

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

July, 2018

Happy Birthday, America! We lead with the best-known 58 words in American history, and later ask you to put words in the mouth of the worst president in American history (page 7). Along the way we celebrate an excellent ex-president, the joys of atheism, the wishy-washiness of agnosticism, and a royal-wedding bride. We “respect” stupid beliefs, celebrate reasonable people, introduce a meet-an-atheist feature, promote pot, and consider the most dramatic resignation from SHSNY ever. — JR

**AN ENDURING INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE:
THE BEST-KNOWN 58 WORDS
IN AMERICAN HISTORY**
Joseph J. Ellis

(From *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*)

The most famous section of the Declaration of Independence, which has become the most quoted statement of human rights in recorded history as well as the most eloquent justification of revolution on behalf of them, went through the Continental Congress without comment and with only one very minor change. These are, in all probability, the best-known fifty-eight words in American history:

We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain [inherent and] inalienable Rights; that among these are life, liberty & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

This is the seminal statement of the American Creed, the closest approximation to political poetry every produced in American culture. ... The entire history of liberal reform in America can be written as a process of discovery, within Jefferson's words, of a spiritually sanctioned mandate for ending slavery, providing the rights of citizenship to blacks and women, justifying welfare programs for the poor and expanding individual freedoms.

Comment: Can somebody explain to the cretin in the Oval Office that: 1) “all men” literally means *all*, even women, even Mexicans, asylum-seekers and people from “shithole countries” who want to come here; and 2) that our government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning *us*, we the people — *not*, as his new religious-right BFFs say, from some guy in the sky. — JR

“SECULAR HUMANIST” JIMMY CARTER
Gary Wills

(Reprinted from “The Pious Presidency of Jimmy Carter”, a review of “Faith, A Journey for All” by Jimmy Carter, in The New York Times, 4/26/18)

When Billy Graham died recently, we were treated to a roll call of presidents whom Graham had visited in the White House to impart the kind of cheap-grace blessing only he could dispense. One name was missing from this list: Jimmy Carter. How could that be? Here was our putatively most religious president and the nation's premier relayer of endorsements from God. But Graham was not invited precisely because Carter was our most religious president — a proud Baptist who followed in the tradition of Roger Williams, the man who created the first Baptist church in America and believed in the strict separation of church and state.



Many have expressed surprise that evangelicals voted last year in overwhelming numbers for our arguably least religious president. There is no reason for surprise. The religious right has long been not a religion but an ideology. This was proved during Carter's presidency. Some think Carter brought religion into politics. That was so only in the sense that Obama brought racism into the White House — that is, he did it only by way of a backlash from racists so stunned by the presence of a black man there that they loved and still love Trump for saying Obama's presidency was illegitimate. The backlash under Carter was similar, orchestrated by Jerry Falwell, who founded the Moral Majority in 1979 to get Carter out of the White House — two-thirds of Falwell's supporters voted for Reagan in 1980.

When Carter was visited by a high official of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: John Rafferty, *Pres./Editor*; Claire Miller, *V.P.*; Brian Lemaire, *Secty.*; Donna Marxer, *Treas.*;

Kiwi Callahan, Matt Callahan, Jonathan Engel, Maria Graber, Dorothy Kahn, Carl Marxer, Carlos Mora. Bob Murtha, Sharif Rahman, John Wagner
SHSNY, P.O. Box 7661, F.D.R. Station, New York, NY 10150-7661 / www.shsny.org / 646-922-7389

Individual membership \$40 per year; Family membership \$65; Subscription only: \$30.

Articles published in PIQUE are archived at www.shsny.org. Original-to-PIQUE articles may be reprinted, in full or in part.

SHSNY is a Charter Chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA), an Affiliate Member of Atheist Alliance International (AAI), an Affiliated Local Group of the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) program of the Center for Inquiry (CFI), and an Endorsing Group in the Secular Coalition for New York (SCNY).

Southern Baptist Convention, the man told him, “We are praying, Mr. President, that you will abandon secular humanism as your religion.” Two errors lurked in that sentence and its presumption — that secular humanism is a religion, and that the Southern Baptists’ religion is a religion. Carter had shocked them by upholding the cancellation of Bob Jones University’s tax exemption (more influence of Roger Williams), supporting the Equal Rights Amendment, calling for a Palestinian homeland and holding a White House Conference on the Families where abortion, contraception, gay rights, divorce and other important social issues were openly discussed.

In the ideology that the right thinks is a religion, the sin of sins is abortion, though that is not a subject mentioned in the Torah, or the Gospel, or the early church creeds and councils. Even the Catholic Church sees this not as a theological issue but as a matter of natural law, more a subject for philosophers, psychiatrists and scientists than for preachers as such. But science is evil in the rightists’ ideology: Scientists invent nonexistent things like evolution and global warming. The ideology also holds that guns are the very essence of government. Regulate guns in any way and we lose justice, liberty and comity, crushed by an instant tyranny. The ideology also insists that women should be subordinate to men, blacks to whites, and experts to “the common man”.

Carter was too religious to accept such pseudo-religion. He taught Bible classes all his adult life, with an emphasis on what is in Scripture rather than what is not — mainly, a regard for the poor, the rejected, the victims of prejudice and injustice. Unlike Barack Obama, who continued and expanded our war in Afghanistan, Carter was a president who earned his Nobel Peace Prize, and keeps on earning it with worldwide efforts against war, poverty and disease.

Though Carter has only one life to live, he has umpteen memoirs to write. This new one, *Faith*, like the many former ones, is full of fond regurgitations of deeds accomplished, speeches given, poems written and op-eds published.

One op-ed reprinted in full is worth recalling. While President George W. Bush was busily talking us into a war in Iraq, Carter wrote a piece published in *The New York Times* on March 9, 2003, 11 days before we invaded, listing 10 reasons this could not be a just war (again, reliance on natural law). He even engaged in some modest prophesying, all of which came true: “Although there are visions of peace and democracy in Iraq, it is quite possible that the aftermath of a military invasion will destabilize the region and prompt terrorists to further jeopardize our security at home.”

Carter has continued to monitor closely our militarism, reminding us that in 2017 “there were 240,000 American troops openly stationed in at least 172 foreign countries, plus more than 37,000 others in places militarily classified as secret”. Meanwhile, as we spend millions on these outposts, our own “infrastructure investment gap” is the largest of the 50 richest nations. The United States has the highest level of incarceration, to feed a booming prison-building and maintenance industry, and “our nation is the only

one that has refused to ratify the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, primarily because it prohibits execution for crimes committed by children”.

These incontrovertible but little-discussed facts will strike some as more of Carter’s prissy nagging. He rightly sees it, rather, as preaching — not mixing church and state but conscience and state.

He takes the same message everywhere in the world, talking to every kind of government and every kind of religion. Conscience has no nationality. He continued to give his Bible classes as president, but they were nonpartisan and just gave grounds for informing conscience. That is evident from a strange aspect of those classes. Though he likes to refer to sophisticated theologians like Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr and Rudolph Bultmann, he works from a fundamentalist canon of the Scripture. He would make his task easier, when it comes to showing that St. Paul was not a misogynist, if he recognized that scholars have long rejected the authenticity of the Epistle to Timothy. But he gets around his problem by taking the humane Jesus as his own touchstone of what matters. (That is what the religious right calls “secular humanism”.)

I am heartened that he keeps on teaching his Bible classes in his 93rd year. He is still looking in the Bible for the mercy and love of God, and he helps me find them there.

WE KILLED AT LEAST 500 CIVILIANS LAST YEAR. AT LEAST!

(Excerpted from “U.S. Strikes Killed Nearly 500 Civilians in 2017, Pentagon Says”, by Helene Cooper in *The New York Times*, 6/1/2018)

United States military actions killed 499 civilians in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen last year, the Pentagon said on June 1 in a report that was a month overdue.

The report, which covers counterterrorism airstrikes and ground operations around the world, added that “more than 450 reports of civilian casualties from 2017 remained to be assessed”, which means that the number of acknowledged deaths could increase. It also said that 169 civilians were injured in American strikes. ...

Several Defense Department officials acknowledged privately that the Pentagon’s decision not to publicly release a breakdown of numbers by country gives more fuel to critics who say the department is trying to blur the civilian death numbers.

Asked why the Pentagon did not release such a breakdown, Maj. Audricia Harris, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said that “the discrete numbers of casualties for each engagement that may have resulted in civilian casualties are in a classified annex to preserve operational security.”

The report asserted that “although civilian casualties are a tragic and unavoidable part of war, no force in history has been more committed to limiting harm to civilians than the U.S. military.” It was unclear what Defense Department officials based that assertion on.

PEOPLE OF REASON, UNITE!

Jonathan Engel

Atheist". "Secularist". "Free-Thinker". All of these describe me, and yet, as labels, none seem quite right in our current culture. "Atheist", however wrongheadedly, is a slur in the U.S. today. It is assumed, with no evidence whatsoever, that atheists are immoral people. Of course this is ridiculous, but from a modern marketing point of view, "atheist" just doesn't cut it. "Secularist" is an apt description of me too, but the term lacks a certain pizzazz. And "free-thinker" just sounds a bit too 19th century for someone living in the 21st. Don't get me wrong: all of these words are fine descriptions of me in substance. But in 2018 substance sure ain't what it used to be, so I'm looking for something a little more savvy, public relations-wise. A few years ago I read an op-ed in *The New York Times* that suggested the word "brights" for me and my kind, but it didn't catch on, which is probably just as well.

How then do we come up with a word or phrase to describe a free-thinking secular atheist that will "sell" in today's American marketplace? Maybe we should take a page from the religious person's handbook on this one. They seem to have done quite well with the phrase "Person of Faith". At its core, this phrase is, well, ridiculous. As Charles Pierce noted in his book, *Idiot America*,

"A politician discussing his religion now refers to himself as a 'person of faith', which tells you more about a politician's balls than it tells you about his soul. He doesn't have enough of the former to call himself 'religious' because that leads to the question of which religion and why he chooses to follow it and not one of the dozens of others, or none of them at all. ... In its essential cowardice, the phrase means nothing. It's a slogan. A sales pitch."

Exactly, but it's a good one, or at least effective. When someone refers to themselves as a "Person of Faith" you can almost see the heavens open and hear a choir singing. The phrase practically cries out "This is a good person", even when by all empirical measurements this is most certainly not the case. Is there an analogous way that someone like me can grab some of that good PR, whether I deserve it or not?

Yes. I have decided from now on that I will be known as a "Person of Reason". Sure, it's somewhat pretentious, maybe just a little bit this side of inane. But it doesn't carry the negative cultural baggage of "atheist". Besides, if religious people can repackage themselves as "People of Faith", then I can repackage myself as a "Person of Reason".

Sounds pretty good from where I'm sitting, and maybe it will help reduce the ridiculous stigma that attaches to people like me who don't believe in the supernatural. Now that's a reasonable idea! And really, who wants to argue with reason?

Comment: Nope. I still like "secular humanist". – JR

I find that life is rich, diverse, fabulous, and extraordinary, conceived without a god. – Ian McEwan, novelist

THOUGHTS ON THE "ROYAL WEDDING"

Steve Greene

Not really interested in the pomp and religiosity of the Meghan Markle/Prince Harry Royal Wedding May 19, I caught the highlights on the internet.

It was amusing to watch Reverend Michael Curry do his thing with great flair and intensity while the stodgy audience stirred awkwardly in their hats and suits. But something the good Reverend said resonated for me.

He spoke of the great prehistoric discovery of fire. Controlled fire. It gave us warmth to survive the winter. It gave us the ability to forge bronze and iron. It gave us the energy to drive our cars and fly our planes. One great discovery can alter history. He looked forward to the day we make a second great discovery: The Power of Love.

Very often, when I hear someone say, "God is Love", I turn it around: "Love is God". In a novel I just completed, the historic poet Sappho explores all the varieties of Love. Six hundred thirty years later, the historic Jesus was reportedly declaring the same message: Love can transform the world, love can create a heaven here on earth. It's not a "Liberal" or "religious" or "Socialist" concept. It's a rational realization of what we need to live in peace and harmony.

Of course, during the royal ceremony God was invoked, psalms were sung, prayers were recited. I thought back to the horrors of the Reformation in England. I thought of the violence of today in the name of religion. But what if we just took God out of the equation?

Before he was deified as the Great Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama meditated upon the existential facts of constant change, mortality, and contingency. He spoke of acceptance of reality with great compassion for everyone.

As secular humanists, we could strive to emphasize the power of love, and practice it in our relationships with others and our planet. Perhaps, at our meetings, we could be more patient with each other and show empathy toward our common human frailties.

Meghan Markle, 36, is the child of a mother whose ancestors were slaves in Georgia. Her father descended from Dutch, English, and Irish settlers. When she was 11 years old, she successfully campaigned against a commercial that denigrated the role of women. She has a double degree in acting and international studies. Most of her life, she participated in community service programs while taking on acting roles in television. In 2014, she was active in One Young World, an international charity. She traveled with the USO to Afghanistan and served in a Clean Water Campaign in Africa. She went to India to speak on behalf of women and was involved with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, making several international tours on behalf of women's rights. Meghan has always put her values into action.

Love, in action, without the religious requirement, what a revolutionary idea!



WHY WE LIVE IN NEW YORK #216

On May 18, Kansas Governor Jeff Colyer—a Republican, of course—signed a bill into law to allow adoption agencies to refuse same-sex couples.

The bill, known as the Adoption Protection Act, is designed to insulate religious organizations that discriminate against LGBTs. Approved by the Kansas Legislature, the bill permits agencies to refuse homes “for foster care or adoption when the proposed placement of such child would violate such agency’s sincerely held religious beliefs”.

Similar adoption bills are being considered in Oklahoma and Colorado, and at least seven other states have already passed such laws. Some of these laws only apply to organizations that do not receive government funding. The Kansas law extends to agencies operating under taxpayer-funded contracts.

Comment: So, better to warehouse kids than allow them to live with people who want to make a loving home for them. – JR

AGNOSTICISM: ON THE PLATFORM, WAITING FOR THE “A” TRAIN

John Rafferty

I have for years subscribed (it’s free) to A.Word.A.Day, by Anu Garg, at Wordsmith.org, which *The New York Times* has called, “the most welcomed, most enduring piece of daily mass e-mail in cyberspace” and which, in fact, introduces me to a (often) new word every day.

AWAD’s theme for the workweek June 18-22 was “coined words” and the Tuesday entry was “agnostic”, coined, as many readers of PIQUE already know, by the biologist Thomas Henry Huxley—so fierce a defender of the new science of evolution by natural selection that he was called “Darwin’s Bulldog”—in 1869.

Garg is, in his day-job life, a computer engineer from Northern India, and it is not hard to discern his humanist values in his Notes and his selection of Usage examples for his chosen words. But in his Notes on agnosticism on June 19 I was particularly taken by his commentary.

Once people realize there’s no evidence for a god or gods, they often take the position that since they do not know whether there is a god or not, calling oneself an agnostic is the best option. Some believe it’s arrogant to be an atheist and declare that there is no god.

The way I see it, it’s not arrogant to be an a-lochness-monster-ist, one who believes there’s no Loch Ness Monster. It’s not arrogant to be an a-bigfoot-ist because we haven’t found any evidence. No entity is more searched for than god and if there’s no evidence for she/he/it, it’s perfectly reasonable to say that you are an atheist.

That said, those of you who are at the agnostic station, don’t feel bad for stopping there. This train goes forward if you continue asking questions.

Those of you who haven’t boarded the train yet, well, ask your religion the same hard questions you ask other religions.

Go. Subscribe at <https://wordsmith.org/awad/>

9 WAYS ATHEISTS GET MORE JOY OUT OF LIFE

Courtney Heard (Godless Mom)

(Reprinted from Godless Mom on patheos.com, 6/4/2018)
(Editor: Ms. Heard references a Twitter post by one Mary Parkis that claims “Atheists are joyless”.)

Mary has offered up the same sentiment I hear from so many theists: atheists are joyless. This is something I’ve heard more than once, and I’ve never quite understood it. As someone who has had a life filled with joy but who has lacked religious belief since day one, it’s completely absurd to me. I think that for some religious people who say this, this is an attempt to make us feel small; that they don’t really believe that we can’t feel joy. For others, however, I get the sense that they truly believe we live without any joy at all.

Either way, *many* religious people I’ve had the opportunity to get to know, are miserable. Now, I realize that the small group of religious people I’ve gotten to know is hardly representative of an entire demographic ... I get this. Of course, not all of them are miserable. I’ve met some truly happy people who profess a belief in god. However, there are some things we don’t need stats to know when it comes to how atheists experience joy. We know that religion comes with dogma. We know that religion is prescriptive and requires certain behaviors. We know those behaviors are promoted with the use of threats, guilt and shame.

We also know that atheists are free from all of that. We don’t do dogma, we don’t take kindly to threats from the magical zombie in the sky. We don’t believe in eternal punishment or infinite reward. We are free to explore what it means to be us without the pressure to fall in line.

Here are nine ways atheists are free to feel joy, without the burden of dogmatic shame or guilt.

1. *Sex!* We are not afraid of going heels-to-Jesus! We celebrate the four-legged foxtrot like it’s an Olympic event. If an atheist feels shame for hiding the bishop, it’s only because he has residual BS carried over from when he was religious. It’s okay for women to ride the bologna pony as much as they like and it’s perfectly okay for men to nail men and women to bang women. So, you’re a back door bandit? That’s fine. More than one partner? It’s cool, as long as all your partners are. Whips and chains your thing? Have at it! Role-playing, toys, or just the good old missionary position with the love of your life? It’s all good! It’s good for the heart, it’s good for the mind and it even burns calories! As my motto goes, *a little less time at the gym, a little more time riding him.* There is absolute joy in mutual pleasure if you can strip away the shame, the guilt and the idea that you’re a dirty little sinner bound for hell.

2. *Celebrating the joy of others!* Instead of disowning people because they have fallen in love with someone of the same sex, we love them just the same. Even more, we are happy for them! We celebrate their milestones with them, and we dance with them at their weddings. We happily consume their wedding cakes baked by people who are *not* bigots and we joyfully march down to the county clerk’s office and look down on people like Kim Davis with the full

knowledge that we are, in fact, better than them. We find profound amounts of joy knowing we are on the right side of history, and even more joy can be derived from being able to separate ourselves from those who would judge another based solely on who they have fallen in love with. You see, trying to actively prevent certain people from loving certain people, is an act *against* love and *against* joy. It defies the very idea of joyful living.

3. Discovery! Nothing is quite as exhilarating as reading a headline that a global ocean was discovered on one of Saturn's moons or hearing that a new robotic prosthetic will give amputees all sort of new abilities and movement. I imagine one day we will find signs of life out there in that deep abyss ... my heart literally flutters at the thought. We'll discover cures for the ailments that most trouble us now, and we'll discover new tech that makes life easier, of a higher quality and more enjoyable. The absolute and utter joy in new discoveries is indescribable. An atheist would never dismiss these discoveries if they conflicted with previous explanations for our existence. We embrace them and allow them to lead us to new and exciting places. We will all die knowing more about our world and our existence than we do now.

4. Saying "I Don't Know"! I know what you're thinking ... *How can saying I don't know be joyful?* It's very simple. Saying I don't know means you have more to learn. Learning is fun. Learning expands our ability to be able to function in this world, treat others with respect and potentially one day live in peace. Those who insist they are certain of something, are closed to the joy of learning. Saying, "I know for certain that God created us" gives you no need to further investigate our origins and eliminates the possibility of you learning something new about it. Saying we don't know leaves us open to discovering something new about our existence ... and that would be a discovery that would bring a great amount of joy to those who were open to learning about it.

5. Sunday mornings! In the fall, watching your football team win with your little boy by your side... or hiking along a creek as dried up leaves crunch beneath your feet. In the summer, swimming with your kids out to the platform in the middle of the lake and diving off. Sleeping in and rising to your husband making you Nutella crepes or jumping all morning with your son on the trampoline. These are just a few of the things that bring more joy than a sore bum from being stuck in a cold, hard pew, surrounded by corpses on crosses, listening to a man warn you of the fires of hell.

6. The joy in knowing this life is all we have! Understanding that there are no second chances and that once we're gone, we're never coming back makes a person really want to live life to its fullest. We really *live* because we know life is fleeting. We cherish this life whereas many religious individuals appear to be living for the next life.

7. Masturbation! Yes, self-pleasure brings a great deal of joy to someone who understands that there is nothing wrong with it and that it is absolutely normal. We all know that even the most devout monks slap their happy sack from time to time but the difference between myself and a

monk is that I am not ashamed of it. I am a sexual creature with a libido and the sheer joy that comes from celebrating that over being ashamed of it is inexplicable.

8. No Hell to fear! An atheist is free to live their lives without the fear of hell. When we do good things, it's because we want to do good things, and never because we are afraid of eternal torture. There are no fiery images of the devil floating around in our minds, no act that we feel deserves suffering for eternity. We believe in compassion and empathy and love, not torture. It's not so hard to believe that choosing compassion over eternal torture is a far more joyful way to live, is it?

9. We are not being watched! Well, some of us may have stalkers but as far as being watched by a celestial Dad-dude in the sky who judges our tiniest actions goes ... well, we live joyfully without that. We know that consequences for our actions are detectable and real-world and we adjust our behaviour based on that rather than on a space-stalker.

Today's most populous religions come with deep shame. They make people feel guilty for who they are, and how their bodies function. Fear is driven into the devout and obedience is cultivated via threats of damnation. These things are directly incompatible with joy.

Facing facts is not cold or hard or joyless. Facing facts gives us freedom, the freedom to live with far more joy than your book would have you experience, the freedom to live life in reality and celebrate our own humanness.

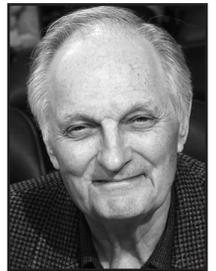
Are atheists more joyful than religious people? I doubt we can prove that ... but to assert that we are joyless is completely unfounded. We live with a great deal of joy ... joy that many of you will never know.

MEET AN ATHEIST YOU ALREADY KNOW:

ALAN ALDA

For a while in my teens, I was sure I had it. It was about getting to heaven. If heaven existed and lasted forever, then a mere lifetime spent scrupulously following orders was a small investment for an infinite payoff. One day, though, I realized I was no longer a believer, and realizing that, I couldn't go back."

— From *Things I Overheard While Talking to Myself*



PUT (YOUR) WORDS IN TRUMP'S MOUTH AND WIN SOME DAMN THING OR OTHER

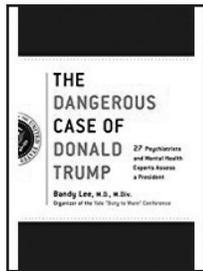
Turn to page 7 ... look at the infamous photo of the defiant six-year-old who is our president acting out toward world leaders at the G7 summit last month, and tell us what you think he (or Angela Merkle) is thinking or saying.

Send your caption to editor@shsny.org by July 18, and a couple or three of us on the Board will, over some wine, choose the best (funniest? politically savvy? most trenchant?) and award the creative-writing winner with some damn thing or other – trust us, it'll be fun.

SHSNY CALENDAR: JULY - SEPTEMBER 2018

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, JULY 12, 7-8:30 pm
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK
28 East 35 St. (front lounge)
 We'll discuss
THE DANGEROUS CASE OF
DONALD TRUMP:
27 Psychiatrists and
Mental Health Experts
Assess a President
Bandy X. Lee

Since the start of Donald Trump's presidential run, one question has quietly but urgently permeated the observations of concerned citizens: What is *wrong* with him?



In spite of the American Psychiatric Association's "Goldwater rule", 27 mental health professionals explore President Trump's symptoms and potentially relevant diagnoses to find a complex, if also dangerously mad, man.

"There will not be a book published this fall more urgent, important, or controversial than *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump* ... profound, illuminating and discomforting." – *Bill Moyers*

Elaine Heller will lead the discussion.

– *Paperback and Kindle available.*

Join us even if you haven't finished reading.

The SHSNY Book Club is open to all ... and free!

LIKE SHSNY ON FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/SHSofNY>

MEET US ON MEETUP

www.meetup.com/shsny-org/

TEXT US ON TWITTER

@SHS_NewYork

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, AUGUST 2, 7-8:30 pm
Community Church of New York
FASCISM: A WARNING
Madeleine Albright

A fascist, observes Madeleine Albright, "is someone who claims to speak for a whole nation or group, is utterly unconcerned with the rights of others, and is willing to use violence and whatever other means are necessary to achieve the goals he or she might have."

Fascism, she shows, not only endured through the twentieth century but now presents a more virulent threat to peace and justice than at any time since the end of World War II.

Charles Heller will lead the discussion.

– *Paperback and Kindle available.*

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, SEPT 6, 7-8:30 pm
Community Church of New York
WHAT IS POPULISM?
Jan-Werner Müller

Who are the people who claim to represent "the people"? And who are "the people" anyway, and who can speak in their name?

In this groundbreaking volume, Jan-Werner Müller argues that at populism's core is a rejection of pluralism. The book proposes a number of concrete strategies for how liberal democrats should best deal with populists and, in particular, how to counter their claims to speak exclusively for "the silent majority" or "the real people".

Tim Greene will lead.

– *Paperback and Kindle available.*

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAD A BOOK CLUB EVENING?

Let's talk, at editor@shsny.org.

BRUNCH & CONVERSATION
SUN, JULY 15, 11:30 am
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St. (Lex-3rd Aves)

We gather in the saloon's back room, where the pub-grub menu includes a \$15 breakfast special, the Bloody Marys are hot, the beer is cold, and conversation sparkles.



Come join 20 or more fellow freethinkers for food, fun and convivial conversation, including the Dorothy Kahn-led ...

After-Brunch Discussion: Can science and technology save us?

DRINKING REASONABLY
WED, JULY 18, 6-10:00 pm
Whispers Restaurant & Bar
210 West 94 Street
(Broadway - Amsterdam Ave)

The NYC Skeptics' Drinking Sceptically event has expanded to include all of the groups in the Reasonable New York Coalition.

Drinking Reasonably promotes fellowship and networking among skeptics, critical-thinkers, and like-minded individuals in a casual, relaxed atmosphere. We discuss the issues of the day and whatever else is on our minds. But most of all, we have fun!

Come at 6:00 and enjoy Happy Hour prices until 7:00.

Don't drink? Don't let that stop you from joining in the conversation and the fun.



SHSNY CALENDAR: JULY - SEPTEMBER 2018

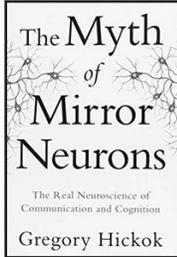
**GREAT LECTURES ON DVD
WED, JULY 25, 7 pm**

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

**THE MYTH OF
MIRROR NEURONS**

Dr. Gregory Hickok

In this myth-busting talk based on his new book, U.C. Irvine cognitive scientist Dr. Gregory Hickok calls for an essential reconsideration of one of the most far-reaching theories in modern neurosciences and psychology.



Ever since the discovery of mirror neurons in macaque monkeys in 1992 there has been a steam of scientific studies implicating mirror neurons in everything from schizophrenia and drug abuse to sexual orientation and contagious yawning.

Dr. Hickok provides deep insights into the organization and function of the human brain and the nature of communication and cognition.

PLANNING AHEAD

The usual SHSNY schedule is ...

Book Club: First Thursday
at the Community Church of NY
Fiction Book Club: 2nd Tuesday
at Nancy Adelman's apartment

Brunch: Third Sunday

at Stone Creek Lounge

Drinking Reasonably

Third Wednesday

at Whispers Restaurant & Bar

Great Lectures on DVD:

4th Wednesday

at Stone Creek Lounge.

More info:

www.shsny.org

and/or 646-922-7389

**A new SHSNY Monthly Event!
SHSNY FICTION BOOK CLUB**

Premiere Meeting:

TUES, SEP 11, 7:00 - 8:30 pm

**Nancy Adelman's apartment
205 Third Ave (6H)**

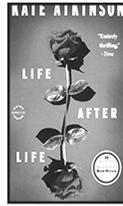
(Between 18-19 Streets)

**Come for Wine, Cheese, and
sparkling conversation about**

LIFE AFTER LIFE

Kate Atkinson

What if you could live again and again, until you got it right? This "audacious, ambitious book that challenges notions of time, fate and free will" (*NYTimes review*) asks and answers that question. Brilliantly.



"Kate Atkinson's new novel is a box of delights. Ingenious in construction, indefatigably entertaining, it grips the reader's imagination on the first page and never lets go. If you wish to be moved and astonished, read it." – Hilary Mantel, author of *Wolf Hall*.

– *Paperback and Kindle available.*

**To reserve your seat on the sofa,
contact: editor@shsny.org**

**NECSS 2018
THU-SUN, JULY 12-15**

**Fashion Inst. of Technology
227 West 27 Street**

The Northeast Conference on Science & Skepticism (NECSS, pronounced "nexus") is a science and critical thinking conference held annually in New York City (this is the tenth).



NECSS welcomes leading scientists, educators, activists, and artists (like James "The Amazing" Randi, above) who educate and engage conference attendees through individual presentations, panel discussions, and performance pieces.

NECSS is produced by New York City Skeptics, the New England Skeptical Society, The Skeptics' Guide to the Universe, and The Society for Science-Based Medicine.

Along with other Reasonable New York groups, SHSNY will be prominently represented at NECSS. Don't miss it!

Go to: <https://necss.org>



WHAT IS TRUMP (OR MERKEL) SAYING? TELL US, AND WIN.

Write a witty caption – put your words in Donald's or Angela's mouth, and send them to editor@shsny.org, and you could be the winner of something or other. Everyone who reads PIQUE is eligible to enter, but by July 18, please.

PROJECT BLITZ: THE LEGISLATIVE PLAN FOR A CHRISTIAN THEOCRACY

Michael Stone

(Excerpted – and selectively edited – from *Progressive Secular Humanist* on *patheos.com*, 5/24/2018 – JR)

A new multipronged legislative plan from Christian Nationalists seeks to use “religious freedom” as a Trojan horse for a Christian theocracy.

A recent report published by *Religion Dispatches* and written by Frederick Clarkson, a senior research analyst at Political Research Associates, details the secretive conservative Christian plan known as “Project Blitz”.

Designed to bring Christian theocracy to the U.S. via a series of disparate but internally coherent legislative measures, the legislative action plan is modeled after the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

Many of the bills on their agenda are making news; some have passed key legislative committees or whole state legislative chambers, and some have already been signed into law. But what reporters, activists, and most legislators don’t realize is that many of these bills draw from an unusual package of 20 model bills assembled by a “Project Blitz” coalition of Christian Right groups – including the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, Wallbuilders, the National Legal Foundation, and others.

The bills are seemingly unrelated and range widely in content—from requiring public schools to display the national motto, “In God We Trust”; to legalizing discrimination against LGBTQ people; to religious exemptions regarding women’s reproductive health. The model bills, the legislative strategy and the talking points reflect the theocratic vision that’s animated a meaningful portion of the Christian Right for some time.

The goal? To pass an outwardly diverse but internally cohesive package of Christian-right bills at the state level, whose cumulative impact would be immense.

The following is an excerpt of the legislative agenda for Project Blitz:

Category 1: Legislation Regarding Our Country’s Religious Heritage

- National Motto Display Act: “An act providing for display of the National Motto, ‘In God We Trust’, in public buildings and on license plates.”
- Civic Literacy Act: “An act providing for instruction in the content and meaning of the documents that form the foundation of our country’s Constitutional Republic.” Requires school boards to teach selected founding documents and to allow the posting of others in secondary schools.
- Religion in Legal History Act: “Endorses a uniform, sound, distinct, and appropriate presentation of the story of the role of religion in the constitutional history of the United States and this State, which may be publicly displayed in court houses and other state and local buildings throughout this State.”
- Bible Literacy Act: Allows for the teaching of the Bible as an elective course in public schools.

Category 2: Resolutions and Proclamations Recognizing the Importance of Religious History and Freedom

- Proclamation Recognizing Religious Freedom Day: Not a full model proclamation. Suggests elements that might be included in an RFD proclamation. Most of which are taken from the 2017 Congressional Proclamation for Religious Freedom Day.
- Proclamation Recognizing Christian Heritage Week: Lists items for inclusion in such a proclamation, based on proclamations in various states.
- Proclamation Recognizing the Importance of the Bible in History: Lists items for possible inclusion.
- Proclamation Recognizing the Year of the Bible: Lists items for possible inclusion.
- Proclamation Recognizing Christmas Day: Lists items for possible inclusion.

Category 3: Religious Liberty Protection Legislation Public Policy Resolutions

- Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Intimate Sexual Relations Only Between Married, Heterosexual Couples: Resolves “that the public policy of this State supports and encourages marriage between one man and one woman and the desirability that intimate sexual relations only take place between such couples”.
- Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Reliance on and Maintenance of Birth Gender: Resolves “that the public policy of this State supports and encourages maintenance of the birth gender of its citizens”. This a bill aimed at discouraging or limiting recognition of transgender people.
- Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Adoption by Intact Heterosexual, Marriage-based Families: Aimed at discouraging adoption by same sex couples.

Protection for Professionals and Individuals

- Protection for Professionals and Individuals Marriage Tolerance Act (a/k/a/ First Amendment Defense Act): “An act to prohibit discriminatory action against a person who believes, speaks, or acts in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such marriage.”
- Preserving Religious Freedom Act (a/k/a/ Religious Freedom Restoration Act or “State RFRA”): “This act is intended to ensure that this State applies at least the same level of religious liberty protections applied at the federal level in order to ensure that State and local governmental entities will not restrict a person’s free exercise rights more than the federal government.” The model bill is similar to bill already on the books in several states.
- Child Protection Act: Seeks to allow religious exemptions for adoption and foster care agencies in serving same sex couples.
- Clergy Protection Act: Allows clergy and religious organizations not to participate in marriage of which they disapprove.
- Licensed Professional Civil Rights Act: “An act prohibiting discrimination by any individual or organization against an applicant for, or a holder of, an occupational license, due to

the professional's or potential professional's sincerely held religious beliefs." Would provide religious exemptions for such professionals as pharmacists, medical personnel and mental health practitioners from providing care to LGBTQ people, and such matters as abortion and contraception.

Protection for Teachers and Students

- Student Prayer Certification Act: "An act providing for certain reporting and certifications by the State Board of Education and local school districts to comply with federal law." States are required to certify that they are not preventing students from engaging in constitutionally protected prayer. This bill sets up a mechanism for how to implement.
- Teacher Protection Act: Provides for state legal assistance if teachers or schools are sued over official religious practices.
- Preserving Religious Freedom in School Act: Provides for legal protection for a variety of religious expressions and activities.

Clarkson, the author of the *Religion Dispatches* report on Project Blitz, told Salon:

"The authors of the Project Blitz playbook are savvy purveyors of dominionism. They are in it for the long haul and try not to say things that sound too alarming. But they live an immanent theocratic vision, and they sometimes cannot help themselves, such as when they describe the resolutions as seeking to 'define public policies of the state in favor of biblical values concerning marriage and sexuality.'

"Among the ways they are seeking to implement biblical values,' is by seeking religious exemptions from civil rights laws and professional licensing standards.

Bottom line: There is a detailed and sophisticated strategy in place that is being deployed by conservative Christian lawmakers across the country to remake the U.S.A. into a Christian theocracy.

"PUMPED-UP, UNDEREDUCATED YOUNG MEN READY TO RID THE WORLD OF SIN" BECOME RELIGIOUS TERRORISTS WHOSE AIM IS TO DESTROY CIVILIZATION

Michael Stone

(Excerpted from "Anti-Intellectual Christian Terrorists Destroyed Classical World" on Progressive Secular Humanist at patheos.com, 6/12/2018)

New research reveals that early Christians were anti-intellectual terrorists that destroyed the classical world, sometimes even using acid attacks on critics.

A new book, *The Christian Destruction of the Classical World*, by Catherine Nixey, offers a fresh look at the early Christian church that paints an unflattering and disturbing picture. Indeed, Nixey shows that early Christians resemble the notorious Islamic State in their destruction of important cultural artifacts and libraries in the classical world, and their violent opposition to church critics. A *New York Times* review of Nixey's book notes:

Nixey makes the fundamental point that while we lionize Christian culture for preserving works of learning,

sponsoring exquisite art and adhering to an ethos of "love thy neighbor", the early church was in fact a master of anti-intellectualism, iconoclasm and mortal prejudice. ...

Christians became known as those "who move that which should not be moved". Their laudable appeal to have-nots at the bottom of the pile, both free and unfree, meant that bishops had a citizen-army of pumped-up, undereducated young men ready to rid the world of sin. Enter the parabalini, sometime stretcher-bearers, sometime assassins, who viciously flayed alive the brilliant Alexandrian mathematician and pagan philosopher Hypatia. Or the circumcellions (feared even by other Christians), who invented a kind of chemical weapon using caustic lime soda and vinegar so they could carry out acid attacks on priests who didn't share their beliefs.

Today, we refer to Christianity's conquest of the West as a "triumph". But this victory entailed an orgy of destruction in which Jesus's followers attacked and suppressed classical culture, helping to pitch Western civilization into a thousand-year-long decline. Just one percent of Latin literature would survive the purge; countless antiquities, artworks, and ancient traditions were lost forever. ...

In short, Nixey argues Christianity caused the "Dark Ages" by systematically destroying the classical world. Driven by a hatred of science, Christians burned down the Great Library of Alexandria, brutally murdered the revered philosopher-scientist Hypatia of Alexandria, and plunged Western civilization into a thousand-year-long decline.

JESUS AND MO DEBATE FREE SPEECH

(Transcribed from www.jesusandmo.net/comic/speech/)

(The boys are at the bar in their favorite pub.)

Jesus: A Scottish hospital has been forced to remove all Bibles from patients' rooms.

Mohammed: So much for free speech. We should be allowed to put Korans in rooms, too.

Jesus: Actually, no. No Korans.

Mo: What? Why should the Bible be allowed in their rooms but not the Koran?

Jesus: This is a *Christian* country.

Mo: The Koran is the *truth*.

Barmaid: Boys, boys - why not just have a policy of no holy books in rooms unless a patient requests one?

Jesus (on their way out): Bloody secularists.

Mo: Why are they always trying to impose their beliefs on everyone else?

The doctrine which, from the very first origin of religious dissensions, has been held by bigots of all sects, when condensed into a few words and stripped of rhetorical disguise, is simply this: I am in the right, and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger, you ought to tolerate me, for it is your duty to tolerate truth; but when I am the stronger, I shall persecute you, for it is my duty to persecute error. — *Thomas Babington Macaulay*

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A BAD-TEMPERED, DISTRACTIBLE DOOFUS RUNS AN EMPIRE?

Miranda Carter

(Excerpted from *thenewyorker.com*, 6/6/2018)

One of the few things that Kaiser Wilhelm II, who ruled Germany from 1888 to 1918, had a talent for was causing outrage. A particular specialty was insulting other monarchs. He called the diminutive King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy “the dwarf” in front of the king’s own entourage. He called Prince (later Tsar) Ferdinand, of Bulgaria, “Fernando naso,” on account of his beaky nose, and spread rumors that he was a hermaphrodite.

One of the many things that Wilhelm was convinced he was brilliant at, despite all evidence to the contrary, was personal diplomacy, fixing foreign policy through one-on-one meetings with other European monarchs and statesmen. In fact, Wilhelm could do neither the personal nor the diplomacy, and these meetings rarely went well. The Kaiser viewed other people in instrumental terms, was a compulsive liar, and seemed to have a limited understanding of cause and effect. In 1890, he let lapse a long-standing defensive agreement with Russia—the German Empire’s vast and sometimes threatening eastern neighbor. He judged that Russia was so desperate for German good will that he could keep it dangling. Instead, Russia immediately made an alliance with Germany’s western neighbor/enemy, France.

Trump’s tweets were what first reminded me of the Kaiser. Wilhelm was a compulsive speechmaker who constantly strayed off script. Unfortunately, the Austrian press printed the speeches as they were delivered, and the gaffes and insults soon circulated around Europe. “There is only one person who is master in this empire and I am not going to tolerate any other,” Wilhelm liked to say, even though Germany had a democratic assembly and political parties. (“I’m the only one that matters,” Trump has said.) ...

In fact, Wilhelm didn’t accomplish very much. The general staff of the German Army agreed that the Kaiser couldn’t “lead three soldiers over a gutter”. He had neither the attention span nor the ability. “Distractions, whether they are little games with his army or navy, travelling or hunting—are everything to him,” a disillusioned former mentor wrote. “He reads very little apart from newspaper cuttings, hardly writes anything himself apart from marginalia on reports and considers those talks best which are quickly over and done with.” The Kaiser’s entourage compiled press cuttings for him, mostly about himself, which he read as obsessively as Trump watches television. A critical story would send him into paroxysms of fury.

Wilhelm was deeply suggestible and would defer to the last person he’d spoken to or cutting he’d read—at least until he’d spoken to the next person. “It is unendurable,” a foreign minister wrote, in 1894. “Today one thing and tomorrow the next and after a few days something completely different.” Wilhelm’s staff and ministers resorted to manipulation, distraction, and flattery to manage him.

“In order to get him to accept an idea you must act as if the idea were his,” the Kaiser’s closest friend advised his colleagues. (In *Fire and Fury*, Michael Wolff writes that to get Trump to take an action his White House staff has to persuade him that “he had thought of it himself”.)

More sinisterly, Wilhelm’s patronage of the aggressive, nationalistic right left him surrounded by ministers who held a collective conviction that a European war was inevitable and even desirable. Alfred von Tirpitz, Germany’s Naval chief—who realized at his first meeting with the Kaiser that he did “not live in the real world” —consciously exploited Wilhelm’s envy and rage in order to extract the astronomical sums required to build a German Navy to rival Britain’s, a project that created an arms race and became an intractable block to peace negotiations. ...

The Kaiser wasn’t singly responsible for the First World War, but his actions and choices helped to bring it on. If international conflict is around the corner, it would seem that you really don’t want a narcissist in control of a global power. Wilhelm’s touchiness, his unpredictability, his need to be acknowledged: these things struck a chord with elements in Germany, which was in a kind of adolescent spasm—quick to perceive slights, excited by the idea of flexing its muscles, filled with a sense of entitlement. At the same time, Wilhelm’s posturing raised tensions in Europe. His clumsy personal diplomacy created suspicion. His alliance with the vitriolic right and his slavish admiration for the Army inched the country closer and closer to war. Once the war was actually upon him, the government and military effectively swept the Kaiser aside. And the gravest damage occurred only after Wilhelm abdicated, in November of 1918. The defeated Germany sank into years of depression, resentments sharpened, the toxic lie that Germany had been “robbed” of its rightful victory in the war took hold. The rest, as they say, is history.

I’m not suggesting that Trump is about to start the Third World War. But recent foreign developments—the wild swings with North Korea, the ditching of the Iran nuclear deal, the threat of a trade war with China—suggest upheavals that could quickly grow out of American control. Some of Trump’s critics suppose that these escalating crises might cause him to loosen, or even lose, his grip on the Presidency. The real lesson of Kaiser Wilhelm II, however, may be that Trump’s leaving office might not be the end of the problems he may bring on or exacerbate—it may be only the beginning.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY L. FRANK BAUM

Fictional Dorothy Gale, upon returning to Kansas from a fantasyland called Oz by clicking her heels and wishing it so: “*There’s no place like home.*”

All-too-real Donald Trump, departing Earth into a fantasy America in which he can create “The U.S. Space Force” simply by snapping his fingers and wishing it so: “*There’s no place like space.*”



**REMEMBER: WHEN DEBATING THESE PEOPLE,
YOU GODLESS ELITIST INTELLECTUALS,
TO RESPECT THEIR SINCERELY-HELD BELIEFS**

John Rafferty

Evangelical author and radio host Paul McGuire:

This administration are something that we've never seen before in all of human history. These unprecedented attacks on Donald Trump are part of the greatest spiritual battle in the history of mankind.

"There are people very high up in what is called the globalist occult or globalist Luciferian rulership system, and this rulership system consists of what used to be called the Pharaoh-God Kings. It's what Aldous Huxley called 'The Scientific Dictatorship', and these are advanced beings who know how to tap into supernatural multidimensional power and integrate it with science, technology, and economics."

Christian preacher Rodney Howard-Browne:

At the highest level, the people that rule the planet worship Lucifer. These people perform human sacrifices and drink blood. I don't care what you believe, we've got all the documentation on it.

"Bohemian Grove in the redwoods of northern California, it's a men's only club founded out of San Francisco. That's why homosexuality is at an all time high because half of them are all involved in it, including the Congress and the Senate and it goes all the way to pedophilia at the highest levels of government."

Christian preacher Matt Powell:

Ibelieve the Bible puts the death penalty on homosexuality. Obviously, not by me or anybody in a regular society, obviously. I believe it's the government's job to execute criminals. I believe that the Bible says clearly that homosexuality is a criminal crime. It's a crime. It's one of the worst crimes ever."

Christian broadcaster Rick Wiles:

Ipersonally believe the Antichrist will be a homosexual Jew."

Wait ... it's not Hilary?

**2300 DISPLACED, TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN?
NOT ON FOX NEWS**

Laura Ingraham, on her show "The Ingraham Angle":

Since more illegal immigrants are rushing the border, more kids are being separated from their parents and temporarily housed in what are essentially summer camps, or ... as looking like basically boarding schools."

Tucker Carlson on "Tucker Carlson Tonight":

This is one of those moments that tells you everything about our ruling class. They care far more about foreigners than about their own people."

Ann Coulter on "The Next Revolution with Steve Hilton":
These child actors weeping and crying on all the other networks 24/7 right now ... these kids are being coached, they're given scripts to read by liberals."

**NOW, BOYS AND GIRLS:
CAN YOU SAY "KLEPTOCRACY"?
THERE. I KNEW YOU COULD**

(Excerpted from "\$82 million in outside income" on FiveThirtyEight.com)

While serving in the White House last year, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump earned at least \$82 million in outside income. The money came from a stake in the Trump International Hotel in Washington, severance from the Trump Organization, an apartment complex in New Jersey, and elsewhere. [According to *The Washington Post*] it's "an extraordinary income flow that ethics experts have warned could create potential conflicts of interests".

Comment: Gee, you think? - JR

**WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR NEWS?
SERIOUSLY, DO YOU STILL THINK
YOU ACTUALLY GET NEWS?**

(Reprinted from FiveThirtyEight newsletter, 6/1/2018)

On May 29, two things happened: A *New England Journal of Medicine* article by Harvard researchers argued that the death toll from Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico was most likely thousands higher than the official number of 64; and Roseanne Barr, the sitcom star, was fired for a racist Twitter rant.

According to the watchdog group Media Matters, CNN devoted nearly five hours to discussing Roseanne, and just over 12 minutes to discussing Puerto Rico. The other cable news networks, Fox News and MSNBC, were similarly lopsided, with Fox spending just 48 seconds on the Puerto Rico study.

**BEFORE WE START CONGRATULATING DISNEY
FOR DUMPING RACIST ROSEANNE ...**

Bernie Sanders

(Excerpted from a Bernie Sanders email 5/31/2018)

The Walt Disney Company is an enormously profitable corporation worth somewhere in the neighborhood of \$150 billion. Last year, it made \$9 billion in profits and rewarded its CEO, Bob Iger, with a compensation package worth up to \$423 million over a four year period. And as a result of the Trump tax cuts, they were given an additional \$1.6 billion.

At the same time — and this is a national disgrace — employees at the company's theme park in Anaheim, California are paid so poorly that many of them are literally living in a tent city not far from the park.

According to one recent study, nearly 1 in 10 workers employed at the park reported being homeless in the past two years, more than 2 in 3 say they are food insecure, and 3 out of 4 employees say they do not make enough money for their basic needs.

This is not what Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck are supposed to be about. This does not sound like the "happiest place on Earth" to me.

THE PROS AND (for the sake of “balance”) CONS OF CANNABIS LEGALIZATION

John Rafferty

(Idea stolen from thedailytrash.co.uk, revised 6/12/2018)

Our neighbor Canada has legalized cannabis, and New York State is taking the first steps towards doing the same. Here’s a look at the pros and, supposedly, cons:

PRO: Cannabis is already used by millions of law-abiding New Yorkers without major negative effects on society.

CON: Cannabis is a “gateway” drug, although so is Ibuprofen if you’re that way inclined.

PRO: Legalizing and taxing cannabis would provide a major new source of income for ailing public services.

CON: A few airlines would lose money after cancelling same-day round-trip packages NYC-Denver.

PRO: Cannabis is a naturally-produced substance which can have significant medical benefits, and which users can grow, like geraniums, in window boxes.

CON: Home-grown cannabis would deny the alcohol and pharmaceutical industries desperately-needed income.

PRO: Cannabis is notably less physically harmful than alcohol and causes almost no fights outside sports bars.

CON: Jamaican dub music is very bass-heavy and could disturb the neighbors.

PRO: Being stoned is fun.

CON: Giddy, stupid fun subverts the moral order.

A FIRST John Rafferty

In my fourteen (I think) years running the SHSNY Membership lists, I had never received a resignation/ unsubscribe like this ... until June 14:

John: Could you please cancel my membership? After 40 years I have reconnected with God. I realized my arguments against were weak. Best, Chuck

Wow. What does one say? “Chuck” (that’s not his name) was not a long-time member, in fact was a dues-payer less than two years, and I don’t think I ever met him in person. Still, what does one say? This is what I settled on:

Chuck: Best back to you. Vaya con dios. John

Why? Because we try to be more tolerant, more humane, more understanding – in a word, better – than the religious. If someone is not committed to a secular life and a humanist philosophy, we’re not going to knock on his/her door of a Saturday morning to bring him/her the good news that there is no news. If he/she isn’t sure about a lifestance, we’re available to discuss, explain, even argue, but *not* to insist, preach, proselytize, or condemn.

We try to *not* respond, as I think whatever religion Chuck now hooks up with *would* respond if he ever changes his mind back again to humanism, i.e.:

Chuck:

You’re damned forever. Vete al diablo.

Win Something: The Trump
Picture/Caption Contest - Pg 7

“Project Blitz”: the
American Theocracy agenda
Page 8

The Nine Joys of Atheism
Page 4

Rethinking “Secular Humanist”
Jimmy Carter
Page 1

An Independence Day Message
for Donald Trump
Page 1

Secular Humanist
Society of New York
FDR Station
PO Box 7661
New York, NY
10150-7661

