

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

May, 2014

Herein we find religion in general (and Jewish marital law in particular) oppressive, and right-wing Christianity especially toxic for, well, Christianity. Yet we take take instruction on strengthening our faith (it's tricky), and on sex from Peppermint Patty (it's really dirty). We promote new humanist videos, study Emergence, review why we live in NY and CT, consider the KKK's "few bad apples", and nominate three Dumbths. But first, we revisit a debate and consider equal time for idiots. — JR

**ONE MORE GO-AROUND
(and a correction)
ON THE KEN HAM-BILL NYE DEBATE
John Rafferty**

In March in these pages I offered the contrarian opinion that debating creationist wackos—as "Science Guy" Bill Nye did with Ken Ham at the Creation Museum in Kentucky on February 4—is a waste of time. In the April issue, someone named Donna Marxer argued that I was wrong, and Joel Galker opined that what we needed was an entirely different debate.

Finally (I thought), I excerpted Lindsay Abrams' salon.com article, reporting that the debate "spurred investors to kick up their support" for the museum. An online event sponsored by Answers In Genesis proudly announced that the debate brought in an additional \$62 million to a municipal bond offering, which means Ham will, indeed, complete the building of his theme park, including a 510-foot "Noah's Ark". And Jerry Coyne on newrepublic.com added, in relation to the money-raising power of the event, "This is why evolutionists should not debate creationists. Nye lost - big time."

See? I was right, right?

When will I learn?

Never underestimate the Liars for Jesus. Lindsay Abrams, Jerry Coyne and I were all taken in by the fabulists for faith. As Bill Nye himself reported about that supposed money-raising on the *Skeptical Inquirer* website:

Mark Looy of AIG sent an email to my office assuring me that the bonds had already been secured, before Feb. 4, i.e., before the debate – and before the unrated bonds' deadline. I could not help but notice that Ken Ham made no mention of this during our encounter, i.e., during the debate itself. I also could not help but notice

that his colleagues suggested that the debate helped close certain aspects of their Ark Park deal, later during their online event – at which not a single journalist, or anyone else for that matter, was present.

In other words — and in fact a specific word I think Bill Nye may be too nice a guy to use — *bullshit*.

Finally (really), however ...

**BUT LET'S GIVE THE LAST WORD ON THE
KEN HAM-BILL NYE DEBATE TO ... BILL NYE**
(Excerpted from "Bill Nye's Take on the Nye-Ham Debate",
on *SkepticalInquirer.com*, Volume 38.3, May/June 2014.)

I slowly realized that this was a high-pressure situation. Many of you, by that I mean many of my skeptic and humanist colleagues, expressed deep concern and anger that I would be so foolish as to accept a debate with a creationist, as this would promote him and them more than it would promote me and us. As I often say and sincerely believe, "You may be right." But, I held strongly to the view that it was an opportunity to expose the well-intending Ken Ham and the support he receives from his followers as being bad for Kentucky, bad for science education, bad for the U.S., and thereby bad for humankind—I do not feel I'm exaggerating when I express it this strongly.

I very much hope this whole business galvanizes the people in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and in neighboring states to take the time to think critically about creationism and to vote to remove it from science classrooms and texts. I frankly hope that in the coming few years not a single student in Kentucky is indoctrinated by the Answers in Genesis facilities and staff.

No matter where this leads, thanks to all of you, who've helped me over the years and in recent weeks to think critically and speak clearly about science and reason.

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It's in the national interest to enlighten young people. The longest journey starts with but a single step. In this debate, we've already traveled a long way, but with projects like the Ark Park still in play, there is quite a journey yet ahead. If we keep making our arguments clear, and continue to vote and fight the political fights, together we can change the world.

Read Bill Nye's whole article at ...

http://www.csicop.org/si/show/bill_nyes_take_on_the_nye-ham_debate

HERE'S A NEVER-GOING-TO-HAPPEN IDEA

John Rafferty

(Based on and excerpted from "Creationist Group Demands Airtime on 'Cosmos' for Sake of 'Scientific Balance'", AlterNet.org 3/21/2014)

The Liars for Jesus (see above), already outraged that Neil deGrasse Tyson and Ann Druyan have dared to revive science- and fact-oriented "Cosmos" for a new generation, are now complaining that the show lacks "scientific balance" because it fails to provide airtime for evolution deniers.

Echoing the complaints of such 14th-century thinkers as Bill Donohue of The Catholic League, Danny Faulkner of Answers In Genesis and the Creation Museum complained on religious nutcase Janet Mefferd's show, "Creationists aren't even on the radar screen for [the show's producers], they wouldn't even consider us plausible at all."

Um, yeah.

I wonder what the reaction of Faulkner or Mefferd or Donohue – or of Pat Robertson and any of the literally thousands of other "Christian" broadcasters filling the American airwaves with ignorance – would be to giving five minutes on each of their shows – hey, *two* minutes! – for rebuttals by a middle-school science teacher?

Okay, a middle-school science *student*!

DUH

Question: On April 2, DailyKos.com posted a longish essay whose title asked, "Is Racism Playing a Role in the Religious Right's Hostility to Neil deGrasse Tyson?"

Answer: (See headline).

IS RELIGION INHERENTLY OPPRESSIVE?

Amanda Marcotte

(Excerpted from AlterNet.com, 4/8/2014)

There's little doubt, outside circles filled with self-delusional reactionaries, that religion is probably the most important force in continuing the oppression of women worldwide. Around the world, various abuses from coerced marriage to domestic violence to restricting reproductive rights are all excused under the banner of religion. More to the point, women's rights have advanced more quickly in societies that put religion on the backburner, or like the United States, have strict laws separating church and state. But even in the U.S., the main result of the grow-

ing power of the religious right is the rollback of reproductive rights and other protections for women's equality.

Former president Jimmy Carter, who is probably the country's most prominent liberal Christian, is willing to set aside his enthusiasm for faith to admit this. While doing press promoting his new book, *A Call to Action: Women, Religion, Violence and Power*, Carter told *The Guardian* (UK) that "Women are treated more equally in some countries that are atheistic or where governments are strictly separated from religion."

This isn't because atheists and secularists have fewer people in their ranks that have ugly and backwards attitudes toward women. It's because, by never having religion in the discourse about women's rights in the first place, discourse in secular circles and societies never gets mired in endless, irresolvable debates about what God wants. Instead, secular societies can get straight to the facts and policy debate. When you stop worrying what God wants and start worrying about what people want, it's much easier to argue that women should have full human rights. After all, women are half the human race. When everyone is talking about what God supposedly wants, it becomes very easy to forget that ultimately, the issue of women's rights is about ordinary, everyday men and women and what goes on in their lives. ...

It's certainly a breath of fresh air having Carter explain, in his patient and comforting way, that there is no reason whatsoever to believe that religion mandates sexism. On the other hand, it's nearly impossible to ignore the fact that religiosity and sexism go hand in hand, and the solution might need to be something more than simply demanding better, less sexist religions.

Carter, like many liberal Christians, is happy to criticize more conservative religious leaders who want to oppress women. Still, it's hard not to have doubts that Carter's own devout Christianity might make him less critical than he should be of the role religion plays in the oppression of women. The sticky point when it comes to advocating for a kind of Christian feminism is that the Bible is undeniably sexist. And it's not just the Old Testament, where women are told they were created from men and told, repeatedly, that they are basically property to be disposed of as men see fit. The New Testament has plenty of verses that should cause feminist eyebrows to shoot up.

Consider Ephesians 5:22-24, the verse the Southern Baptist Convention upholds but Carter disagrees with:

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ... Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

There's not a lot of wiggle room around that, as Carter freely admits. The Bible is pretty straightforward in its description of women as inferiors who should treat their husbands like masters. Fundamentalists who cite this verse in order to justify the continued oppression of women have a pretty strong argument.

IS THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT KILLING CHRISTIANITY IN AMERICA?

C J Werleman

(Excerpted from "Christian Right Has Major Role in Hastening Decline of Religion in America", *Alternet.org*, 3/22/2014)

Of those aged 18 to 35, three in 10 say they are not affiliated with any religion, while only half are "absolutely certain" a god exists. These are at or near the highest levels of religious disaffiliation recorded for any generation in the 25 years the Pew Research Center has been polling on these topics.

As encouraging as this data is for secular humanists, the actual numbers may be significantly higher, as columnist Tina Dupuy observes. "When it comes to self-reporting religious devotion Americans cannot be trusted. We underestimate our calories, over-state our height, under-report our weight and when it comes to piety – we lie like a prayer rug."

Every piece of social data suggests that those who favor faith and superstition over fact-based evidence will become the minority in this country by or before the end of this century. In fact, the number of Americans who do not believe in a deity doubled in the last decade of the previous century according to both the census of 2004 and the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) of 2008, with religious non-belief in the U.S. rising from 8.2 percent in 1990 to 14.2 percent in 2001. In 2013, that number is now above 16 percent.

If current trends continue, the crossing point, whereby atheists, agnostics, and "nones" equals the number of Christians in this country, will be in the year 2062. If that gives you reason to celebrate, consider this: by the year 2130, the percentage of Americans who identify themselves as Christian will equal a little more than 1 percent. To put that into perspective, today roughly 1 percent of the population is Muslim.

The fastest growing religious faith in the United States is the group collectively labeled "Nones", who spurn organized religion in favor of non-defined skepticism about faith. About two-thirds of Nones say they are former believers. This is hugely significant. The trend is very much that Americans raised in Christian households are shunning the religion of their parents for any number of reasons: the advancement of human understanding; greater access to information; the scandals of the Catholic Church; and the over-zealousness of the Christian Right.

Political scientists Robert Putman and David Campbell, the authors of *American Grace*, argue that the Christian Right's politicization of faith in the 1990s turned younger, socially liberal Christians away from churches, even as conservatives became more zealous. "While the Republican base has become ever more committed to mixing religion and politics, the rest of the country has been moving in the opposite direction."

Ironically, the rise of the Christian Right over the course of the past three decades may well end up being the

Jimmy Carter's rejoinder to this is that it's cherry-picking. ... The problem is both Carter and the fundamentalists he denounces are cherry-picking Bible verses. Carter likes to cite Galatians 3:28, which states, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," as proof that the New Testament supports a view of female equality. But there's no real reason to think that verse "counts" more than the number of verses that are quite clearly stating that women are inferior to men.

Indeed, it's worth noting that it's not just liberal Christians who ignore Bible verses that are just too reactionary for our times. There are some parts of the Bible that are too conservative or backwards for every stripe of conservative, no matter how conservative. Protestant fundamentalists ignore the parts of the Bible that instruct women to be silent in church, and even the Catholic church doesn't take that part so literally that nuns and female Sunday school teachers are not allowed to teach religion. And pretty much all stripes of Christian, from the most conservative to the most liberal, pointedly ignore the parts of the New Testament that endorse slavery and instruct slaves to obey their masters.

What we're left with is the unavoidable conclusion that both fundamentalist and liberal Christians have a tendency to decide first how they feel – do they believe women are equal to men or inferior to men? – and then they start mining the Bible for verses to back up the point of view they've already decided on. Since there's no outside reference point to show which verses are the truest, best ones, this is the only way that it could work. All stripes of Christian, in addition, are happy to switch up what verses they believe "count" and what do not according to the changing tides of their time.

Carter touches on this briefly, writing, "There is no need to argue about such matters, because it is human nature to be both selective and subjective in deriving the most convenient meaning by careful choices from the thirty-one thousand or so verses in the modern Christian Bible." However, it's a brief thought, almost an aside. He is far more interested in playing the verse vs. verse game, even though he tacitly admits that it's a pointless game that no one will ever win because, as he says, religious authorities will always end up just accepting "the version they prefer".

It's a shame, really, because exploring this idea – that all religious people are, on some level, making it up as they go along – would be a lot better use of a liberal Christian's time than trying to match fundamentalists verse for verse, hoping your Galatians cancels out their Corinthians, all while knowing that no one is ever persuaded this way.

What liberal Christians could do, instead of quibbling endlessly with conservatives over theology, is stand up and say, "No one knows either way what God wants or what Jesus would have wanted, so let's table the argument and start discussing the facts and evidence instead."

Comment: Fat chance. – JR

catalyst for Christianity's rapid decline. From the moment Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority helped elect Ronald Reagan in 1980, evangelical Christians, who account for roughly 30 percent of the U.S. population, identified their movement with the culture war and with political conservatism.

Michael Spencer, a writer who describes himself as a post-evangelical reform Christian, says, "Evangelicals fell for the trap of believing in a cause more than a faith. Evangelicals will be seen increasingly as a threat to cultural progress. Public leaders will consider us bad for America, bad for education, bad for children, and bad for society."

In light of the recent backlash against Republicans who supported the right-to-discriminate bills across 11 states, Spencer's words seem prophetic. Republican lawmakers had expected evangelicals to mobilize in the aftermath of Arizona governor Jan Brewer's veto of SB1062. Instead, legislatures in states like Mississippi, Kansas, and Oklahoma have largely backed down from attempts to protect "religious freedom" after a national outcry branded the proposed bills discriminatory.

Every denomination in the U.S. is losing both affiliation and church attendance. In some ways the country is a half-generation behind the declining rate of Christianity in other western countries like the U.K., Australia, Germany, Sweden, Norway, France, and the Netherlands. In those countries, what were once churches are now art galleries, cafes and pubs. In Germany more than 50 percent say they do not believe in any god, and this number is increasing rapidly. In the U.K., church attendances have halved since the 1970s.

A recent study into the beliefs of people living in 137 countries concludes that religious people will be a minority in many developed countries by 2041. Nigel Barber, an Irish bio-psychologist, based his book, *Why Atheism Will Replace Religion*, on the findings. He debunks the popular belief that religious groups will dominate atheistic ones because they collectively have more children. "Noisy as they can be, such groups are tiny minorities of the global population and they will become even more marginalized as global prosperity increases and standards of living improve."

Anthropologists have often stated that religion evolved to help early man cope with anxiety and insecurity. Barber contends that supernatural belief is in decline everywhere [because] ordinary people enjoy a decent standard of living secure in their health and finances. "The market for formal religion is also being squeezed by modern substitutes such as sports and entertainment. Even Facebook is killing religion because it provides answers for peculiarly modern narcissistic anxieties for which religion has no answer."

While some polls show roughly 9 in 10 Americans still maintain belief in a god or gods, the trend of religious young Americans is toward a mish-mash of varied religious beliefs. A 2010 *USA Today* survey revealed that 72 percent of the nation's young people identify as "more spiritual than religious".

With an increasingly majority of younger Americans accepting evolution as fact, Christianity for many under 35

is becoming a watered-down hybrid of eastern philosophy and biblical teachings. "The turn towards being 'spiritual but not religious' points at the decreasing observation of doctrine and strict rules and a broader relationship to sentiment and 'Jesus and me' on the one hand alongside the rise of yoga, Buddhism, Hinduism and a blend or smorgasbord of eastern practices with the idea of being loosely/broadly spiritual—yet not in any specific context or foundation of the Trinity, Seven Deadly Sins, Karma, Nirvana or any of the pillars or branches of belief," writes Alan Miller, moderator of a "spiritual but not religious" event.

Young people are turning away from the church and from basic Christian beliefs. While a number of non-denominational mega-churches continue to thrive, their teachings are less dogma and more self-help. Eventually, Christianity-Lite will be replaced with Spirituality-Full Strength*.

Certainly, pro-secular groups have been largely successful in removing Jesus from the public square, workplace and classroom.

All of which leaves only one self-evident conclusion: that despite the Christian Right's well-funded and well-organized effort to transform America's secular state into a tyrannical theocracy, Christianity will inevitably mirror the days of its origins, i.e., something that is only whispered about in secretly guarded places. And that may happen sooner than you think.

*Ugh. Is that supposed to be an improvement? - JR

FREE YOURSELF

Jonathan Engel

On March 22, *The New York Times* ran an article by Jennifer Median, "Unwilling to Allow His Wife a Divorce, He Marries Another", about an Orthodox Jewish woman who appears to be stuck in an untenable situation. Over seven years ago she obtained a civil divorce from her (also Orthodox Jewish) husband, but he continues to deny her a *get*, which is a document given by a husband to his soon-to-be ex-wife, as required by Orthodox Jewish law to end a marriage. The lack of a *get* means the woman cannot remarry under Orthodox Jewish law, although she is free to do so under New York State law, as she has completed a civil divorce. Normally, this would mean that the husband could not remarry under Orthodox Jewish law either, but evidently he has taken advantage of a "loophole" in the religious law and has indeed remarried.

According to the *Times* article, the woman has received significant support in the Orthodox community, where her supporters have tried to shame and ostracize the husband into giving the *get*, so far without success. (The husband seems to have his own supporters in the community as well.) But there is another option open to this woman and her supporters that they seem to have not considered:

Stop this nonsense and stop it now!

They can choose to rid themselves of the entire *get* process. She does not have to be part of this patriarchal system, nor do her supporters. She and they can simply opt out: "We don't do this anymore." And if her supporters

don't follow her, she can go on her own. Her supporters are trying to help her through the "system", but, 1) Going through the system has not helped this woman, at least so far; and, 2) Even if eventually the husband does give the *get*, the system itself, which has tormented this woman for seven years, will still be in place.

Now, it is not my intention to suggest that leaving this "system" will be easy for this woman. When a person has a feeling of "community", especially one in which they grew up, it is often a wrenching decision to leave. One feels somewhat lost in these circumstances, especially at first. But there are other communities of which she can become a part that will welcome her and support her right not only to remarry, but to live her life as she sees fit, and the lack of a *get* be damned. There are secular communities built around common interests. There are also religious communities, including Jewish religious communities, that do not adhere to the ancient patrimony and misogyny that is inherent in the entire *get* system, and, in fact, in much of traditional Orthodox Judaism. While it would not be easy, the fact remains that this woman and all those who support her do have a solution to this dilemma, no matter what the ex-husband does or doesn't do. Just opt out.

OBEYING THE CONSTITUTION IS NOT BIGOTRY

Edd Doerr, President

Americans for Religious Liberty

Seth Lipsky's claim (in *The New York Post*, April 3) that opposition to tax credits to aid faith-based private schools stems from "anti-Catholic bigotry" is wrong.

Article XI, Section 3 of the New York Constitution prohibits diversion of public funds to all faith-based private schools. In 1967 New Yorkers voted 72 percent to 28 percent to defeat a proposed new constitution that would have eliminated XI, 3.

Since then voters in 25 referendum elections from largely Catholic Massachusetts to California have rejected all efforts to have states aid private schools by an average margin of two to one.

Tax credits for private religious schools would divide the school population along religious and ethnic lines and violate the religious freedom of all New York taxpayers.

HOW TRUE, YOUR IMPERIAL WIZARDNESS.

SADLY, HOW TRUE

The gunman who went on a Kill-the-Jews rampage in Kansas City last month—shooting no Jews but killing a Methodist doctor and his grandson outside a Jewish community center, then driving a few blocks and killing a Catholic woman outside a Jewish retirement home—is Former Ku Klux Klan Grand Dragon Frazier Glenn Cross.

Current KKK Imperial Wizard Frank Ancona was quick to disavow Cross in a statement to the media.

"We've had a few members who have become bad apples," he said, "and the whole organization is overall cast in the same light."

WE HAVE THREE – COUNT 'EM, THREE – DUMBTH CANDIDATES THIS MONTH

Met Jim Brown, who's running for Congress from Arizona's 2nd District. Jim hates federal spending and modern-day "entitlements" so much he thinks they're worse than slavery, because they hurt business, and offered this explanation on his Facebook page:



"Back in the day, slaves were kept in slavery by denying them education and opportunity while providing them with their basic needs. Not by beating them and starving them. (Although there were isolated cases of course.) Basically slave owners took pretty good care of their slaves and livestock and this kept business rolling along."

Well, okay, as long as business kept rolling along.



And here's an old favorite of ours: former Republican House Leader—and convicted money launderer—Tom DeLay, back from the not-quite dead with a new scheme to restore morality in politics. His "Josiah Project" is intended to preserve the Constitution as "a document of faith".

Faith? Yes, because "the Constitution is based upon a higher authority". In an interview last month DeLay rewrote American history with ...

"God created this nation and He wrote the Constitution."

So much for Franklin, Madison, Hamilton, et al, in the sweltering summer of 1787 in Philadelphia.

Speaking to religious radio host Jerry Newcombe in April, ex-Senator (and now President of the Heritage Foundation, the right wing's brain trust), Jim DeMint, afraid someone could think "big gummint" might ever have accomplished something, rewrote some history:



"Well the reason that the slaves were eventually freed was the Constitution, it was like the conscience of the American people. ... But a lot of the move to free the slaves came from the people, it did not come from the federal government. It came from a growing movement among the people, particularly people of faith, that this was wrong. ... So no liberal is going to win a debate that big government freed the slaves."

So much for four years of war, the Union Army, 600,000 lives, and the Emancipation Proclamation.

Atheists don't want religions to have exemptions under the law, and why should we? It's not our demographic that has the most divorce, the most chemical dependency, domestic violence, criminal convictions, or even abortion. The only thing we might have more of are diplomas.

– Aron Ra

SHSNY CALENDAR: MAY - JULY, 2014

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

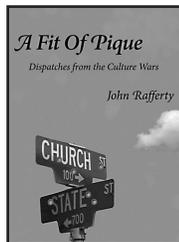
THURS, MAY 1, 7-8:30 pm
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK

28 East 35 St. (Park-Mad)
(3 doors West of the church - red door)

We'll discuss
A FIT OF PIQUE

John Rafferty

Here is the SHSNY President's selection of a dozen years worth of his own essays from the pages of this newsletter.



John will read from the book, and Book Club Editor Elaine Lynn will lead the discussions of: Church and State, evolution and creationism, Hitchens and Dawkins, Newt Gingrich and Tony Soprano, Ronald McDonald and "Touchdown Jesus" - they're all here, in a collection Chuck Debrovner, past President of the Humanist Institute, calls, "a treasure trove of wit and wisdom from the humanist perspective".

- Paper & Kindle

Join us even if you haven't finished reading.

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

PLANNING AHEAD

The usual SHSNY schedule is ...

Book Club: First Thursday
at the Community Church of NY

Movie Night: Second Monday
at Stone Creek Lounge.

Brunch: Third Sunday
at The Stag's Head

Great Lectures: 4th Wednesday
at Stone Creek Lounge.

Humanism 102: Last Monday
at the Community Church of NY

More info: www.shsny.org,
and/or 646-922-7389

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

THURS, JUNE 5, 7-8:30 pm
at Community Church of NY
GODS IN THE

GLOBAL VILLAGE:

The World's Religions in
Sociological Perspective

Lester R. Kurtz

The question that faces us is not "Which religious tradition is true?" or "Is any religious tradition true?" but rather "How can we enable the various religious and secular traditions to coexist peacefully on the planet?" Kurtz believes the sociology of religion can provide invaluable insight into the most pressing problems of our time.

Editor Elaine Lynn notes: "The new Third Edition can be bought used and, just as useful for our purposes, the 2006 edition costs very little." Just read, she says, Chap 2, A Sociological Tour: Turning East; Chap 4, Indigenous Religions; Chap 6, Modernism & Multiculturalism; Chap 7, Religious Movements for a New Century.

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

THURS, JULY 10, 7-8:30 pm
at Community Church of NY
(Note change to second Thursday)

THE AGE OF ATHEISTS:

How We Have Sought to Live
Since the Death of God

Peter Watson

Acclaimed historian Watson offers a sweeping narrative of the secular philosophers and poets, psychologists and scientists, painters and playwrights, et al, who have forged a thrilling, bold path in the absence of religious belief.

From Nietzsche to Habermas, Watson's narrative explores the revolutionary ideas provoked by these great minds and movements.

BRUNCH & CONVERSATION

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 12 NOON
MONTHLY CASUAL BRUNCH
The Stag's Head
252 East 51 St.

The Stag's Head offers an American-traditional brunch menu of eggs and omelets sev-



eral ways, crepes, burgers, frittatas, burritos and short-rib hash, all in the \$10.95-12.95 range., and including a drink. Join 19 other freethinkers and humanists (private space in back seats 20) for food, fellowship and well-fed fun.

After-Brunch Discussion:
deGrasse Tyson's "Cosmos":
Good, bad, meh?

MONDAY, MAY 12, 7:00 pm
SHSNY MOVIE NIGHT
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St (Lex-3rd Aves)
NETWORK

Paddy Chayefsky's outrageous satire on anything-for-ratings television (including exploiting an on-air madman) looks less and less like fantasy as the years pass.

William Holden, Faye Dunaway, Robert Duvall, and Peter Finch as the "mad-as-hell" madman.



After-film discussion:
How prophetic/true is "Network"?
SHSNY Movie Night is FREE.
(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

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www.facebook.com/pages/The-Secular-Humanist-Society-of-New-York/168704396485734

AND MEET US ON MEETUP

www.meetup.com/shsny-org/

SHSNY CALENDAR: MAY - JULY, 2014

GREAT LECTURES ON DVD
WED, MAY 28, 7 pm

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

TO BOLDLY GO ...
WELL, YOU KNOW.

NASA'S DAWN MISSION
TO THE ASTEROID BELT
A lecture by

DR. MARC RAYMAN

Dr. Rayman is Dawn's Chief Engineer and Mission Director at JPL. Launched in 2007, Dawn is one of NASA's most remarkable ventures into the solar system, recently completing a spectacular exploration of the asteroid belt's Vesta, and now traveling to dwarf planet Ceres. Dr. Rayman will explain it all and share the excitement with us.



Great Lectures on DVD is FREE.
(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

HUMANISM 102

MONDAY, JUNE 2, 6:30-8:30

(Last Monday in May is a holiday)

Community Church of New York
28 East 35 Street (red door)

Meeting/Discussion #7:

Understanding Why America's Underclass Hates Science, Reason and Us
Readings - Books:

Joe Bageant: *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War*
 and/or

Thomas Frank: *What's the Matter with Kansas?*

Readings - Online: TBD. Check the Calendar of Events for Jun 2 at www.shsny.org

Note: Humanism 102 is a study group, not a book club. If you have not done the reading, you may still audit the discussion – all are welcome!

THURS, MAY 22, 6:30-9:30 pm
HONORING

PETE SEEGER'S VISION
Presented by NYC Friends of Clearwater, with the New York Society for Ethical Culture at NYSEC, 2 West 64 St.

Come hear wonderful performers (Oscar Brand, Walkabout Clearwater Chorus, and many more) and great friends of Pete Seeger share in song and remembrances. Learn about Pete's vision for our planet and all people.



\$12 general admission. Tickets:
<http://petesvision.eventbrite.com>

OTHER REASONABLE NEW YORK EVENTS

www.reasonablenewyork.org
CFI-NYC. Mon, May 12, 10 pm, Googie's Lounge (Upstairs at the Living Room), 154 Ludlow St.:
"Skeptics on the Mic Karaoke".

New York Philosophy: Fri, May 23, 6-10 pm: 49 Grove, 49 Grove St at Christopher St/Sheridan Square:
"Cocktails & Conversation". RSVP: nyphilosophy.com

NY Society for Ethical Culture:

- Fri, May 2, 7 pm, Ethics in Film: *Five Easy Pieces*. Snacks/Bevs, \$5 suggested donation.

- Sun, May 4, 2 pm, Sunday Assembly-NYC Talks: Massimo Pigliucci, on *Friendship*. Free.

- Mon, May 5, 1 pm, Ethics in Literature: *The Round House*, by Louise Erdrich. Snacks & Bevs, \$5.

- Fri, May 9, 6:30 pm, Ethics and the Theater: Suzan-Lori Parks' *Topdog/Underdog*. Reception/Refreshments, \$10.

See the full RNY calendar at reasonablenewyork.org

SUNDAY, MAY 4, NOON
SHSNY 6th Annual

Day of Reason Brunch
at historic

Pete's Tavern, 129 East 18 St.
TYSON GILL

"Why Is It So Hard to Apply Science and Reason to Real Problems?"

(And how can we do better?)

Tyson Gill is a research scientist and a passionate evangelist for fact-based thinking. Our selective abandonment of reason to belief, he contends, compromises our fundamental decision-making capacity, both in small personal matters and in critical public policy.



A frequent columnist and speaker on a wide range of related topics, Tyson is the author of *Belief in Science and the Science of Belief: A Guidebook to Fact-Based Thinking*, and will discuss how to apply scientific rigor to everyday decision-making, to verify facts, avoid logical pitfalls and belief-driven biases, and use fact-based reasoning to make moral and ethical decisions.

Don't miss this lively, informative talk (plus Q&A) at the oldest continuously operating tavern/bar in NYC ... and join 40 or more of your fellow freethinkers for one of SHSNY's best annual get-togethers.

Brunch is just \$25 at the door
(tax, tips and a drink included).

But save 20% (\$5)

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at www.shsny.org.

Note: Yes, this is a change of speakers. Our originally-scheduled speaker, Liz Heywood, had to bow out, with regrets.

WHY WE LIVE IN NEW YORK (OR IN MY CASE CONNECTICUT)

David Rafferty

If Hobby Lobby prevails in the Supreme Court, and they and other corporations are free to pick and choose what kind of contraception they deem appropriate for their employees, this will not be a slippery slope, it will be a California mudslide. When you boil it down, *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby* means one thing: you are not allowed to argue against my faith, even if my faith does not conform to the facts. By claiming religious belief, Hobby Lobby is allowed to call the pill and IUDs things that cause abortions. And because of their beliefs, Hobby Lobby will not pay for abortions. Unfortunately, this is not true, the pill and IUDs do not cause abortions. But you are not allowed to say that because they “believe” they cause abortions, therefore the court must consider the belief of Hobby Lobby over the scientific facts. This is truly and royally insane. And because our legal system is based on precedent, a victory here will be used over and over to cram religious stupidity down our throats.

Like maybe in places like Tennessee. The legislature there just passed the Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act, in which teachers and schools “may not discriminate against the student based on a religious viewpoint expressed by the student on an otherwise permissible subject”. How might this affect schools? Say a test asks where water comes from and high school Johnny says, “God”. Under this law, he may not be right, but nor would he be wrong. Why? Because “a student may express beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. A student would not be penalized or rewarded on account of the religious content of the student’s work.”

Or how about when Johnny bashes gay authors in his book reports and reads them out loud to the class. With a couple of closeted gay kids sitting there just having to take it, because if I were gay in Tennessee you would be damn sure I wouldn’t be telling anybody in that freakin’ state.

Or maybe Johnny becomes class president and does the morning announcements every day, utilizing his megaphone to lead a prayer and read scripture instead of giving us yesterday’s girls’ soccer score? According to the law, everybody’s gotta sit there and take it.

The bill passed unanimously in the state senate and with only two nays in the house, so you know the governor will sign it. Or have his veto overridden. Welcome to the Tennessee madrasa, with a seat at the desk right next to Oklahoma and of course Texas, which have already passed similar bills. And when the state is sued and normal people hope to get the law overturned because of the Establishment Clause of the constitution, or because it’s a horrible law, the defenders will point to Hobby Lobby and say, “My belief trumps your facts.”

And we continue to become a nation of stupid.

DO AS I PRAY, NOT AS I DO Hunter

(Excerpted from “Hobby Lobby invests in contraceptive, abortion drug manufacturers”, *Daily Kos* 4/1/2014)

Documents filed with the Department of Labor and dated December 2012—three months after the company’s owners filed their lawsuit—show that the Hobby Lobby 401(k) employee retirement plan held more than \$73 million in mutual funds with investments in companies that produce emergency contraceptive pills, intrauterine devices, and drugs commonly used in abortions. Hobby Lobby makes large matching contributions to this company-sponsored 401(k).

Several of the mutual funds in Hobby Lobby’s retirement plan have holdings in companies that manufacture the specific drugs and devices that the Green family, which owns Hobby Lobby, is fighting to keep out of Hobby Lobby’s health care policies: the emergency contraceptive pills Plan B and Ella, and copper and hormonal intrauterine devices.

So the company demands it not have to pay for any employee insurance that might purchase such things, but investing in their manufacture? Not a problem. ...

The companies Hobby Lobby invests in include Teva, as well as Pfizer, the maker of the abortion-inducing drugs Cytotec and Prostin E2. Hobby Lobby’s mutual funds also invest in two health insurance companies that cover surgical abortions, abortion drugs, and emergency contraception in their health care policies.

So providing workers with health insurance that might provide certain contraceptives is right out, but making a little dough from companies that make actual abortion drugs does not run afoul of those self-same Deeply Held Religious Beliefs, nor [does] investing in the very insurance companies whose original naughtiness was the thing Hobby Horse could not put up with.

I think we all understand each other here. Businesses must be able to lodge religious objections to the medical decisions of their employees, but don’t be surprised if that happens to be the one and only Deeply Held Religious Belief a given company might have.

And we won’t even get into the Made In China part.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH: A LETTER TO A RELIGIOUS YOUNG PERSON S. Abbas Raza

(Thanks to Robert Tapp for forwarding this. S. Abbas Raza is the founding editor of *3QuarksDaily.com*)

Quite recently I received a letter from a very religious and clearly very intelligent and well-educated young person from Pakistan asking about my personal religious views. This was my reply:

Dear X,

I am not going to speak here about my own religious views but about yours. It seems from what you have written that you are somewhat troubled that I might not share your

own beliefs. What I want to do is recommend to you a reasonable, scientific, logical, and quite surefire method by which you may strengthen your own faith.

It doesn't really matter which sect of which religion you belong to, this is what you need to do: pick two or three well-known religions with large numbers of adherents which are as different as possible from your own. From your perspective, the people who believe in these religions are quite wrong about a great number of things, even though you may agree with them about some aspects of their faith. Forget about the things you agree on. Focus instead on their wrong beliefs. The more ridiculous they seem to you, the better. And now ask yourself why such a large number of people find these beliefs to be not only reasonable but often quite self-evident. You must make finding the answer to this question your project for some time. You will essentially be compiling a list of bad reasons for holding a religious belief.

If you think about it (and look into the matter) you will find that there is generally no great difference in the average intelligence of those people who believe in religions very different from yours and the people of your own religion. After all, one can find accomplished and very smart artists, scientists, musicians, mathematicians, writers, philosophers, and so on, from all major religions. (One can, of course, also find imbeciles in every religion, but that is neither here nor there.) Similarly, one can find morally decent people as well as cheats and liars and evil psychopaths from all sorts of religious backgrounds.

When people of very different religions are put in similar circumstances, they tend to succeed in intellectual and other ways quite equally. I first happened to notice this when I went to university in America and saw that there were students from all over the world, belonging to all kinds of faiths: Mormons, Buddhist, Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Hindus, Atheists, etc., but in classes I was taking, like Partial Differential Equations, for example, there was no difference in their performance as groups. Of course I didn't do a statistical study to confirm this, but others actually have. So it can't just be that the people who hold ridiculously wrong beliefs by your lights are all just very stupid. They are only stupid about religion; otherwise, they are just as good as anyone else. So what is it, then? Why do they believe such clearly false things?

One glaring fact will no doubt leap out at you immediately at this point: most of these deluded people (almost all of them, in fact) believe in the same religion as their parents, so that probably has something to do with it. Children trust their parents, after all, and seek their approval and look to them for guidance. And most of the time what parents tell their children turns out to be true.

But not always. Once a ridiculously false belief takes hold (for some reason or other), it is quite easy to imagine how it could get transmitted down generation after generation. Maybe this is why they believe in what seems quite silly to you. Then there is also the fear of abandoning a belief out of concern that it may hurt one's parents' feelings

and also there is often fear of ostracism from the family and even the larger community to which one belongs. This, then, is our first very good example of a very bad reason for holding a religious belief: because your parents hold it. At least if you care about having true beliefs.

So, go ahead, start your list of bad reasons for having religious beliefs now and add this as your first item. Note that I am not saying that if you believe in the same religion as your parents you are necessarily wrong, I am just saying that you must be careful that your parents' belief in a given religion is not one of your reasons for also believing in that religion. You must decide whether your parents' religion is true on independent grounds.

But not all people believe in the religion of their parents. Some people convert into a religion. Sometimes they are forced to do this by circumstances. For example, in some countries, it is not easy belonging to a religion different from that which the majority of people hold to be true. I am sure you can think of many examples of such places for yourself. The people who are coerced in such circumstances to convert to a religion to escape persecution or oppression are not doing it for a good reason. That belonging to a given religion might make your life easier doesn't make that religion true, obviously. So that's another bad reason for your list. By the way, historically speaking, such conversions are not uncommon and have happened on a large scale in the past.

Another reason people hold certain beliefs might be that holding those beliefs makes them feel better about something or other. For example, it might make them anxious to think that they will be permanently separated from their parents or other loved ones by death and so if their religion offers them a belief in an eternal afterlife, as many religions do, where they will be reunited with friends and family, it may make them feel calmer. Or belonging to a religious faith might provide some people with a feeling of solidarity and community and a pleasurable method of occasional social interaction with others. But just because something makes you feel good is not a good reason to believe it is true. It would make me feel very good to believe that I am about to inherit a large sum of money from an unknown relative in the near future but that doesn't make it true and it would be quite foolish of me to have such a belief without strong evidence that it actually is true.

Your job is to keep thinking about those people who hold obviously wrong, even ridiculous beliefs by your lights and compiling your list of the reasons why they do so. You can teach yourself much more about this by reading books about the origins of religious beliefs and what weakness there are in human psychology and emotional makeup that allow such wrong notions to be held true by so many otherwise intelligent people. You might be surprised to know how many of the religious ideas which seem crazy to you take advantage of well-known problems in human cognition to perpetuate themselves from one generation to the next. Humans everywhere seem to share the same mental flaws, just as they do physical ones, like having a useless

appendix, and psychologists have made a lot of progress studying these phenomena. I have appended a very short list of books to this note to get you started.

And now we come to the last and very easy step. Once you feel that you have a fairly solid understanding of the many reasons why those people in other religions manage to believe such wrong things, and you are no longer puzzled by the strangeness of their convictions, all you have to do to strengthen your own faith is to just make sure that none of those bad reasons overlap with your reasons for holding your religious faith. That's it. After you have completed this exercise, your faith in your own religion will be stronger than ever because you will know that you believe what you believe for good reasons.

Best wishes, Abbas

JESUS ANSWERS MO'S DOUBTS BY APPEALING TO THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY: JESUS

Mohammed: The barmaid got me thinking: How can we know what we claim to know? You say you are the son of God, but how can you really be sure of that?

Jesus: Faith.

Mo: But faith in what? Faith that God would not deceive you? OK, but how do you know that you're not deceiving yourself – that you only imagine you're the son of God? Ultimately, when people say they have faith, they mean they have faith in their own judgment, they're too smart to be wrong. Can you really justify such faith in yourself?

Jesus: Sure, I can – I'm the son of God.

THINK AGAIN ABOUT THAT TRIP TO RIYADH, ALL YOU TERRORISTS

(Based on and excerpted from "New laws in Saudi Arabia declare that atheists are terrorists", by Sarah Gray, on Salon.com, 4/3/2014)

Saudi Arabia is cracking down on dissent. Human Rights Watch issued a report explaining that "a series of related royal decrees ... appears to criminalize virtually all dissident thought or expression as terrorism".

Last month, yet another regulation was released by the Saudi interior ministry. This one specifically defines who is and is not a terrorist organization in the eyes of the law. There is a long list of who is – and what actions are – defined as a "terrorist", and here's the very first one.

Article 1: "Calling for atheist thought in any form, or calling into question the fundamentals of the Islamic religion on which this country is based."

Someone remind me: Why is Saudi Arabia our "ally"? – JR

PROBLEM SOLVING, THE PEANUTS WAY

Linus: If you have some problem in your life, should you try to solve it right away, or think about it for a while?

Charlie Brown: Oh, think about it ... by all means ... I think you should think about it.

Linus: To give yourself time to do the right thing?

Charlie Brown: No, to give it time to go away.

NEW HUMANIST VIDEOS BY STEPEHN FRY

Stephen Fry – brilliant actor, director, writer, atheist and humanist – and the 21st century UK's reincarnation of Oscar Wilde and Noel Coward, has made four short "That's Humanism" videos for the British Humanist Association:

- How Do We Know What Is True?
- What Should We Think About Death?
- What Makes Something Right Or Wrong?
- How Can I Be Happy?

They are delightfully illustrated and animated, are available at <https://humanism.org.uk/> or on YouTube, and are highly recommended by Your Editor and by our own American Humanist Association. Check 'em out.

Let's start with ...

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT IS TRUE?

Stephen Fry

How do we know what's true? Ever since human beings have been capable of thought we have asked big questions about how the world around us works. Some people have believed that there's another reality beyond the one we can perceive with our normal senses, a supernatural world, where there might be ghosts and goblins, gods and demons. They thought that knowledge can come from this source: from supernatural revelations, prophetic visions, or divinely-inspired books.

Others have thought that the way to learn is by observing the world around us carefully, and in detail, forming ideas about why things behave as they do, testing those ideas through experiments, refining them in the light of experience, then testing them again.

Out of all the various methods that people have tried to use to find out how the world works, observation, experimentation, and the testing of theories against evidence have the best track record. Prophets have predicted the end of the world on many occasions, but we are still here. Ancient holy books contain a description of the universe which has turned out to be totally inaccurate. If asked to choose between taking a medicine prescribed by a doctor whose methods are based on experiment, and one who has selected medicine for you based on his visions, you would probably not choose the medicine from the vision.

We may never know everything. But the testing of theories against evidence has proved itself again and again to be a reliable way to gain any knowledge about how the world around us works. Through science, we have cured deadly diseases, created amazing technologies, and learned things about the universe that fill us with wonder. When we want to know what is true and what is false, there is no better method.

When one person suffers from a delusion it is called insanity; when many people suffer from a delusion it is called religion. — Robert Pirsig, philosopher, author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

THE ANSWER TO THEISTIC CHALLENGES: EMERGENCE

Walter Balcerak

Apologetists for theism often rely on two main arguments to challenge the thinking of secularists and skeptics. The complexity of the universe and life, they assert, requires a creator. They also charge scientists and skeptics with reductionism, the view that all living systems ultimately can be explained by the laws of physics. However, both assertions are overturned by a concept that has gained increasing acceptance among scientists. It is called emergence.

The underlying concept of emergence is that complex systems, including life, don't need a creator or designer: under certain conditions they emerge naturally, without any external input. Physics Nobel Laureate P. W. Anderson puts it this way: "At each level of complexity entirely new properties appear. Psychology is not applied biology, nor is biology applied chemistry. We can now see that the whole becomes not merely more, but very different from the sum of its parts."

Systems scientist Peter Corning stresses that living systems cannot be reduced to the underlying laws of physics. "Rules, or laws, have no causal efficacy; they do not in fact 'generate' anything. They serve merely to describe regularities and consistent relationships in nature."

The most famous theistic argument based on complexity was offered by William Paley in his 1809 book, *Natural Theology*. If you stub your toe on a stone, he reasoned, you can't assume anything about the stone's origin. If, on the other hand, you find a watch, you are justified in assuming the existence of an intelligent watchmaker. Similarly, he contended, the complexity of life requires an intelligent creator.

This creationist or designer argument was refuted almost 60 years later by Darwin's theory of evolution, which teaches that the complexity of living things is determined by the blind forces of variation and natural selection.

In addition to refuting creationism, emergence corrects the shortcomings of reductionism. "(M)any, but not all physicists, are giving up on the adequacy of reductionism alone as a scientific principle to explain the properties of the world," says Stuart A. Kauffman, a professor of biological sciences and physics and astronomy. "In its stead a new scientific world view is starting to come into view: Emergence."

According to Kauffman, the principles of emergence apply not just to physical and biological systems, but to economics, human culture, and even god-free spirituality. "In short," he says, "in wondrous ways . . . our universe, biosphere, econosphere, and culture are ceaselessly creative and emergent. The two cultures, science and humanities, stand united in this world view. Meaning and value have a scientific base."

Kauffman strongly supports secular humanist beliefs

and values: "On the other side of this vast divide [between] those who hold to a transcendent God and His authority for meaning and values, are the innumerable secular humanists, children of the enlightenment and contemporary science, who hold firmly to reality as revealed by science, find values in their love for their families and friends, a general sense of fairness and a morality that needs no basis in God's word. Yet we secular humanists have paid an unspoken price for our firm sense that (reductionist) science tells us what is real. ... The two cultures, science and humanities, remain firmly un-united. And equally important, we have ... come to believe that spirituality is inherently co-localized with a belief in God, and that without such a belief, spirituality is inherently foolish, questionable, without foundation, wishful thinking, silly.

"I would like to begin a discussion about the first glimmerings of a new scientific world view — beyond reductionism to emergence and radical creativity in the biosphere and human world. This emerging view finds a natural scientific place for value and ethics, and places us as co-creators of the enormous web of emerging complexity that is the evolving biosphere and human economics and culture. In this scientific world view, we can ask: Is it more astonishing that a God created all that exists in six days, or that the natural processes of the creative universe have yielded galaxies, chemistry, life, agency, meaning, value, consciousness, culture without a Creator. In my mind and heart, the overwhelming answer is that the truth as best we know it, that all arose with no Creator agent, all on its wondrous own, is so awesome and stunning that it is God enough for me and I hope much of humankind."

(The Kauffman quotes above were excerpted from his essay Beyond Reductionism: Reinventing the Sacred. It is available at edge.org/beyond-reductionism.)

LUNATIC LOGIC: 8 PEOPLE ≠ 1 BIBLE

John Rafferty

(Based on a Boston Globe report, forwarded by Bill Blythe)

Remember that Mid-March gas-leak explosion in East Harlem that flattened two buildings and killed eight people? Terrible, right? Well, if you're an idiot theist there's an upside to every calamity.

An uplifting moment from the painstaking recovery effort came Saturday as crews pulled a large water-damaged Bible from the rubble of the Spanish Christian Church, which had been located in one of the two buildings. About two dozen people carried the Bible in a solemn procession near the East Harlem site. Said Rick del Rio, a bishop at The Church of God:

"This was in the depths of the rubble. Somehow God protected it."

Okay, then. Bummer about the people, though, y'know.

Religion gives people hope in a world torn apart by religion. — Jon Stewart

WHY WE LIVE IN NEW YORK #71

John Rafferty

Mississippi has one of the highest teen birth rates of any state in the Union, 50 births per teen, as compared to the U.S. average of 31 (2011 figures), as well as one of the highest rates of sexually transmitted disease (STDs) among teens.

So, in 2012 the legislature moved to require school districts to provide abstinence-only or so-called abstinence-plus sex education programs to students. So, at least 71 of the state's 151 school districts have opted to teach abstinence-plus sex education, a nominal improvement from previous decades.

Good news, right? Forward march into the last century, right?

Not if Bubba and Earlene May are doing the teaching. In the relatively sophisticated (for Mississippi) city of Oxford, one school district is teaching that sexually active girls are like dirty chocolate. A teacher unwraps a Peppermint Patty chocolate and directs all the kids in class to pass it around to each other, hand-to-grubby-hand, then asks, "Now, who wants to eat that?"

Lesson learned: Sex is dirty, filthy, and you should save it for someone you love and marry.

A liberated woman has sex before marriage and a job after.
– Gloria Steinem, *who just turned 80*

WHAT (ELSE) SHSNY MEMBERS ARE DOING ...

• *Through Fri, May 9*, daily 11am-5pm: Artists **Irene Christensen** and **Donna Marxer** will show works in the Roundtable Annual exhibition at The National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South.

• *Tue, May 6*, 7pm: SHSNY President **John Rafferty** will read from – and lead a CFI-Long Island Book Club discussion of – his book, *A Fit of Pique: Dispatches from the Culture Wars*, at the Jericho Public Library, 1 Merry Lane, Jericho.

• *Tue, May 20*, 6pm: **Dorothy Kahn** will address Manhattan History Buffs on How the Discovery of American Enabled the Copernican Revolution, at MHB's monthly dinner/talk at Lili's restaurant, 1500 Third Ave. (83-84 Sts).

• *Sun, May 25*, 3pm: Artist/Poet **Ellen Peckham** will read her work from *The Widow's Handbook*, a "wonderful anthology of poetic reflections on grief and survival", at the Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. Info at corneliastreet-cafe.com

• *Sat, June 7*, thru July 13, Artist **Harvey Offenhartz** is exhibiting new abstract work in his show, "Drawing Color", at the Souterrian Gallery, West Cornwall, CT.

• *Mon, Jun 9*, 6:30pm: Lawyer/ Activist **Jonathan Engel** will speak to the Humanists and Freethinkers of Fairfield County (CT) on "Engel v. Vitale, Prayer in the Schools, and the Separation of Church and State" at the Silver Star Diner, 210 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT. (Exit 14 off of I-95). Admission is free – food and drink for sale by the diner.

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Sunday, May 4 at Pete's
Day of Reason Brunch
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