

Editor's Note

Bill Murry

Responding to the essays on James Luther Adams in the previous edition of the Journal, Brent Smith adds more insight into that great thinker and offers a scathing critique of liberal religion today, arguing that liberal religionists are “liberal” but not “religious”: “Liberals have abandoned the revelation they represent and have abandoned the God they once extolled. But just like the fundamentalists, liberals have substituted the political for the religious.”

In “Crisis-Tragedy-Promise I,” Michael Hogue offers an insightful theological critique of contemporary religious liberalism, especially its inability to address prophetically the crises of our time. He then outlines what needs to be done to correct this failure and promises a future second essay that will elaborate more fully on the theological direction he is suggesting.

Jerome Stone’s “Controversies in Early Religious Naturalism” offers insight into the several differences between theologians who were pioneers in this important and increasingly popular theological perspective, differences which are also part of contemporary religious naturalism. This article comes from a chapter in Stone’s forthcoming history of religious naturalism.

Richard Kellaway’s essay (“Nature and Spirit: From Idyllic to Demonic”) serves as a corrective to those of us who tend to romanticize nature. Kellaway draws on American literature, especially Unitarian and Universalist writers, to depict and discuss the spiritual significance of nature, both from a romantic and a realistic perspective, and the evolution in the perception of nature “from idyllic to demonic.” Kellaway’s thorough immersion in both Unitarian and Universalist history and American literature give this essay depth and breadth. This essay was originally presented to Collegium.

In “Ethical Living in a Moral Desert,” David Bumbaugh wrestles with the critical question of finding an ethical foundation in a postmodern, post-secular world devoid of moral certainties. He ponders three questions, each of which leads to the discovery of a viable standard for responsible ethical living.

In his essay, “Engaging the Sacred Wisdom of Our Sisters in the Wilderness: A Unitarian Universalist/Womanist Dialogue,” Aaron McEmrys compares womanist and UU theologies and finds a remarkable compatibility. But since Unitarian Universalists do not share the African-American history of oppression, he believes UUs need to become engaged with and accountable to womanists in order to promote wholeness for all people and to overcome blind spots in UU theology and practice.

Marvin Cooke, in “Retiring Belief in the Resurrection, Claiming the Sayings Tradition,” argues that while the evidence supports the view that the resurrection of Jesus was real

as a personal experience for particular individuals, it does not support the claim that the resurrection was an objective, publicly available event. However, he then offers the “sayings tradition” as a basis for a radical understanding of Christianity as ethical pragmatism.