

## BRITISH UNITARIANISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY – A SURVEY

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Ten years have now elapsed since the close of the twentieth century which is sufficient time to enable at least a partial evaluation to be made of what happened in this century of upheaval. The social changes that arose from both world wars and the impact of scientific and industrial revolutions impacted upon and changed significantly the practice of religion in Britain. The events also changed the perception by society of the Christian religion and church going, and this includes Unitarians. As part of organised nonconformity since its creation in the seventeenth century it is impossible to draw a line between Unitarians and the mainstream Christian denominations; while its beliefs may be different the culture is very similar.

A history of the Unitarian movement in Britain in the twentieth century is too large a canvas to attempt to paint in the timescale of a lecture or an article. I'm going to present a survey in six areas, comparing the position before 1914, describe how British Unitarianism evolved during the remainder of the century and finally to describe, as I judge it, the situation in each area in 2000. It would be tempting to add a few glimpses of possibilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; this I'm trying to avoid. My aim is to follow the advice contained in the statement made by the dramatist Henrik Ibsen who when challenged about the endings of his plays which are often intentionally ambiguous, wrote, "Don't expect me to solve the riddle. I prefer to ask the questions; my calling is not to provide the answers."

Most of us lived through many of the events described here and possibly took part in what happened. Some of the content does come from my personal recollection of events. Writing what has been called contemporary history is a difficult and uncertain task. I attempt to be as dispassionate and neutral a commentator as possible but this may be contested if readers have their own recollection and evaluation of the events described. Few names have been included, and then not of the living.

### **The six areas**

The six areas I want to examine in order to consider the changes which have taken place in the last century are 1. Organisation. 2. Beliefs. 3. People and Numbers. 4. Social Vision. 5. Worship patterns, and lastly 6. Ministry.

### **Organisation:**

In 1900 there were national two bodies representing the Unitarian congregations. Firstly, the British & Foreign Unitarian Association (B&FUA), founded in 1825 which was widely recognised as the national representative body.<sup>1</sup> The Secretary was an active and efficient figure, William Copeland Bowie who continued in office until the 1920s. He in the main carried out a role that we would recognise today as the denominational representative figure. The other body was called 'the National Conference' whose full title was the National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christians, Presbyterian and other nonsubscribing or kindred congregations – unsurprisingly this full appellation was only used in formal matters.<sup>2</sup> The National Conference had been formed by the B&FUA in 1882 to broadly satisfy the influential views of James Martineau and his supporters; at the start it did not mention Unitarian in its title. It met nationally every three years which was its main function. The two bodies were not in competition by 1900, each was involved in the working of the other, the representational role being carried out by the B&FUA.

The next level were the district associations, a few of which had been formed by 1810 but most in the twenty year period following the passing of the Dissenters' Chapels Act in 1844. These were and remain the local

representative bodies for groups of congregations. They started mainly as missionary bodies but by 1900 this role was much diminished and their function had become the support of and interaction between existing congregations and individuals. The congregations, the third level of organisation, formed from the seventeenth century onwards were and remain sovereign entities.

What happened in the interim? The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GA) was formed in 1928 as the national body mainly because the distinct views of Martineau had lessened in impact within Unitarianism, and the perceived need by most Unitarians to at last form a properly organised national body.<sup>3</sup>

What was in the position in 2000? The short answer was—roughly the same. The General Assembly remained essentially as it was in 1930. There had been various review commissions over the years but their recommendations had broadly not been implemented. The district associations also continued doing the same things.<sup>4</sup> Their number was slightly reduced but basically they were serving 175 congregations compared to 350 in 1900 while the number of Unitarians has declined from say 25,000 -30,000 in 1900 to about 6000 in 2000.

The challenging nature of Unitarian thinking in religious and social areas has not been matched in terms of how it was organised. This dichotomy looks to be a continuing feature of the Unitarian movement. The early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw some changes in the operation and governance of the GA but not in the district associations. Added to this lack of organisational change there was throughout the period widespread deep-seated suspicion within congregations towards the GA administration at Essex Hall, often centred on the attempts it made to take national collective initiatives.<sup>5</sup> The sometimes negative attitude towards, and low level of local acceptance of, attempts by the GA to take a line meant that most initiatives could only at best fall short of the target. Thus the GA was timid and cautious in its actions over time knowing it could not consistently take its constituency with it. This was not a recipe for successful development of Unitarianism.

### **Beliefs**

In 1900 British Unitarianism was an avowedly Christian based movement which saw religion in terms of the Bible but not exclusively so. The Five Precepts which had come from America first in the 1870s were certainly not biblical in origin but were almost universally accepted - The Fatherhood of God, The Brotherhood of Man, The Leadership of Jesus, Salvation by Character, Progress of Mankind Onward and Upward forever. <sup>6</sup> The devastations of World War 1 made the last two difficult to affirm but the fatherhood of God remained strongly held, even if its definition was not always clearly expressed.<sup>7</sup> Agnosticism had become a more widely acknowledged feature and the main divergence in viewpoint in the 1930s was over what could be seen as a just war, and how to achieve peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Second World War created greater long term changes in belief patterns and content than was foreseen in the 1940s. The report, *A Free Religious Faith* (1945) was ground breaking; the Fatherhood of God for example was hardly mentioned.<sup>8</sup> A faith not necessarily biblically-based was envisioned, unbound by past practice. By 1950 world faith concepts had started to make a wider impact than hitherto and a humanist standpoint was more widely found within congregations, influenced by changes in Unitarian thought in the USA,

By the early 1960's Unitarian worship was still expressed in broadly liberal Christian terms which had not changed greatly from the 1930s.

*Hymns of Worship Revised* which appeared in 1967 reflected an almost status quo position in thought terms, and did not attempt to venture into newer thought and expression. From the mid 1970s changes in viewpoint within British Unitarianism took place which is difficult to categorise

and define, though not to identify – new prayers and worship elements, readings from a wider variety of contemporary sources, and the wider use of silence within worship. The inner spiritual element within worship was being explored and expressed in new and different ways.

By 2000 worship at General Assembly meetings for example was not generally expressed in traditional liberal Christian terms, and disputes over the use of different hymn books had arisen. *Hymns for Living* 1985 expressed a wider and less specifically Unitarian Christian viewpoint (this was the first Unitarian hymnbook to attempt de-genderisation) while *Hymns of Faith and Freedom* 1991 was more Christian in background and emphasis, and was seen by many as an alternative.<sup>9</sup> The Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland no longer sent its students for ministry training to the Unitarian College Manchester whose teaching reflected this change of theological view in Britain if not in Ireland. British Unitarianism in belief terms was in a different place to where it had been in 1900, although possibly underlying affirmations may not have altered significantly. However the terminology in which they were expressed was different and evolving.

### **People and Numbers**

It is difficult to determine with accuracy the number of Unitarians in Britain at particular dates, and the figures quoted here are in broad numbers based on estimates using a variety of sources. The Census of 31 March 1851 figures show 229 congregations with 48,600 attending though there is evidence that nonconformist figures were inflated.<sup>10</sup> At its height in the 1870s it is unlikely there were more than about 52,000-55,000 Unitarians, the question of numbers being complicated not only by definition but also by whether Sunday school scholars are included. By 1914 it is likely to have been in the region of 35,000. By 1913 a decline in numbers generally had already been identified, a contemporary source stated – ‘Most churches are regretting a decline in membership and attendance in public worship; all of them are perceptibly anxious at their failure to reach vast masses of the people...(we) cannot regard this state of things with indifference’

During World War 1 10,000 Unitarians are said to have served with 1000 identified as killed or died during hostilities.<sup>11</sup> After that time a figure of 20,000 -30,000 was accepted for decades though nobody attempted to create an accurate figure, it was almost seen as a perverse thing to do, the often unstated issues associated with identifying what is a Unitarian were seen as too daunting. A partial unofficial survey in 1927 suggests a figure of about 34,000 but that is an extrapolation from the 144 larger churches who responded and the actual figures are likely to have been lower.<sup>12</sup> In 1945 a GA report put the number of Unitarians in 1942 at 24,000 but this is unlikely to have taken account of the downturn due to wartime conditions; the actual figure is likely to have been lower.<sup>13</sup> In the 1950s the number was probably in excess of 15,000.

The most accurate survey made in the period was carried out in 1965/1966 by the Foy Society which was published in a detailed census in 1967 consisting of 180 pages. Congregations were visited. ‘We counted 14220 adult members in the 238 congregations surveyed; scaled up for the total of 258 congregations this gives an estimate of 15800 adult Unitarians in all.’<sup>14</sup>

When a quota system of payment to the GA was introduced in the 1980s, each congregation had to pay a set sum for each member. This process no doubt did little to enhance accurate recording of the Unitarian population. An analysis of quota figures in 2007 showed 5380 in 1989 and 4443 in 1998. The 2001 National Census figure was 4187 but is likely to be an under estimate.<sup>15</sup> A more realistic figure of the number of people associated with Unitarian congregations is in the region of 6000-6500. In the thirty years since the 1965 survey a significant drop in numbers had taken place.<sup>16</sup>

Of the number of places of worship, taken from the preface of the respective Year Books or GA Directory, there was in 1900, 364 congregations, 285 of which were in England, 32 in Wales and 8 in Scotland, with 39 in Ireland. In 1950 the figure was 262 in England, of which 18 were closed, 34 in Wales of which 8 were closed, 4 in Scotland, making a total of 274 living congregations, plus 35 in Ireland. In 2001 there were 182 congregations, 155 of which were in England, 23 in Wales

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and 4 in Scotland, with 32 in the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Summed up, we start with 364 (some are likely to have been defunct), then mid century 274, and at the end of the century 182. That is a drop of about 90 each fifty years in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Commentators on the condition of British churches in general argue that the 1960s was the period from which the significant decline in the number of church attendees can be dated.<sup>17</sup> However in the case of Unitarians this seemingly took place between the 1970s and the 1990s. Another significant change is in the make up of congregations. In 1900 the richer and well established figures and families were still present and upper middle class people were generally the main leaders. Strong family connections existed across the movement, so much so that a well known Unitarian has compared her twentieth century dissenting family to a complex knitting pattern. Unitarian congregations mainly consisted of the lower middle class with the skilled working class present in some places. There was considerable social homogeneity although this was not seen at the time, with much deference shown towards the traditional leading families. Even in the 1990s non British-born members of congregations were very much the exception.

After 1945 Unitarian family connections within and between members of congregations started to diminish, and a new type of person entered into membership of Unitarian congregations – those born as Unitarians started to decline as a percentage of the total. It has been claimed, though not supported by any statistics, that Unitarians in the 1950s and 1960s had a preponderance of school teachers in membership. After 1950 the working class element where it had existed was diminishing fast as was that traditional bastion of dissent - the shop keeper. An increase in the age profile associated with a preponderance of women can be found in churches of most denominations. A general increase in the distribution of wealth amongst most congregational members, as in the wider population, can be identified. At the same time there was a decline in the number of more affluent members; these had chiefly been local manufacturers, company owners and professional people. By 2000 the classless church had to a large degree arrived amongst Unitarians, though not in terms of income.

To conclude this section it can be added that a long term trend can be discerned from about 1918 – an unwillingness to give financially, particularly to initiatives outside the local congregation. This is a reversal

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of what happened in the nineteenth century and is a trend which has weakened national and district organisations and affected what they could achieve. There was a distinct increase in reliance of what can be termed 'dead money' ie from investments and income from closed buildings, rather than live giving. The General Assembly has not been exempt from this trend and has been consistently under-funded, only attempting what could be financially firmly supported.

### **Social vision**

In 1900 there was quite a clear social ethos – what others saw as a lack in what Unitarians believed was made up for by the social impact

they made in their locality, far beyond their numbers would warrant. This was combined with a strong belief in morally improving causes like abstinence from alcohol. This outlook and approach has been associated with what has been termed 'gas and water socialism', the thrust given to the trend came from Birmingham and in particular from Joseph Chamberlain, the most well known lay Unitarian in the period up to 1914. Unitarians were in the main staunch supporters of the Liberal Party, with some notable exceptions, believing in reform without revolution. Many had been almost adulatory of WE Gladstone. The Unitarian vision expressed by the Domestic Mission movement of non-denominational social work was now past its peak but remained of significance. Each denomination formed their Social Service association in the period up to 1910, the Unitarian Union for Social Service coming in 1906.<sup>18</sup> Unitarian gatherings on social issues, often held at Manchester College Oxford, could consist of over a hundred participants. Social vision and activity continued into the 1920s with the inter-denominational COPEC movement where despite their small numbers Unitarians were amongst the leaders. When the British Council of Churches was formed in 1940 devices were created so that Unitarians and Quakers could join in recognition of their long term contribution and commitment to alleviating social problems.<sup>19</sup>

Unitarians took stands on big social issues and their voice was heard through the several MPs who were Unitarians, a representation far beyond the size of their membership numbers would suggest.<sup>20</sup> Following the formation of the GA motions were raised and passed at its annual meeting which were followed up with government for a response. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a GA Social Responsibility Department was formed out of the Social Service Department created in 1944 which pressed Unitarians to make stands on social issues.<sup>21</sup> The strong affirmation of the

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alcohol temperance or abstinence movement prior to 1914 had almost disappeared by the 1970s, a similar trend being discerned amongst other nonconformist denominations.<sup>22</sup>

By 2000 it seemed as if Unitarians had run out of steam and had lost their strong desire to be social activists except at an individual level. The number of wider issue motions presented at the GA annual meetings varied widely and in some years were non-existent.<sup>23</sup> A notable affirmation made from the 1980s onwards by some Unitarians was support for gay rights, and the blessing of gay marriages in Unitarian churches. The emphasis had always been on non-collective action and the amount carried out with a Unitarian label attached seemingly became smaller. There was a clarion call from Harry Lismor Short in his 1962 Essex Hall Lecture, *Dissent and the Community*, when he said, 'Do we now retire into ourselves and cultivate our own garden, grateful for the freedom which allows us to mind our own business?...a religious society which has no distinct social status and function is in danger of inner decay.' (p 33). Increasingly it would appear that Unitarians at the end of century were, with notable exceptions, tending to disregard his words and sideline their long tradition of social activism.

## Worship patterns

In 1900, several forms of liturgy were in use in Unitarian congregations. The larger and more important congregations had their own printed liturgy, often based on James Martineau's collections. Unitarian congregations had a tradition of using adapted liturgies, many stemming from the liturgy based on the Book of Common Prayer prepared by Theophilus Lindsey for the Essex Street congregation in the 1770s. The open form of worship, sometimes latterly called 'the hymn sandwich' had been displaced in various places in the nineteenth century, sometimes to match the new building built in the Gothic style.<sup>24</sup>

There were six or more hymn collections in use. Martineau's two collections had been widely used but were being replaced by the first denominational collection, *The Essex Hall Hymn Book*, which appeared in 1890. The arrival of the *Novello New Hymnal* in 1905 displaced many of the older collections. The next denominational collection was *Hymns of Worship* in 1927 which held sway for many years.<sup>9</sup>

By the 1960s the liturgical pattern had been displaced by the open form of worship, though this trend had been checked in the period up to

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the 1950's by the denominationally-produced *Orders of Worship* published in 1932. This liturgy had a high reputation.<sup>25</sup> However by 1963 of the 242 congregations only 66 used a liturgical form. A later development was an interest in world faiths, exemplified by Will Hayes in 1948 with the publication of *Every Nation Kneeling* for the Chatham congregation. The sermon or address continued to hold sway.

In the 1970s new forms and patterns of worship developed which included very different music and even dancing and mime. The trend was clearly moving away from the old dissenting manner of worship. Some Unitarians had become suspicious of traditional prayer patterns, and even the sermon, and the use of the Lord's Prayer and the readings from the Bible diminished in some areas. From the 1980s onwards the GA Worship Committee produced several special services a year mainly gratis for use by congregations to mark special events; these services have introduced new material and continue to have a significant influence. Worship by 2000 was more eclectic showing the impact of fresh developments like Celtic spirituality. While it cannot be said that Unitarian worship had become post Christian, there had been significant changes to what was in use in congregations in 1900. The General Assembly Anniversary Service showed a revolutionary change in content and style between say 1930 and 2000. A shift in worship patterns and content had taken place.

### Ministry

In 1900 there were significant numbers of recognised ministers though a minister could not be found to serve every congregation. In 1901 the *Essex Hall Year Book* shows there were 366 ministers, 292 in charge of congregations (44 of the balance were retired), and 12 lay workers. This total meant that while there was a shortage the majority of congregations could employ a minister; 16 ministers were open to settlement. The ministry was traditional in nonconformist terms both in dress and expression; ministers were formal when together and mainly addressed their fellows by their surname. Unitarians appointed the first recognised woman minister in Britain in 1904.<sup>26</sup> Ministers were distinguished by where they were trained: those from the Unitarian College Manchester were generally seen as of a lesser order and were only slowly being accepted by major congregations.<sup>27</sup> This evaluation was conditioned by the universally accepted need for a 'learned ministry' which most took to be those from Manchester College Oxford. There was a continuing emphasis on training in the classics, and entrants still

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often started a long period ministerial training, sometimes lasting several years, at the age of 18.

Studies of attitude change engendered by World War 1 have shown that the position of ministers of religion in society had substantially altered. No longer were they seen as kings in their pulpits but rather figures under attack addressing diminished and more elderly congregations. A contemporary source states that, 'Instead of mounting his pulpit as a throne, the modern preacher is rather in the position of

being summoned into a witness box.<sup>28</sup> A growth in part time ministry took place to make up for often poor pay. Joint ministries between congregations became an increasing trend; there was a changing view of the pastoral office and in consequence of training needs.

If in 1950 there were 243 Unitarian minister including 45 retired plus 19 Lay Pastors, by 2001 there were 141 ministers, of whom 47 were shown as retired and 10 Lay Pastors, with many working part time in the profession. Efforts were in train to improve ministerial salaries as well as the support of students at the now two main Colleges at Oxford and at Manchester (UCM became a member of a confederation of theological colleges in 1984, giving up its own building).<sup>29</sup> Training in 2000 had become almost unrecognisable from what it was before 1914. Non residential with the majority of students over the age of 35 with a family to support being tutored in subjects like administration and computer skills would have been inconceivable in an earlier period.<sup>30</sup> The number of women in the ministry had greatly increased with the long term possibility that they could at least equal the male element. Congregational attitudes towards women ministers altered considerably during the century.<sup>31</sup>

No longer was it possible for congregations to be certain of their ability to appoint a minister, even if they could afford the much higher level of funding involved. Whether the main demand amongst congregations remained for a learned ministry is debateable. By the 1990s the chief aim of congregations appears to have become the employment of a minister possessed of a mature and natural approach, who would try to meet the needs of a congregation with shifting beliefs and aspirations. The stress was on an ability to conduct worship in an open but challenging manner. Perhaps people with these qualities are not thick on the Unitarian ground, as the numbers entering training varied widely from year to year. What, when and how to teach became a vexed issue and opinions varied as to the best approach. What is certain is that

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it was very different to what had existed in the past.

### **An evaluation**

Each of the six areas discussed fed off the others and are not in any sense watertight compartments. Each is part of the other, for example changes in social vision have affected the training given to erstwhile ministers. The drop in Unitarian numbers has affected everything, though less so in terms of belief patterns which have been influenced by other factors.

Outreach to non Unitarians was possibly more in tune with its time in the 1990s than in earlier periods. To gain adherents religious denominations have been forced into the market place since at least the early nineteenth century. For example famous preachers like Spurgeon declaring from their pulpits were in a sense just exercising a marketing ploy. Unitarianism has had to go down this path; in the past it sometimes seemed as if the message was 'this is what we are, what you see, join us if you like.' The advertising slogan created about 1930 of 'Are you a Unitarian without knowing it?' held sway for decades but this quietist indirect approach at definition, not seeking to make a positive statement, lost its attraction as the century wore on. Publicity in the 1960s adopted a new more direct approach.<sup>32</sup> A glossy GA booklet entitled *Outside the Mainstream* created controversy not because of its content but its title, demonstrating to some that the movement was declaring it had moved beyond its Christian roots.<sup>33</sup> From the 1980s, there was a regular column in the *Inquirer* entitled *Sounding the Mainstream* 'written by Arthur Long reflecting the Christian background, this was part of a continuing exchange between the two pole positions in the Unitarian tradition.<sup>34</sup> The twentieth century saw organised religion losing out to a beguiling

assertive popular culture, though evangelicals seemed to adapt to it more readily than liberal religion has done. In its presentation and marketing, particularly before the 1990s, Unitarianism was not geared to attract a rising generation unused to congregational life.

The arrival in Britain after 1950 of significant numbers of adherents of world faiths and the creation of a multi-cultural society have amongst other things made attending church just one of many options.

Unitarianism has been no different to various Christian denominations in this respect. However Unitarianism, despite a unique approach to world religions, has not attracted many from other cultural and religious

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traditions into membership.

The social and religious changes have been so large that in many ways it is almost impossible to compare the position in 2000 with that in 1900. Admittedly congregations worshipping in old meeting houses have continued to exercise their witness, a tribute to the commitment of often a small number of people throughout the country. Perhaps their task was not made easier by the state listing many buildings as of historical importance so laying down a requirement about their preservation.

Unitarianism without ownership of buildings was tried from the late 1940s onwards in the creation of what were called 'Fellowships' meeting in rented premises on a permanent basis. Fellowship creation was based on positive American experience but had limited impact in Britain. Of more significance was the National Unitarian Fellowship, again borrowed from an America idea, formed in 1944 which aimed at a national rather than local Unitarian commitment.<sup>35</sup> British take-up of Unitarian practice and style from the USA has had mixed success.

While certain congregations appear fairly healthy in twenty-first century terms, the overall membership trend viewed historically has been downwards. While this trend makes the future of organised Unitarianism in Britain uncertain, what may be the most positive factor for the future is the perceived need to evolve and create a new vision amongst Unitarians which took place in the decade since the twentieth century ended. An earlier reform effort was the formation of the 62 Group, of course in 1962. <sup>36</sup> Its successor the Unitarian Renewal Group which attempted to envision of different type of Unitarianism.<sup>37</sup> It is possible the formation of the Unitarian Christian Association in 1991 was at least in part a reaction to it. The tension engendered, though much less extreme, was a reflection of what had happened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century between the followers of Martineau's free Christian approach on the one hand and the assertive Unitarians on the other.

The 1990s saw the need arising amongst Unitarians to define what the Unitarian movement was about. If for the first time it could be determined how many people were associated with Unitarian congregations, now the objects of the movement were to be set down to better show what Unitarians affirmed. This activity created controversy from the 1980s and the various twists and turns were not resolved before the GA Objects were adopted in a revised form early in the next century.<sup>38</sup>

Possibly more was in the process of change in the 1990s than had

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taken place in much of the previous period. Some of this was forced by circumstance there not being sufficient numbers of people and finance available to carry on as before. New times required different strategies, and ministry in all its forms was changing to meet it. A new consciousness had arisen believing it was necessary to grapple with the problems rather than go with the tide. Unitarians do not naturally carry on as before in thought or belief terms but find it easy to do so when it

comes to organisation and its finance.<sup>39</sup> There are signs that this trait is starting to change.

Time will tell whether initiatives started in the 1990s represents a turning point, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century will present a different picture to what has gone before. It is only too easy to say 'we must wait and see' but that is what I'm going to do, echoing the words of the former Chinese Foreign Secretary Chou En-Li who when asked his view of the effects of the French Revolution replied 'It's too early to tell'.

This article is a revised version of the Presidential address given to the Unitarian Historical Society at the Unitarian General Assembly meetings held at Swansea University in April 2011.

#### REFERENCES

1. B&FUA foundation 1825, HL Short, Supplement *TUHS*, Vol 16 No 1, 1975. Centennial history, *Liberty and Religion*, SH Mellone, Lindsey Press, 1925. For activity in the late twentieth century, see *Inq* 15 January 2005, p 6.
2. *Christian Life*, Commemoration Issue, 10 May 1913, p 256 gives an account of the activity of the National Conference.
3. For the background to the setting up of the GA see HL Short, *The English Presbyterians, From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism*, London, 1968, p 283-286.
4. In 1916 the B&FUA published a report on the Future of District Associations. It described the present situation and saw an urgent need for change. 'If our churches are not to be undisciplined and individualistic units...accustomed to work together...with one mind and one voice upon broad essential issues, then district associations must work as they have never worked before.' (quoted in *Inq* 3 May 2003, p 6). It appears the report was unimplemented.
5. Feeling about the role of Essex Hall developed by the 1890s, in particular the stance some felt the B&FUA was pressing on the churches. El Fripp in a pamphlet *Two opposing tendencies* of 1898 argued it has 'grown to be a dangerous ecclesiastical power', quoted by HL Short, *The English Presbyterians*, p 277.
6. The Five Precepts had been first enunciated by James Freeman Clarke (1810-1888) in the USA in the 1860s, see D Robinson, *The Unitarians and Universalists*, Greenwood Press, USA, 1985, p 234-235.

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7. J Estlin Carpenter ed, *Freedom and Truth Modern Views of Unitarian Christianity*, Lindsey Press, 1925 was an influential work but was essentially backward looking; it felt the need for example to include the long deceased James Martineau's *Three Stages of Unitarian Theology* which he preached in a sermon in 1869. The impact of World War 1 and the revolution in thought it created is hardly reflected within it.
8. *A Free Religious Faith*, A report presented to the General Assembly etc, Lindsey Press, 1945, reprinted 1948, 1960, 219 pages, was prepared by a Commission given to 13 Unitarian ministers. It was described as 'an exposition of a religious faith which is free and yet definite in content.' (Preface)
9. Hymn books used by congregations up to 1914 are described by Alan Ruston, Unitarian Hymnbooks 1795-191 *TUHS* 2011, Vol 25 No 1 p 17-34. For a later period see Andrew Hill, Unitarian Worship during the Twentieth Century, *TUHS* 2012 Vol 25 No 2.
10. The 1851 Census was the only occasion when a religious question was asked until 2001. Figures are taken from C Cook and B Keith, *British Historical Facts 1830-1900*, Macmillan, 1975, section on church membership. The problem of definition of the denominations is a significant factor.
11. Alan Ruston, Unitarians Killed in World War 1, *TUHS*, Vol 20 No 4 1994, p 304-305. Unitarians attitudes to the War and its impact are considered in the *TUHS*, Vol 21 No 4, p 269-284.
12. *Inq*. 3 and 10 December 1927 p 704, 717. The Unitarian Men's League undertook a survey of congregations from the replies received from 144 congregations.
13. *The Work of the Churches*, GA Survey, published 1945, stated that 256 congregations responded to a request for information in 1942 showing 18400 in membership which when adjusted for those not responding produced an overall figure of 20000. It also reported Sunday school attendees at 7120 when in 1904 it has been in excess of 36000. Charles A Howe, *For Faith and Freedom, a short history of Unitarianism in Europe*, Skinner House Books USA, 1997, p 178 quotes this survey and adds a membership figure at page 180 of 8,000 in 1996 but the source is not given.
14. Foy Society Survey Group, *A Census of Unitarian Congregations in Britain*, GA, 1967, 180 A4 pages. A simpler account was published at the same time entitled *Unitarian Congregations Surveyed*.
15. In the 2001 National Census, 3604 Unitarians were recorded in England and 383 in Wales, with another 30 Unitarian-Universalists in England. There were 167 Unitarians in Scotland and 3 Unitarian-other, giving a total of 4187, see *Inq* 19

March 2011, p 2.

16. Jeffrey Teagle writing in the *Inq* 5 May 2007, p 7 states he had an analysis made of quota figures when he was the GA General Secretary comparing these figures with the similar Christian Research picture. 'The steepest decline occurred during the 1989-98 period.' An estimate of quota payers for 2000 made at my request in 2011, adjusted upwards for Welsh non payers, put the figure at about 4600.

17. Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, London, 2000, argues that the decline in church attendance in Britain and its associated culture happened very suddenly in the 1960s, due to a number of factors not least the position of women and not as part of a gradual decline over the century. This view is not without its critics.

18. The early years of the National Conference Union for Social Service are described in the *Christian Life*, Commemoration Issue 10 May 1913, p 257.

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19. An account of Unitarian relations with bodies like the British Council of Churches is given by Alan Ruston, Unitarian Ecumenical Relations in England in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Faith & Freedom*, Vol 54 Part 2 No 153, Autumn 2001, p 92-103.

20. *The Christian World*, 4 Jan 1906, Supplement estimates in the 1902-1906 Parliament there were four Unitarian MPs. At the 1906 General Election 11 Unitarian MPs were returned, all were recorded as Liberal only. Unitarian MPs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is considered in the *Inq* 26 April 1997, p 5 which gives higher figures for these dates and includes Conservatives. At the 1992 General Election two Unitarians were elected, but just one in 1997. For wider background see D Bebbington, Unitarian MPs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (to 1905), a catalogue, *TUHS Supplement*, Vol 24 No 3 2009.

21. Arthur Peacock, Social Factors in British Unitarian History, *Faith & Freedom*, Vol 22 Part 2 Issue 65 Spring 1969, pages 64-74 gives a broad sweep over social activism within Unitarianism since the early nineteenth century.

22. The National Unitarian Temperance Association founded in 1893 grew quickly. By 1909 they had their own hymnbook and in 1911 nearly 150 sermons and addresses were delivered in churches. There were then 146 abstaining ministers (*Christian Life*, Commemoration Issue, 10 May 1913, p 228). The Association went out of existence in the 1970s.

23. Examination of GA Annual Reports show that resolutions passed since 1960 covering wider social issues and not those only about Unitarian concerns varied considerably. In 1961, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1969, 1987, 1989 and 1990 there was one resolution or none at all, while in 1963, 1978, 1988, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1998 there were four or more.

24. Duncan McGuffie, *The Hymn Sandwich, a brief history of Unitarian Worship*, GA, 1981 (on the decline of the service book, text on the Unitarian.org website.)

25. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Vol 5 The Ecumenical Century 1900-1965*, Princeton and OUP, 1965. Chapter XII Unitarian Worship pages 412-427. 'Orders of Worship is a definite advance on its predecessors (Martineau's *Ten Services* excepted) in the variety of its orders, in the rich provision of alternative responsive prayers, in the partial observation of the Christian Year, in the requirement for silent prayer, and in the bidding prefaced to each short prayer in the central part of each service. The book sold over 10,000 copies in the first few years and contributed to the unification of Unitarian congregations.'

26. Gertrude von Petzold appointed at Narborough Road Church Leicester. For background see K Gilley, Gertrude von Petzold, *TUHS*, Vol 21 No 3, 1997 p 157-172.

27. The nineteenth century practice of discrimination continued into the twentieth, for example the Hibbert Trust consistently financially supported students at Manchester College rather than those of UCM, see Alan Ruston, *The Hibbert Trust, a history*, London, 1984, p 12 et seq.

28. Quoted in Horton Davies, *Varieties of English Preaching 1900-1960*, SCM Press, 1963, p 17.

29. Unitarian College Manchester becoming part of the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry is described in Leonard Smith, ed, *Unitarian to the Core, UCM 1854-2004*, Chapter 8.

30. Mortimer Rowe, The Historical Development of the Unitarian Ministry in England, *Faith & Freedom*, Vol 13 No 2, Spring 1960, p 61-70 is important in describing the growth of ministerial consciousness, following the foundation of the Ministerial Fellowship in 1899, and the impact of the advent of the GA. Arthur Long,

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Ministerial Training in the Unitarian Tradition, *Faith & Freedom*, Vol 40 Issue No 2, Summer 1987 pages 59-81 contains an evaluation of the relationship between the Colleges at Oxford and Manchester.

31. While the Unitarian movement had been the pioneer in appointing women ministers, Herbert McLachlan at UCM in the 1930s thought women students were not being responded to as they deserved, and in 1935 he gave the Unitarian movement a blast. 'As far as my experience goes, I am bound to admit that both in the matter of

- Sunday supplies as well as settlement it appears as if our churches are quite indifferent to the claims of cultured women when they are not positively averse to their presence in the pulpit.' *Inq* 20 July 1935 p 355, quoted in Leonard Smith ed, *Unitarian to the Core, Unitarian College Manchester 1854-2004*, p 129.
32. Arthur Peacock (1905-1968) brought a new approach to GA publicity, producing attractive booklets. 'He was our Press Relations Officer, an office he filled with distinction and no small amount of success' John Kiely, *Inq* 5 Oct 1968 p 4.
33. *Outside the Mainstream* was introduced by the Chairman of the GA Publicity Department in the *Inq* 20 Dec 1967 p 2 as an exciting venture, a free coloured 16 page leaflet. After that nothing was heard of it in the *Inquirer's* columns. Following the death of Arthur Peacock, who had been chiefly responsible for its preparation and publication, in September 1968 much of the new material contained within it was re-launched under a different title.
34. Examples of articles entitled Sounding the Mainstream written by Arthur Long are in *Inq* 31 Jan 1987 and 8 April 1989 p 4, with many other examples in the 1990s.
35. *NUF 50 The first half-century of the National Unitarian Fellowship*, Lindsey Press, 1994 shows a varying individual membership of 113 at the start rising to 413 in 1982.
36. 62 Group. Its journal *Sixty-Two* lasted 1962-1965, *Inq* 13 Nov 1965 p 6-7 'Sixty-Two was perhaps the manifestation of our Church's new *national* identity.'
37. The Unitarian Renewal Group hold an annual event often in Manchester; for an example of what was mounted see *Inq* 3 Jan 1998 p 3.
38. GA Objects: the position reached at the century end is described *Inq* 4 Dec 1999, p 1. The objects created in the 1980s were agreed in 1990 by 79% of congregations but enthusiasts for the process had written into the rules that it should be 90% which meant they could not be adopted at that stage.
39. Examples of the several reviews of Unitarianism in Britain which took place in the twentieth century include the Unitarian Faith and Action Commission 1963-1967, see *Inq* 7 Jan 1967 p 2-3, and the Objects and Development Commission which commenced in 1985, see *Inq* 11 May 1985 p 3.