

## **Joe Bord – Personal Note**

I regard myself as a Jewish friend to Unitarian Christianity. I am neither a rabbi nor a minister, and can say nothing authoritative on doctrine or practice. As a historian (a research fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge) my theological argument must be received purely as lay suggestion. Andrew and I conceived of the idea of a colloquium in response to the manifest intellectual crisis of the British Unitarian tradition. This should be of concern to the Jew and the liberal (I count myself as both). Liberal Judaism and Unitarianism had a close intellectual relationship at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> This dialogue has now faltered. After the Shoah and the foundation of the State of Israel, liberal Jewish thought turned away from universalising ethical monotheism and towards the spiritual restoration of the Jewish people. Meanwhile, Unitarian Christianity neglected its own development in favour of creating space for humanist and naturalist ideologies. There has been, as it were, deterioration in the universal theistic centre, with liberal Judaism moving away from universalism and Unitarian Christianity following a self-abnegating post-theistic path. As a result, Judaism is in danger of losing a likeminded partner in faith. There is, then, a clear Jewish interest in participating in a conversation about Unitarian reconstruction. My intention is to offer, as a contribution, not an assessment of Unitarianism in Jewish terms, but suggestions for reconstruction according to Unitarianism's own logic and premises, which are ultimately consistent with (but distinct from) liberal Judaism.

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<sup>1</sup> Explored in A. Brown, 'The Theology of Robert Travers Herford (1860-1950) and its Relationship to Jewish Thought' MS Dissertation (2005), Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations, Cambridge CB5 8BJ