

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

March, 2013

Some of the greats this month: Ingersoll, Sagan, Mencken, Russell, and Dear Abby – plus a few of our own thoughtful readers (and a poet). We celebrate our celebration of Darwin Day, congratulate Mississippi, and consider religious unreason and political ignorance. We review the real reasons we have a 2nd Amendment, why theists pop pills and we eat pie. But first we consider The Church's latest mess and make a generous offer to an ex-Pope, while your Editor applies for his job. – JR

JOHN XXIV
John Rafferty

TO: The College of Cardinals, Vatican City
FROM: John Rafferty
SUBJECT: Job Application

Since the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church in Rome will shortly be without a Bishop of Rome and Vicar of Christ in the apostolic succession, I offer myself to the College of Cardinals.

My qualifications: I was baptized in the Faith, and made my First Holy Communion at the traditional age of seven. And while I have been – let's call it "irregular" – in my church attendance since being Confirmed a Soldier of Christ at age twelve, I do have other qualifications that seem requisite for the job.

I am male, Caucasian, old, close enough to natural celibacy as to make no never mind to the Church, and can swear I have never laid hands on an altar boy. I am rigidly set in my ways, and have dogmatic, unalterable opinions about birth control, abortion, women in the priesthood, and the above-mentioned celibacy. I also already consider myself generally infallible.

Although unlike my predecessor I am fluent only in English, I do speak passable tourist French and some New York Spanglish (*bodega, cuchifritos, Jennifer Lopez*), and am willing to study Latin.

Living in Rome is fine with me, especially the Italian-food-every-day part, and I have no problem with all the travel the job obviously requires, as long as I get that Pope Plane and the cool white car.

In fact, I've started to prepare a First Papal World Tour list of several important centers of Catholic worship that my predecessor missed in his travels (Cancun, Las Vegas, and a "nature beach" I know on St. Kitts). (I also have some

marketing ideas about Official Tour tee shirts, caps, and coffee mugs.)

If my atheism is a deal-breaker, I am willing to recant. In fact, you might consider that my abnegation (on bloody knees in St. Peter's Square) would make great worldwide TV, probably delivering a 60 share globally! Finally, don't forget: I'm already named John.

Very truly yours,
John (XXIV) Rafferty

P.S.: My wife, like dozens of papal wives and mistresses in history, promises to stay out of the public eye (or at least to not make her opinions of the Church public), and to not make public fun of me wearing a white dress.

Ed. Note: This originally appeared in PIQUE in December, 2003, the last time the men in red dresses got together.

BILL MAHER ON THE LOGIC OF CATHOLIC RESIGNATIONS

Hey, Catholics, news flash: If the Pope can quit, it's OK for you to quit, too.

GRETA CHRISTINA ON THE CHURCH'S FUTURE

The only way – and I mean the only way – that the Catholic Church is going to change its stance on [the child abuse] issue, or indeed on any issue, is if Catholics vote with their feet, and get the hell out of there.

IRV MILLMAN ON THE EX-POPE'S FUTURE

Now that Mr. Ratzinger will have much more time on his hands, and may be casting about for new leisure activities and intellectual challenges, I suggest we offer him honorary membership in the Secular Humanist Society of New York.

How about it, Benny?

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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THE US AND THE VATICAN

Edd Doerr

President, Americans for Religious Liberty

Former President (1995-2003)

The American Humanist Association

From the *National Catholic Reporter*, February 1, 2013:

Why send a Catholic?

Since the Reagan administration formalized diplomatic relations with the Holy See, all of our ambassadors have been Catholic. Doesn't this seem to conflict with the US Constitution's ban on religious tests for public office? We do not send Jewish envoys to Israel, Hindus to India, Muslims to Egypt, or Buddhists to Sri Lanka. How about a non-Catholic envoy to the Holy See?

— Edd Doerr, Silver Spring, MD

Well, someone is sure to ask if the U.S. should have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The Vatican is a 106-acre artificial state in Rome which has relations only with Italy; the Holy See is the entity that has diplomatic relations with nearly all countries and is simply the HQ of the Roman Catholic Church.

On Feb 9, 1984, I testified against U.S. diplomatic relations with the Holy See at a congressional hearing on behalf of Americans for Religious Liberty, the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Council for Secular Humanism, the American Ethical Union and the American Humanist Association. My oral and written testimony, from the Congressional Record, is reprinted in my 2006 book *Here I Stand*. The church-state separation side lost in Congress.

After Reagan opened formal relations with the Holy See in 1984 I was one of the many plaintiffs in a Supreme Court challenge to the arrangement. We lost on grounds of lack of “standing to sue” and foreign policy considerations. Later, as president of the AHA, I helped get the International Humanist and Ethical Union to support the “See Change” campaign by Catholics for Choice and other liberal Catholic groups to get the UN to terminate the Holy See’s unique status as the only religious organization that has permanent observer status at the UN General Assembly, which it uses to block international efforts to deal with family planning and overpopulation.

Background: From 756 to 1870 the Papal States in central Italy was a recognized state, a badly governed theocracy. It was absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy in 1870 with the approval of the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants. Though no longer a state, the Holy See nonetheless concluded dubious treaties, called concordats, with a number of nations, such as Colombia. In 1927 the Mussolini dictatorship created the independent 106-acre Vatican City (*Citta del Vaticano*) for political reasons. In 1933 the Holy See concluded a concordat with Germany’s Nazi government, the first treaty the Nazis achieved, and which allowed (authorized?) the German Catholic Center Party to vote with the Nazis to grant Hitler plenary power.

After WW II President Truman considered extending U.S. diplomatic relations to the Holy See, but this met with widespread opposition and fizzled. During WW II Roosevelt

had a “personal” representative at the Vatican, but, after all, we were in the midst of a war. Reagan resurrected the idea.

So the Holy See remains the only church with which the US has formal diplomatic relations. I am of the opinion still that this violates the First Amendment, discriminates against all other religions and life stances, and is actually an insult to Catholics and all other Americans. But, like a fishhook in one’s finger, it is easier to get in than get out.

Meanwhile, all Americans who value religious freedom and church-state separation must, *must* work together to stop or reverse the erosion of church-state separation being pushed through diversion of public funds to church-related private schools, fundamentalist infiltration of public schools, restrictions on reproductive choice, and related matters.

NEW POPE? I’VE GIVEN UP HOPE

Garry Wills

(Reprinted from The NYTimes OpEd page, 2/2/2013)

Editor's Note: Mr. Wills is not a non-theist, but one of America's leading Catholic intellectuals, which gives an added dimension to this cold-eyed essay — JR

There is a poignant air, almost wistful, to electing a pope in the modern world. In a time of discredited monarchies, can this monarchy survive and be relevant? There is nostalgia for the assurances of the past, quaint in their charm, but trepidation over their survivability. In monarchies, change is supposed to come from the top, if it is to come at all. So people who want to alter things in Catholic life are told to wait for a new pope. Only he has the authority to make the changeless church change, but it is his authority that stands in the way of change.

Of course, the pope is no longer a worldly monarch. For centuries he was such a ruler, with all the resources of a medieval or Renaissance prince — realms, armies, prisons, spies, torturers. But in the 19th century, when his worldly territories were wrested away by Italy, Pope Pius IX lunged toward a compensatory moral monarchy.

In 1870, he elicited — from a Vatican council he called and controlled — the first formal declaration that a pope is infallible. From that point on, even when he was not making technically infallible statements, the pope was thought to be dealing in eternal truths. A gift for eternal truths is as dangerous as the gift of Midas’s touch. The pope cannot undo the eternal truths he has proclaimed.

When Pope Paul VI’s commission of learned and loyal Catholics, lay and clerical, reconsidered the “natural law” teaching against birth control, and concluded that it could not, using natural reason, find any grounds for it, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, the secretary of the Holy Office, told Paul that people had for years, on papal warrant, believed that using a contraceptive was a mortal sin, for which they would go to hell if they died unrepentant.

On the other hand, those who followed “church teaching” were obliged to have many children unless they abstained from sex. How could Paul VI say that Pius XI, in his 1930 encyclical *Casti Connubii*, had misled the people in

such a serious way? If he admitted it, what would happen to his own authority as moral arbiter in matters of heaven and hell? So Paul VI doubled down, adding another encyclical in 1968, *Humanae Vitae*, to the unrenounceable eternal truths that pile up around a moral monarch.

In our day, most Catholics in America have reached the same conclusion that Paul VI's commission did. But successive popes have stuck by Pius and Paul and have appointed bishops who demonstrate loyalty on this matter. That is why some American bishops in the recent presidential election said that President Obama was destroying "religious liberty" if his health plan insured funds for contraception. Nonetheless, more Catholics voted for Mr. Obama than didn't. In a normal government, this disconnect between rulers and ruled would be negotiated. But eternal truths are nonnegotiable.

Wistful Catholics hope that on this and other matters of disagreement between the church as People of God and the ruling powers in the church, a new pope can remedy that discord. But a new pope will be elected by cardinals who were elevated to office by the very popes who reaffirmed "eternal truths" like the teaching on contraception. They were appointed for their loyalty, as were the American bishops who stubbornly upheld the contraception nonsense in our elections.

Will the new conclave vote for a man who goes against the teachings of his predecessors? Even if they do, can the man chosen buck the structure through which he rose without kicking the structure down? These considerations have given the election of new popes the air of watching Charlie Brown keep trying to kick the football, hoping that Lucy will cooperate.

As this election approaches, some hope that the shortage of priests, and their damaged reputation and morale, can be remedied by adding married priests, or women priests, or gay priests. But that misses the point. Whatever their sexual status, they will still be priests. They will not be chosen by their congregations (as was the practice in the early church). They will be appointed from above, by bishops approved for their loyalty to Rome, which will police their doctrinal views as it has with priests heretofore. The power structure will not be changed by giving it new faces. Monarchies die hard.

In 1859, John Henry Newman published an article that led to his denunciation in Rome as "the most dangerous man in England". It was called "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine" and it showed that in history the laity had been more true to the Gospel than the hierarchy. That was an unacceptable position to Rome. It still is. Pope Benedict XVI, when he was still Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, was asked if it did not disturb him that Catholics disagreed with the rulings of Rome. He said no — that dogma is not formed by majority rule. But that is precisely how it was formed in the great councils like that at Nicaea, where bishops voted to declare dogmas on the Trinity and the Incarnation. There was no pope involved in those councils. Yet they defined the most important truths of the faith.

Jesus, we are reminded, said to Peter, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." But Peter was addressed as a faithful disciple, not as a priest or a pope. There were no priests in Peter's time, and no popes. Paul never called himself or any of his co-workers priests. He did not offer sacrifice. Those ideas came in later, through weird arguments contained in the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews.

The claim of priests and popes to be the sole conduits of grace is a remnant of the era of papal monarchy. We are watching that era fade. But some refuse to recognize its senescence. Such people will run peppily up, like Charlie Brown, to the coming of a new pope. But Lucy, as usual, still holds the football.

MOHAMMED DECRIES A TERRIBLE DISEASE

(Transcribed from "Jesus and Mo, reprinted 2/13/2013)

Mohammed (at computer, but we don't see screen): Abstinence-only clearly doesn't work against this terrible disease. It continues to cause untold suffering and millions of deaths every year. It's particularly heartbreaking when it's passed from mother to child.

We have to face the reality that people are going to have sex, and encourage them to use condoms to prevent it spreading. Especially in Africa, which is the one continent where it is on the increase.

Jesus: I thought AIDS was on the rise everywhere.

(We see screen: "Pope to Africa: Only my magic will save you.")

Mo: I'm not talking about AIDS, I'm talking about Catholicism.

DEAR ABBY

(From the New York Atheists Facebook page)

Pauline Phillips died January 18. For decades she was "Dear Abby" to tens, perhaps hundreds of millions of people around the world who read her pull-no-punches syndicated newspaper column. For example:

Dear Abby: Since God alone can create life, and since God alone knows what tomorrow brings, He alone is truly qualified as a "Family Planner".

How did a lovely, brilliant girl like you get taken in by Planned Parenthood? — *A Long-Time Admirer*

Dear Admirer: I read the figures on population explosion, and saw pictures of thousands of children born of parents who did not want them and could not feed them. I then concluded that a just God could not possibly have given life to innocent children only to doom them to death by starvation in their infancy.

THIS MONTH'S "GOOD BOOK" LESSON

David's prayer for revenge

Let his days be few, and let another take his office.
Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.
Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg.
Let them seek also their bread out of the desolate places.

— *Psalms 109: 8-10*

IT'S IRRATIONAL TO BE RELIGIOUS

Jared Diamond

(The following is an excerpt from The World Until Yesterday, the new book by the award-winning scientist/author of Guns, Germs, and Steel.)

Virtually all religions hold some supernatural beliefs specific to that religion. That is, a religion's adherents firmly hold beliefs that conflict with and cannot be confirmed by our experience of the natural world, and that appear implausible to people other than the adherents of that particular religion.

For example, Hindus believe there is a monkey god who travels thousands of kilometers at a single somersault. Catholics believe a woman who had not yet been fertilized by a man became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy, whose body eventually after his death was carried up to a place called heaven, often represented as being located in the sky. The Jewish faith believes that a supernatural being gave a chunk of desert in the Middle East to the being's favorite people, as their home forever.

No other feature of religion creates a bigger divide between religious believers and modern secular people, to whom it staggers the imagination that anyone could entertain such beliefs. No other feature creates a bigger divide between believers in two different religions, each of whom firmly believes its own beliefs but considers it absurd that the other religion's believers believe those other beliefs. Why, nevertheless, are supernatural beliefs such universal features of religions?

One suggested answer is that supernatural religious beliefs are just ignorant superstitions similar to supernatural non-religious beliefs, illustrating only that the human brain is capable of deceiving itself into believing anything. We can all think of supernatural non-religious beliefs whose implausibility should be obvious. Many Europeans believe that the sight of a black cat heralds misfortune, but black cats are actually rather common. By repeatedly tallying whether or not a one-hour period following or not following your observation of a black cat in an area with high cat density did or did not bring you some specified level of misfortune, and by applying the statistician's chi-square test, you can quickly convince yourself that the black-cat hypothesis has a probability of less than 1 out of 1,000 of being true. Some groups of New Guinea lowlanders believe that hearing the beautiful whistled song of the little bird known as the Lowland Mouse-Babbler warns us that someone has recently died, but this bird is among the most common species and most frequent singers in New Guinea lowland forests. If the belief about it were true, the local human population would be dead within a few days, yet my New Guinea friends are as convinced of the babbler's ill omens as Europeans are afraid of black cats.

A more striking non-religious superstition, because people today still invest money in their mistaken belief, is water-witching, also variously known as dowsing, divining, or rhabdomancy. Already established in Europe over 400 years ago and possibly also reported before the time

of Christ, this belief maintains that rotation of a forked twig carried by a practitioner called a dowser, walking over terrain whose owner wants to know where to dig a well, indicates the location and sometimes the depth of an invisible underground water supply. Control tests show that dowsers' success at locating underground water is no better than random, but many land-owners in areas where geologists also have difficulty at predicting the location of underground water nevertheless pay dowsers for their search, then spend even more money to dig a well unlikely to yield water. The psychology behind such beliefs is that we remember the hits and forget the misses, so that whatever superstitious beliefs we hold become confirmed by even the flimsiest of evidence through the remembered hits. Such anecdotal thinking comes naturally; controlled experiments and scientific methods to distinguish between random and non-random phenomena are counterintuitive and unnatural, and thus not found in traditional societies.

Perhaps, then, religious superstitions are just further evidence of human fallibility, like belief in black cats and other non-religious superstitions. But it's suspicious that costly commitments to belief in implausible-to-others religious superstitions are such a consistent feature of religions. The investments that many religious adherents make to their beliefs are far more burdensome, time-consuming, and heavy in consequences to them than are the actions of black-cat-phobics in occasionally avoiding black cats. This suggests that religious superstitions aren't just an accidental by-product of human reasoning powers but possess some deeper meaning. What might that be?

A recent interpretation among some scholars of religion is that belief in religious superstitions serves to display one's commitment to one's religion. All long-lasting human groups — Boston Red Sox fans (like me), devoted Catholics, patriotic Japanese, and others — face the same basic problem of identifying who can be trusted to remain as a group member. The more of one's life is wrapped up with one's group, the more crucial it is to be able to identify group members correctly and not to be deceived by someone who seeks temporary advantage by claiming to share your ideals but who really doesn't. If that man carrying a Boston Red Sox banner, whom you had accepted as a fellow Red Sox fan, suddenly cheers when the New York Yankees hit a home run, you'll find it humiliating but not life-threatening. But if he's a soldier next to you in the front line and he drops his gun (or turns it on you) when the enemy attacks, your misreading of him may cost you your life.

That's why religious affiliation involves so many overt displays to demonstrate the sincerity of your commitment: sacrifices of time and resources, enduring of hardships, and other costly displays that I'll discuss later. One such display might be to espouse some irrational belief that contradicts the evidence of our senses, and that people outside our religion would never believe. If you claim that the founder of your church had been conceived by normal sexual intercourse between his mother and father, anyone else would believe that too, and you've done nothing to

demonstrate your commitment to your church. But if you insist, despite all evidence to the contrary, that he was born of a virgin birth, and nobody has been able to shake you of that irrational belief after many decades of your life, then your fellow believers will feel much more confident that you'll persist in your belief and can be trusted not to abandon your group.

Nevertheless, it's not the case that there are no limits to what can be accepted as a religious supernatural belief. Scott Atran and Pascal Boyer have independently pointed out that actual religious superstitions over the whole world constitute a narrow subset of all the arbitrary random superstitions that one could theoretically invent. To quote Pascal Boyer, there is no religion proclaiming anything like the following tenet: "There is only one God! He is omnipotent. But he exists only on Wednesdays."

Instead, the religious supernatural beings in which we believe are surprisingly similar to humans, animals, or other natural objects, except for having superior powers. They are more far-sighted, longer-lived, and stronger, travel faster, can predict the future, can change shape, can pass through walls, and so on. In other respects, gods and ghosts behave like people. The god of the Old Testament got angry, while Greek gods and goddesses became jealous, ate, drank, and had sex. Their powers surpassing human powers are projections of our own personal power fantasies: they can do what we wish we could do ourselves.

I do have fantasies of hurling thunderbolts that destroy evil people, and probably many other people share those fantasies of mine, but I have never fantasized about existing only on Wednesdays. Hence it doesn't surprise me that gods in many religions are pictured as smiting evil-doers, but that no religion holds out the dream of existing just on Wednesdays.

Thus, religious supernatural beliefs are irrational, but emotionally plausible and satisfying. That's why they're so believable, despite at the same time being rationally implausible.

IT'S TIME TO STOP VALIDATING IGNORANCE

Jonathan Fowler and Elizabeth Rodd

(Excerpted from BigThink.com, 1/30/2013)

In protesting the Kansas State Board of Education's decision to allow intelligent design to be taught in public schools as an alternative to creationism, Bobby Henderson audaciously argued that "Flying Spaghetti Monsterism" ought to be given equal time in classrooms as well.

The idea behind this colorful parody was simple. Religious tolerance is one thing. It is quite another thing to teach children unfalsifiable claims.

According to the physicist Lawrence Krauss, author of *A Universe from Nothing: Why There is Something Rather than Nothing*, the notion that the earth is 6,000 years old, as opposed to 4.55 billion years old, is simply an error, and a very big error indeed. To teach such an error, Krauss says, has consequences. It would be like "teaching kids that the distance across the United States is 17 feet. That's how big

an error it is".

As Krauss is fond of saying, "the purpose of education is to overcome ignorance, not validate it". In other words, we can't water down our teaching of science. In fact, we need to be more bold. "The very fact that enough people are willing to somehow believe that Earth is 6,000 years old," he argues, "means we have to do a better job of teaching physics and biology, not a worse job."

Krauss takes particular issue with the fact that some politicians are compelled—for whatever reason—to promulgate the idea that Earth is 6,000 years old. He singles out Senator Marco Rubio, who made headlines several months ago when he said we do not know how old Earth is. In qualifying his remarks, Rubio also said, "I think the age of the universe has zero to do with how our economy is going to grow." Krauss strongly disagrees.

"Technology and biotechnology will be the basis of our economic future. And if we allow nonsense to be promulgated in the schools, we do a disservice to our students, a disservice to our children, and we're guaranteeing that they will fall behind in a competitive world that depends upon a skilled workforce able to understand and manipulate technology and science."

SLIDING INTO SUPERSTITION

Carl Sagan

I have a foreboding of an America in my children's or grandchildren's time when we're a service and information economy; when nearly all the key manufacturing industries have slipped away to other countries; when awesome technological powers are in the hands of a very few, and no one representing the public interest can even grasp the issues; when people have lost the ability to set their own agendas or knowledgeably question those in authority; when, clutching our crystals and consulting our horoscopes, our critical faculties in decline, unable to distinguish between what feels good and what's true, we slide, almost without noticing, back into superstition.

SIX-YEAR-OLD DANAE ON TRUTH, LIES, AND DISCLAIMERS

Wiley Miller

(Transcribed from the comic strip Non Sequitur, 11/28/2012)
(After her father explains to her why "people talk so quickly" at the end of TV commercials, 6-year-old Danae interprets the concept of disclaimers for Lucy, her stuffed-toy pony.)

Lucy: Wait ... explain that to me again.

Danae: It's simple. You just loudly say what you want to be true. People want it to be true, too. That's when you quickly and quietly say why it's not all true, but they're not listening anymore. So it's their fault if they still believe you.

Lucy: And that's not lying?

Danae: Nope! It's what adults call a disclaimer.

Lucy: But adults always say, "Honesty is the best policy".

Danae: See? You tuned out their disclaimer on how that old saying doesn't apply to business.

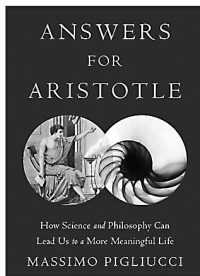
SHSNY CALENDAR: MARCH - MAY 2013

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

THURS, MARCH 7, 6:30 pm
in the front room of
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK
28 East 35 St. (Park-Mad)
(3 doors West of the church - red door)
We'll discuss

ANSWERS FOR ARISTOTLE:
How Science and Philosophy
Can Lead Us to a
More Meaningful Life
Massimo Pigliucci

How should we live? SHSNY's own philosopher-in-residence argues that the combination of science and philosophy first pioneered by Aristotle offers us the best possible tool for understanding the world and ourselves.



Answers for Aristotle addresses such essential issues as how to tell right from wrong, the nature of love and friendship, and whether we can ever really know ourselves - while finding the path to the best possible life. — *Kindle available.*

Join us even if you haven't finished reading. The SHSNY Book Club is open to all ... and free!

PLANNING AHEAD

Book Club: First Thursday
at the Community Church of NY
Movie Night: Second Monday
at Stone Creek Lounge.
Brunch: Third Sunday
at BXL East Bistro.
Great Lectures: 4th Wednesday
at Stone Creek Lounge.
Humanism 101: Last Monday
at the Community Church of NY
More info: www.shsny.org,
at.humanism.meetup.com/515,
and 212-308-2165

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

THURS, APRIL 4, 6:30 pm
at Community Church of NY
28 East 35 Street (Park-Mad)
THE SIGNAL & THE NOISE:
Why So Many Predictions
Fail – And Some Don't
Nate Silver

Nate Silver predicted the 2008 election within a hair's breadth, and became a national sensation as a blogger — all by the time he was 30 — then called the 2012 election correctly in all 50 states. *The New York Times* now publishes FiveThirtyEight.com, where Silver is one of America's most influential political forecasters. Most predictions fail, he says, because most of us have a poor understanding of probability and uncertainty, and mistake more confident predictions for more accurate ones.

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 6:30 pm
at Community Church of NY
28 East 35 Street (Park-Mad)
THE SOCIAL CONQUEST
OF EARTH
Edward O. Wilson

Where did we come from? What are we? Where are we going? One of our greatest living scientists directly addresses these three fundamental questions of religion, philosophy, and science while "overturning the theory that evolution naturally encourages creatures to put family first".

Refashioning the story of human evolution, Wilson draws on his remarkable knowledge of biology and social behavior to show that group selection, not kin selection, is the primary driving force of human evolution.

BRUNCH!

New Restaurant!
SUNDAY, MAR 17, 12 NOON
MONTHLY CASUAL BRUNCH
Brabant Belgian Brasserie
316 East 53 Street

We'll meet at Noon just east of 2nd Avenue at *our new brunch venue* for outstanding Belgian fare, from salads to shrimp rolls, Grand Fromage Onion Soup, waffles and burgers, pots of lots of mussels, \$6 to \$18, plus a prix-fixe brunch (10 choices, plus 5 omelettes, including a drink) for \$17.

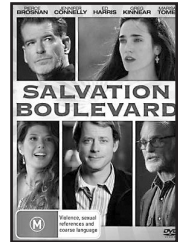
Everyone interested in getting together with 15-20 or more like-minded humanists and rationalists for good grub (huge selection of beers!) and lively talk is welcome.

Bring friends!

MONDAY, MARCH 11, 7:00 pm
SHSNY MOVIE NIGHT
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St (Lex-3rd Aves)
"SALVATION BOULEVARD"

Combining wicked satire with an engrossing murder mystery, this 2011 black comedy follows charismatic pastor Dan Day (Pierce Brosnan), whose megachurch — not to mention his real estate developments — is endangered when he becomes entangled in an unsavory incident being investigated by a hapless parishioner (Greg Kinnear), one of Pastor Dan's born-again followers who really wishes he were still following the Grateful Dead.

The all-star cast also includes Jennifer Connelly, Marisa Tomei, Ed Harris, and Ciarán Hinds
SHSNY Movie Night is FREE.



SHSNY CALENDAR: MARCH - APRIL 2013

**GREAT LECTURES ON DVD
WED, MARCH 27, 7:00 pm
"QUANTUM MAN:
RICHARD FEYNMAN'S LIFE
IN SCIENCE"**

Lawrence Krauss

**Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St. (Lex-3rd Aves)**

Arguably the greatest physicist of the second half of the 20th Century, Feynman changed the way we think about quantum physics, the most perplexing of all physical theories. Lawrence Krauss, a theoretical physicist and best selling author (*The Physics of Star Trek*), offers a unique scientific biography of an intensely vivid persona. Feynman revolutionized our understanding of nature amid a turbulent life. Krauss presents that life as seen through the science, providing a new understanding of the legacy of a man who continues to fascinate millions.

Great Lectures Night is FREE

HUMANISM 101

**MONDAY, MAR 25, 6:30-8:30
Community Church of New York
28 East 35 Street (red door)
Meeting/Discussion #4
Critical Thinking**

Suggested Reading:

Online: Rebecca Newberger Goldstein: *36 Arguments for the Existence of God* (from the Appendix to the book, posted at www.shsnny.org)

Book(s)

Normand Baillargeon: *A Short Course in Intellectual Self-Defense* (Chapters 1,3,5) ... and/or
Massimo Pigliucci: *Nonsense on Stilts*

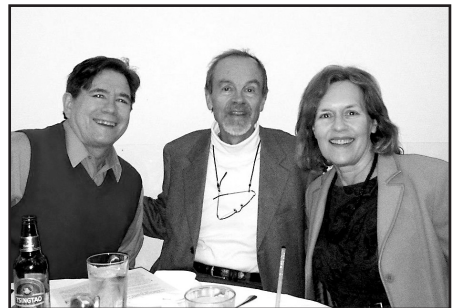
Note: You can do the online reading in an hour or so, and choose just one of the books. And, if you haven't done the reading, you may still audit the discussion – all are welcome!

**WHAT A SWELL PARTY THAT WAS!
CELEBRATING DARWIN AND DUMBTH**



"What enables us to live together? Where does the idea of ethical progress come from?" Professor Philip Kitcher asked an audience of fifty humanists at our 5th annual Darwin Day and SHSNY (25th!) Anniversary luncheon. "Ethical life," he told us in a captivating talk, "is primarily something we do together, perhaps the greatest thing our species has ever done - inventing the ethical life."

You weren't there? Even if you missed all the fun on February 16, you can see and hear Professor Kitcher's (our newest Honorary Member) full talk at www.shsnny.org.



Clockwise from top left: Craig Brashear (l. to r.), Rebecca Kelly, Caroline Rubinstein, Phil Winegar; John Wagner (l. to r.), Philip Kitcher, Lorraine Gudas; CFI-NYC Exec Director Syd Leroy; and Ed Robins (l.) and Janet Asimov.



**AND THE WINNER
OF THE 2012 DUMBTH AWARD IS ...**

The result was never in doubt. Todd "Legitimate Rape" Akin, the failed Senate candidate from Missouri, led the field of five in the online voting, and coasted to victory with another big margin in our Darwin Day paper-ballot voting.

The silver horse's-ass trophy is yours whenever you want to pick it up, Ex-Congressman, and no one has ever deserved it more.



AND A GREAT GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL ...

Cory Aquire, Janet Asimov, Giddian Beer, Wally Berliner, Robert Bohr, Craig Brashear, Brenda Brewer, Bill Carter, Ed Edelman, Edith Finell, Ron Finell, Joel Galker, Mary Ellen Goodman, Lorraine Gudas, Dorothy Kahn, Jane Kelly, Rebecca Kelly, Scott Kim, Philip Kitcher, Brian Lemaire, Syd Leroy, Lee Loshak, Marsha Loshak, Carl Marxer, Donna Marxer, Irv Millman, Carlos Mora, Bob Murtha, Margo Meyers, Bob Mundy, Justine Ondricek, Robert Ondricek, Kathleen Walsh Penn, Charlotte Marzani, John Rafferty, Bill Reed, Martine Reed, Ed Robins, Caroline Rubinstein, Eric Salzman, Lorna Salzman, Thomas Shea, Corey Sheridan, Harvey Wachtel, John Wagner, Mike Weiss, Julia Willebrand, Phil Winegar

THE GREAT AGNOSTIC: ROBERT G. INGERSOLL Walter Balcerak

For a pungent, quotable critique of religion, it's hard to beat Robert G. Ingersoll, the popular 19th Century orator and author known as the "Great Agnostic". Here are some examples:

"I do not know – but I do not believe."

"I believe in the gospel of good living. ... I believe in the gospel of intelligence; in the gospel of education. The schoolhouse is my cathedral; the universe is my bible."

"[T]hey who know the most of nature believe the least about theology."

"[M]iracles prove the dishonesty of the few and the credulity of the many... "

"Over the manuscripts of philosophers and poets, priests, with their ignorant tongues thrust out, devoutly scrawled the forgeries of faith."

"All religions have, with ceremony, magic, and mystery, deformed, darkened, and corrupted the soul."

"Man did not get his knowledge of the consequence of actions from God, but from experience and reason."

"God or not God, murder is a crime. ... As long as men object to being killed, murder will be illegal."

"The assassin cannot sanctify his dagger by falling on his knees, and it does not help a falsehood if it be uttered as a prayer."

"I have but little confidence in any business, or enterprise, or investment, that promises dividends only after the death of the stockholders."

"Honest investigation is utterly impossible within the pale of any Church, for the reason, that if you think the Church is right you will not investigate, and if you think it wrong, the Church will investigate you."

"In all ages reason has been regarded as the enemy of religion. Nothing has been considered so pleasing to the Deity as a total denial of the authority of your own mind."

"It is said that a desire for knowledge lost us the Eden of the past; but whether that is true or not, it will certainly give us the Eden of the future."

"Mental slavery is mental death, and every man who has given up his intellectual freedom is the living coffin of his dead soul. In this sense, every church is a cemetery and every creed an epitaph."

"And every life, no matter if its every hour is rich with love and every moment jeweled with joy, will, at its close, become a tragedy as sad and deep and dark as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death."

"He believed that happiness was the only good, reason the only torch, justice the only worship, and love the only priest." (*From a funeral tribute to his brother.*)

"One school-master is worth a thousand priests."

"A King is a non-producing thief, sitting on a throne, surrounded by vermin."

Note: All the quotations above come from a book that is free to Kindle users. It is titled Ingersollia: Gems of Thought from the Lectures, Speeches, and Conversations. Many books by Ingersoll can be downloaded free at Amazon.com.

WHEN GOD IS NOT ENOUGH: POP A PILL John Rafferty

(Based on "When God Is Not Enough: Religious States Have Highest Rates of Anti-Depressant Use", by Laura Gottesdiener, on AlterNet.org, 2/14/2013)

We are all aware that dozens of studies of life satisfaction show that the least theistic countries – Scandinavia, the Netherlands, France – are the happiest, their citizens the most content with their lives, while the most dissatisfied people live in the most religious. On the other hand, we keep hearing and reading that surveys of Americans indicate that our own theists are longer-lived, healthier, and generally happier than we – the no-fun rationalists – are.

How, as our unsmiling *uber*-rationalist hero Spock would ask, does this compute?

Here's a possibility: medication.

A new Gallup poll confirms that the traditional Bible Belt states – Mississippi (#1), Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma (plus Mormon Utah) – are still the most religious states. And the Devil's Northeast corner – Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire – are the least godly. But, as the Alternet essay referenced above says, when those statistics are cross-tabbed with a 2006 study by one of the country's largest prescription drug companies:

The most religious states in the U.S. share another trait: the highest use of anti-depressants.

Utah has long been the nation's capital of happy pill popping, with its citizens twice as likely to be on anti-depressants than the general U.S. population.

And of the top-ten most religious states, nine have higher than average use of anti-depressants.

Now I understand all those "blissed-out" faces.

THE SECOND AMENDMENT: THE REAL HISTORY

(Excerpted from "The Real Rationale for the 2nd Amendment, That Right-Wingers Are Totally Ignorant About", on AlterNet.org, 12/21/2012)

Right-wing resistance to meaningful gun control is driven, in part, by a false notion that America's Founders adopted the Second Amendment because they wanted an armed population that could battle the U.S. government. The opposite is the truth, but many Americans seem to have embraced this absurd, anti-historical narrative.

The reality was that the Framers wrote the Constitution and added the Second Amendment with the goal of creating a strong central government with a citizens-based military force capable of putting down insurrections, not to enable or encourage uprisings. The key Framers, after all, were mostly men of means with a huge stake in an orderly society, the likes of George Washington and James Madison.

The men who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 weren't precursors to France's Robespierre or Russia's Leon Trotsky,

believers in perpetual revolutions. In fact, their work on the Constitution was influenced by the experience of Shays' Rebellion in western Massachusetts in 1786, a populist uprising that the weak federal government, under the Articles of Confederation, lacked an army to defeat. ...

The rebellion alarmed retired Gen. George Washington, who received reports on the developments from old Revolutionary War associates in Massachusetts, such as Gen. Henry Knox and Gen. Benjamin Lincoln. Washington was particularly concerned that the disorder might serve the interests of the British, who had only recently accepted the existence of the United States. ...

"If three years ago [at the end of the American Revolution] any person had told me that at this day, I should see such a formidable rebellion against the laws & constitutions of our own making as now appears I should have thought him a bedlamite - a fit subject for a mad house," Washington wrote to Knox on Feb. 3, 1787, adding that if the government "shrinks, or is unable to enforce its laws ... anarchy & confusion must prevail." ...

Washington's alarm about Shays' Rebellion was a key factor in his decision to take part in - and preside over - the Constitutional Convention, which was supposed to offer revisions to the Articles of Confederation but instead threw out the old structure entirely and replaced it with the U.S. Constitution, which shifted national sovereignty from the 13 states to "We the People" and dramatically enhanced the power of the central government.

The drastic changes prompted strong opposition from some Revolutionary War figures, such as Virginia's Patrick Henry, who denounced the federal power grab and rallied a movement known as the Anti-Federalists. Prospects for the Constitution's ratification were in such doubt that its principal architect, James Madison, joined in a sales campaign known as the Federalist Papers in which he tried to play down how radical his changes actually were.

To win over other skeptics, Madison agreed to support a Bill of Rights, which would be proposed as the first ten amendments to the Constitution. Madison's political maneuvering succeeded as the Constitution narrowly won approval in key states, such as Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts. The First Congress then approved the Bill of Rights, which were ratified in 1791. ...

The Second Amendment dealt with concerns about "security" and the need for trained militias to ensure what the Constitution called "domestic Tranquility". There was also hesitancy among many Framers about the costs and risks from a large standing army, thus making militias composed of citizens an attractive alternative.

So, the Second Amendment read: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Contrary to some current right-wing fantasies about the Framers wanting to encourage popular uprisings over grievances, the language of the amendment is clearly aimed at maintaining order within the country.

That point was driven home by the actions of the

Second Congress amid another uprising which erupted in 1791 in western Pennsylvania. This anti-tax revolt, known as the Whiskey Rebellion, prompted Congress in 1792 to expand on the idea of "a well-regulated militia" by passing the Militia Acts which required all military-age white males to obtain their own muskets and equipment for service in militias.

In 1794, President Washington, who was determined to demonstrate the young government's resolve, led a combined force of state militias against the Whiskey rebels. Their revolt soon collapsed and order was restored, demonstrating how the Second Amendment helped serve the government in maintaining "security", as the Amendment says.

Beyond this clear historical record - that the framers' intent was to create security for the new Republic, not promote armed rebellions - there is also the simple logic that the Framers represented the young nation's aristocracy. Many, like Washington, owned vast tracts of land. They recognized that a strong central government and domestic tranquility were in their economic interests.

So, it would be counterintuitive - as well as anti-historical - to believe that Madison and Washington wanted to arm the population so the discontented could resist the constitutionally elected government. In reality, the Framers wanted to arm the people - at least the white males - so uprisings, whether economic clashes like Shays' Rebellion, anti-tax protests like the Whiskey Rebellion, attacks by Native Americans, or slave revolts, could be repulsed.

However, the Right has invested heavily during the last several decades in fabricating a different national narrative, one that ignores both logic and the historical record. In this right-wing fantasy, the Framers wanted everyone to have a gun so they could violently resist their own government.

This bogus "history" has then been amplified through the Right's powerful propaganda apparatus - Fox News, talk radio, the Internet and ideological publications - to persuade millions of Americans that their possession of semi-automatic assault rifles and other powerful firearms is what the Framers intended, that today's gun-owners are fulfilling some centuries-old American duty. ...

Today's American Right is drunk on some very bad history, which is as dangerous as it is false.

ON THE RIGHT TO BE STUPID H.L. MENCKEN

Even a superstitious man has certain inalienable rights. He has a right to harbor and indulge his imbecilities as long as he pleases, provided only he does not try to inflict them upon other men by force. He has a right to argue for them as eloquently as he can, in season and out of season. He has a right to teach them to his children. But certainly he has no right to be protected against the free criticism of those who do not hold them. He has no right to demand that they be treated as sacred. He has no right to preach them without challenge.

ON “PATRIOTS” AND GUNS

Ira Glasser

(Reprinted from the Letters column in The New York Times, 1/14/2012. Mr. Glasser is the former Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union)

Consider what has been said on behalf of weapons of war: Andrew Napolitano, a Fox News analyst, says the Second Amendment “protects the right to shoot tyrants, and it protects the right to shoot at them effectively”. He seemed to be talking about the Obama administration, or Congress. James Yeager, the chief executive of a Tennessee company that trains civilians to use weapons, says he’ll start killing people if gun control efforts move forward, and he urges all “patriots” to do likewise.

Imagine what police departments and the F.B.I. would do if these statements were being made by Muslims in response to government harassment – probably gear up to infiltrate and entrap Muslim groups and perhaps even launch murderous raids against them. That is precisely what happened when young Black Panthers brandished arms during the 1960s. Where were the advocates of the Second Amendment then?

Second Amendment enthusiasm has little to do with advocacy of constitutional rights, and everything to do with marketing for weapons manufacturers and with politically selective fears. Tell me if you’re enthusiastic about Muslims arming themselves, or whether you were enthusiastic about the Black Panthers, and maybe I’ll take your Second Amendment arguments seriously.

TAKE A GUESS: WHAT DO YOU THINK “THE CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENSE FUND” IS?

Lee Fang

(Reprinted from “The NRA’s Real Mission” in The Nation, 1/14/2013)

Over the last four years, the only gun laws that Congress and the Obama administration have enacted have been laws further deregulating gun use. It’s no secret why – as pundits love to note, the gun lobby is incredibly influential. But as we consider potential reforms in the wake of the tragedy in Newtown, one of the first questions we must ask is: Whom does the gun lobby really represent?

The National Rifle Association claims to be a group representing “4 million members” who simply love the Second Amendment. In reality, it is composed of a half-dozen legal entities, some designed to run undisclosed attack ads in political campaigns, others to lobby and collect tens of millions of dollar in undisclosed, tax-deductible sums. This power has arguably been enhanced by *Citizens United*, with GOP donors in the last election reportedly funneling money to the NRA simply to use the group as a weapon against Democrats.

Despite the NRA’s grassroots façade, there’s plenty of evidence that corporations profiting from unregulated gun use are propping up the NRA, much as the tobacco lobby

secretly funded “smokers’ rights” groups. In a “special thanks” to donors, the NRA Foundation listed Bushmaster Firearms, the company that makes the assault-rifle used in the Connecticut murders.

The Violence Policy Center has estimated that since 2005, gun manufacturers have contributed up to \$38.9 million to the NRA. Those numbers, however, are based on the publicly listed sponsorship levels in NRA fundraising pamphlets. The real figures could be much bigger: the NRA doesn’t disclose any donor information, even though it spends millions of dollars on federal elections. And like other industry fronts, the NRA is quick to present its policy positions as principled, idealistic commitments. Its “Civil Rights Defense Fund”, for example, is “involved in court cases establishing legal precedents in favor of gun owners”. Who picks the cases? Defense Fund board members like James W. Porter II, an attorney specializing in “areas of products liability defense” for gun manufacturers. His last client, according to the federal court docket, was Smith & Wesson.

Is the NRA working to support the interests of casual gun owners, many of whom favor tougher restrictions on gun ownership? Or does it serve the gunmakers’ lobby, which is purely interested in policies that promote gun sales? Any policy debate should begin with this question.

Readers Respond to PIQUE:

CAN HUMANISM OFFER SOLACE?

Stan Friedland

Another [February] interesting and thought-provoking issue. The opening trilogy of essays pertaining to the presence, or lack thereof, of secular humanists in the aftermath of the Newtown tragedy was certainly provocative. Perhaps those essays raise more questions than they answer. In the wake of such a calamitous national tragedy should humanists speak up just to be heard? Just to not be submerged by the voices of other religions? To provide solace to the mourners of those who were victims? Each one of these questions poses different motivations and takes different tacks and shapes. I dare say that if any of your three “freethinker” friends were called upon to speak because they were family friends, I have no doubt that their chosen remarks would and could provide solace to their respective friends.

I was the high school principal for many years in a community that had a large Catholic population. One year one of our popular seniors was killed in an auto accident in which the young driver of his car was driving drunk. I went to the funeral in a church where the parents practiced “Joyous Catholicism” (much singing, guitars and celebrating Jesus). It was a eulogy type of service and, because I’d been close to the boy and his family, they asked me to say a few words.

In the course of my comments, I said, “I don’t really know if there is a Heaven or an afterlife. But I guarantee you that Brian, here with us for seventeen years, left his lasting legacy upon and in each of us. He will have a very

special afterlife in each of our hearts and memories. He now lies within you and within me. We each can be comforted by this knowledge because we each can keep his memory and his legacy alive and well. So continue to think of Brian, the best of Brian, so that you create his most meaningful memorial, one that lives within you and within me."

My comments were well received and I think the reason for that is that they were spiritual, intimate and affectionate, but did not bring religion into play. I conveyed to the mourners that we *all* suffered and were aggrieved by Brian's untimely death, and I showed them an avenue for keeping his presence alive within each of us.

This theme is one I've taken with virtually all of the perhaps 10-12 talks I've made at different funerals. This approach is intentionally non-religious, even though it implies, but does not specifically state, that there is no hereafter. There is no need to do that either. There is strong need to respect everyone's sensibilities and the way to do that is through our common denominator, an intimacy with the deceased and the desire to keep his memory alive within each of us. It's a theme of love, caring and universal commonality without falling into the no-win trap of religious branding.

After all, that's what humanism is all about, isn't it?

HELPING ARISTOTLE OUT ON ETHICS

Joel Galker

Re the ethical question asked in February PIQUE ("An Ethical Question Aristotle Never Had to Consider") - whether a sperm donor is financially (or in any way) responsible for the support of the child his sperm has produced, even if he forswore all parental rights at the time of the (paid) donation - it was his and the women's ethical responsibility to use good judgment. That entails considering the potential risks and obtaining legal advice, which they did not. The unforeseen outcome, which would likely have been avoided by good judgment, does not relieve the principals of any ethical responsibility, but stupidity counts a little in their favor.

I would think that in many states there is a legal process that would bear on the ins and outs of paternity, and which would relieve the sperm donor of financial responsibility, laying out at least a minimally ethical course that reflects the ethical beliefs of the lawmakers. The principals did not follow this legal route and there is nothing that suggests that theirs was an act of civil disobedience against an unjust law. The mutual agreement of the principals about the sperm donor's non-responsibility to the potential child is in some sense similar to people who do not want to produce a child but who have intercourse without birth control. The "but I meant well" defense is pretty lame when the likely outcome is obvious. As a moral heuristic, agreeing with your collaborators that you have no intention of accepting responsibility for your behavior is enough of a red flag that the plan may be hinky.

A child? A humanist wouldn't even toss out a kitten to fend for itself.

MORALITY CLASH: WHOSE "RIGHTEOUS MIND"?

Giddian Beer

In PIQUE last year there was a three part review (July, Sept, Oct) of *The Righteous Mind*, a book by Jonathan Haidt about the origin and value of morality and related characteristics such as religion, law, etc. The review, by Walter Balcerak, does a good job analyzing the flaws as well as the strengths of the book; I think Mr Haidt would have benefited from a conversation with Mr Balcerak. Still, I am troubled by two assumptions: A) that morality is "in the genes", and B) that it is *ipso facto* good.

A: We don't really know where or how instincts and other behaviors are transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus far, no gene or set of genes has been identified and there may not be any. It may happen a different way. In the 200,000 years since its emergence homo sapiens has physically evolved very little if at all; this includes the brain. There have been regional adaptations: tall and skinny, short and husky, skin, hair and eye color, lactose tolerance, etc. But these differences are trivial and *none affect the entire species*.

Social animals form cohesive "societies" or groups that compete, very aggressively, with other groups of the same or similar species. Their behavior exhibits cohesiveness, cooperation, even altruism. For some, like bees and ants, this is 100 percent instinctive, but for mammals like wolves, lions, meerkats, elephants, and primates, these behaviors are partly instinctive but mostly learned from adults of the group. Any behavior that must be learned is not instinctive, not inherent, certainly not in the genes.

The only evidence in the review (there may be others in the book) is the finding by psychologists that infants watch how people behave towards other people and prefer those who are nice rather than those who are mean. This is more reasonably attributed to mirror neurons, which are very basic and probably genetic, rather than to morality, which requires some decision making.

B: Let's start with a standard definition of morality, from the *New Oxford American Dictionary, 3rd Ed.*: "*Principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior . . . a particular system of values and principles of conduct, esp. one held by a specified person or society . . . behavior or qualities judged to be good.*"

Certainly much of what is accepted or "judged by a specified person or society" as moral behavior is very good. Much is not, such as taking aboriginal children from their parents to be raised in orphanages or as foster children in order to "civilize" (usually including Christianizing) them, as has been done in Australia, the U.S., Canada and probably some other places. Female genital mutilation is a custom in much of Africa. Women considered "fallen" or even just rebellious by society or their families were sent to virtual slavery for life in Magdalene Asylums in Ireland, without trials or even crimes. Torture and the immolation of "witches" and heretics were once considered "moral" in Medieval Europe. And much of Islamic sharia-based "morality" is considered barbaric in the West.

But all of the above are or once were thought to be “behavior or qualities judged to be good” according to the definition, and a complete listing of such, if possible, would require a book, maybe an encyclopedia.

So, what do you think?

ALL ABOUT EVE

Charlotte Marzani

Jews and Christians refute her.
Islamists worldwide dispute her.
Only a secular humanist
Knows Eve bit an Apple computer.

WHAT A TRIP

Charlotte Marzani

They say our life on earth
Is a blip of a blip of a blip.
And though, from our birth,
There’s more heartache than mirth,
It’s a helluva one-way trip.

MISSISSIPPI ENTERS THE 19TH CENTURY

On February 7, 2013, the lawmakers of the sovereign state of Mississippi completed the paperwork (the vote was held in 1995, but what’s the rush?) to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

You know, the one abolishing slavery.

RELIGION AND HUMAN PROGRESS

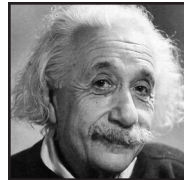
Bertrand Russell

You find as you look around the world that every single bit of human progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step toward the diminution of war, every step toward better treatment of the colored races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized churches of the world. I say deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is, the principal enemy of moral progress in the world.

PI DAY

From modest beginnings at the San Francisco Exploratorium in 1989, Pi Day celebrations have spread to college campuses all across the country. Pi Day is March 14 (3/14 in month/day format), and it’s the only holiday we have that celebrates math and science, so why not celebrate it with a (triangular) piece of pie?

In fact, why not have that pie (blueberry, please) at the end of a late lunch, say at almost two p.m.?
(3.14159) – JR



And one more reason to celebrate: March 14 is also the birthday of Albert Einstein. Happy 134th, Albie!

*Have a piece of pie
on March 14
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*The Real History of the
Second Amendment
Page 8*

*Our Darwin Day-
Anniversary Celebration
Page 7*

*We settle the
Papal Succession
Page 1*

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