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Editor's Introduction

“Secular” is a dirty word to millions of religious adherents who believe secular morality has led to the moral decline of their respective communities. In the United States, one need look no further than the recently concluded annual “war on Christmas” to be reminded that secular values are frequently viewed as an outright assault on religious liberty and the moral fabric of our nation. Similarly, many secularists dismiss religious belief as dangerously irrational, scientifically unsound and morally irresponsible. Religion, these secularists argue, is the fundamental source of discrimination, hatred and terror. In fact, throughout the world, tensions between religious and secular worldviews consistently animate political and moral discussion, often times resulting in polarized discourse about the mortal threat inherent in the opposing position. This apparent opposition between religion and secularism provides the framework for this edition of the *Claremont Journal of Religion*.

Our exploration of religion and secularism begins with two enlightening interviews with Dr. Phil Zuckerman and Dr. Peter Boghossian. Dr. Zuckerman shares his views on, among other fascinating questions, the role of socialization in the development of religious and irreligious beliefs and identities, the relationship between religion and morality, and the New Atheist movement. Dr. Boghossian discusses his new book, *A Manual for Creating Atheists*, reflects on the role of atheism in modern society, and questions religion as a foundation for morality.

Following these interviews, six wide-ranging essays explore our theme. First, Daniel Silliman proposes that the practice of fiction reading produces the social

imaginary necessary to secularity. Next, Duncan Gale provides a comparative analysis of the Four Horsemen of New Atheism, arguing that these critics of religion are worthy of serious intellectual engagement and therefore, ought not be hastily dismissed by religious scholars and practitioners. Turning to the political arena, Rebecca Cardone examines the role of secularism in Ataturk's revolutionary Turkification reforms, concluding that Turkey can diminish fear of both oppressive secularism and Islamists by adopting a more pluralistic model of secularism. Then, Courtney Anderson explores Hume's mitigated skepticism as a God-free foundation for morality. Jeremiah Bowden returns to the Four Horsemen of New Atheism, arguing that these intellectuals offer little new insight when read through the lens of Nietzsche's critique of religion. Finally, Seth Clark argues that we can in fact be good without God, and that we need not rely upon divine revelation for universal moral standards.

Our exploration of religion and secularism concludes with two book reviews, the first of Ronald Dworkin's *Religion without God* and the second of Marie Cartier's *Baby, You Are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, and Theology Before Stonewall*, and an op-ed by Friederike Rass in which Rass argues that establishing an opposition between religion and secularism is not only difficult, but also highly problematic.

At the *Claremont Journal of Religion*, we welcome searching questions and honest discourse. We hope you find these works to be thought-provoking, engaging, and worthy of future conversation with friends and colleagues.

I would like to thank the following people for making this issue a reality: Kile Jones (Founder), Kyle Thompson (Editor-in-Chief), Matthew Fisher (Editor), Seth

Nunan (Referee Coordinator), the Editorial Advisory Board, Sean Clancy (Cover Artist), Kelsey Kimmel (Artistic Advisor), and all of the hard-working referees.

Sincerely,

Rick Hankins
Managing Editor