoned.”¹

The reason for this Unitarian initiative arose from a feeling that the physical and spiritual needs of Unitarians engaged in the war should be attended to by their own ministers. The Hibbert Trust had been one of the first to explore the possibility based on experience of the First World War and this was seen as best done through either Toc H/Talbot House or the YMCA organisations. Mr Montgomery, a Trustee, reported various interviews between himself, the Rev. M Rowe, Secretary of the General Assembly, the Rev R.K. Spedding and Sir Philip Colfox, the outcome of which was (1) that the numbers of Unitarians serving with HM Forces were inadequate to qualify for a Chaplaincy, (2) that a scheme for establishing a small Hostel in the charge of a minister in one of the French ports had been explored. It was decided that the scheme was too costly to be worthwhile attempting.² However, in the 1930's Toc H decided that Unitarians could be members, but not act as padres within the organisation, and a similar ruling was made by the YMCA.³ But Sir Philip Colfox who had fought in the First World War was determined that something would be done on the lines of Toc H at Poperinghe on the Somme. A Hibbert Trustee since 1919, he felt strongly that the Trust should play a role in this area and he wrote to his fellow trustees when the other avenues of approach had been closed, on 3 March 1940:

“Those of us who remember the original Toc H know what a

power for good it was . . . Broadly speaking it consisted of three departments. There was a coffee stall, at which buns, cigarettes, etc. could be bought. There was a rest room for reading, writing and quiet amusements. And there was the ‘upper room’ fitted out as a chapel.

The place was run and staffed by several zealous chaplains of the Church of England, who certainly did great good to those with whom they came in contact. From our point of view, the one mistake they made was in the doctrinal views they strove to propagate.

Now I believe that we of the Hibbert Trust have a very definite and important message which we should strive to ‘put across’ to the youth of today, and particularly to the men of the fighting forces. I am not especially concerned to minister to those who have belonged to our household of faith. They form only part of the youth of the nation. I desire as far as possible to spread among all the young people the message of Unitarianism, without particularly urging them to acknowledge membership of our body. There is little importance in words and labels — what is important is what is the spirit behind the labels.”

He proposed to start such a house as near the war zone as possible with its doors open to anyone in uniform. It would be costly, but if the Trustees gave a strong lead, the balance would be made up from other sources. At their meeting on 3 May 1940, the Trustees did take up the challenge and made a grant of £1000 a year for three years, “for the purpose of maintaining a house to be staffed by two Unitarian ministers for the benefit of the fighting forces in a fighting area, to be called Hibbert House . . . The Trustees will appoint three of their number to act as an organising Committee, with power to co-opt two additional members representing a wider public”. Thus, from the start the Trustees made it clear that the House was not going to be organised by their main body, especially in wartime conditions, but looked to an outside committee in which they were willing to join.

Sir Philip had already got the two ministers lined up. The first was Rev. Griffith J. Sparham (1892-1974), minister at Lewins Mead, Bristol. The son of a Congregational missionary in China, he fought in the First World War and offered his services again only to be told in early 1940 by the War Office “I was too old, probably too decrepit and certainly too far behind the times to be of any use. Somewhat dazed by this comprehensive survey of my

inutility, I was mournfully walking down Whitehall when it occurred to me that, as an old soldier and a Unitarian, Sir Philip might have some counsel to offer, so I made my way to the House of Commons. In a very short time, he had pushed any idea of my rejoining the army into the background. He had, so he said, a much better idea for me. There and then he outlined the plan for Hibbert Houses.”³ The other minister Sir Philip determined on a few months later was Rev. Walter Bone (1897-1944) of Gloucester, who had served in the Friends Ambulance Unit in the First World War.

To set up such a venture required considerable drive and determination on the part of Colfox, but being a man of influence in both government circles and in Unitarianism, he made such good progress that by Christmas 1940 he was writing to Sparham that the military authorities had secured a place for a House in Cairo, and his departure was to be imminent. But there were delays and the ministers only finally set sail on March 24th 1941, still uncertain exactly what they were to do when they arrived in Cairo on May 11th. Sir Philip may have got the government machine to work to his desire but the Unitarian movement was a different proposition. Requiring considerable financial support from non-Hibbert sources, he obviously went to the General Assembly where he met with a far from rapturous reception. Outlining the idea for Hibbert House to the GA Council in July 1940, it was referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee which on 9 October 1940 “agreed that the Hibbert House scheme must be left to the Hibbert Trustees to deal with, and that the committee should concern itself with churches endeavouring to be of general service to troops etc. in their districts”. Besides a grant, Colfox wanted General Assembly support for an appeal for cash from all Unitarians; this support was not given until later in the War and the Unitarian HQ remained generally antagonistic to Hibbert Houses throughout, and from the minutes of the Committee it is clear that whatever support was provided was given very reluctantly. The reason for this was probably because there was a strong feeling that any form of “social work” should not be done under the Unitarian name, and the lack of control the Assembly had over the Houses.

But Colfox wrote a general appeal for support to the Unitarian movement which appeared in the *Inquirer* on 6 July 1940, and by March 1941 he had secured a further £600 per annum promised income. Most of the individual subscribers providing this money

(*The Inquirer* 15 March 1941) were Hibbert Trustees, though a long term generous supporter of the Houses, Miss S. Courtauld, was not. His other main hope as a source for funds was the American Unitarian Association through Rev. Robert Dexter of the Department of Foreign Relations, as they had already asked to be told of “ways that they could help Britain generally” (*The Inquirer* 2 November 1940). Money did arrive for Hibbert Houses from these sources late in 1941 and thereafter it was an important source of income for the venture, coming at a vital time.

Cairo in May 1941 was quickly becoming a leave centre for troops engaged in the many battles in the Western Desert, and needed facilities for off duty troops. Sparham and Bone soon learned that the urgent need in Egypt was not for clubs or canteens, but for hostels “Places where men could spend their leaves in surroundings that were clean, materially and morally, where they knew they would not be exploited, and where they would feel an atmosphere of home.”³ “So we found ourselves pressed by the authorities to undertake something very much bigger than originally proposed; we can do nothing else than accept the challenge and proceed.” (Sparham in *The Inquirer*, 16 August 1941.) Only £300 came quickly from England and the two ministers needed £800 to make a start on their work. “But almost at once as representing the Unitarian War Welfare effort, I was accorded a seat on the co-ordinating Council for Welfare located in Cairo and which controls the expenditure of the civilian-raised War Welfare Fund for troops in Egypt; and from this fund we were granted a loan.” (This was subsequently repaid by the Hibbert Trust).⁵

So the first Hibbert House was set up and “we began to furnish and equip the premises in Cairo that the military, on a special War Office Order, had taken for us before we arrived. It was situated (5 Chareh Cherif) away from the main thoroughfare, but was in the centre of the city, It consisted of two large flats on the third floor of a five storied block and gave us some 22 rooms in which to operate. With a certain ingenuity in planning we made each of these rooms serve some purpose relevant to our needs, without undue alteration. So we got our chapel, our reading room, our private quarters, our large dining room, our troops’ bedrooms, and our main lounge”. It was opened within three weeks of their landing, and “a bug-ridden block was changed into the cleanest and one of the most popular hostels in the Middle East”. From 5 June 1941 to August 1946 over 109,000 daily lettings were made to the troops.

Who made up the team who did all this work? Besides Sparham and Bone it consisted of “Miss Evelyn V. Abel, (1897-1983), a Froebel-trained teacher, who had been working in Cairo for over two years and had been introduced by a military chaplain’s wife. Thus Mr Bone, Miss Abel and Mr Sparham formed a team — Mr Bone as accountant and business adviser to the venture; Miss Abel as caring for the domesticities and acting as hostess; and Mr Sparham taking care of policy, service contacts, etc.”⁶ The House was officially opened on 27 June 1941 by the Assistant Adjutant General and the deputy Chaplain General. Their first customers were the R.A.F. of the New Zealanders being forced out of Crete. “At last a dream had come true.”

The early months were a period of consolidation, as the name got known and beds filled up. “Very occasionally we found traces of a lurking prejudice at our Unitarian connection, but, for our part, although we never hid our Unitarianism, we so emphasized our belief in religious inclusiveness and freedom that any mere prejudice was rendered ineffective.” As is so often the case in pioneering social initiatives, that which is set up in response to real need and is found to be of practical value is not what was first intended by the original founders; this was certainly the case with Hibbert Houses.

Expansion was clearly in everyone’s mind as the Hibbert Houses were not just to serve the avowed Unitarians amongst the vast number of troops passing through the Middle East. Sparham saw it as “a first-class opportunity, as a religious fellowship, of rendering a direct service to the main mass of our countrymen of the present generation, along lines that accord with our own general religious outlook . . . we explain that the Hibbert Trust is a Unitarian Trust, a kind of Toc H, supported by it and Unitarians in England.”⁷ Up to June 1946 twelve Hibbert Houses of different kinds were opened, financed by money from Great Britain and the USA, but mainly from funds accumulated from the work of earlier Houses, and grants and loans from the Council for Voluntary Welfare Work (CVWW). It was an efficient, if very standardized, method of accounting, based on a ticket system, devised and maintained by Rev. Walter Bone, that really provided the funds for the Houses all over the Middle East. The location and type of each House are listed in an Appendix.

Based on the pattern created for the first House in Cairo, each subsequent one was set up on similar lines, though some had no sleeping facilities. “We did not seek to offer restaurant facilities of

which there was an ample supply in the city, but reliable accommodation, beds, games, library, with or without partial or full board, and waiter service; an English atmosphere; daily Chapel services in a Chapel room for those who cared to attend, and a guide to the many places of interest in and about Cairo, all at the most reasonable possible rates.”⁶ Not all the Hibbert Houses were set up on the same basis, “a second Hibbert House of 80 beds was set up in Cairo; further hostels for men (130 beds); for women service personnel (40 beds) and in due course married ATS and their husbands (13 beds) in Alexandria; a hostel for men in 1942 at Tel Aviv (80 to 100 beds) and finally in 1947 when the British forces left the Egyptian delta a Hibbert House at Somalia in the Canal Zone. Only four of the hostels required financial assistance from the Council for Voluntary Welfare Work fund.”

In Britain the idea had caught the Unitarian imagination and the quarterly reports for 1941-1944 published in *The Inquirer* show a high, if irregular, rate of giving from individuals and churches. Certainly most Unitarians in the forces who were anywhere near the area were referred to a Hibbert House, whose addresses were posted in many chapel porches, and personal experiences were reported home by visitors. “We are glad that we have recently been discovered by several Unitarians including two from Astley, one from Bristol, one (the son of a minister) from Liverpool, one from Bethnal Green, one from Sheffield and one from Walsall. This influx is probably due largely to the reference to Hibbert Houses in the last Religious Education Department letter to those serving in the forces.” (*The Inquirer*, 22 November 1941, Colfox). As a correspondent wrote in *The Inquirer*, 6 December 1941: “The first thing I do in opening your magazine is to search for news of the Hibbert Houses. That is vital work.” The General Assembly did approve Sunday January 11th 1942 as a day on which collections might be taken at all services on behalf of Hibbert Houses. It was without doubt visiting Unitarians in the forces which produced donations from back home “Sometime ago the Deputy Chaplain General, at my request, very willingly had it put in Army Orders that there being no Unitarian Chaplains in the Middle East, Unitarians in the Army should communicate with Mr Bone or myself immediately, with the result that, besides those who have heard of us direct from home, and visited us, already twenty-one men have written or been. And I have now promises from the R.A.F. and the Navy to do the same thing.” (Sparham, *The Inquirer* 7 February 1942).

Other Unitarian ministers, as well as Mr Bone, were recruited in 1942 though rueful correspondents in *The Inquirer* did not want this to become a flood. Besides American Unitarian workers and one or two Unitarian lay people, most of the helpers after 1944 were not Unitarians but were from other denominations. Thus by late 1943 all was not well between Hibbert Houses and the Unitarian movement. Colfox wrote in the *The Inquirer* 3 July 1943: "I am told that some of our supporters have to think that, because Hibbert Houses are run on undenominational lines with no sectarian bias, and also because there are among our workers men and women who are not professing Unitarians, therefore Hibbert Houses have ceased to be a Unitarian organisation. I am therefore writing in order to correct this misunderstanding." Likewise others thought the trading profits made (no HH committee minutes or records of the period are known to exist) meant that further funds were not needed. The GA Finance and General Purpose Committee on 10 November 1943 pointed out to Colfox that "information has been received to the effect that there is little or nothing to indicate that Hibbert Houses are being supported and run by the Unitarians."

By late 1943 income from the Unitarian movement was falling and there is evidence that interest in Britain in the scheme was diminishing. Without continuing support from the Hibbert Trustees, the American Unitarian Association, Manchester College, Oxford and the Lawrence House Fund, Hibbert Houses would have had to rely almost entirely on locally generated resources in the Middle East. Interest declined further during 1944 as the war in the Middle East was drawing to a close and the question of opening a Hibbert House in Europe was raised yet again. An Appeal for £100,000 over 3 years made by the General Assembly in August 1944 to foster and encourage Unitarian Churches after the war caught the imagination and donations to Hibbert House dropped slowly and never really recovered. People in Britain were now looking towards the end of the long war and a brighter future, and Hibbert Houses were becoming associated in the minds of many in Unitarianism with a past period of the war effort. The Houses were still fulfilling a very essential function and purpose but the very fact of running 12 hostels, some separated by considerable distances, must have meant that Sparham's role was organisational more than anything else. In 1944 Sparham was mentioned in despatches for his welfare work, and a Hibbert Houses broadcast took place on the radio in December 1944. He

was also taking an increasingly important part in the work of the Council for Voluntary Welfare Work in the area.

Although always intending to open in Europe, a Hibbert House was never set up there and as early as 1942 the new houses were opened eastwards, expanding into Palestine, setting up a small hostel and restaurant at Nathanya, and canteen clubs in Haifa, Wadi-es-Sarrar and Romleh as well as a small centre in a transit camp outside Damascus. The long-hoped for centre in Jerusalem never materialised. "When in 1948, the last British garrison left Palestine, HH and all its equipment were taken by the battalion to Tripoli, Libya; it was arranged to establish a club centre nearby at Miserata. Hibbert Houses were thus the last CVWW organisation to leave Palestine."⁶

Many expected that the end of the war would see the end of Hibbert Houses, their task essentially done, having provided useful and vital services to the Forces when it was needed. However, this was not the view of Colfox, Sparham and Miss Abel (Bone died of smallpox in April 1944) and they still saw a useful role to be played by Hibbert Houses. The Trustees at their meeting on 8 December 1944 abolished the special committee on Hibbert Houses, and determined that all correspondence on them should be sent to the Trustees in a rota. In June 1945 Sparham was thanked by the Trust for his work in the Middle East, and the "Trustees hope that he will continue while the need for Hibbert Houses remains". Sparham attended the Committee of the Trustees in October 1945 and the £1000 annual grant was renewed until September 1947. The Trustees agreed to support the publication of 5,000 copies of a booklet on Hibbert Houses to be prepared by R. H. Mottram from material supplied by Sparham.

In 1946 ideas were being put forward for the development of the Hibbert Houses ideal in peace time, Colfox arguing that "a religious movement is all the stronger when it has some stiff practical work to do; such work demonstrates the life of a movement and it is life that people want." There was pressure for the creation of a permanent House in Jerusalem but *The Inquirer*, 12 January 1946 noted: "It is an open secret that up to now representative bodies of the GA have not regarded the plan favourably." Rev. John Kielty in the same issue summed up the feeling that was critical of the activities of Hibbert Houses:

"The hostels have been clean and inexpensive, but they have been little or nothing more than good hotels. More than one had

been open a year when I received an assurance from the Treasurer of the scheme that I should be pleased to know that in future a notice stating that they were maintained by Unitarians would be prominently displayed in each House. That was in reply to a protest that men using them were ignorant of the name of the body responsible for them . . . From time to time lists of subscriptions have appeared in *The Inquirer* but never a balance sheet. Surely now would be an excellent time to remedy this defect.”

In the same letter John Kielty raised the question of opening a Hibbert House in London, an idea which was to bear fruit much later when he was secretary of the General Assembly.

The Trustees kept aloof from these arguments, they being divided into those people like R. M. Montgomery (the Chairman) and Colfox who were strongly committed to the idea, and the majority who took a more detached view wanting the Trust to develop along several different lines. The Trustees saw some balance sheets for Hibbert Houses but these are not included in the minutes, nor were there any published. Criticisms of Sparham and his supporters were about at this time and later, but they were vague and imprecise. Anyone who had set up such a large efficient organisation quickly depending on a few dedicated people is bound to have encountered opposition and made enemies. Whether he pressed the Unitarian connections as forcefully and loudly as he claimed in *The Inquirer* is an open question.

Unitarians as the chief material and spiritual supporters of Hibbert Houses were in two minds about them. Some felt it absolutely wrong to do anything collectively under the Unitarian name. Whilst many were willing to countenance such an institution in wartime, it was seen as entirely unacceptable in peacetime. The other group felt that Hibbert Houses did not stress the Unitarian name sufficiently and that the contribution and efforts on the home front were being ignored in the Middle East.

No House in Jerusalem was ever set up, nor in Europe and in the changed peacetime conditions, Hibbert Houses attention was centred on the Canal Zone at Ismailia. The idea was to make it a spiritual centre as well as providing hostel and club facilities.

“Service families were beginning to come out to the Middle East. Single, or unaccompanied, men there were in plenty. And the R.A.F. Chaplain’s Branch required a suitable centre for its Middle East Christian leadership courses as well as for other

denominations . . . Here Hibbert Houses established their first Bookshop. They took over a Malcolm Club Centre 55 miles away at Shallifa, near Suez. They organised mobile bookstall services to several camps in the desert north of Ismailia, and at the urgent request of the Chaplain’s Branch at the latter end of 1947, established what appeared to be a small centre though it proved to be one of their most important ventures, viz. that at R.A.F. Nicosia, Cyprus, which served for 18 years.”⁶

Sparham, and his supporters amongst the Trustees, emphasized their connection with the military and the official Chaplaincy as much as possible. Sparham always seemed to wear a type of army uniform, and in both appearance and sentiment identified very closely with the military: “there was a time when our Unitarian House in Cairo became a sort of informal Chaplain’s Club, for chaplains of many denominations”.

It was the Cyprus Centre, however, that proved of particular importance and value in peacetime. The first warden, who opened the Nicosia House on 5th November 1947, was a retired Army Colonel, W. W. Ling. Starting from scratch, Col. Ling set up a canteen service, part of which was mobile which he drove about to provide for scattered airmen. He dug over the land around the huts and kept all the accounts. After laying these firm foundations of service he retired, and when the Hibbert House at Ismailia was finally closed due to the Egyptian troubles of the time on November 27th 1951, Sparham and Miss Abel decided to move over to Cyprus. “By the summer of 1952, with the reduced tension in Egypt, our work for the servicemen situated there became less important while at the same time it became clear that it would be impossible to re-establish a leave hostel or any type of permanent centre in Egypt.” (*The Inquirer* 22 February 1953). There were to be no more hostels, but Nicosia proved to be a key station. By 1955 there were 2000 people on the station and the two buildings were too small. “In one is installed our canteen, lounge, bookshop, lending library, office and kitchen. In the other are our chapel, church fellowship clubroom (used jointly by Anglicans and others) and our social centre.” (*The Inquirer* 19 November 1955). At the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Station grew to nearly 8000.

There were four vans and a considerable book service was set up which distributed newspapers and magazines from the U.K. over a prolonged period. Other centres in the area of the camp, and in a

neighbouring army camp, were opened quickly and closed when no longer required. "For two years Hibbert Houses ran the canteen service at the Joint Services Air Terminal, so that the first and last canteen to be used by the services on arrival and departure from Cyprus was a Hibbert House activity . . . Thus this Hibbert House served the R.A.F. Nicosia and neighbourhood through fair days and foul without cessation."⁶

But by 1965, it was decided by the Hibbert Houses Committee that the time had come to close down in Cyprus and the premises which were falling down were handed over on 30th September. The R.A.F. Officers' Mess held a special dinner in honour of Griffith Sparham and Evelyn Abel to say goodbye. Each already had received the MBE at service instigation. Sparham had done many broadcasts on radio and from 1960-1966 was chairman of the Cyprus Committee of the CVWW. Thus ended the connection of this remarkable couple with Hibbert Houses that they had done so much to create and maintain. But they still persevered. "After 1965 this amazing pair carried on a canteen service for the United Nations troops stationed in their vicinity."⁸

Now Hibbert Houses attention switched to England and a lease for 3 years was taken of the Montgomery Club, Shorncliffe near Folkestone which was termed HH21. Opened on 11 September 1964 by the Chairman of Hibbert Houses Committee, an active Trustee, Captain A. L. Blake, the Club was intended to be a community centre for servicemen and their families. Mr and Mrs J. C. Jones were the wardens and the venture appeared to get off to a good start with a widely based main committee consisting of Trustees and appointees of the General Assembly as well as a local Unitarian based committee. By 1969 the main committee wanted to close Shorncliffe because of its own involvement in the creation of a London Hibbert House and the realisation that other religious groups were willing to take over the running of the Club. But the army moved more quickly and closed Shorncliffe to troops the same year. Mr Jones died late in 1969 and the building was finally handed back to the Methodists in 1971.⁹

The London Hibbert House was an entirely new venture divorced from welfare of H.M. Forces and it was announced in *The Inquirer* as "a residential centre providing two dozen bed-sitting rooms, dining room, common room, warden's flat, dormitory facilities for youth groups, limited overnight accommodation for occasional visitors — these are the facilities planned for Hibbert Houses new London centre at 102-104 Albert Street, London,

N.W. 1 close to Camden Town" (27 July 1968). Finance was complicated and the large amount of money required to make the conversion of the old property into a modern hostel came from donations, sale of investments and local and central government grants. Opened by Sir Felix Brunner on 9 August 1969, it has provided accommodation for long stay residents, often students, at reasonable rates and continues to operate on this basis at present. Run by a committee appointed by the Trust and the General Assembly it has fulfilled a valuable role in providing rooms for young people in a city centre. A. L. Blake and M. Fieldhouse have been successively Chairmen of the House committee since its inception.

Thus in giving their name and financial support in 1941 to a venture to provide for troops in time of war, the Trustees entered for the first time into the field of social service. Though operating the Houses indirectly through a committee from the start, the Trustees have always shown an interest in their operation even if on occasions it has only been limited. They provided the mechanism by which the social idealism of Unitarianism was expressed in times of war, a move which the founder would certainly have appreciated. The Trust was acting as a pioneer and in whatever new field it has entered in this role of innovator its contribution has been significant. In no way could Robert Hibbert have envisaged the idea of Hibbert Houses, but the flexible interpretation of his will, as well as of the Case Fund, by his trustees made it possible for his name to become known to thousands of British troops serving far from home.

References

1. *Hibbert House, a record* by R. H. Mottram, Lindsey Press 1947, page 47. This is the most comprehensive record available. I have been unable to find any reference to HH in the Chaplain General's archives, nor in any official Unitarian sources.
2. Minutes, Half-Yearly Meeting, 15 December 1939. The Finance and General Purposes Committee of the GA meeting on 13 December 1939 turned down without reservation the idea of establishing a hostel in a French port.
3. The Founding of Hibbert Houses, G. J. Sparham, *The Inquirer* 13 March 1943, page 83: 20 March 1943, page 87.
4. Finance and G.P. Committee of the General Assembly Minutes 12 February 1941. In providing the names of subscribers for an Appeal on behalf of HH "the question was asked whether this would not imply that the GA gave full endorsement to the Appeal, and the answer was given in the negative."
5. The Council of Voluntary Welfare Work (CVWW) still continues to organise religious and philanthropic organisations who wish to work amongst H.M. Forces.

6. Griffith Sparham before the final closure of Hibbert House in Nicosia wrote a short account of the history of the venture dated 1 December 1965, entitled "Twenty-five Years, a brief on HH/CVWW in the Middle and Near East". He sent a signed copy to the CVWW who have kindly made this important source document available to me.
7. Hibbert House Under Way, G. J. Sparham, *The Inquirer* 16 August 1944, page 272-273. As it was through *The Inquirer* that appeals for cash were made, it is the only source that now remains which gives a contemporaneous account of HH. For many years it featured a quarterly appeal for funds, as well as listing those who had made donations.
8. CVWW official letter 8 April 1970 (ref. 19/2/70), Chairman CVWW to Major Lock, Ministry of Defence (PS4).
9. Minutes HH Committee 1969-72; HH advertising leaflet; *The Inquirer* 17 October 1964.

6. THE MATURE TRUST

"The history of charitable trusts tends of necessity to become a list of names, dates and monies expended, the real content of the record and the widespreadness of the resultant good being lost under the respectability of procedure and legal requirement." So wrote G. Stephen Spinks in 1949 in *The Hibbert Journal* when anticipating the centenary of the Trust, and it would be easy in writing the history of its work after the First World War to fall into this trap. The minute books record patterns repeating themselves, and to list the various grants given to causes major and minor would only add to the minutiae and do little to demonstrate the main trends in its work and activity.

The Trust continued to operate during the 1914-18 War but at a lower key. Dinners were not held after 1915 and a grant in lieu was sent to War charities. Failure to attend Trust meetings did not disqualify a trustee from membership for the period of the War. Miss von Petzold appears yet again in the minutes, and a committee of Trustees proposed to make a grant of £100 to her for foreign travel. But the half yearly meeting held on 18 June 1915, noting that they had a "letter from her as to her German nationality and her application for naturalisation, also supported by her church, declined to make a grant and over-ruled the Committee's recommendation."

It is clear that during this period the Secretary, Rev. F. H. Jones, who had served the Trust since 1895, was becoming rather inefficient especially in financial matters. In 1917 Herbert Gimson prepared a report for the trustees on how the accounts were kept and at the end of the year took over this part of the work as accountant. Jones died in 1919 and Rev. Dr W. H. Drummond, one of the most distinguished Unitarian ministers and scholars of his time, was appointed in his place.

The 1920's and 1930's was not a vital or pivotal period in the Trust's history. Few innovations were attempted and the old formulas were carried on assiduously by, in particular, the large number of lawyers on the Trust. *The Inquirer* was supported financially throughout the War, and in the early 1920's some large

grants were given which played an important part in keeping it going. In 1920 the first woman was elected to a full scholarship — E. Rosalind Lee, who having private means did not require the money but wanted the honour of such an appointment. However, the Trustees insisted on paying her the proper amount. It was seen as an honour to be the recipient of a scholarship, and a recognition that the person who received it had great things expected of him or her. It was widely recognised as a reward for excellence for able and diligent aspirants to the Unitarian Ministry, and it continued to be so up until the late 1960's.

Perhaps the major innovation which took place during this period involved the Hibbert Lectures. Held in 1916, 1919 and 1921, the Trustees were in some difficulty, not necessarily in getting a speaker of eminence, but in finding a theme and obtaining the services of the right speakers in order to carry it through. Public interest was also low. Whether a theme was required for the Hibbert Lectures is a moot point, but the Trustees were relieved in 1921 when L. P. Jacks offered “to deliver a short course of lectures on some present day religious topics with a view to meeting the needs of ordinary men and women”. (HTM 17 June 1921) Very different from any previous Lectures, which had tended to be highly intellectual and beyond the knowledge and grasp of the person in the pew, the Trustees decided to let their successful editor have a try at a more popular version. He had succeeded with *The Hibbert Journal* so why not with the Lectures? In 1922, his title was “Religious Perplexities”, in 1923 “The Living Universe” and in 1924 “The Challenge of Life”. These, together with some other lectures he gave for the Trust established Jacks' name as a well known writer on both sides of the Atlantic and brought the name of Hibbert before a very wide public; “they had a large circulation both at home and in America. These books, of which there were five, made me fairly well known as a person who might be trusted to speak in public about elemental religion without attacking the Christian Creeds which had grown out of it, grinding the Unitarian axe or otherwise provoking bitterness.”¹

In 1924, the Trustees decided to take a new initiative and asked Jacks to deliver popular lectures rather than try to maintain the intellectual standards of the traditional Hibbert Lectures. Possibly it was Jacks' idea in the first place. He was given:

“a commission to deliver a series of public lectures on the fundamental issues of religion, in the great industrial towns.

This was to be an entirely different thing from preaching on the one hand and from academic lecturing on the other . . . “It compelled me to study simplicity of presentation . . . These lectures continued at intervals until 1933, the last series being given under the title ‘The Revolt against Mechanism’, in Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The general subject to which they were all devoted was Elemental Religion, though these words were not used in the title of any of them.”²

While these were being delivered, the main series of Hibbert Lectures was recommenced with some very distinguished speakers although the idea of a theme had now been dropped. In 1927, Dr W. L. Sperry of Harvard spoke on “The Paradox of Religion”, in 1929 Professor S. Radhakrishnan (in later years President of India) on “An Idealist View of Life” and in 1930 Rabindranath Tagore on “The Religion of Man”. The latter two lectures in particular have been of continuous interest and importance to scholars and researchers, and requests for republication of extracts from them continue into the present to reach the Trust.

The Trustees became very involved in the rights of copyright between themselves and the various Lecturers. The minutes record long disputes with distinguished scholars that tend to show the Trustees acting in a narrow and legalistic manner and not in accord with their traditional spirit of liberality. As with the rigid control maintained over stocks of published lectures in the 19th century, the meetings of the Trust continued to involve the spending of considerable time and energy on very minor matters. Happily in the period after 1950 the Trustees did not bother themselves greatly in these affairs and left them rightly to others.

In 1934 Albert Schweitzer gave the Lectures, after various postponements, on the “religious factor in modern civilisation”, but this was unpublished as Schweitzer was unable to deliver an adequate manuscript. With addresses by Gilbert Murray in 1937 and W. E. Hocking in 1938, the lectures held in the inter-War period were concluded and there were no more until 1946 when H. D. A. Major spoke on “Civilisation and Religious Values”.

Support to scholarship though a continuing Trust activity was nonetheless important, particularly to the Unitarian movement. An examination of the grants awarded shows that financial support was given to nearly every piece of research leading to publication that was associated with Unitarianism. The Trust played a significant role in fostering and materially assisting the

publication of a whole range of works but mainly in the field of Unitarian history. It was in the inter-War period that the Trust became particularly associated with the support of historical and analytical works on the evolution of Protestant Radical Dissent, and without Trust backing many works now regarded as classics of their kind would not have appeared before the public.³

Willaston, a boarding school founded for Unitarian boys in 1899, closed in 1937. The Trust had a long connection with the provision of religious education there. In the 1920's, they introduced a scheme whereby certain Unitarian ministers were paid to visit the school for a few days at intervals, and this arrangement appeared to function effectively. This replaced a different scheme to achieve the same end set up before 1914 which had not worked well. A brief history of the school is to be found in *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* 1974, written by Kenneth Gill Smith.

The Memoir of Robert Hibbert, with associated material, by Jerom Murch, that had caused such a storm when it appeared in 1874, was by the 1920's in short supply and rather out of date. When Dr Snow of Meadville College, Chicago, wrote asking for a copy in 1929, the Secretary was "instructed to prepare a new chapter dealing with the history of the Trust from 1874 to the present day, which could be bound up with the sheets of the old book still in hand" (HTM 6 December 1929). *The Book of the Hibbert Trust* that appeared in 1933 was the result and from passing references in the minutes and elsewhere it appears that Drummond did not undertake the duty with relish. As a source he used the minute books and nothing else, and attempted no critical evaluation of the work of the Trust in the period. W. H. Drummond continued as Trust secretary until 1938 when Rev. Dr J. C. Flower was appointed.

The real innovation in the 1930's was a minor one by any outside standard but a major step for the Trust. On 2 November 1934, the Committee concluded that "In view of Counsel's opinion, taken as long ago as 1860, that there was nothing in the terms of the Trust to limit the freedom of the Trustees in the matter, it was resolved that 3rd class return rail fares be allowed on application to the secretary." The years of disagreement on the matter of travel expenses were over, and common sense was at last triumphant. But the Second World War prevented the development of an entirely new undertaking which could have developed into a major Trust activity. In June 1939 negotiations were in an "advanced state" for religious radio publicity based on Trust principles

on Radio Luxembourg and/or the Paris Broadcasting Station, paid for by the Trust. A sub-committee was even authorised to spend up to £300 on a series of seven 15 minute broadcasts on the Paris Station. Changed circumstances meant that after 1945 the idea was not pursued. If it had been adopted earlier in the 1930's, this might well have developed into a significant part of the Trust's work.

In the period up to the early 1950's there were no major initiatives except for Hibbert Houses, the history of which is covered in an earlier Chapter. In 1948 the number of Trust dinners was reduced from two to one per annum, and the minutes were duplicated rather than printed. Perhaps the main influence on the Trust until his death was R. M. Montgomery KC (1869-1948) who was Recorder of Chester and for many years the Trust's Chairman.⁴ Only a few weeks before his death, he decided to try to define the role of the Trust to his fellow Trustees especially in its relationship to the Unitarian movement. Published subsequently in the Minutes, nothing like this had or has been attempted before or since. It is an important statement on the work of the Trust, both for the present and the future, even if there are many who would disagree with its conclusions. For this reason it is now set out in full:

"Statement by Mr R. M. Montgomery, KC on the Meaning of the Hibbert Trust made at the Trust meeting held on 10 December 1948.

I want to say something about the Trust because I think we are in great danger and difficulty from what has been written about it, and the view that has been expressed by Non-lawyers in *The Inquirer* and perhaps elsewhere, and amongst others by one of our non-lawyer Trustees, that the words of our Trust are the Hibbert Trust definition of Unitarianism. That is exactly what they are not, if I may say so. The words of the Trust are these:—

(Mr Montgomery read from Trust Deed, "and in all respects in such manner as they deem most conducive to the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form and to the exercise of unfettered private judgment in matters of religion.")

Now here you will see there is no reference to 'Unitarianism'. There are three words of definition, and only three I think and they are these. The expenditure must be for 'the spread of Christianity.' It is no use saying these people are Unitarians, like the Muslims, that is not Christianity: it must always be in favour

of Christianity. That is one limitation, and it is a definition. Then 'in its most simple and intelligible form'. There again is another limitation and it is a definition. It is no doubt true that at the time when this deed was first made by the founder and the other members who were made Trustees in the first instance they all believed that Unitarianism was the only intelligible view at that time, the only 'simple and intelligible' form of Christianity. But at the same time, although they were deeply opposed to the Trinity and did not believe there was a possible explanation, Field (who drew up the Deed and was one of the finest lawyers of his day) knew only too well that Unitarian views might change from time to time, and were likely to change, and in fact they have changed, because there has been a tendency far more towards the Immanent view of the Deity, than there was amongst the earlier Unitarians of about 100 years ago or more, and therefore he was most anxious to avoid anything that would prevent the change in Unitarian views as knowledge increased, and affect the Trust in that way. He did not want that to happen, and therefore he did not want to use the word "Unitarian", because any lawyer, and anyone acquainted with Unitarian history at that time, would have realised (as he of course realised) that the Trust (if it had mentioned Unitarianism, or been specifically Unitarian in any way) would have been faced with this problem later on; the people who held the older view of Unitarianism and did not hold the Immanent view would then be said to be the Unitarians when the Deed was drawn up, and we should have the Lady Hewley Trust trouble and the Scottish Church trouble all over again; and we might have been faced with the statement that we were supporting views which were not the views of Unitarians when originally this Deed was drawn up, and an enquiry might have been instituted into Robert Hibbert's own views.

The other point was that Field was only too keenly realistic of the fact that, although at that time and by all of us, I suppose, at the present time, the view is held that the Trinity is unintelligible and by no means simple (it was often rudely spoken of in those old days 100 years ago as 'the arithmetical conundrum') and up to the present time and in the present state of our knowledge that seems the only possible view. It is quite possible, as Field realised, that with increasing knowledge one never can tell (just as one thought 100 years ago that the atom could not be split up, and took it for granted as the basic element of matter) we might learn something more about the future life, or something of that kind. It

seems unlikely, but it is of course conceivable. We do not know all that may yet be known about the future. Field therefore desired if it turned out that there was a simple and intelligible view to be taken of Christianity in the form of a Trinity or Duality or some other form, that it should be absolutely open to the Trust to spend its funds in support of that view. But he made this condition 'and the unfettered exercise of private judgment in matters of religion'. It was not to be an 'intelligible form' based upon some authority instead of on private judgment. So the three points of definition were: 'private judgment', which is tied to the other two, 'the simple and intelligible form' and 'the spread of Christianity'.

I think that it is a very great pity that we have had words used which have sought to make the Trust responsible, or the Trust Deed responsible, for a definition, which is exactly what they have intentionally avoided. Thus it is quite possible in the way the deed is drawn up to take more progressive views from time to time, but always remembering that the 'intelligible form' must be held by people who hold that view in the exercise of 'unfettered private judgment' and not who hold it by reason of some authority like the history of the Church or whatever it may be, or the Archbishop of Canterbury or anyone else. It must be their own view, and once they have got that, if then it is possible to hold something which is not a Unitarian view of Christianity then the Trust funds might be used to support them. It was that effort to avoid any words of definition and to avoid bringing Unitarianism into the picture at all which brought about the other words that are used here, and so far from being a definition they are words used to avoid any definition of Unitarianism in any shape or form. At the same time, of course, the Trustees were known to be people who did not believe the Trinity to be the most intelligible form of Christianity and they have continued to hold those views ever since; and it looks as if nobody but a Unitarian could, at the present time, properly carry out or give assent to carrying out our Trust."

In the period after the Second World War to the late 1960's, much of the effort of the Trust was poured into *The Hibbert Journal* and devising new ways of keeping it going. This involvement has been described in an earlier Chapter. In 1952, a new initiative was taken by the Trustees with the creation of the Junior Hibbert Lectures, whose aim was to present religious issues in an open and non-sectarian manner to teenagers at public and grammar schools in a defined geographical area. The first series was given by Rev. G. Randall Jones at Sherbourne School in the middle of 1952. The

idea appeared to be a good one even if the first lecturer was seen by his hearers as being "old and deaf" (HTM 18 December 1953) and not able to relate closely to the needs of young people. In 1957 the idea was taken up again by N. D. Blake and a series was given at schools in the Lyme Regis area, mainly by non-Unitarians. But strong objection was taken by some Unitarians to one of the lecturers, Rev. G. Tiarks, Vicar of Lyme Regis, who "had orthodox rather than liberal views".⁵ Some felt that the school authorities had rejected a good Unitarian speaker but as Norman Blake stated in *The Inquirer* "I suggested names but knew that if I became dogmatic there would be no lectures". In the Trust Minutes 25 April 1958, it was however decided to review the position as "generally heads will not accept Unitarians on lists as lecturers". In 1960 there was a further series held successfully at the University of Birmingham, away from the confines of a specific school, with a Trustee, Dr S. J. Kennett, in the chair. The format was changed slightly with a panel discussion being included. However, there was no widespread interest, although a grant was made available in 1966 for another series at Cardiff. The strength of theological view on all sides even in ecumenical times made the holding of such events precarious and uncertain.

But A. L. Blake pressed the Trustees to accept another idea designed to involve the young. At the July 1966 meeting he indicated that there were nine Unitarian drama groups throughout the country, and it was suggested that a grant should be given for "a play with the underlying theme of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form". Although some Trustees felt the scheme could be more widely drawn, Arthur Blake was asked to develop it and write to the groups in question. Although several ideas were developed at different places in the country, it was concluded in 1969 that "there was little prospect of a work being produced of sufficient merit to warrant going further".

After 1946 there was no Hibbert Lecture until 1953 when Viscount Samuel spoke on "A Century's Change of Outlook" at Hibbert's alma mater to mark the hundredth anniversary of the Trust. A centennial dinner was held at Emmanuel College, Cambridge in July of that year. Lectures followed in 1957 given by Victor Murray and in 1959 by Basil Willey. As 1962 was the tercentenary of the Great Ejection of 1662, an event which helped to lay the foundations of modern Nonconformity, a short popular volume by four scholars was published as a Hibbert Lecture in 1963 on the beginnings of Nonconformity.

But the Trustees decided, as an allied project, to support a history of English Presbyterianism over the same period. The project turned out to be a longer and more protracted one than expected and "the Trust gave support and encouragement throughout a long period of time and awarded a Hibbert Fellowship to Dr Jeremy Goring to enable him to devote part of a year to research into 18th century Dissent".⁶ The resulting volume, by four Unitarian authors, entitled *The English Presbyterians* appeared in 1968 and has proved to be a major contribution to the detailed study of Nonconformity over the period.

In the domestic affairs of the Trust there were some changes. For reasons of economy the dinner following the December half-yearly Trust meeting was discontinued in 1948, "in spite of the expressed wish of the Founder that the Trustees should dine together, at the cost of the Trust, twice a year". In June 1955 it was decided to have, each December meeting, "a lunch on a less expensive scale and thus to reinstate the second social occasion provided for by the founder". This arrangement continues to this day. In 1957, Dr J. C. Flower, after nineteen years distinguished and loyal service as secretary, retired, and Rev. Dr H. S. Carter of Cambridge succeeded him. He continued in office through the difficult last years of *The Hibbert Journal* until his death in 1966 when Rev. Roger Thomas took over.

Perhaps the main break with past tradition that came about during this time was in the number of scholarships awarded as well as to whom they were given. The advent of adequate major county awards given by right to students preparing for all kinds of degrees was perhaps the chief reason for the change although another factor was probably a lack of suitable candidates. In the period 1945-1970, only three scholarships were awarded in addition to two fellowships and a studentship. Increasingly, the Trustees seemed to feel that the scholarship, if not the fellowship, scheme was not as necessary as once it was although the ability to offer them to suitable candidates is still open to the Trustees.

By the 1960's the ability of the Trustees to support new ventures was fast diminishing as inflation and other factors came together to limit the financial power and authority of the Trust. A grant from the Hibbert Trust in the 1960's for a publication or a course of study was useful, but most of those who applied required other sources of finance to achieve their end. Thus the Trust was increasingly searching for appropriate initiatives to support, but

did not make awards if the intellectual status or originality of the proposal failed to meet their high standards.

In the 1970's financial reserves were built up by the Trustees in order to support a venture with adequate financial backing when an appropriate one was proposed. Apart from Hibbert Lectures in 1965 and 1969, the Trust at the end of the 1960's had no major venture to support either on a continuing or one off basis.

References

1. Jacks, *Confessions* op cit, page 200.
2. Jacks, *Confessions* op cit, pages 197-198.
3. The two major examples are Herbert McLachlan's *The Unitarian Movement in the Religious Life of England* (1934) — "It was by invitation of the HT . . . that what follows was written" (Preface) and Raymond Holt's *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* (1938).
4. A full obituary of Montgomery is to be found in TUHS 1949, pages 154-6. A director of *The Inquirer* 1917-32, he clearly took a lead in obtaining HT funding for the paper.
5. Letters in *The Inquirer* 21 December 1957, page 424; 4 January 1958, page 6; 25 January 1958, page 30; 15 February 1958, page 54.
6. *The English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* by C. G. Bolam, J. J. Goring, H. L. Short and R. Thomas, from the preface.

7. THE JOHN GREGSON TRUST

This Trust was founded in 1956 and owes its origin to the late John Thomas Gregson who died at the age of 87 on 27th October 1949. Born and educated in Bolton, he came from an old Unitarian family, most of whom are buried at the Unitarian Chapel at Walmsley (Egerton). One of them gave the avenue that connects the Chapel with the main road. He went out to South Africa in 1886 as a clerk and made a considerable fortune as a banker in the years that followed. His niece, Mrs Amy Howarth, has a series of his letters, sent home to his family ending in 1912, and in them he tells of attending the Unitarian Church in Cape Town when he was living there.

On his retirement early in the present century, he returned to Bolton where he lived until his death, and took up membership of Bank Street (Unitarian) Chapel. He was a bachelor, and at his death his only near relatives were his two nieces, Mrs Amy Howarth and Mrs Sybil Dodson, daughters of his sister Esther, who married Walter Simpson of Bolton. In his will he appointed these two nieces, with the Standard Bank of South Africa, as his Executors and Trustees. After giving certain legacies and making other provisions, he directed that at the expiration of five years from the date of his death one half of the remaining estate should be given to "such deserving institutions" as his two nieces should determine.

It was not until the end of 1954 that Mrs Howarth and Mrs Dodson approached the Secretary of the Trust with a view to the possibility of the Hibbert Trustees undertaking to administer a John Gregson Trust, one of the essential purposes of which would be to give assistance in the maintenance of Unitarian and Free Christian Church buildings. This was very much their own idea — "the creation of the Trust was not a premeditated act or a long cherished dream of my Uncle's. As the will states, he left what was then quite a sizeable sum to charity, with the sole proviso that Sybil and I were to choose the charity. We thought about it for a long time and our first decision was that Uncle would like something that bore his name rather than that we should just add

the sum to an existing charity . . . When we were selecting a charity, we hovered between a bequest to an Art Gallery (Uncle was a bit of an art connoisseur) and the one we eventually chose".¹

The proposal raised some complicated difficulties for the Trustees and their secretary, Dr Cyril Flower. While they are empowered to exercise their uncontrolled discretion in the use of the income from Robert Hibbert's Trust for "the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form", there is an absolute veto on the expenditure of any of this money on buildings. Moreover, there were certain ambiguities or imprecisions, in the wording of John Gregson's will which created further obstacles to any participation of the Hibbert Trust as such in the administration of the proposed John Gregson Trust. Some Trustees, like M. H. Winder, strongly supported the idea while others were opposed for a variety of reasons.

There followed over twelve months of negotiation, discussion and legal consultation, but early in 1956 the difficulties were overcome, a Trust Deed was prepared, and thirteen members of the Hibbert Trust who had expressed their willingness were appointed as original Trustees. An important clause in the Trust Deed lays down the condition that only Trustees of the Hibbert Trust are eligible for appointment as John Gregson Trustees. This arrangement makes possible close collaboration between the two Trusts, and economy in administrative costs. The meeting of the Gregson Trust follows that of the Hibbert, and both now have common Trustees.

The purpose of the Trust as stated in the Trust Deed is:

"for the promotion of corporate worship amongst those who profess Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form and who do not require for themselves or their ministers subscription to any doctrinal articles of belief, including (but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing words) those Churches which now or hereafter may be on the Roll of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches or of any other body or bodies which may hereafter be or become the Central Authority or Authorities for Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. The Trustees shall have special regard to the maintenance of the fabric of such places of worship as come within the sphere of the last preceding sub-clause and are in the opinion of the Trustees of historical or architectural importance."

In 1957, when the Trust came into operation, the capital amounted to £16,500. By 1971, the capital fund had risen to over

£22,000 (annual income c. £1,500). In 1972, after a gift of £10,000 from Sir Felix Brunner, the capital fund stood at £33,000 and this remained the position at the end of the decade.

At their meeting held on 25 April 1958, the Gregson Trustees laid down the principles upon which they proposed to act, and these have been followed since that time. "Arising out of a general discussion concerning the first batch of applications, the Trustees agreed that priority should be given in their consideration to the preservation of the ancient buildings, that grants should be large rather than small, and that it was better to assist two churches with large grants rather than several churches with small ones."

In the period to 1979, no less than sixty Unitarian Chapels have been helped by the Trustees in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (congregations of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland). The list of those assisted contains the names of all the oldest Unitarian church buildings and meeting houses, and without doubt the Trust has played an important role in helping to maintain a neglected part of our national religious heritage. Applications from non-Unitarian chapels have been received from time to time, but these have been rejected on the basis of the contents of the Trust Deed, as have requests for assistance towards the erection of new Unitarian buildings.

It can be said that John Gregson and Robert Hibbert shared similar characteristics. Both lived for a considerable period on the income from accumulated capital gained either directly or indirectly from Africa and both had no children or young close relatives to whom to leave their money. They were old men at their deaths with a long connection with the Unitarian movement and the Trusts which now bear their names were in practice created and put into effect by someone else (in Hibbert's case it was his solicitor E. W. Field, and in Gregson's by his nieces and those Hibbert Trustees who were keen on the idea). Neither would have recognised the work and activity of the Trusts that were created out of their wills and now bear their names. Although Hibbert did not want his money to be spent on buildings, a point about which he felt strongly, he would without doubt have welcomed a tightly drawn up Trust dedicated to this end and operated and run by his Trustees with the principles of his own Trust used as a guide. The John Gregson Trust is thus a useful and logical adjunct to the continuing work of the Hibbert Trust.

References

1. Letter, Mrs Amy Howarth to the author, dated 4 February 1981. I am indebted to Mrs Howarth for many of the personal details about her uncle.

8. THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

The years 1970-79 saw many changes in the membership of the Trust, and the most obvious change was the advent of women. It is surprising in a trust devoted to the liberal tradition in religious and related spheres that it was not until 1970 that women were made trustees (Dame Kathleen Lonsdale and Mrs Mary Burns). By 1979 there were five women trustees. Also by the end of this period the number of people from the legal profession was much reduced and a proportion of the trustees were under the age of 45. Whether these changes will mean a permanent and significant shift in the Trust's outlook and policy must await the test of time. The continuing factor amongst the Trustees since the first were appointed in 1853 is that the majority still come from old Unitarian families. The only other noteworthy alteration in the Trust's business was that the post of accountant, held from 1919 by a member of the Gimson family, was abolished in 1976 and a trustee was made honorary treasurer. The Secretary was asked to keep the financial records, and this arrangement has operated successfully since then.

The ending of *The Hibbert Journal* was a shock in more ways than one to the Trust but with the lifting of the financial burden, it was possible to look around for new fields of activity. One project that was supported was the Religious Experience Unit set up at Manchester College, Oxford in 1969, by a distinguished academic Trustee, Sir Alastair Hardy FRS. Its purpose was to undertake a systematic study of records of religious experience in the community and to publish the results. The Hibbert Trust played an important role in financing the early work of the now famous Unit.

The field of religious education, particularly for young people, was an interest of trustees from the 1960's onwards, but there was an ever present difficulty in getting a worthwhile scheme off the ground within the sums of money available. A scheme to sponsor working teachers to study for a diploma course in religious education at the University of London Institute of Education was

created in 1970. But local authority grants were found to meet these needs, and there was little interest from students who did not qualify for such grants. A scheme for prize essays on the subject of religious education was set up and advertised and judges appointed in 1973. Three awards were made, all to Unitarians, in 1974 and these were later published as a supplement to *The Inquirer*. The 1965 series of Hibbert Lectures were centred on Christianity in education and published the following year but the trustees were generally disappointed that they seemed unable to do more to help in this important and developing field.

But the Trust continued to maintain its traditional fields of activity — scholarship schemes and the support of various kinds of publications. In 1970, a Joint Scholarship Scheme was formulated in association with other Trusts, to finance the advanced training of ministers of religion. The aim was to make significant sums of money available to appropriate and suitable applicants from various denominations to enable them to further their studies. Few people were interested, the trusts involved did not see things in the same way, and in 1973 the arrangement was discontinued without really getting off the ground. The Trust then substituted a scheme to provide sabbatical leave for experienced Unitarian ministers. The idea had enthusiastic support from parts of the Unitarian movement, but little from the ministers themselves, and was still-born.

Financial backing for publications was however taken up with enthusiasm. There have been many applications over the years for all types and kinds of project. The Trust has given regular assistance to the journal *Faith and Freedom*, devoted to the study of progressive religion which was founded in 1947 by the Old Students' Association of Manchester College, Oxford. Although the Trust stated that this journal, which appears three times a year, was not a successor to *The Hibbert Journal*, several of the trustees hoped that in supporting *Faith and Freedom* many of the aspirations of *The Hibbert Journal* might live on in a new way.

However, the major initiative during the 1970's was the preparation of "an up-to-date book on Unitarianism suitable for putting in the hands of serious enquirers" (HTM 24 June 1971), the original proposal coming from a trustee, Charles Beale.

A sub-committee was formed and meetings of selected people were held to get the idea off the ground. John Hostler was asked to write it on these lines in 1973, and the Trust awarded him a Fellowship in order to allow sufficient time to complete the task

adequately. The final draft was made available to the Trustees in 1975, but there was considerable delay in getting it published despite the offer of trust support to possible publishers. Eventually the Trust decided to publish the work under its own name and the book appeared in 1981. While not being greeted with critical acclaim or selling in large numbers, the venture was a worthwhile one and Dr Hostler's work a major contribution to the debate on the past, present and future of Unitarianism in this country.¹

Sir Alastair Hardy's notable Hibbert Lectures in 1969 (later enlarged and published in 1975 under the title *The Biology of God*) was followed by a new series in 1979. This was the centenary of the first Hibbert Lectures. Delivered by Professor Rustum Roy of Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A. at King's College, London on three successive evenings in November 1979, their title could be said to sum up much of the work of the Trust — "Experimenting with truth". Although they were not heard by audiences as extensive as those which listened to the first in 1879, they were very much in the tradition of Hibbert Lectures — in other words, challenging, scholarly and provocative.

Writing in 1982 it is appropriate to ask in what directions the Trust might develop and expand in the future, and some trustees want the Trust to find a new role in the 1980's. In recent years, the income has been spent mainly on supporting publications of various kinds, very often historical. If this trend is to continue an important question needs an answer — what type of publications should be supported and to what extent? The views are many and varied. Besides this, financial backing for international liberal religious bodies outside Great Britain has been given in recent years, but as the total annual trust income is less than £10,000 per annum, whatever sums it gives can only be token amounts.

Can the past give indications of what lines the Trust might follow in the future? It would be quite presumptuous and wrong of me to attempt to show how the Trust ought to develop. All that I will do is point out three qualities that the Trust at its best has shown over the years, and where in my view it has been most successful in its efforts. This is not a blueprint for the future, but rather a recapitulation of where the Trust has done so well in its one hundred and thirty year history.

Firstly, the Trust has been successful when it has played the role of innovator. The Hibbert Lectures were the first in the field and met a need to look beyond Christianity (as well as Unitarianism) to a wider religious and spiritual arena that the Christian consen-

sus of the 19th century in Britain had done so much to suppress. Original material delivered by leading figures ensured their early success. When the Hibbert Lectures were restarted in the early years of the present century, they created much less of a stir because many other lectures were being held regularly, some of which had the Hibbert Lectures as their inspiration. *The Hibbert Journal* was a unique innovation in its time, and was widely recognised as an instant success. It was read eagerly by everyone of note in the British Churches even if they did not all agree with its emphasis and content. In 1904, Hensley Henson wrote in *The Hibbert Journal* on evidence of Christ's Resurrection. Then Canon of Westminster, and later one of the most controversial Anglican bishops of the 20th century, he was roundly attacked for what he had written by the Bishop of London in a sermon in Ely Cathedral.² Instances like this show that after the appearance of only a few issues, the Journal was meeting a real and perceived need, in particular amongst so-called modernists. It provided a platform for the latest thinking and some saw *The Hibbert Journal* as a means of loosening the old tight denominational boundaries. To some extent it was successful in doing this and later it had its imitators. The Journal kept going for as long as it did because it was the first in its particular field and was consistently well edited.

The idea behind Hibbert Houses was not entirely new, but they were successful because they removed the block that had been created against Unitarian involvement in social work for the troops. The number of Unitarians in the forces were small, the other denominations were antipathetic to Unitarian participation in joint work, and many Unitarians felt unable to do anything together even though there was a deep social concern that some action should be taken. The Trust, prompted by Colfox and Sparham provided the initial cash and impetus that the Unitarian movement needed in order to get something started in the period 1941-44. Hibbert Houses were the result. Support flagged after this time because it was widely felt that the original need had passed. Thus the Trust was particularly successful in these three initiatives because it fostered and encouraged activities in spheres that had not hitherto been developed. The early recognition of their importance and prompt action to turn them into practical reality was perhaps the Trust's major contribution to their success.

Secondly, the Trust has prospered when it has invested in the future. In each of the spheres mentioned, the Trust took risks and

supported ideas which were open to dispute and criticism, and in each instance there was little in terms of their past activity to guide the Trustees. Setting up the first Hibbert Lectures in particular was a major step, that required considerable flexibility and dexterity of mind by the Trustees to see the Lectures as part of “the spread of Christianity in its simplest and most intelligible form” as envisaged by the founder. Another example of the forward glance is the way in which the Trust has always encouraged original work on the relationship between science and religion. Since the 1930’s in particular the Trust has been associated very closely with the fostering of historical research, mainly connected with liberal protestant dissent. Its distinguished role in this field has been widely acknowledged, but there are those who feel that there has been an over-concentration on the past. This is not an easy issue to resolve as historical analysis does much to place the past, present and future in perspective. However, it may well be that the Trustees, in looking for a changed role for the Trust in the 21st century will wish to enter new pastures and re-interpret Robert Hibbert’s will in the daring and adventurous manner that certain of their predecessors have done.

The third area where the Hibbert Trust has succeeded has been in what can be termed “the pursuit of excellence”. Undoubtedly the Trust has always demanded the best that is available both in terms of people and their work. When applicants for financial help are judged by the Trustees not to have reached the required level of ability or attainment, their candidature has been rejected. This policy has produced some bitterness and rancour over the years, particularly from those in the Unitarian movement who have been disappointed by the Trust. Possibly, the Trust has not always been right in its judgement of both people and their work. At times it appears to have shown a distinct social class preference when choosing between broadly equal candidates. But nonetheless, the Trust’s record over one hundred and thirty years has been a consistent one in this respect and part of its success has been because it has preferred the excellent rather than the best of the second rate. On occasions perhaps it has not enforced its own high standards rigorously enough. The concern for achieving the best, however, still remains with the Trustees, and when I attended a meeting of the Trust as an observer at the commencement of my researches, the thread of this concern ran through much of the discussion and the decisions reached.

Whether these strands in the history of the Trust are the key

ones in its tradition must be left up to the Trustees to determine. There are other continuing traditions that have become part of the Trust’s work. The longest one still obtaining is the regular financial support given to *The Inquirer*, a tradition now nearly eighty years old. Without this backing it is highly unlikely that the oldest Nonconformist newspaper would still be in existence. Support for Manchester College, Oxford and its work is perhaps of even longer lineage, but its form and manner have changed over the years. The future of “Christianity in its simplest and most intelligible form” is probably less certain today than at any time since 1850. Clearly the Trust cannot make any significant effect on its flow and development unaided, as it has done on previous occasions; the income from investments is too small and in recent times it has neither attracted legacies or gifts to add to its capital. Perhaps the future lies in creating long term understandings and agreements with other like-minded trusts and financial institutions in order to support those initiatives that are consistent with Robert Hibbert’s will in the terms of the 21st century. Christianity in its simplest and most intelligible form has a future, though the means by which it can be strengthened will be different to those of the past.

Each generation needs to examine critically the work of its forebears, and determine how to use and build on what has been done before. This is true of religion as much as it is true of society. It is no less true of the Trust itself. The Hibbert Trust has consistently attempted to be an agent of religious change, so much so that this is probably its subtlest and most profound tradition. This is a high calling and a challenge for the future that will require all the vision, flair and flexibility that the Trust has so clearly tried to demonstrate throughout its history.

References

1. *Unitarianism* by John Hostler, paperback, 1981, 84 pages, with a foreword by S. J. Kennett, Chairman of the HT, price £2.25.
2. *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life*, H. Hensley Henson, 2 vols. 1943, Oxford, pages 80-81. There are other references to the HJ in the autobiography including a whole chapter on the Liverpool Unitarian controversy 1933-34 that closely involved L. P. Jacks.

LIST OF HIBBERT TRUSTEES 1853-1979

Thomas Ainsworth	1853-1860
Edwin Wilkins Field	1853-1871
Thomas Field Gibson	1853-1877
Richard Greaves	1853-1870
John Grundy	1853-1860
James Heywood	1853-1887
John Pemberton Heywood	1853-1876
Timothy Kenrick	1853-1884
Arthur Lupton	1853-1863
Richard Martineau	1853-1865
John Manning Needham	1853-1876
Charles Paget	1853-1861
Mark Philips	1853-1873
Robert Philips	1853-1853
Robert Needham Philips	1853-1877
William Philip Price	1853-1860
Robert Worthington	1853-1859
Thomas Wrigley	1853-1857
Thomas Ashton	1859-1898
Jerom Murch	1859-1894
Christopher James Thomas	1860-1882
Timothy Rhodes Cobb	1860-1874
Samuel Stone	1861-1863
William Philip Price	1862-1891
William James Lamport	1863-1874
James Clarke Lawrence	1865-1897
Edward Enfield	1866-1880
Charles Jerom Murch	1867-1891
Herbert New	1870-1887
Henry Peyton Cobb	1872-1900
Robert Dukinfield Darbishire	1874-1902
Alfred Paget	1874-1884
Henry Russell Greg	1875-1894
Philip Henry Lawrence	1876-1895
Thomas Pickard Warren	1877-1908

Henry Wainright Gair	1877-1901
Joseph Chamberlain	1877-1882
David Ainsworth	1881-1906
Francis Taylor	1882-1898
James Kitson, junr.	1882-1890
Ernest William Enfield	1884-1894
William Edwin Price	1884-1886
Charles William Jones	1886-1889
Alfred Henry Paget	1887-1909
Lindsey Middleton Aspland	1887-1891
William Hollins	1890-1915
John S. Ainsworth	1891-1908
Robert Harrop	1891-1917
William Blake Odgers	1891-1919
Russell Scott	1894-1908
Thomas Grosvenor Lee	1895-1914
Thomas Alfred Colfox	1895-1929
Russell Martineau	1896-1898
Walter Baily	1896-1917
Henry Philips Greg	1898-1936
James Allanson Picton	1898-1910
William Arthur Sharpe	1899-1920
Sir John Tomlinson Brunner, Bart.	1899-1903
Talfourd Ely	1900-1923
Sir Richard Durning Holt	1901-1941
Arthur Henry Worthington	1902-1931
Sir William Job Collins	1903-1937
William Wallace Bruce	1906-1907
Sir Charles Sydney Jones	1908-1947
Charles Fellows Pearson	1908-1918
John Dendy	1909-1924
Morgan Philips Price	1911-1917
John Archibald Kenrick	1914-1930
Philip Milner Oliver	1914-1938
Robert Mortimer Montgomery	1914-1949
Malachi Locke Blake	1915-1919
Sir John Fowler Leece Brunner, Bart.	1917-1929
Edmund Phipson Beale	1917-1952
Charles Martineau	1919-1935
Sir William Philip Colfox	1919-1963
Harold Wade	1919-1931
Joel Herbert Seaverns	1921-1923

Stanley Chatfield-Clarke	1922-1949
Hugh Reynolds Rathbone	1924-1931
Charles Fredk. Tolmé Blyth	1924-1950
Prof. Frederick John Merriam Stratton	1925-1960
Sir Felix John Morgan Brunner, Bart.	1929-1974
Stephen Grosvenor Lee	1929-1961
Sir Charles Edwin Odgers	1930-1960
Nathaniel Bishop Harman	1932-1945
Sir Richard Harold Armstrong	1933-1948
Henry Rickards Bramley	1933-1957
Sir Hector James Wright Hetherington	1935-1945
Norman Blake	1936-1962
Sir Allen Mawer	1937-1942
Arthur Wynn Kenrick	1939-1963
Charles Harold Goodland	1942-1962
Ralph Hale Mottram	1943-1968
Sir Arnold Duncan McNair	1945-1946
Stanley John Kennett	1946-
Edwin Kell Blyth	1946-1969
Duncan Thomas Norman	1947-1966
Lord Woolton (Frederick James Marquis)	1948-1951
Harold Fellows Pearson	1949-1960
Hector Beaumont Jacks	1950-1957
James Martineau Street	1950-1973
Mark Humphreys Winder	1952-
Charles Beale	1952-
Arthur Locke Blake	1958-1976
Sir Charles Herbert Pollard	1958-1979
Herbert Gimson	1961-1971
Professor Sir Alastair Hardy	1961-1979
Stopford Brooke Ludlow Jacks	1961-1978
John Henry Kilian Brunner	1962-1966
Edward Anthony Wrigley	1963-1967
Owen Furnival-Jones	1963-1969
Alastair Kinmont Ross	1963-1967
Martin Henry Grundy	1963-1977
Charles Enfield Booth	1967-
Martin Fieldhouse	1967-
Sydney Roscoe	1967-1969
Albert Forrester	1968-
Peter John McLachlan	1969-1975
Sydney Arthur Woolven	1970-

Mary Burns	1970-
Dame Kathleen Lonsdale	1970-1971
Elizabeth O'Brien	1972-
Roy Walter Smith	1972-
Edward Armitage Robinson	1973-
Eileen Joan Forrester	1974-
Hilda Martin Hall	1975-
Geoffrey Millar Ramsden	1976-
Joy Ruth Mason	1977-
John Brandon-Jones	1978-

FELLOWS AND SCHOLARS (SINCE 1932)

Herbert John McLachlan	Scholar 1932-1934
Earl Morse Wilbur	Fellow 1933-1934
Kenneth Twinn	Scholar 1935-1936
George James Gascoign Grieve	Scholar 1935-1936
Alexander Elliott Peaston	Scholar 1936-1937
Ian Laurie Toseland	Scholar 1937-1938
Fred Mainé Ryde	Scholar 1938-1939
John Croft	Scholar 1938-1939
Arthur John Long	Scholar 1944-1945
George Stephens Spinks	Research Student 1945-1946
Donald Priestley Maw	Scholar 1950-1951
Frank Walker	Scholar 1958-1959
John Jeremy Goring	Fellow 1961-1962
Dudley Eric Richards	Fellow 1963-1964
Keith Gilley	Scholar 1966-1967
Joan O. Crewdson	Fellow 1971-1973
John Hostler	Fellow 1973-1974
Brian Gates	Fellow 1973-1975

SECRETARIES TO THE TRUSTEES 1853-1979

Edwin Wilkins Field	July-December 1853
Rev. David Davison	1853-1856
Charles Jerom Murch	1856-1866
Talfourd Ely	1866
Henry Peyton Cobb	1867-1871
Alfred Henry Paget	1871-1874
Percy Lawford	1874-1902
Rev. Francis Henry Jones, BA	Deputy 1895-1902
	Secretary 1902-1918
Rev. Dr William Hamilton Drummond, BA	1919-1938
Rev. Dr John Cyril Flower, MA	1938-1957
Rev. Dr Henry Stewart Carter, MA	1957-1966
Rev. Roger Thomas, MA	1966-1979
Rev. James McClelland, MA	1979-

Herbert Gimson served as accountant to the Trustees from 1918 until 1971, and was succeeded by his son Peter who served until 1976 when the office was merged with the Secretaryship.

1979 Rustum Roy Experimenting with truth Pergamon Press 1980

HIBBERT LECTURES (SINCE 1932)

Date of delivery	Lecturer	Title	Publisher and date
1933	L. P. Jacks	The revolt against mechanism	Allen & Unwin 1934
1934	Albert Schweitzer	The religious factor in modern civilisation	Unpublished
1937	Gilbert Murray	Liberality and civilisation	Allen & Unwin 1938
1938	W. E. Hocking	Living religions and a world faith	Allen & Unwin 1940
1946	H. D. A. Major	Civilisation and religious values	Allen & Unwin 1948
1953	Viscount Samuel	A century's change of outlook (centenary Lecture)	Cambridge University Press 1953
1957	Victor Murray	The State and the Church in a free society	Cambridge University Press 1958
1959	Basil Willey	Darwin and the history of thought	Chatto & Windus 1960
1962	G. F. Nuttall, R. Thomas, H. L. Short, R. D. Whitehorn	The beginning of Nonconformity	James Clark 1964
1963	J. Luther Adams	Voluntary associations	Unpublished
1963	F. H. Hilliard, D. Lee, G. Rupp, W. R. Niblett	Christianity in education	Allen & Unwin 1966
1969	Sir Alastair Hardy	Science and an experimental faith	Enlarged and published by Jonathan Cape as "The Biology of God" 1975

LIST OF HIBBERT HOUSES OPENED SINCE 1941

Sources

Hibbert Houses by R. H. Mottram (op cit)

The Inquirer, various issues; Minutes of the Hibbert Trust;

Twenty-five Years of Hibbert Houses by G. J. Sparham (op cit);

Minutes of the London Hibbert House Committee

Number	Address	Date Opened	Date Closed	Facilities	Local Staff Clerical and Domestic	HH Core Workers	Comments
HH1	5 Chareh Cherif Cairo	5 June 1941	10 Aug 1946	Hostel 70 men	14	2	The first HH headquarters, being provided directly by the War Office.
HH2	13 Rue Nai Daniel Alexandria	22 Nov 1941	April 1946	Hostel 145-150 men	27	2	Opened by Rev. Walter Bone, this was the largest of all the wartime Houses. It provided over 200,000 bed-and-breakfasts during its operation.
HH3	21 Quanteret el Dekka Cairo	March 1942	April 1946	Hostel 80 men	15	2	Situated in central Cairo, it was a complete house not an aggregation of flats or floors as many other HH were.
HH4	7 Yeoash Street Tel Aviv	Nov 1942	Feb 1946	Hostel 85-115 men	19	2	HQ for the work in Palestine. A former hotel "it was our most ambitious venture materially and financially speaking." Closed due to civil disturbances.
HH5	Nathanya Syria	Dec 1943	circa 1946	Club or hostel 3 married couples or 12 men	7	1	The smallest of the hostels, situated near an army leave camp and a convalescent depot.
HH6	13 Rue Nai Daniel Alexandria	Sept 1943	April 1946	Hostel 38-40 women	4	See HH2	This shared certain common facilities with HH2 and was for women personnel. This was set up by means of a full grant from the CVWW.
HH7	Camp at Wadi Sarrar	Dec 1943	Nov 1945	Hut	2	1	An army hut at a base ammunition depot, it was abandoned when the structure started to fall down. It was financed from HH own resources.
HH8	Alexandria	July 1944	late 1946	Hotel; 13 married couples or 60 men	10	1 or 2	The initial capital as well as the offer of an operating subsidy came from Army funds. It ran as a married personnel House.

HH9	Army camp Damascus	April 1943	Oct 1943	Hut	2	1	This consisted of a camouflaged army hut, opened to serve a particular need.	88
HH10	Barracks at Haifa	Dec 1945	June 1948	Club	7	1	Financed from HH resources it was run on club as opposed to hostel lines, "within the perimeter of Peninsula Barracks".	
HH11	Jaffa Road Haifa	March 1946	circa 1947	Club	12	2	Not a hostel, it served as a club and social centre. Partly financed from Army funds.	
HH12	R.A.F. Station Ramleh	June 1946	circa 1947	Hut	7	1	A wooden hut located in the middle of a camp. Financed from HH funds and used as recreational facilities.	
HH13	Ismailia Canal Zone	1947	27 Nov 1952	Hostel 50 ? beds		2	This became HH headquarters. "Here, HH established their first bookshop." Ended by emergency evacuation.	
HH14	R.A.F. Station Nicosia Cyprus	5 Nov 1947	30 Sept 1965	Varied over its long life	4	2-4	Club, canteen, bookshop, library and camp social centre for many years.	
HH15	Near Royal Artillery Barracks Misarata Tripolitania	1948	1950	Club	?	?	A club	
—	Montgomery Club Shorncliffe Barracks Folkestone	5 July 1964	Inactive April 1969 closed 25 March 1971	Club	—	Husband & wife operated	Run by Mr and Mrs Jones as a club also providing welfare facilities and operated in conjunction with local organisations.	
—	London Centre 102- 104 Albert Street London NW1	9 Aug 1969	continuing	Residenti- al centre for up to 24 people	—	1 resident warden	Nineteenth century house in Camden Town, London, converted with the help of government grants administered by the local authority, and individual contributions.	

Note

The Montgomery Club is shown in several sources as the 22nd Hibbert House. Numbers 16-20 constitute various changes of location in and around the Nicosia House, which can all really be regarded as extensions of HH14. For this reason the numbering after 15 only tends to confuse and has not been used in the above table.

HIBBERT TRUST

SCHEME

ADOPTED BY THE TRUSTEES, JULY 1968

TRUSTEES

I. The Trustees shall not exceed eighteen in number at any one time. They shall meet together at least twice a year to transact the business of the Trust.

A special meeting of the Trustees shall be summoned at any time on the requisition of six Trustees.

II. Every Trustee who shall not attend any meeting of the Trust for two whole years shall cease to be a Trustee, but the Trustees shall have power to re-elect him. A table of the attendances of the Trustees at the several meetings of the Trust during each year ending 30th November shall be forwarded to each Trustee, and his attention shall be called to this provision.

A Trustee may resign from the Trust by giving notice in writing to the Secretary.

III. In all cases of a vacancy in the Trust, such vacancy shall be forthwith announced to all Trustees. Vacancies shall be declared by the Chairman at the next meeting of the Trust, and shall be filled up by the Trustees at the succeeding meeting, provided that suitable candidates have been proposed.

IV. Any Trustee who may wish to propose a candidate to fill a vacancy in the Trust shall send in the name of such candidate to the Secretary at least 21 days before the meeting at which the candidate is to be nominated. The names of all candidates proposed for nomination shall be announced to the Trustees as soon as possible.

MEETINGS OF TRUSTEES

V. All new Trustees, Fellows, Scholars and Lecturers shall be elected, all officers appointed, and all grants made at a meeting of Trustees and the payment of all stipends to Scholars, Fellows, and Lecturers, of the Secretary's and the Accountant's salaries, and of other grants, shall be ordered. All such payments shall be made by cheques signed by two Trustees or by one Trustee and the Accountant.

VI. Twice a year the Trustees and their Secretary and Accountant may dine together. To such dinners the late and present Scholars, Fellows and Lecturers may be invited if the Trustees so determine. The Trustees may also invite such other guests as they may think fit.

VII. Any particular business may be deputed to a special committee and if thought fit it may be given power to act between meetings of the Trust.

TRUST FUNDS

VIII. The Capital fund of the Trust shall be vested in the Official Custodian for Charities. The Trustees shall from time to time consider the propriety of continuing or varying the investments of such capital funds.

SECRETARY AND ACCOUNTANT

IX. The Trustees shall appoint a Secretary and an Accountant at such remuneration and upon such terms as they shall determine.

ACCOUNTS, AUDIT ETC.

X. The accounts of the Trust shall be kept by the Accountant. The accounts for the financial year shall be audited by an auditor approved under Section 161(a) of the Companies Act, 1948 and circulated to the Trustees within three months of the end of the financial year.

XI. The minutes of the Trust, or a summary of them, shall be circulated among the Trustees before the following meeting of the Trust. The Trustees shall also from time to time publish Reports of such of the proceedings of the Trust as they may deem to be of sufficient public interest.

XII. The following Methods of Implementing the Trust define various ways in which the Trustees are at present prepared to carry out their Trust. But such Methods of implementing the Trust shall in no way control or restrict the general powers or the wide discretion vested in the Trustees by the Trust Deed.

METHODS OF IMPLEMENTING THE TRUST

XIII. The Trustees may grant Scholarships or Fellowships to scholars of special promise, who desire to obtain further qualification for the ministry amongst those who profess Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form, and who do not require for themselves or for their ministers, subscription to any doctrinal articles of belief.

The Trustees shall from time to time draw up Regulations for the administration of their Scholarships and Fellowships and for the guidance of applicants.

XIV. The Trustees may in special circumstances and on special conditions, grant Special Fellowships to persons of distinguished attainments, who are not ministers, and who do not intend to become ministers, but who desire assistance in the pursuit of a special line of study which in the opinion of the Trustees will conduce to the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form and to the unfettered exercise of private judgment in matters of religion. The result of such study shall be subsequently embodied in a book, essay or course of lectures, which the Trustees shall be at liberty to print and publish, wholly or in part as they may think fit, and the copyright of which (if they think fit to publish it) shall belong to the Trustees.

XV. The Trustees may from time to time appoint persons of distinguished attainments to prepare and deliver lectures, or to write or translate books, on any subject, which in the opinion of the Trustees, will conduce to the furtherance of the objects of the Trust. They may also undertake the cost of publishing books of distinguished scholarship which are submitted to them for approval. The copyright in such books and lectures shall, in the absence of any special arrangement, vest in the Trustees, on the payment by them to the author or lecturer of the agreed fee. The Trustees may also undertake the cost of reprinting books which in their opinion conduce to the furtherance of the objects of the Trust.

XVI. The Trustees shall be at liberty, by pecuniary grants, to assist those who are, or have been, Scholars or Fellows, and in special cases, other learned persons, either in the publication of the results of their studies or otherwise. They may also publish or give assistance to the publication of any journal which in their opinion conduces to the furtherance of the objects of the Trust. They may also give assistance to any organisation, national or international, that aims at furthering objects similar to those of the Trust.

XVII. The Trustees shall have power to make grants for the purchase of books to present and former Scholars and Fellows and to other deserving students recommended by competent persons known to the Trustees. The list of books to be purchased shall in each case be approved by the Secretary of the Trust.

XVIII. The Trustees may grant copies of any of the lectures or other works published by the Trustees, to the Library of any College or Public Institution, to any present or former Scholar or Fellow or to any minister or student who is recommended by competent persons known to the Trustees as deserving such a grant, and is likely to make good use of the books.

XIX. The Trustees may make grants to any person or body of persons for activities which in their opinion conduce to the furtherance of the objects of the Trust.

JOHN GREGSON TRUST

SCHEME

ADOPTED BY THE TRUSTEES, JULY, 1968

TRUSTEES

- I. The Trustees shall meet together at least twice a year to transact the business of the Trust.
A special meeting of Trustees shall be summoned at any time on the requisition of six Trustees.
- II. Every Trustee who shall not attend a meeting of the Trust for two whole years shall cease to be a Trustee, but the Trustees shall have power to re-elect him. A table of the attendances of the Trustees at the several meetings of the Trust during each year ending 30th November shall be forwarded to each Trustee, and his attention shall be called to this provision. A Trustee may resign from the Trust by giving notice in writing to the Secretary.
- III. In all cases of a vacancy in the Trust, such vacancy shall be forthwith announced to all the Trustees. Vacancies shall be declared by the Chairman at the next meeting of the Trust, and shall be filled up by the Trustees at the succeeding meeting, provided that suitable candidates, being Trustees of the Hibbert Trust, have been duly proposed.
- IV. Any Trustee who may wish to propose a candidate to fill the vacancy in the Trust shall send in the name of such candidate to the Secretary at least 21 days before the meeting at which the candidate is to be nominated. The names of all candidates proposed for nomination shall be announced to the Trustees by the Secretary as soon as possible.

MEETINGS OF TRUSTEES

- V. All grants shall be made at a meeting of Trustees and the payment of all salaries, fees and other money payments shall be ordered. All such payments shall be made by cheques signed by two Trustees or by one Trustee and the Accountant.
- VI. Any particular business may be deputed to a special committee, which may be given power to act between meetings of the Trust.

TRUST FUNDS

- VII. The Capital fund of the Trust shall be vested in the Official Custodian for Charities. The Trustee shall from time to time consider the propriety of continuing or varying the investment of such capital fund.

SECRETARY AND ACCOUNTANT

- VIII. The Trustees shall appoint a Secretary and an Accountant at such remuneration and upon such terms as they shall determine.

ACCOUNTS, AUDIT ETC.

- IX. The accounts of the Trust shall be kept by the Accountant. The accounts for the financial year shall be audited by an auditor approved under Section 161(a) of the Companies Act, 1948 and circulated to the Trustees within three months of the end of the financial year.

- X. The minutes of the Trust, or a summary of them, shall be circulated to the Trustees before the

following meeting of the Trust. The Trustees shall also from time to time publish reports of such of the proceedings of the Trust as they may deem to be of sufficient public interest.

XI. The following Regulations define various methods by which the Trustees are at present prepared to carry out their Trust. But such Regulations shall in no way control or restrict the general powers or the wide discretion vested in the Trustees by the Trust Deed.

XII. This Scheme and the Regulations following shall be revised at periods of not more than 25 years. A request for earlier revision may be made by not less than two Trustees to the Secretary. The revision ensuing shall be effected at a meeting immediately prior to the expiration of the appropriate period or immediately following the request as the case may be.

REGULATIONS

PURPOSE OF THE TRUST

- The Trustees may grant monies for the maintenance or repair of the fabric of places of worship of historical or architectural importance belonging to congregations or trustees for congregations devoted to the profession of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form and not requiring for themselves or their ministers subscription to any doctrinal articles of belief, including (but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing words) those churches which may now or hereafter be on the Roll of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches or of any other body or bodies which may hereafter be or become the Central Authority or Authorities of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.
- The Trustees may grant monies for the maintenance or repair of the fabric of a place of worship or associated buildings belonging to such congregations or trustees for such congregations as aforesaid which does not possess historical or architectural importance.
- The Trustees may grant monies for any other purpose which in the opinion of the Trustees will benefit any such congregation and which is both religious and charitable in its object.
- The Trustees may grant monies for religious and charitable objects similar to those of the Hibbert Trust.

APPLICATION FOR GRANTS

- Application for grants shall be made in writing to the Secretary of the Trust by 1st March or 1st September in any year for consideration at the meeting of the Trustees next following.
- Applications for grants under Regulations 1 or 2 should be supported by:-
 - a report from a qualified architect recommending the proposals,
 - a contractor's estimate of the cost,
 - a statement showing how it is proposed to meet the cost,
 - particulars of applications made to other bodies for financial assistance and their decision thereon: if a decision has not been made, it must be reported to the Trustees as soon as it is known.
 - Where there are trustees for the congregation who act separately from the congregation, the approval of both bodies to the proposal.
- Applications for grants under Regulations 3 or 4 must be in writing and contain full details of the purpose of the application and, where appropriate, the particulars and consents required by sub-paragraphs (d) and (e) of Regulation 6.
- The Trustees will not make grants under Regulations 1 or 2 in aid of schemes where work has already begun, save in very exceptional cases.
- When a grant has been authorised under Regulations 1 or 2 the issue of an Architect's certificate that the whole or part of the work has been completed shall be reported in writing to the Secretary of the Trust, upon which payment of the whole or part of the grant will be made, subject to Regulation 10. In the case of other applications payment will be made as the Trustees may direct.
- The Trustees will if they think it necessary consult their own Architect or take other advice before reaching a decision on any application or passing payment.

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