

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

September, 2018

“Reality,” said Robin Williams years ago, “what a concept.” Today in America, and this month in these pages, we consider what Reality really is when Authority says facts can alter and truth isn’t truth. We start with two warnings: about bogus “religious liberty” and a fate worse than Trump. Also herein, E.O. Wilson celebrates ants and us, we wax poetic (twice), find that atheists may be moral and that Fox News is *not* news, brush off microaggressions, and cheer for Argentina. — JR

THE “TASK” OF THIS TASK FORCE WILL BE TO PUNISH US

Michael Stone

(Excerpted from “New ‘Religious Liberty Task Force’ Will Promote Christianity, Punish Non-Believers” on Progressive Secular Humanist at patheos.com, 7/30/2018)

On the road to Christian theocracy, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Department of Justice is creating a “Religious Liberty Task Force”.

The effect of the task force will be to promote conservative Christianity while punishing non-Christians. It is a deplorable and un-American attempt to circumvent the separation of church and state and the secular values upon which this nation was founded, and a significant step on the current path towards a Christian theocracy. Announcing the new task force Sessions declared: “Religious Americans are no longer an afterthought.”

In his prepared remarks Sessions said:

“Let’s be frank. A dangerous movement undetected by many is challenging and eroding our great tradition of religious freedom. There can be no doubt, it’s no little matter, it must be confronted intellectually and politically and be defeated. This past election gives us a rare opportunity to arrest these trends and to confront them. ...

“We’ve gotten to the point where courts have held that morality cannot be a basis for law, where ministers are fearful to affirm holy writ from the pulpit, and where one group can actively target religious groups by labelling them hate groups. This President and Department of Justice are determined to protect and advance our heritage of freedom of religion. ...

“In short, we have not only the freedom to worship — but the right to exercise our faith. The Constitution’s protections

don’t end at the parish parking lot nor can our freedoms be confined to our basements.”

To be clear, this new task force is not about religious freedom, it is about giving legal protection to conservative Christians who wish to punish, harass, and discriminate against members of the LGBT community, Muslims, atheists, agnostics, and anybody else who offends the backward and mean-spirited values of conservative Christians.

Writing at the Daily Beast, Tim Teeman noted:

“Sadly it is no exaggeration, no hyperbole, to say that Attorney General Jeff Sessions declared a holy war on LGBT people, LGBT equality, and LGBT rights on Monday. ... The Attorney General of the United States just celebrated discrimination. Not only that, he said he wants to use his office — an office which is allegedly about ensuring justice for all — as an official green light for this discrimination to happen more ...”

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) responded to the announcement on Twitter with a reminder for the Justice Department:

“Reminder: Religious freedom protects our right to our beliefs, not a right to harm others. The Department of Justice has no business licensing discrimination against LGBT people, women, and religious minorities.”

Americans United for Separation of Church and State blasted the new task force as “one-sided and inaccurate”.

In a statement Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United, said:

“Today’s event by the Justice Department offends the true meaning of religious freedom. The event was clearly designed to advance the Trump administration’s twisted and dangerous view of religious freedom, one that uses religion to discriminate and harm others. This event exposed the administration’s real agenda: to preserve the power of

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).

Christian fundamentalists.”

Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director of the American Humanist Association, said:

“We are disturbed by the apparent effort of Jeff Sessions and his Department of Justice to create special rights for the Religious Right. This task force is ripe for abusing taxpayer money by using government resources to promote one brand of Christianity over minority faiths and philosophies.”

Bottom line: The new “Religious Liberty Task Force” will promote Christianity, and punish non-believers. It will protect conservative Christians who want to discriminate against women, members of the LGBT population, and others, all in the name of “religious freedom”.

In short, our long national nightmare continues, and the theocrats are winning.

**BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR
OR
HEAVEN HELP US
Frank Bruni**

(Excerpted from “Mike Pence, Holy Terror”, on The New York Times Op-Ed page, 7/28/2018)

There are problems with impeaching Donald Trump. A big one is the holy terror waiting in the wings. That would be Mike Pence, who mirrors the boss more than you realize. He’s also self-infatuated. Also a bigot. Also a liar. Also cruel.

To that brimming potpourri he adds two ingredients that Trump doesn’t genuinely possess: the conviction that he’s on a mission from God and a determination to mold the entire nation in the shape of his own faith, a regressive, repressive version of Christianity. Trade Trump for Pence and you go from kleptocracy to theocracy.

That’s the takeaway from a forthcoming book by the journalists Michael D’Antonio, who previously wrote *The Truth About Trump*, and Peter Eisner. It’s titled *The Shadow President: The Truth About Mike Pence* ... and it’s the most thorough examination of the V.P.’s background to date.

I got an advance look at it, along with a first interview about it with D’Antonio, and while it has a mostly measured tone, it presents a damning portrait of Pence. You’ve seen his colors before, but not so vividly and in this detail.

The book persuasively illustrates what an ineffectual congressman he was, apart from cozying up to the Koch brothers, Betsy DeVos and other rich Republican donors; the clumsiness and vanity of his one term as governor of Indiana, for which he did something that predecessors hadn’t and “ordered up a collection of custom-embroidered clothes — dress shirts, polo shirts, and vests and jackets — decorated with his name and the words Governor of Indiana”; the strong possibility that he wouldn’t have won re-election; his luck in being spared that humiliation by the summons from Trump, who needed an outwardly bland, intensely religious character witness to muffle his madness and launder his sins; and the alacrity with which he says whatever Trump

needs him to regardless of the truth.

In Pence’s view, any bite marks in his tongue are divinely ordained. Trump wouldn’t be president if God didn’t want that; Pence wouldn’t be vice president if he weren’t supposed to sanctify Trump. And his obsequiousness is his own best route to the Oval Office, which may very well be God’s grand plan.

“People don’t understand what Pence is,” D’Antonio told me. Which is? “A religious zealot.”

And D’Antonio said that Pence could end up in the White House sooner than you think. In addition to the prospect of Trump’s impeachment, there’s the chance that Trump just decides that he has had enough.

“I don’t think he’s as resilient, politically, as Bill Clinton was. He doesn’t relish a partisan fight in the same way. He loves to go to rallies where people adore him.”

There’s no deeply felt policy vision or sense of duty to sustain him through the investigations and accusations. “If the pain is great enough,” D’Antonio said, “I think he’d be disposed not to run again.”

So it’s time to look harder at Pence. *The Shadow President* does. It lays out his disregard for science, evident in his one-time insistence that smoking doesn’t cause cancer and a belief that alarms about climate change were “a secret effort to increase government control over people’s lives for some unstated diabolical purpose”, according to the book. ...

Fiercely opposed to abortion, Pence once spoke positively on the House floor about historical figures who “actually placed it beyond doubt that the offense of abortion was a capital offense, punishable even by death.” He seemed to back federal funds for anti-gay conversion therapy. He promoted a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage.

“He is absolutely certain that his moral view should govern public policy,” D’Antonio told me.

D’Antonio then recounted two stories that he heard from college classmates of Pence’s after the book had gone to bed, so they’re not in there. One involved a woman in Pence’s weekly college prayer group. When she couldn’t describe a discrete “born again” experience, “he lectured her on her deficiencies as a Christian and said that she really wasn’t the sort of Christian that needed to be in this group.”

Another involved a college friend of Pence’s who later sought his counsel about coming out as gay. D’Antonio said Pence told the friend: “You have to stay closeted, you have to get help, you’re sick and you’re not my friend anymore.”

According to D’Antonio’s book, Pence sees himself and fellow Christian warriors as a blessed but oppressed group, and his “hope for the future resided in his faith that, as chosen people, conservative evangelicals would eventually be served by a leader whom God would enable to defeat their enemies and create a Christian nation.”

I asked D’Antonio the nagging, obvious question: Is America worse off with Trump or Pence?

“I have to say that I prefer Donald Trump, because I think that Trump is more obvious in his intent,” he said, while Pence tends to “disguise his agenda”. D’Antonio then

pointed out that if Pence assumed the presidency in the second half of Trump's first term, he'd be eligible to run in 2020 and 2024 and potentially occupy the White House for up to 10 years.

Heaven help us.

THE DUMBEST, MOST HALF-ASSED, BACKWARD-THINKING IDEA OF THE 21ST CENTURY SO FAR

The time has come to write the next great chapter in our Armed Forces. ... It's time to establish the United States Space Force ... an elite group of warfighters specializing in space ... a warfighting domain already."

– Vice President Mike Pence, August 9, 2018

"THEN THEY CAME FOR THE JOURNALISTS ..."

Sam Stein

(Excerpted from *thedailybeast.com*, 8/8/2018)

The "enemy of the people" talk is working. A plurality of self-identified Republicans say they want Trump to have the power to take "bad" media outlets out.

Freedom of the press may be guaranteed in the Constitution. But a plurality of Republicans wants to give President Trump the authority to close down certain news outlets, according to a new Ipsos public opinion survey.

All told, 43 percent of self-identified Republicans said that they believed "the president should have the authority to close news outlets engaged in bad behavior". Only 36 percent disagreed with that statement. When asked if Trump should close down specific outlets, including CNN, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*, nearly a quarter of Republicans (23 percent) agreed and 49 percent disagreed.

Republicans were far more likely to take a negative view of the media. Forty-eight percent of them said they believed "the news media is the enemy of the American people" (just 28 percent disagreed) while nearly four out of every five (79 percent) said that they believed "the mainstream media treats President Trump unfairly".

IT'S CALLED "MOVING THE GOALPOSTS". OR "IT'S JUST A LOT OF LITTLE LIES."

Stephen Colbert

(Transcribed from *"The Late Show with Stephen Colbert"*, 7/30/2018)

First it was, "Russia didn't interfere in the election." Then it was, "Okay, they did, but nobody on the Trump team met with them."

Then it was, "Okay, they met, but it was just about adoptions."

Then it was, "Okay, they offered us dirt on Hilary, but there was no collusion."

And now we're at, "Collusion is not a crime."

What's next? "Okay, collusion is a crime, but it's just a little crime."

And then it will be, "Since when are crimes illegal?"

"TRUTH ISN'T TRUTH"

The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command."

– George Orwell, 1949, in 1984, his novel of future fascism

You're saying it's a falsehood. And they're giving – Sean Spicer, our press secretary – gave alternative facts."

– Kellyanne Conway, January, 2017

Just remember, what you're seeing and what you're reading is not what's happening."

– Donald Trump, to a campaign rally, August, 2018

When you tell me that, you know, [Trump] should testify because he is going to tell the truth and he shouldn't worry, that's silly because it's somebody's version of the truth. Not the truth."

"Truth is truth," Chuck Todd replied.

"No, it isn't truth. Truth isn't truth."

– Rudy Giuliani, on Meet The Press, August 20, 2018

YOUR VOCABULARY GUIDE – FROM ORWELL'S "1984" – FOR THE REST OF TRUMP'S TERM

John Rafferty

(An "enhancement" of *A Word A Day AWADmail Issue 842* "Words from '1984' that are now a part of the language.")

newspeak

noun: Deliberately ambiguous or euphemistic language used for propaganda.

Examples: "torture" is "enhanced interrogation", "lying" is "alternative facts" and "journalism" is "fake news".

doublethink

noun: An acceptance of two contradictory ideas at the same time.

Example: Donald Trump lies, on average, 7-1/2 times a day, and his base loves that he "tells it like it is".

Big Brother

noun: An authoritarian person, organization, government, etc., that monitors or controls people.

Examples: "I'm really smart." "I know more than the generals." "Only I can fix it." "I have the best words." "I'm the best there is."

unperson

noun: A person regarded as nonexistent.

Examples: "I don't take questions from [Jim Acosta of] CNN. CNN is fake news." "Wacky Omarosa ... never made it, never will."

oldspeak

noun: Normal English usage, as opposed to propagandist, euphemistic, or obfuscatory language.

Example: "The day we see the truth and cease to speak is the day we begin to die." – Martin Luther King, Jr.

The facts on which the true believer bases his conclusions must not be derived from his experience or observation but from holy writ . . . To rely on the evidence of the senses and of reason is heresy and treason.

– Eric Hofer, *The True Believer*, 1951

**FOX NEWS:
WE HIDE, YOU DECIDE**

John Rafferty

On August 8, Congressman Chris Collins, R-NY27, the first sitting congressman to endorse Donald Trump back in 2015, was indicted in federal court on charges of insider trading. The evidence looks pretty solid. And as CNN, MSNBC and *The New York Times* reported, the story could be even bigger, as at least five other Republican lawmakers were shareholders in the soon-to-fail company.

So, hours after the story broke, I went to the Fox website to see what Trump's "real news" source had to say. Nothing. Nada. *Thirty-two* separate stories, not one about Collins.

On August 21, the day the media went crazy ("This is so nuts," said Meghan Kelly from her new NBC perch) ... when Donald Trump's erstwhile campaign manager was found guilty of financial crimes eight times in federal court ... his former personal lawyer pleaded guilty to campaign finance violations (implicating Trump himself while he was at it) ... and the *second* sitting congressman to endorse Trump in 2015, Duncan Hunter, R-CA, was indicted on charges of "misusing" (i.e., "stealing") campaign funds ... when CNN and MSNBC suspended advertising to squeeze in all the news ... I channel-hopped to Fox.

Fox News's prime-time headline was that an undocumented immigrant had been arrested in the investigation of a missing (white, of course) woman.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Helen Bennett

Let's make friends of our enemies

And foes of our friends,

Let's ban all the scientists,

And let's make amends

With all the uneducated,

Destroy public schools,

And raise the incompetents

To break all the rules.

Let's get rid of breastfeeding,

Put babies in cages,

Shoot gorgeous animals,

And other outrages.

Let's drill for oil in National Parks,

Let's lower taxes and see if that sparks

A fervent agreement there is no confusion,

No need for a recount, there was NO COLLUSION!

What else can we do to create a great mess?

Get rid of entitlements and the Free Press;

The Amendment that's Second must rule every day,

We've got what we need in the NRA.

Let's insult our antagonists in the EU,

Our best friend is Putin, a man through and through!

And let us ban Spell Check, who needs to spell right

When we've got covfefe, and we tweet all night.

**THE TIMES PRINTS DENNIS MIDDLEBROOKS'
SPOT-ON ANALYSIS OF TRUMP, TURKEY AND
THE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS RIGHT**

August 20, 2018, TO THE EDITOR:

Let me get this straight. Last year President Recep Tayyip Erdogan looked on while his thuggish bodyguards assaulted American citizens peacefully protesting in Washington, and President Trump did nothing. This year, Mr. Erdogan ordered the Turkish military into northern Syria to attack and drive out the Kurds, our staunch allies in the struggle against ISIS, while warning that American troops stationed with the Kurds risk receiving an "Ottoman slap" if they interfered, and Mr. Trump did nothing.

However, now that a single American evangelical minister in Turkey is charged with espionage, Mr. Trump imposes strong sanctions and tweets, "Our relations with Turkey are not good at this time!" How could they have possibly been considered "good" previously? Once again the president blatantly panders to his fundamentalist base.

— Dennis Middlebrooks, Brooklyn

Note: Dennis, who is a past President of SHSNY, also has an excellent letter on the humanist movement and feminist and minority issues in the current (Sep/Oct) issue of *The Humanist* magazine. It's well worth a read. — JR

**LET'S DO MORE THAN JUST ENDING
THE FREE RIDE FOR ANTI-VAXXERS**

John Rafferty

(Based on "Vaccine-refusing community drove outbreak that cost \$395K, sickened babies", by Beth Mole on arstechnica.com, reprinted in The Morning Heresy, Center for Inquiry, 7/30/2018)

A 2013 measles outbreak rooted in a vaccine-refusing Orthodox Jewish community in Brooklyn cost the city's health department an estimated \$394,448, requiring 87 employees to collectively spend more than 10,000 hours on outbreak response and control.

Healthcare workers confirmed 58 cases of measles, begun when a teenager in the community brought back a case of measles after a visit to London. All of the cases were Orthodox Jewish persons in Williamsburg and Borough Park.

Jason Schwartz of Yale's department of health policy and management notes that such insular communities of vaccine refusers ... reap the benefits of "herd immunity".

"Those who voluntarily choose to forego vaccination are thus free-riders, benefiting from this public good without contributing to it," Schwartz says. One possible solution, vaccination refusal fees that would go to cover outbreak response costs, among other vaccination-related expenses.

So, should vaccine refusers help foot the bill, as Schwartz proposes? The answer to that question is simply ... duh.

But that's only a start. When an infant too young to be vaccinated is sickened by measles caught from an unvaccinated elder, why not indict the refuser (or if a child, the refuser's parents) for assault? Or depraved indifference?

And if a child dies the smug free riders should be indicted, convicted and imprisoned for manslaughter.

21ST CENTURY ACTIVISM IN AMERICA

John Rafferty

(Inspired by “Woman fighting poverty and injustice by clicking angry face emoji” at thedailymash.co.uk, 7/27/2018)

In 1517, Martin Luther changed Western Civilization when he challenged Rome by posting his “95 Theses” on the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg. In 1776, Thomas Paine roused the thirteen American colonies to revolution when he published *Common Sense*. In 1898, Emile Zola broke open “the Dreyfus Affair” with his open letter, “J’accuse”, and shook French society to its core.

In 2018, with previously undreamt-of communications tools connecting people all across the globe instantly, a new generation of activists is setting out to change the world.

Walter Schmidt is a 54-year-old insurance adjuster who advises his 43 followers on Twitter (#TruthByWalter) about politics, but has never in his life voted. “They’re all crooks anyway,” he says, “and me not voting is my way of monkey-wrenching the machine, my civic duty.”

Madge Evans takes direct action. Because a store in her neighborhood displayed campaign posters in its windows for a candidate she opposed, the manicurist has stopped patronizing it. “Except when they have sales.”

Frank Lucchesi is “doing something” to boost the TV ratings of his favored cable-news network. The free-lance marketing consultant (and part-time waiter) keeps his TV tuned to Fox News – eighteen hours a day. “When one of those polling companies calls, I can tell ‘em ‘Fox News, baby’,” he says. “All Fox, all the time!”

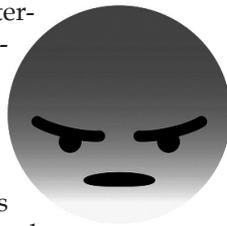
Genevieve Wallbanger, an unemployed Pilates instructor, votes for the most progressive candidate in Democratic party primaries – then maintains her political purity by refusing to support the winner if he/she is not her first choice. “The lesser of two evils is still evil,” she announced proudly on #BernieOrBust on November 9, 2016.

Ralph Jacoby “awakens consciences” by expounding his views about Israel and Palestine 24/7 on his own and other people’s “walls” on Facebook, on every Twitter feed from which he has not been barred, in a blog he emails to 30 people, at family holiday gatherings, Mystery-of-the-Month book clubs, PTA meetings at his Third-Grade daughter’s school, and in the middle of his Best Man toast at his brother’s wedding. “What I have to say is important,” he says.

Nikki Hollis, an advertising agency receptionist, is doing everything she can to help by clicking on the angry face emoji on Facebook after reading about terrible events, using the tiny cartoon picture to help solve problems like the refugee crisis, plastic pollution and child poverty.

“It’s important to make your voice heard,” she says, “so I read the headlines on Facebook, click on the angry face and then do something more fun like a quiz about which one of the Kardashians I’m most like.

“The situation in Yemen is really upsetting me at the moment. I’m most like Kim, by the way. Yay!”



21ST CENTURY HOMO SAPIENS

John Rafferty

“What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!” – *Hamlet, Act 2, Sc. 2*

You know that large, sealed sarcophagus that was discovered in Alexandria, Egypt, a couple of months ago? The 2300-year-old one that tens of thousands of people on social media around the world demanded be opened to reveal – they insisted with no evidence – astounding long-locked secrets of the past? And that other tens of thousands – also with no evidence – insisted be kept closed to keep world-destroying forces locked inside? That one?

Well, it was opened, and it contained nothing more than three undistinguished skeletons (probably a family) and some liquid sewage so rank it sent the inquisitive Egyptologists running from the room.

No mystery, no curse, no apocalypse, really bad smell, end of story.

Not quite.

An idiot or prankster (or idiot-prankster) who goes by the online tag innes mck has started a petition on change.org

**Let People Drink The Red Liquid
From The Dark Sarcophagus**

... and argues that:

“We need to drink the red liquid from the cursed dark sarcophagus in the form of some sort of carbonated energy drink so we can assume its powers and finally die” (sic – no punctuation).

As of this writing he has collected 31,193 signatures.

JESUS AND MO FIND THE FATAL FLAW IN APOPHATIC THEOLOGY

(Transcribed from jesusandmo.net/comic/tell2/)

Moses: You guys are doing your apologetics all wrong. You ought to try apophatic theology – it is unassailable.

Mohammed: What is it?

Moses: No positive claims can be made about the ineffable God, so the truest expression of faith is silence.

(silence, while the boys think)

(more silence)

Jesus: Wait – doesn’t that mean we can’t tell people how to behave?

Mo: Great. Got any other bright ideas, Moses?

READERS RESPOND

To the Editor: I just spoke to a friend, to whom I give a PIQUE subscription every year. She told me that she looks forward to PIQUE every month, loves it, and that it means more to her than any other publication. I told her I would tell you that. – *Chic Schissel*

To the Editor: Nice job John, you always give me so much to think about. Hope you are well. – *Eileen Regan*

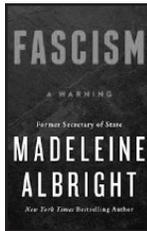
To the Editor: Greetings, John. I still read and enjoy every issue of PIQUE. It is so thought provoking! – *Giles Kelly*

SHSNY CALENDAR: SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2018

SHSNY BOOK CLUB THURS, SEPT 6, 7-8:30 pm THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

28 East 35 St. (front lounge)
We'll discuss
FASCISM: A WARNING
Madeleine Albright

A personal and urgent examination of Fascism in the twentieth century and how its legacy shapes today's world, written by one of America's most admired public servants, the first woman to serve as U.S. secretary of state



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 20th century but now presents a more virulent threat to peace and justice than at any time since the end of WWII.

Here is a book for our times that is relevant to all times, written by someone who has not only studied history but helped to shape it.

Charles 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/shsnny-org/

TEXT US ON TWITTER

@SHS_NewYork

SHSNY BOOK CLUB THURS, OCT 4, 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.*

SHSNY BOOK CLUB THURS, NOV 1, 7-8:30 pm Community Church of New York **THE RIGHTEOUS MIND: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion** Jonathan Haidt

Drawing on his 25 years of groundbreaking research on moral psychology, Haidt shows how moral judgments arise not from reason but from gut feelings. He shows why liberals, conservatives, and libertarians have such different intuitions about right and wrong, and he shows why each side is actually right about many of its central concerns. Haidt gives us the key to understanding human cooperation, as well as our eternal divisions and conflicts.

Harry French will lead.

– *Paperback and Kindle available.*

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAD A BOOK CLUB EVENING?

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

BRUNCH & CONVERSATION SUN, SEP 16, 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:
Is the banning of Alex Jones
a good thing?*

DRINKING REASONABLY WED, SEP 19, 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 anytime for any length of time 6-10, or come at 6:00 and enjoy Happy Hour prices until 7:00.

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

SHSNY CALENDAR: SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2018

GREAT LECTURES ON DVD

WED, SEP 26, 7 pm

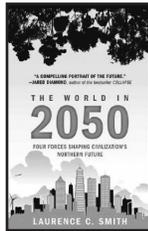
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge

THE WORLD IN 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future

Laurence Smith

In a stunning visual presentation, UCLA Professor of Geography and Earth and Space Sciences, Dr. Laurence Smith, forecasts what our planet will be like in the year

2050, distilling his 15 months of research traveling the Arctic Rim with cutting-edge research into four global forces: demographic trends, natural resources demand, climate change and globalization. The result is both good news and bad; Eight nations of the Arctic Rim (including the U.S.) will become increasingly prosperous, powerful, and politically stable, while those closer to the equator will face water shortages, aging populations, and crowded megacities sapped by the rising costs of energy and coastal flooding.



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

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 your life 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.

"A box of delights. Ingenious in construction, indefatigably entertaining, it grips the reader's imagination on the first page and never lets go." — Hilary Mantel, author of *Wolf Hall*.

— *Paperback and Kindle available.*

To reserve your seat on the sofa, and/or to nominate the next book for us to read, contact: editor@shsny.org

CHAMBER16 RECITAL

MON, SEP 17, 6 pm

Bruno Walter Auditorium

(Library of the Performing Arts)

Amsterdam at 65th Street

Chamber16 — featuring our Cown Mary Bopp, pianist, plus Sharon Gunderson, violinist, Leah Coloff, cellist and vocalist, and Hannah Barnard, dancer and choreographer — will present the concert "Dark Light of the Soul", a combination of dance, poetry and music. Music will include Ysaye "Ballade"; Bruch, "Kol Nidrei", and original improvisations.

Admission is free but it is necessary to get a ticket at the box office, which opens at 5 pm.

Reserve your place today:

SHSNY's 10th ANNUAL FREETHOUGHT DAY BRUNCH

Sunday, October 14, at

PETE'S TAVERN

129 East 18 Street (Irving Place)

with speaker

R. LAURENCE MOORE

Co-Author of

GODLESS CITIZENS IN A

GODLY REPUBLIC:

Atheists in American Public Life

Prof. R. Laurence Moore, co-

author (with Prof.

Isaac Kramnic) of

The Godless Consti-

tution, and now of

newly-published

Godless Citizens in

a Godly Republic:

Atheists in American Public Life, will

discuss the fascinating history —

Paine, Ingersoll, Cady Stanton — of

much-derided atheists in America,

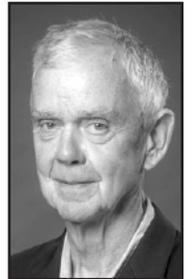
and of the dramatic rise of today's

"atheist awakening" and the role of

organizations (like ours) intent on

holding the country to the secular

principles it was founded upon.



Brunch is just \$28

... for your choice of 11 entrees, tax,

tips and a drink included. Join up

to 50 of your fellow and sororal

freethinkers for one of SHSNY's

best annual get-togethers. Meet old

friends, make new ones, schmooze,

network and discuss ideas.

But Don't Wait!

Our upstairs private room at Pete's

only seats 50 (at a squeeze). So

guarantee your place by booking

now, at www.shsny.org, using your

credit card or PayPal.

Questions? email editor@shsny.org

or call 646-922-7389 (leave a call-

back number).

E. O. WILSON AND THE MEANING OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

Daniel Lev Shkolnik

(Reprinted from *patheos.com*, 7/23/2018)

No one particularly expected E. O. Wilson to answer the question. It would have been tantamount to answering, once and for all, what the “X” in algebra really was.

Instead, the renowned evolutionary biologist’s talk at the Harvard Humanist Hub—entitled “The Meaning of Human Existence”—tried to answer a related and similarly important question. Namely: why do we, the altruistic, cooperative, and purportedly enlightened homo sapiens, seem to be so royally “fu[ding]” up the Earth?

There may be few people better equipped to answer that question than Edward O. Wilson. His work on evolutionary biology earned him the moniker “Darwin II”, courtesy of writer Tom Wolfe. He has received two Pulitzers and is the man who coined the terms “biodiversity” and “biogeography”. To boot, Wilson is considered the world’s leading authority on ants. And having spent so much time with species other than our own, Wilson may just have enough intellectual distance to assess us fairly.

The appearance of homo sapiens, according to Wilson, runs something like this: “After many close calls, extraordinary suffering, [and nearly reaching extinction on the African savannah], we staggered onto the stage, to the grief of most of the rest of life.”

Since then, one Promethean achievement after another has brought us basic machines, mathematics, AC and DC currents, Fords, PCs, iPhones, increasing our power and our numbers. But while our computers run ever more advanced operating systems, Wilson says we continue to run on “Paleolithic emotions” while our society runs on “medieval institutions”. And although we like to think of ourselves as the dominant species on the planet, Wilson makes the argument that if we count “dominance” in terms of numbers, global biomass, and our odds of survival as a species, ants may have us beat.

Our dominance on Earth, and maybe even our mere survival, may depend less on our technological achievements than on whether altruism or selfishness wins out in our species.

Wilson argues, as Darwin himself first proposed, that altruism is not God-given but a development of natural selection. There are various examples—upwards of twenty different evolutionary lines, says Wilson—of biological altruism that have been identified in the natural world. (Altruism being defined as an organism acting to the benefit of other organisms at a cost to itself.)

Examples include vampire bats who regurgitate blood so those bats who failed to feed that night won’t starve; “helper” birds that will aid in raising the young of other mating pairs; Vervet monkeys that will raise alarm calls when predators approach, even though they attract attention to themselves; and social insects like ants that rely on countless sterile

workers who sacrifice their lives and reproductive potential for the survival of the colony.

Among evolutionary biologists, the idea that altruistic tendencies are derived by natural selection is not controversial. But exactly how biological altruism developed is a subject of ongoing debate.*

Wilson’s stance on the issue, put simply, is that altruism develops when there are different groups within a species—different tribes for example—that are in competition with one another. If there are selfish individuals within a group—even a single selfish member—then the selfish members will always win out over the altruists. However, groups of altruists will theoretically always out-perform groups of selfish individuals because altruism insures the group as a whole is more likely to survive.

However, whether biological altruism can be extrapolated as a direct cause of human altruism is still a subject of debate. For one thing, biological altruism and what’s commonly meant by human altruism are not identical, since the latter requires conscious intent and the former does not.

Furthermore, human behavior—more than any other animal’s—depends on culture, which is itself environmentally dependent. We’ve managed to spread across the globe, surviving in drastically different climates and on vastly different diets, not by rapidly evolving our anatomy (our genetic differences are superficial) but by endlessly adapting our culture. Humanity’s specific brand of altruism may be a unique product of cultural evolution.

By and large our altruism does resemble that of other animals. For example, we are far more altruistic towards our kin than towards strangers. And like birds, humans will help raise others’ young, or even adopt children who have no biological ties to themselves. But human altruism doesn’t always fall neatly in accordance to patterns of biological altruism. For example, humans often collaborate with and even give their lives for non-genetically related families and even “other tribes”. Stranger still: we act altruistically for the sake of other, non-symbiotic species.

But given our unique altruistic capacities why does it seem we’ve become so bad for the Earth? Why, as Wilson asked, are we screwing things up?

It’s tempting to fall into existential guilt or think of ourselves as some kind of perverse aberration inherently destructive to life on planet Earth. But we shouldn’t be so hard on ourselves. An answer for our behavior seems to lie in the very basic mechanisms of life.

We have been raised by Earth’s own code of conduct. Like other creatures, what’s first and foremost on our minds is an old and basic formula: survive and reproduce. Food and shelter, sex and kids. Much of what we and other animals do are focused on these basic ends and we strive for them as best we can.

Consider the rabbit or the starling. These species are not inherently evil, but when they’re placed in ecosystems with no natural predators and seemingly limitless resources, they do what life does best: consume and reproduce, ad infinitum, to the detriment—and sometimes extinction—of

plants and animals around them. As a species we have come to a similar sort of place.

We're not exactly a blessing for the Earth, but to be fair, we're also not a plague. We're a decidedly mixed bag. Our cultural adaptability has allowed us to stumble into, survive in, and disrupt ecosystems the world over. But we've also developed the capacity for arguably the highest form of altruistic action: altruism towards other species.

Once in a while a person like Wilson comes along to remind us just how strange, how tribal, how animal, how stomach-driven, sex-driven, and paleolithically myopic we are. But at the same time – by simply existing at all – people like Wilson also manage to make a case for precisely the contrary.

**For those who want to enter into the fray see the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's entry on biological altruism.*

An earlier version of this article first appeared on the Humanist Hub website on Sep 17, 2017.

The planet isn't going anywhere, *we* are! ... We're going away. Pack your shit, folks. We're going away. And we won't leave much of a trace, either. Maybe a little Styrofoam ... The planet'll be here and we'll be long gone. Just another failed mutation. Just another closed-end biological mistake. An evolutionary cul-de-sac. The planet'll shake us off like a bad case of fleas. — *George Carlin*

AND IN TERMS OF THE UNIVERSE ...

Giles Kelly

In considering reports of our vulnerability to cyber attacks, I gather that all our weapons of war are only as good as their ability to withstand cyber attacks.

And by extension, the same is true of our energy grid. We can thus anticipate that the next war will be fought from control rooms. It is easy to imagine attempts to survive with no electricity, with individuals competing for food and transport, and a complete lack of our modern systems of communications. That seems to be what we would encounter if we have another world war: modern human life would revert to the primitive and be unsustainable, all leading to the extinction of humans.

Of course, in terms of the universe, it won't matter.

NO WONDER

Sarah Vowell

Just the other day, I was in my neighborhood Starbucks, waiting for the post office to open. I was enjoying a chocolate cafe mocha when it occurred to me that to drink a mocha is to gulp down the entire history of the New World. From the Spanish exportation of Aztec cacao, and the Dutch invention of the chemical process for making cocoa, on down to the capitalist empire of Hershey, PA, and the lifestyle marketing of Seattle's Starbucks, the modern mocha is a bittersweet concoction of imperialism, genocide, invention, and consumerism served with whipped cream on top. No wonder it costs so much.

"THEY HID IT ALL. FOR DECADES"

Jonathan Engel

"Bishops and other leaders of the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania covered up child sexual abuse by more than 300 priests over a period of 70 years, persuading victims not to report the abuse and law enforcement not to investigate it The report found more than 1,000 verifiable victims [and] likely thousands more whose records were lost or who were too afraid to come forward. ... Despite some institutional reform, individual leaders of the church have largely escaped public accountability, the grand jury wrote. Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsible for them not only did nothing; they hid it all. For decades."

— *The New York Times*, 8/15/2018

As a non-believer in the supernatural, I have always been irked (okay, more than just irked, more like infuriated) by the free pass given to so-called "people of faith". Once more, with feeling: *There is no correlation between a person's level of religiosity and such person's proclivity for acting in a moral/ethical manner.*

Catholic priests sexually assault children and their superiors cover it up; devout Muslims fly planes into the World Trade Center, killing thousands of innocents; devout Buddhists in Myanmar persecute and kill Muslims, as do Hindus in India; Orthodox Jews in Israel spit on little girls whose dresses they deem insufficiently modest, and so on.

I'm not saying that all religious people are immoral, any more than all non-religious people are virtuous. There are very fine people who are quite religious, although they have some strange ideas (to me at least) as to how and when the universe was formed, and how it works. My point is that a person's religious beliefs give us no clue as to their character. And yet society stubbornly persists in believing it does, and always in the favor of the most religious. This is not only illogical, it has also abetted horrific damage to thousands of children.

This deference to religion and the religious has resulted in massive failures within our society. Look back to the *Times* article cited above. See how the leaders of the Catholic Church were able to persuade law enforcement to be derelict in its sworn duty to "protect and serve". How could they possibly have persuaded police authorities and individual officers to look the other way while thousands of children were being subjected to the most vile abuse? How?

Because of our deference to so-called "people of faith", that's how. That deference allowed these fucking bastards to rape children for years, and then to cover it all up. "Well, they're men of God, they would never do anything evil, and we really aren't allowed to even contemplate that they might." This is the vehicle by which American society failed these poor unfortunate children so miserably. All people should be judged on their words and deeds, and not on their adherence to any particular dogmatic beliefs. By carving out an exception to this rule for religious believers, we are indirectly complicit in the abuse of these children.

It is illogical, it is grotesque, and it must stop.

THREE LITTLE ALTAR BOYS

Lyric: Emily Perl Kingsley & Sharon Lerner. Copyright © 2010 by Emily Perl Kingsley & Sharon Lerner. Music: Arthur Sullivan ("Three Little Maids From School" from THE MIKADO)

Three little altar boys are we
Sweet as three altar boys can be
Filled to the brim with purity
Three little altar boys.
Everyone thought that a Catholic priest
Would be worthy of trust, at least
Now we feel we have all been fleeced
Three little altar boys.
Three little boys who all unwary
Met a priest from the seminary
Who woulda thought it would be so scary
Three little altar boys
Three little al-tar boys.
One little boy in the closet went
One little boy o'er the desk was bent
One little boy gave it up for Lent
Three little altar boys.
From these little boys he was sent away
To some other school he was sent they say
He's doing much of the same today
To three other altar boys.
New little boys who all unwary
Keep meeting priests from the seminary
The Church never stops it: that's what's scary
Three little altar boys
Three little al-tar boys!

A PRIEST'S REALLY NEAT IDEA ON HOW TO STOP SEXUAL ABUSE BY PRIESTS

Father Regis Scanlon, the "spiritual director and chaplain for Mother Teresa of Calcutta's Missionaries of Charity in Denver", thinks he has a solution to the rampant sexual abuse within the Catholic Church:

Seminaries should refuse to admit any man who, in the past year, has ever had an impure thought or masturbated.

Suggestion: Just set fire to the entire pile of applications and save yourselves a whole lot of time. – JR

JESUS AND MO AND EVOLUTION AND MURDER AND OTHER BAD STUFF

(Transcribed from jesusandmo.net/comic/kids/)

(The boys are in their favorite pub)

Jesus: School shootings are tragic but unsurprising when you consider children are taught about evolution in schools.

Mohammed: Yeah, if you teach kids that they're just animals, you encourage them to behave like animals.

Barmaid: But animals don't commit mass murder.

(The boys are silent for a moment.)

Jesus (recovering): Okay, you encourage extramarital sex, masturbation and bad table manners.

Mo: That's nearly as bad.

WHY FEWER AND FEWER AMERICANS ARE GOING TO CHURCH (YES, REALLY)

Hemant Mehta (The Friendly Atheist)

(Excerpted from "A Survey Reveals Why People Don't Go to Church (Atheism Doesn't Top the List)", on <http://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2018/08/01/>)

The good news from a new Pew Research Center survey is that fewer people than ever before are going to church. The bad news is that it's not necessarily because they stopped believing in nonsense.

Among adults who only attend church a few times a year or less, only 28 percent said it's because they're not believers. The rest of them aren't going because, among other things, they practice their faith in other ways (37 percent) or haven't yet found a church they like (23 percent).

Along the same lines, among those adults who attend church regularly, most had "good" reasons for doing so. It's not like they were going purely out of guilt or cultural pressure. They said they went to get closer to God (81 percent), so their kids learn morals (69 percent), to become better people (68 percent), or for comfort (66 percent).

So which groups of non-churchgoers were more likely to say they don't attend because they don't believe in God? No surprise there. It's college graduates, men, young people, and Democrats. (Hello, my loyal readers.)

There is one huge takeaway from all this for atheists who care about these numbers. Some of the main reasons people give for going to church is that they want to instill morality in their children, make themselves better people, find comfort, get inspired, be part of a community, and meet new people.

Religion doesn't—or shouldn't—have a monopoly on any of those things. While atheists have often struggled to offer meaningful alternatives, it's not for lack of trying. (Consider all those atheist "churches" that popped up years ago, some of which are still going strong.)

But it's not all on us either. Many large churches are becoming known for their immoral stances: for their opposition to LGBTQ rights, for pushing abstinence over useful sex ed, for ignoring the climate (and science in general), for sexual abuse scandals, etc. If you want to become a good person, going to church is really an awful way to achieve that goal. And if the only reason you're good is because you think God wants you to be, then ... that's just disturbing. ...

The main thing churches have going for them is that they help people get "closer to God" — but even that's slowly becoming a relic. Hell, just witness what happens when the people who declare themselves closest to God align with Donald Trump and his barbaric, ignorant policies.

Ultimately, the one thing churches do better than anyone else — helping people connect with God — is on the decline as people realize they've been duped into accepting religion. There are alternatives for just about everything else, and if those options aren't fully formed yet, they will be soon enough.

**PEW RESEARCH TELLS US
A LOT WE ALREADY KNOW
ABOUT WHAT WE DON'T LIKE
ABOUT RELIGION**

Becka A. Alper

(Excerpted from "Why America's 'nones' don't identify with a religion", Pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/08)

A growing share of Americans are religiously unaffiliated. We recently asked a representative sample of more than 1,300 of these "nones" why they choose not to identify with a religion.

Out of several options included in the survey ...

- I question a lot of religious teachings
- I don't like the positions churches take on social/political issues
- I don't believe in God
- Religion is irrelevant to me
- I don't like religious leaders

... the most common reason they give is that they question a lot of religious teachings.

Six-in-ten religiously unaffiliated Americans—adults who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular"—say the questioning of religious teachings is a very important reason for their lack of affiliation. The second-most-common reason is opposition to the positions taken by churches on social and political issues, cited by 49 percent of respondents (the survey asked about each of the six options separately). ...

Those who identify as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular" tend to give different reasons for their lack of affiliation, showing that "nones" are far from a monolithic group. For example, about nine-in-ten self-described atheists (89 percent) say their lack of belief in God is a very important reason for their religious identity, compared with 37 percent of agnostics and 21 percent of those in the "nothing in particular" category. Atheists also are more likely than other "nones" to say religion is simply "irrelevant" to them (63 percent of atheists vs. 40 percent of agnostics and 26 percent of adults with no particular religion).

We also asked religious "nones" which of the six potential statements is the single *most* important reason they are unaffiliated. Again, questioning religious teachings is among the top responses, with a quarter of all "nones" saying it is the most important reason. A similar share (22 percent) cite lack of belief in God, and 16 percent say the most important reason is that they dislike the positions churches take on social and political issues. ...

Three-quarters of atheists say the most important reason they are atheist is that they don't believe in God. (*Comment: Jeez, who'd'a thought?*) Far fewer agnostics (17 percent) and "nothing in particulars" (8 percent) say this.

Among self-described agnostics, the most important reason cited for being agnostic is the questioning of a lot of religious teachings (38 percent).

People who identify as "nothing in particular" give a variety of responses when asked about their most important

reason for not affiliating with a religion – and no single reason predominates.

NOTE: To see the details, including the charts, go to Pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/08, and scroll around. – JR

**MICROAGGRESSIONS?
OH, PLEASE.**

John Rafferty

(From The Center for Inquiry Morning Heresy, 8/15/2018)

Introducing MANRIS, not a new league of supervillains, but the Microaggressions Against Non-Religious Individuals Scale. Three researchers have published a study on the "subtle prejudicial verbal and behavioral acts" that atheists have to deal with, coming up with 31 kinds of microaggressions within five categories:

- Assumption of Inferiority
- Denial of Non-Religious Prejudice
- Assumption of Religiosity
- Endorsing Non-Religious Stereotypes
- Pathology of a Non-Religious Identity.

From the study's Abstract:

The growing non-religious minority remains among the most distrusted groups in America. We examined how non-religious individuals experience microaggressions—subtle prejudicial verbal and behavioral acts. U.S. participants who self-identified as being non-religious were recruited to develop and validate a Microaggressions Against Non-Religious Individuals Scale (MANRIS). ... We found experiences of non-religious microaggressions to uniquely predict depressive symptoms, even after controlling for potential confounds including overt non-religious discrimination. Atheists reported experiencing the highest incidences of non-religious microaggressions and discrimination compared to other non-religious groups.

Oh, the horror.

Atheists assuming I'm inferior, stereotyping me, then denying their prejudice and assuming ... what, exactly? Did these researchers actually get paid for this crap?

Seriously? We're supposed to take seriously the problem that we "Non-Religious" in 21st century America are suffering "microaggressions" that could conceivably hurt our feelings and even lead to "depressive symptoms" and oh my gosh, who *knows* what.

This demands international action!

We need a conference, a gathering of "Non-Religious" from all around the globe to address this worse-than-genocide crisis before it gets even worse. We can meet at the U.N., and discuss our common problems with atheists from Bangladesh, where their fellows are hacked to death in the streets by gangs, with Iranian Allah deniers who are given 200 or so lashes for a first-offense impiety, or with the "blasphemous" Indonesian woman who last month was sentenced to a year-and-a-half in prison for complaining that a local mosque's p.a. speakers were too loud.

I'm sure they'll have some excellent suggestions about what we can do with our microaggressions.

New scientific finding:

**ATHEISTS SOMEHOW ABLE
TO MAKE MORAL DECISIONS**

(Based on a 2015 post on the thedailymash.co.uk)

Humans who do not believe in a god still have some morals, it has emerged. In an experiment inspired by the continuing popularity of religion, 28-year-old Helen Archer was given consequence-free opportunities for selfish gain, including the chance to get unlimited free Snickers bars, simply by pushing over a small child.

But despite not having a deeply-rooted fear of an omnipotent entity's wrath, Archer consistently showed basic empathy.

Professor Henry Brubaker of the Institute for Studies said: "We gave her the opportunity to steal, lie, and even do a murder, although we had to substitute a chicken for a person in that one because of legal issues. We covered most of the things mentioned in the major religious books, and threw in some internet fraud in a nod to modernity."

Archer said: "They gave me the login details for a stranger's PayPal account, which had 1800 dollars in it, and told me to go crazy on my preferred fashion website.

"I just felt weird about it, even though they said the money just belonged to 'some knobhead nobody likes'."

Professor Brubaker added: "It seems possible that humans have some innate moral sense. So it's probably fine to ignore religion, unless you don't want to gamble on the 'Hell' stuff which to be fair does sound bad."

**HERE'S AN IDEA FOR AMERICAN CATHOLICS
SICKENED BY THE NEVER-ENDING SCANDAL:
COLLECTIVE APOSTASY**

(Excerpted from "Movement Encourages Argentines to Quit Catholic Church", The Associated Press, 8/18/2018, and posted at [The Morning Heresy on centerforinquiry.com](http://TheMorningHeresy.com))

At an August 18 event in Buenos Aires called "Collective Apostasy", Argentines were urged to quit the Catholic Church over its interference in Argentinian politics, specifically over the rejection by the Senate in early August of a bill that would have legalized abortion in the first 14 weeks. The group leading the effort, the Argentine Coalition for a Secular State, said:

"Obtaining the vote for women, the divorce law, marriage equality, the gender identity law, the assisted human fertilization law, the law of integral sexual education, the dignified death law were all done fighting clerical power, which seeks to have total dominion over our minds and bodies."

Collective Apostasy is centered on a signature drive for Argentines wanting to renounce their affiliation to the church through a form that will later be given to the Episcopal Conference in the homeland of Pope Francis.

People formed long lines in Buenos Aires and other Argentine cities [to sign up], and organizers hoped thousands would officially register their desire that the church not interfere in Argentine politics and that their names be eliminated from its registries.

**10th Annual Freethought Day
Brunch at Pete's Oct 14.
Book now – Page 7**

**Look Out! It's the Religious
Liberty Task Force
Page 1**

**Un-Truth in the Age of Trump
Pages 3-5**

**E.O. Wilson and the Meaning
of Human Existence
(plus George Carlin)
Page 8**

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

