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PREFACE

‘Religion and politics’, according to a waggish etiquette, are topics to be avoided in polite company. They deal with ethical absolutes and absolute questions notoriously lead to absolute disagreements - on the larger scene to violent animosities. The further question as to how religion and secular order are to be reconciled to each other is doubly contentious; for here it is no longer a matter of theoretical debate but dire practicality, since the one can so easily appear the arch-enemy of the other, a threat both to spiritual integrity and political stability. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that history has largely been about just this conflict of divine with worldly absolutes, a judgment confirmed once again by events of the present time.

The current volume of *Animus* presents a variety of philosophical perspectives on the relation of religion to secularity. The first four are somewhat historically directed: Floy E. Doull examines traditional Islamic and Christian views of secularity and considers their compatibility with contemporary freedom; Torrence Kirby reflects on the influence of the theologian Bullinger upon the politics of the English reformation; Simon Kow discusses subsequent ambiguities as to the separation or establishment of religion, as exemplified in a debate between Hobbes and Milton; and Steven Michel provides an account of a still-influential Nietzschean anti-Christian polemic.

Two following essays deal with aesthetic renderings of the tension between religion and secularity found in literature: Paul Epstein discerns in the plays of Aristophanes a progressive constitution of “civilization’s first secularity” carried out from the side of the Athenian divinities themselves. At the other end of history, Ken Jacobsen finds in the pop-heroics of the world of Harry Potter a dialectical relation of contemporary religion and secularity.

The final three essays are grouped as specifically Hegelian in interest. Eli Diamond untangles the mostly ill-addressed issue of Hegel’s own stance as regards the constitutional monarchy of his day and the post-national universal history of which he also wrote; David Peddle explores the difficulties encountered in current American political-philosophical attempts to reconcile religious culture with public reason, pointing to the deeper Hegelian principles upon which they depend but only incompletely realize; finally, F. L. Jackson explicates the logical underpinning of Hegel’s account of religious knowledge and of the theology and history of the ‘consummation’ of religion in a post-religious ethics of freedom.