

## **The First Stone: On Revelation**

*First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Delaware, by Rev. Michelle Collins, 2013*

### **Chalice Lighting, by Leslie Poyl-Kosbau**

Flame of fire, spark of the universe that warmed our ancestral hearth—

Agent of life and death, symbol of truth and freedom.

We strive to understand ourselves and our earthly home.

**Check In:** What is a realization or satisfying learning that you have found recently?

### **Reading: from *On Being Human Religiously*, by James Luther Adams**

According to James Luther Adams, the five basic tenets of religious liberalism are:

- 1. *Revelation is continuous.***
2. Relations among persons should rest on consent, not coercion.
3. Religious people have a moral obligation to establish a just and loving community.
4. Good things don't just happen, people make them happen.
5. The resources available for change justify an ultimate optimism.

### **Discussion & Sharing Questions:**

- What does “revelation” mean to you? What kinds of revelation are there?
- How have you experienced revelation in your life?
- How have you seen revelations unfold and develop during your lifetime, both for yourself and for culture and society at large?
- Can you think of any ways that revelation has not been continuous for you, when an idea or belief has been more static for you? Did you feel any need to change it or that it was alright for you that way?
- Does revelation have to be continuous?

### **Closing Thoughts**

### **Extinguishing the Chalice**

## **The Second Stone: On Consent**

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**Check In:** Share something about an important relationship in your life right now.

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1. Revelation is continuous.
- 2. *Relations among persons should rest on consent, not coercion.***
3. Religious people have a moral obligation to establish a just and loving community.
4. Good things don't just happen, people make them happen.
5. The resources available for change justify an ultimate optimism.

### **Discussion & Sharing Questions:**

- Can you think of a time or relationship you had that was based on consent, and one that was not? What were the differences between them?
- What changes for you in a relationship that is based on consent rather than one that is based on necessity or coercion?
- Is it ever alright to be in a relationship or compel a relationship that is based on coercion? When is coercion alright or even necessary?
- Do you have any beliefs or morals that run counter to this claim that relations should rest on consent rather than coercion? What experiences have you had related to these beliefs or morals?

### **Closing Thoughts**

### **Extinguishing the Chalice**

## **The Third Stone: On Obligations**

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**Check In:** Share something that happened recently in a community of which you are a part.

### **Reading: from *On Being Human Religiously*, by James Luther Adams**

According to James Luther Adams, the five basic tenets of religious liberalism are:

1. Revelation is continuous.
2. Relations among persons should rest on consent, not coercion.
- 3. *Religious people have a moral obligation to establish a just and loving community.***
4. Good things don't just happen, people make them happen.
5. The resources available for change justify an ultimate optimism.

### **Discussion & Sharing Questions:**

- What does it mean to have a just and loving community?
- Can you think of any communities of which you are a part that you would describe as just and loving? What is it about those communities that make you describe them in this way?
- What is different about those communities and others of which you are a part that you would not describe with the words just or loving?
- What have you done to move a community towards being just or being loving? Do you feel an obligation to do so?
- What might be different if you were to act on this obligation in all of the communities of which you are a part?

### **Closing Thoughts**

### **Extinguishing the Chalice**

## **The Fourth Stone: On Causes**

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**Check In:** Share a good thing that has happened to you recently.

### **Reading: from *On Being Human Religiously*, by James Luther Adams**

According to James Luther Adams, the five basic tenets of religious liberalism are:

1. Revelation is continuous.
2. Relations among persons should rest on consent, not coercion.
3. Religious people have a moral obligation to establish a just and loving community.
- 4. *Good things don't just happen, people make them happen.***
5. The resources available for change justify an ultimate optimism.

### **Discussion & Sharing Questions:**

- What do you think of when you think of the term “good things”? Who or what determines “good”?
- What sources or causes have you found for these good things? Are there good things that can occur without human intervention?
- Are there any universal good things?
- Thinking of specific “good things” that occurred in your life, were they connected with your own effort, someone else’s, with something else or with nothing at all?
- Where is the space for grace with this claim that people are the only enactors for good things? (thinking of grace as unexpected or unearned blessing, as gifts of life) Is there space for chance and serendipity?
- Are these lines of thinking too idealistic?

*While the opposite of this claim is also interesting – sources of “bad things” and evil, and human connections to evil – I would encourage you to leave that discussion for another day.*

### **Closing Thoughts**

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## The Fifth Stone: On Optimism

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**Check In:** What is something that you are hopeful for right now?

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3. Religious people have a moral obligation to establish a just and loving community.
4. Good things don't just happen, people make them happen.
5. *The resources available for change justify an ultimate optimism.*

### Discussion & Sharing Questions:

- How optimistic are you feeling today? In general, how optimistic do you feel?
- When do you experience feelings of hopelessness and despair rather than optimism? Are there particular issues or situations when you feel this more? Has it ever been overwhelming?
- The claim that an ultimate optimism is justified is a bold claim. Would you agree with this claim? Why or why not? If not, then what might need to change to make an ultimate optimism seem more justified for you?
- How are optimism and hope different, and how are they similar?
- What helps to ground and sustain your sense of hope?

### Closing Thoughts

### Extinguishing the Chalice