

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

September, 2013

Vacation's over, so let's go to work. Can we overturn the worst court decision since *Dred Scott*? Do we want to go to "atheist church"? Do we even know what kind of atheists we are? Some of our readers do. We consult Sam Harris on free will, Dan Savage on Bible b.s., Joyce Carol Oates on Islamism, Oscar Wilde on beauty, Art Harris on treason, and the Pope on gays. We out Barney Frank and ax Rush Limbaugh, and Your Editor shamelessly self-promotes on page 7. – JR

WE CAN OVERTURN "CITIZENS UNITED"

(Excerpted from *DailyKos*, 7/4/2013)

If it's going to take a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, count Oregon in. On Monday, 7/1, it became the 16th state to call on Congress to pass an amendment overturning that 2010 decision.

The bipartisan measure passed the state House by a 48-11 margin, with 14 Republican votes (the majority of state House Republicans), and the state Senate by a 17-13 margin, with one Republican voting in favor.

Oregon joins four other states—Delaware, Maine, West Virginia and Illinois—that have called for a constitutional amendment over just the past two months. All of the resolutions this year have passed with bipartisan support in at least one chamber. This is an issue that affects every American, regardless of political affiliation.

The other states that have called for an amendment to overturn *Citizens United* are California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Connecticut, Maryland, Colorado, and Montana. The Washington, D.C., Council has, too.

Getting corporate money out of politics is the key to restoring a healthy democracy, to electing public officials who care more about their voting constituents than their donating constituents, and to seeing nine Supreme Court justices who care more about the rule of law than the rule of the dollar.

Most of Oregon's congressional delegation is cosponsoring resolutions to overturn *Citizens United*. Are your representatives?

Stand with Daily Kos and CREDO by signing our petition urging your members of Congress to pass a constitutional amendment overturning the *Citizens United* decision and ending corporate personhood.

WHY NOT NEW YORK?

John Rafferty

I did not sign the petition because I think online petitions have all the impact of an uppercut punch by a sleepy toddler.

Instead, I emailed my own messages to Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and to my Congresswoman, Carolyn Maloney, on July 4:

"Are you in favor of a constitutional amendment to overturn the *Citizens United* ruling? Are you willing to sponsor such an amendment?"

On the same date I wrote Governor Cuomo: "Will you ask New York's legislature to call on Congress to pass a constitutional amendment overturning the *Citizens United* ruling?"

To State Senator Liz Krueger: "Will you support a measure in the NY State Senate calling on Congress to pass a constitutional amendment overturning the *Citizens United* ruling, as 16 other states have? Will you sponsor such a measure?"

And to my Assemblyman, Dan Quart: "Will you support a measure in the NY State Assembly calling on Congress to pass a constitutional amendment overturning the *Citizens United* ruling, as 16 other states have? Will you sponsor such a measure?"

In each message I included my postal address to identify me as a constituent. I got immediate automatic "Thank-you-for-your-message" responses from every one, but as of August 25 I have not received a single substantive reply. So I'm going to do it all again.

And if you who are reading this—in whatever state you live—will do the same: via email, snail-mail, and phone, insisting on a reply, demanding an answer, then maybe we can make a difference. Maybe we can get this done.

Let's do it.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Rafferty, *President/Editor*; Robert A. Murtha, Jr., *Vice President*; Donna Marxer, *Treasurer*; Lee Loshak, *Secretary*; Remo Cosentino; Arthur Harris; Brian Lemaire; Elaine Lynn; Carl Marxer; Irv Millman; Carlos Mora; John Wagner; Mike Weiss
SHSNY, P.O. Box 7661, F.D.R. Station, New York, NY 10150-7661 / 212-308-2165 / www.shsny.org

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

Articles published in PIQUE are archived in www.shsny.org. They may be reprinted, in full or in part, in other newsletters.

SHSNY is an Affiliated Local Group of the Council for Secular Humanism, and a Charter Chapter of the American Humanist Association.

THE ATHEIST ASSEMBLY COMES TO AMERICA, VIA A “DIVE BAR” IN TIMES SQUARE

John Rafferty

So, the Atheist Assembly – the monthly Sunday-morning imitation of church services that has been hugely successful in the UK – arrived in New York on June 30 (too late to report in July PIQUE). I attended, as did SHSNY Board members John Wagner and Carl Marxer.

The setting was, indeed, a “dive bar” (as the *Daily News* put it), but was okay. The back room space was packed with about 80 people, half of whom were standing (including me at the extreme back – I hadn’t allowed for Pride Day traffic – with Rich Sander and Michael DeDora). The “service” itself was uninspiring, with talks by a couple of guys promoting their film, somebody else promoting I don’t know what, and Michael welcoming the movement to New York. A competent trio and singer juiced up the crowd, which did mostly sing along to a couple of rock-solid oldies: “Proud Mary”, and I forget what.

Then the star, Sanderson Jones, took over, and lit up the group. As ebullient, wheedling, demanding, cajoling as any televangelist, and funny! A stand-up comic by trade, he congratulated everyone for having come, praising us all for our perspicacity and bravery, and even led a “Moment of Silence” for “silent reflection or meditation”, which sort of bothered me – although why it should I can’t explain.

Finally, in a rip-roaring finale, he promised that instead of coming back in November, he would see to it that there was another NYC Assembly *next month!*

When, just before his big finish he encouraged everyone to introduce themselves to their neighbors and chat, I was able to scoot between groups to a better vantage point, and so saw other people you’d know, like Beth Zucker, Chris Everett, Willy Fuchs, Eileen Regan, and Jane Everhardt. Good mix of younger people (i.e., 30-somethings) in the group, and maybe a dozen African-Americans, both good signs.

Anyway, my report: Nothing particularly wrong with the part before Sanderson Jones, everything right in the second half with him. I agreed with Carl’s opinion that “the ‘churchyness’ of the event made him a little uncomfortable, but that is what most people are probably looking for. I will go to the next one.”

So I did, too, especially to see how it would hold up without Sanderson Jones.

To my surprise, the crowd at the July 28 Assembly seemed even a little larger than June’s. Michael Dorian of NYC Atheists “testified” about losing his religion; the guitarist and the girl singer offered a hymn (“Benny & The Jets”?!); and there was a short charity pitch, but no “collection-plate”-passing. Rich Sander was present again, as were Austin Dacey, Giddian Beer, Ben Forman, Willie Fuchs – and Matthew Chapman, who “sermonized” on his film “The Ledge”, and the changing relationship between artist and audience in the age of social media.

Interesting, but I think I’ve had enough.

SIX TYPES OF ATHEIST: WHICH TYPE ARE YOU?

Amanda Marcotte

(Reprinted from “The 6 Types of Atheists and Non-Believers in America”, on *AlterNet.org*, 7/11/2013)

With the rising number of people in America – now nearly one in five – who have no religious affiliation at all, more people are asking questions about who exactly these unbelievers are. Not all of them identify as atheist or agnostic or non-believer, but plenty do, and while there are many people offering to defend this particular community, few are willing to speak for them.

After all, unlike religious believers, non-believers have no authorities, no hierarchies, no theology, nothing for us to look at to determine exactly who these people are. In addition, the public image of atheists, who are a diverse group in reality, is being shaped by a handful of vocal white men – Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens being the most famous – who, while well-respected in the atheist community, are not really representative*.

Because of this, researchers at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga decided to poll and interview non-believers to find out what kind of people abandon religious faith and why. Based on this research, the project authors were able to divide non-believers into six basic categories, some of which may surprise you.

First things first: While atheists have a public image of being dogmatic and belligerent – an image that famous atheists like Bill Maher only end up reinforcing – researchers found that to absolutely not be true. Only 15 percent of non-believers even fit in the category of those who actively seek out religious people to argue with, and the subset that are dogmatic about it are probably even smaller than that. But that doesn’t mean that the majority of non-believers are just sitting around, twiddling their thumbs and not letting atheism affect their worldview. On the contrary, researchers found that the majority of non-believers take some kind of action in the world to promote humanism, atheism or secularism. Here is a breakdown of the types.

1. Intellectual Atheist/Agnostic. By far the most common kind of non-believer, at nearly 38 percent, this group enjoys intellectual discourse, and while they’re often very certain about their beliefs, they’re not belligerent about it. These types often get mistaken for dogmatic atheists, however, because they have a tendency to join skeptic groups or otherwise find avenues to discuss non-belief with others. However, as the researchers note, these non-believers “associate with fellow intellectuals regardless of the other’s ontological position”, so long as their friends are “versed and educated on various issues of science, philosophy, ‘rational’ theology, and common socio-political religious dialog”. They like debating religion, but aren’t particularly interested in chasing down believers to give them a hard time.

2. Activist. This group also gets commonly accused of being dogmatic, but like the intellectual atheist, while

they're firm in their beliefs, they're intellectually flexible and don't prioritize attacking believers. Instead, they are motivated by a strong sense of humanist values to make change in the world, often making related issues—such as feminism, gay rights, or the environment—a priority over simply advocating atheism. This group also advocates for a better, more egalitarian atheist community, according to researchers. "They seek to be both vocal and proactive regarding current issues in the atheist and/or agnostic socio-political sphere." Because of this, they unfortunately attract a lot of abuse from a small but vocal minority of atheists who disapprove of linking secularism with larger social justice issues, but they do have the numbers on their side. They are the second biggest sub-category of non-believers, making up 23 percent of non-believers.

3. Seeker-Agnostic. This group, which makes up 7.6 percent of non-believers, are unlikely to be as critical of religion as most other groups. They prioritize not-knowingness. If you ever come across people saying, "I don't know, but neither do you!" regarding religious belief, you're dealing with a seeker-agnostic. They don't really believe in anything, but they are uncomfortable committing to non-belief completely. They routinely get accused of intellectual cowardice by atheists, but researchers defend them, saying, "For the Seeker-Agnostic, uncertainty is embraced."

4. Anti-Theist. This group tends to get conflated with all atheists by believers, but they only constitute 15 percent of non-believers. Like the Intellectual Atheists, they like to argue about religion, but they are much more aggressive about it and actively seek out religious people in an effort to disabuse them of their beliefs. While most atheists limit themselves to supporting a more secular society, anti-theists tend to view ending religion as the real goal. While plenty are aggressively angry, researchers point out that this isn't necessarily a bad thing: "For example, many of the Antitheist typology had responded as recently deconverted from religious belief or socially displeased with the status quo, especially in high social tension-based geographies such as the Southeastern United States", and being combative with believers might help them establish their own sense of self and right to non-belief.

5. Non-Theist. They don't believe in any gods, but don't think about those who do very often. In such a religious society, simply opting out of caring much about religion one way or another is nearly impossible, which is why this group is only 4.4 percent of non-believers. "A Non-Theist simply does not concern him or herself with religion," researchers explain. In some skeptical/atheist circles, this group is disparagingly referred to as "shruggies", because they simply shrug when asked their opinion on religion. However, some quite likely are indifferent because they're fortunate enough to live in a bubble where belief doesn't matter one way or another.

6. Ritual Atheist/Agnostic. While you might think the anti-theist is the non-believer type that scares Christians the most, it turns out that it may very well be the Ritual Atheist/Agnostic. This group, making up 12.5 percent of atheists,

doesn't really believe in the supernatural, but they do believe in the community aspects of their religious tradition enough to continue participating. We're not just talking about atheists who happen to have a Christmas tree, but who tend to align themselves with a religious tradition even while professing no belief. "Such participation may be related to an ethnic identity (e.g. Jewish)," explain researchers, "or the perceived utility of such practices in making the individual a better person."

The Christian Post clearly found this group most alarming, titling their coverage of this study "Researchers: 'Ritual' Atheists and Agnostics Could Be Sitting Next to You in Church", and giving the first few paragraphs over to concern that people in your very own congregation may not actually believe in your god. The atheism, it seems, might be coming from inside the house (of God).

While a lot of non-believers don't really do much when it comes to acting on their non-belief, for those who are trying to create a more organized atheist community that takes up activism and offers community, there is plenty of reason to hope. The Intellectual, the Activist and the Anti-theist all, to one extent or another, discuss their non-belief with others or let their non-belief have significant impact on their activities. Taken together, they make up nearly three-quarters of non-believers. That's a big group that has a lot in common, and perhaps that energy could be harnessed as a force of good.

**Comment 1:* Who says Dawkins and Hitchens are "not representative"?

Comment 2: Okay, which type of atheist are you? Are we? Let's compare our non-beliefs in our Discussion at our monthly brunch Sunday, September 15 – see page 6. – JR

THE WORLD IS GETTING LESS RELIGIOUS ...

(Reprinted from *The Voice of Sanity, Newsletter Of the Upstate S.C. Secular Humanists, August, 2013*)

Globally – according to the WIN-Gallup International "Religion and Atheism Index" collected from 57 countries – the number of those claiming to be religious has dropped by nine percent from 2005 to 2011, while the number of people identifying themselves as atheists has risen by three percent.

Four countries have experienced a drop in religiosity in their populations greater than 20 percent between 2005 and 2012. France and Switzerland saw decreases of 21 percent, while Ireland's number of faithful declined by 22 percent, and Vietnam's by 23 percent.

The top 19 atheist countries included China, Japan, Czech Republic, France, South Korea, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Iceland, Australia, and Ireland. The most religious countries were Ghana, Nigeria, Armenia, Fiji, and Macedonia.

The United States experienced a 13 percent decline in religiosity since 2005. In terms of comparative religiosity, the United States fell in the middle of the list, just below the Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza), Lebanon, and South Africa.

... AND THAT'S A GOOD THING

(From "Immoral Majority, ThisIsTrue.com, excerpting The Knoxville (TN) News Sentinel, forwarded by Mike Tuchman)

Who's on top when it comes to morality? Atheists, by many measures, according to several studies. In the U.S., atheists are about 10 percent of the general population, but make up only 0.2 percent of the prison population, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Meanwhile, Catholics make up 39 percent of prisoners, Protestants 35 percent, Muslims seven percent, and Jews two percent.

As far as stability in "traditional marriage", according to a study by the Barna Research Group, a religious polling organization, fundamentalist Christians are the most likely to divorce; while atheists tie for least likely with Catholics and Lutherans.

Meanwhile, the best educated are reformed Jews, Unitarian Universalists, and atheists; the worst educated, according to a Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Survey, are Jehovah's Witnesses, black Protestants, and fundamentalist Christians.

Other studies find that as a whole, the most religious countries have the highest crime rates, the highest rate of sexually transmitted diseases, and the highest rate of teen pregnancies.

Comment: We know, we know. But it's good to see it all in print, isn't it? - JR

OSCAR WILDE EXPLAINS WHY SO MANY OF US ARE NOT BEAUTIFUL

(From The Picture of Dorian Gray, unearthed for us and forwarded by Harry Graber)

Beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself a mode of exaggeration, and destroys the harmony of any face. The moment one sits down to think, one becomes all nose, or all forehead, or something horrid. Look at the successful men in any of the learned professions. How perfectly hideous they are!

Except, of course, in the Church. But then in the church they don't think. A bishop keeps on saying at the age of eighty what he was told to say when he was a boy of eighteen, and as a natural consequence he always looks absolutely delightful.

SAM HARRIS, WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE IN FREE WILL, CONFOUNDS THE ISSUE FURTHER

Sam Harris

(Reprinted from "Free Will and the Reality of Love" at www.samharris.org/blog/)

Many readers continue to express confusion—even outrage and anguish—over my position on free will. Some are convinced that my view is self-contradictory. Others are persuaded of its truth but find the truth upsetting. They say that if cutting through the illusion of free will undermines hatred, it must undermine love as

well. They worry about a world in which we view ourselves and other people as robots. I have heard from readers struggling with clinical depression who find that reading my book *Free Will*, or my blog articles on the the topic, has only added to their troubles. Perhaps there is more to say...

First, I'd like to address the common charge that it is simply self-contradictory to talk about the illusoriness of free will while using words such as "choice", "intention", "decision", "deliberation", and "effort". If free will is an illusion, it would seem, these qualities of mind must be illusory as well. In one sense, this is true. It would perhaps be more precise to speak of "apparent choices". But the distinction isn't generally relevant at the level of our experience. In terms of experience, there is no contradiction between truth and appearance. Even in the absence of free will, I find that I can speak of choices, intentions, and efforts without hedging.

Consider the present moment from the point of view of my conscious mind: I have decided to write this blog post, and I am now writing it. I almost didn't write it, however. In fact, I went back and forth about it: I feel that I've said more or less everything I have to say on the topic of free will and now worry about repeating myself. I started the post, and then set it aside. But after several more emails came in, I realized that I might be able to clarify a few points. Did I choose to be affected in this way? No. Some readers were urging me to comment on depressing developments in "the Arab Spring". Others wanted me to write about the practice of meditation. At first I ignored all these voices and went back to working on my next book. Eventually, however, I returned to this blog post. Was that a choice? Well, in a conventional sense, yes. But my experience of making the choice did not include an awareness of its actual causes. Subjectively speaking, it is an absolute mystery to me why I am writing this.

My workflow may sound a little unconventional, but my experience of writing this article fully illustrates my view of free will. Thoughts and intentions arise; other thoughts and intentions arise in opposition. I want to sit down to write, but then I want something else—to exercise, perhaps. Which impulse will win? For the moment, I'm still writing, and there is no way for me to know why—because at other times I'll think, "This is useless. I'm going to the gym," and that thought will prove decisive. What finally causes the balance to swing? I cannot know subjectively—but I can be sure that electrochemical events in my brain decide the matter. I know that given the requisite stimulus (whether internal or external), I will leap up from my desk and suddenly find myself doing something else. As a matter of experience, therefore, I can take no credit for the fact that I got to the end of this paragraph.

But the apparent reality of choice remains intact. It isn't wrong to say that I decided to write this post—and it certainly isn't wrong to say that my writing it requires some conscious effort. I can't write it by accident, or in my sleep. The writing itself is clearly the product of my unconscious mind—I cannot know, for instance, why one word or bit of

syntax comes forward and another doesn't—but the entire project requires consciousness to come into being. Certain things cannot be thought or done unless they are warmed by the light of conscious awareness. I am, after all, writing about what it is like to be me at this moment—and it would be like nothing to be me without consciousness.

What many people seem to be missing is the positive side of these truths. Seeing through the illusion of free will does not undercut the reality of love, for example—because loving other people is not a matter of fixating on the underlying causes of their behavior. Rather, it is a matter of caring about them as people and enjoying their company. We want those we love to be happy, and we want to feel the way we feel in their presence. The difference between happiness and suffering does not depend on free will—indeed, it has no logical relationship to it (but then, nothing does, because the very idea of free will makes no sense). In loving others, and in seeking happiness ourselves, we are primarily concerned with the character of conscious experience.

Hatred, however, is powerfully governed by the illusion that those we hate could (and should) behave differently. We don't hate storms, avalanches, mosquitoes, or flu. We might use the term "hatred" to describe our aversion to the suffering these things cause us—but we are prone to hate other human beings in a very different sense. True hatred requires that we view our enemy as the ultimate author of his thoughts and actions. Love demands only that we care about our friends and find happiness in their company. It may be hard to see this truth at first, but I encourage everyone to keep looking. It is one of the more beautiful asymmetries to be found anywhere.

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR LIVING IN A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

1. Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
2. Do not think it worthwhile to produce belief by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
3. Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
4. When you meet with opposition, even if it is from your husband or your children, endeavor to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
5. Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
6. Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you.
7. Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
8. Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
9. Be scrupulously truthful, even when truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
10. Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that is happiness.

ONE SMALL STEP FOR A BROADCASTER, ONE GIANT STEP FOR MANKIND.

Last year Rush Limbaugh trashed Georgetown law student Sandra Fluke as a "slut" for testifying before Congress on the need for health-insurance coverage of contraception. In response, large segments of the feminist, liberal, and humanist communities organized "Stop Rush" boycotts of the goods and services advertised on his daily show.

Mirabile dictu! It worked.

Rush's broadcaster, Cumulus Media, the nation's second biggest, had a \$2.4 million decline in revenues related to talk-radio in the first quarter this year. Second-quarter losses are as yet unreported, but expected to be at least as great.

So Cumulus is dropping Rush at the end of the year.

Oh, and Mini-Rush, Sean Hannity, too.

AND JUST IN CASE CUMULUS CONSIDERS CHANGING ITS MIND ...

Prachi Gupta

(Excerpted from Salon.com, "Rush Limbaugh: Maybe Oprah was denied handbag because she's 'fat'", 8/9/2013)

At long last, anthropomorphized blowfish Rush Limbaugh has offered his unsolicited opinion on Oprah Winfrey's unpleasant encounter with racism. On his radio program today, Limbaugh posited that perhaps a store assistant in Switzerland refused to show the celebrity a handbag "because The Oprah's fat".

Winfrey told "Entertainment Tonight's" Nancy O'Dell about the incident, during which she asked to see a \$40,000 handbag several times, but was told "No. It's too expensive." The Switzerland tourism office, along with the store's owner, have issued Winfrey an apology. "I could've had the whole blow-up thing and thrown down the black card, but why do that? But that clearly is, you know ... it (racism) still exists. Of course it does," Winfrey said.

On his program, The Rush hypothesized that because "we don't know that the sales person based her judgment on The Oprah's skin color", the store clerk could have denied Winfrey on other grounds: "Maybe it's because The Oprah's fat? Well that's another — how was The Oprah dressed? I mean she didn't look like The Oprah obviously. Was she wearing a jump suit with tennis shoes? Maybe Air Jordans that weren't laced up?"

Comment: Seriously, fat jokes from Rush Limbaugh? And now that his listener base is shrinking to the die-hard "ditto heads" and only the shameless are left among his advertisers, perhaps the Fathead-In-Chief will get only more vicious, if that's possible.

And by the way, Rush, "Air Jordans"? How 1998. — JR

A USEFUL NEW WORD Mumpsimus

(MUMP-suh-muhs), noun

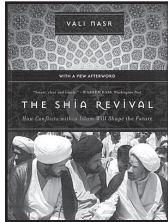
1. A view stubbornly held in spite of evidence that it's wrong.
2. A person who holds such a view.

SHSNY CALENDAR: SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2013

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURSDAY, SEPT 5, 6:30 pm
 in the front room of
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK
28 East 35 St. (Park-Mad)
 (3 doors West of the church - red door)

We'll discuss
THE SHIA REVIVAL:
How Conflicts Within Islam
Will Shape the Future
By Vali Nasr

Profiled on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*, Iranian-born scholar Vali Nasr has become one of America's leading commentators on current events in the Middle East. In this "smart, clear and timely" book (*Washington Post*), Nasr brilliantly dissects the political and theological antagonisms within Islam. He provides a unique and objective understanding of the 1,400-year bitter struggle between Shias and Sunnis, and sheds crucial light on its modern-day consequences. — *Paperback*



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

PLANNING AHEAD

Book Club: First Thursday
 at the Community Church of NY
Movie Night: Second Monday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.
Brunch: Third Sunday
 at Brabant Belgian Bistro.
Great Lectures: 4th Wednesday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.
Humanism 101: Last Monday
 (Resumes in October)
 at the Community Church of NY
 More info: www.shsn.org;
[at humanism.meetup.com/515](http://humanism.meetup.com/515);
 and 212-308-2165

Note new time for Book Club!
A six-month experiment,
starting in October:

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, OCT 3, 7-8:30 pm at
Community Church of NY
28 East 35 Street (Park-Mad)
AFTER THE ICE:
A Global Human History,
20,000 - 5,000 BC
Steven Mithen

20,000 B.C., the peak of the last ice age--the atmosphere is heavy with dust, deserts and glaciers span vast regions, and people exist in small groups, facing the threat of extinction. Drawing on the latest research in archaeology, human genetics, and environmental science, *After the Ice* takes the reader on a tour of 15,000 years of human history that is part history, part science, part time travel, offering a compelling portrayal of diverse cultures, lives, and landscapes that laid the foundations of the modern world. — *Paperback*

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, NOV 7, 7-8:30 pm
 at Community Church of NY
28 East 35 Street (Park-Mad)
THE REVENGE OF GOD:
The Resurgence of Islam,
Christianity and Judaism in
the Modern World
Gilles Kepel

From Protestant televangelists to ultra-Orthodox Jews, from Islamic militants to the "charismatic renewal", Kepel argues that they cannot be dismissed simply as a reaction to modernity. "They are true children of our time" who seek to recreate society according to a set of symbols and values in accordance with their holy scriptures. Watch out. — *Paperback*

BRUNCH & CONVERSATION
SUNDAY, SEPT 15, 12 NOON
MONTHLY CASUAL BRUNCH
Brabant Belgian Brasserie
316 East 53 Street

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

September Brunch Discussion:
What kind of atheist are you?
(if you are one - See pages 2-3)

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

Bring friends!

MONDAY, SEPT 9, 7:00 pm
SHSNY MOVIE NIGHT
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St (Lex-3rd Aves)
NOT THE MESSIAH
(He's a Very Naughty Boy)



A 90-minute hilariously comic oratorio inspired by "Monty Python's Life of Brian", filmed at the Royal Albert Hall in 2009 to celebrate 40 years of Python.

Written by ex-Python Eric Idle (who calls the musical style of this spoof of Handel's "Messiah" "baroque 'n' roll"), it includes appearances by Michael Palin, Terry Gilliam, and Terry Jones, as well as Idle's reprise of his role as Lead Singer Crucifixe singing "Always Look On the Bright Side of Life".

SHSNY Movie Night is FREE.
(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

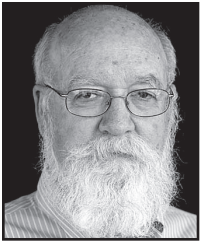
SHSNY CALENDAR: SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2013

GREAT LECTURES ON DVD

WED, SEPT 25, 7:00 pm
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St. (Lex-3rd Aves)

BREAKING THE SPELL: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon

Dr. Daniel Dennett



One of the greatest thinkers of our age tackles one of the most important questions of our time: Why people believe in god and how religion

shapes our lives and our future.

In this lecture, based on his book by the same title, Dr. Dennett shows that for most people there is nothing more important than religion. It is an integral part of their marriage, child rearing and community. Dennett takes a hard look at this phenomenon and asks: Where does our devotion to god come from and what purpose does it serve? Is religion a blind evolutionary compulsion or a rational choice?

In a spirited investigation that ranges widely through history, philosophy, and psychology, Dennett explores how organized religion evolved from folk beliefs and why it is such a potent force today. Deftly and lucidly he contends that "belief in belief" has fogged any attempt to rationally consider the existence of god and the relationship between divinity and human need.

Great Lectures Night is FREE

(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

LIKE SHSNY ON FACEBOOK

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

AND MEET US ON MEETUP

www.meetup.com/shsny-org/

Book Launch & Signing & Wine Social Thursday, Sept 26, 7-10 p.m. Cellar 58, 58 Second Ave. (3rd-4th Streets)

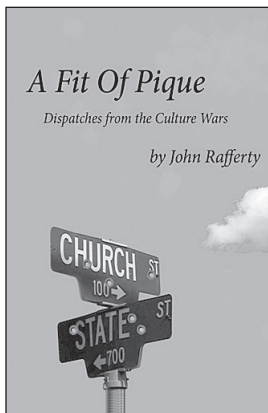
to celebrate the publication of

A FIT OF PIQUE:

Dispatches from the Culture Wars

by **John Rafferty**

President, SHSNY / Editor, *PIQUE*



Come celebrate the publication of John's first book, a collection of a decade's worth of his essays, amusements, and outraged rants in the pages of *PIQUE*. From "An Atheist's Christmas" to "Ronald McDonald & 'Touchdown Jesus'", it's all, in the opinion of philosopher Massimo Pigliucci, "... highly opinionated, incisive, always straight-shooting writing, and you won't regret spending some thoughtful - and enjoyable - hours with it."

"Simply wonderful," says NY Society for Ethical Culture Leader Anne Klaeyen, "I was hooked from the first great story."

So come ... meet, mingle with, and share a glass with your fellow humanists, rationalists, skeptics, atheists, and agnostics ... hear a couple of funny book excerpts ... and (maybe even) buy a book.

"A Fit of Pique" Book Launch and Wine Social is FREE and open to all.

(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

Can't make it September 26?

Order your copy of "A Fit of Pique" at www.shsny.org.
Use your credit card, or your PayPal account.

SAVE THE DATE:

Sunday, October 13, Noon
**SHSNY 5TH ANNUAL
FREETHOUGHT DAY BRUNCH**
at Pete's Tavern
129 East 18 Street
at which
Historian Jonathan Engel
(scion of *Engle v. Vitale*)
will recount
"The History of Church/State
Separation in America"

SAVE THE DATE:

Tuesday, October 22, 7:00 pm
at NY Society for Ethical Culture
2 West 64 Street
Secular Humanist Society
of New York &
NY Society for Ethical Culture
will present
PROF. NORMAN DORSEN
Former President, ACLU,
"The Seven Crises of the
ACLU"

COSMOLOGICAL-ONTOLOGICAL QUESTION OF THE MONTH

If the Flying Spaghetti Monster doesn't exist, why are the planets shaped like perfect meatballs?

JOYCE CAROL OATES ENRAGES ISLAMISTS AND APOLOGISTS FOR ISLAM

Frank Bruni

(Excerpted from "Tweeting Toward Sacrilege", in The New York Times Sunday Review, 7/13/2013)

(In this interview of the prolific Ms. Oates – "She teaches a full load at Princeton. She also writes long, deeply researched literary reviews. And then there's her principal vocation and claim to prolific fame: churning out at least a book a year – the novel "The Accursed", all 670 history-packed pages of it, is her most recent – along with poems, essays and more" – Mr. Bruni also discussed her interest in llamas, which we have excised here. – JR)

In the first days of July, Oates, one of America's most celebrated writers, was monitoring news from Egypt and was struck by something that I'm sure many other people noticed as well. It certainly caught my eye. Amid accounts of street protests were reports of sexual violence, an odd expression and ugly byproduct of the rage.

On her Twitter feed she saw a statistic that chilled her. And she tweeted, "Where 99.3 percent of women report having been sexually harassed & rape is epidemic – Egypt – natural to inquire: what's the predominant religion?"

This wasn't an isolated query. It belonged to a stream of musings that day, all 140 characters or fewer, on Egypt, Islam and women. She wrote, "If 99.3 percent of women reported being treated equitably, fairly, generously – it would be natural to ask: what's the predominant religion?" She also wrote, "'Rape culture' has no relationship to any 'religious culture' – how can this be? Religion has no effect on behavior at all?"

Fellow writers and intellectuals freaked. On various byways of the Internet, she was blasted for anti-Muslim bigotry. A furor, *The Wall Street Journal* called it, in a headline no less. I wondered if she wanted to take it all back.

"Well, I'm not a confrontational person, so I wouldn't do it again," she told me, at least not with the exact language she used. She said that she might instead have written, "If all these women are being harassed and raped and so forth, it's natural to ask what are *the social conditions*." You tweet and you learn. ...

The 99.3 percent figure that she cites for Egyptian women who report having been harassed is questionable, from a United Nations survey that defines harassment broadly. And she hasn't researched the "epidemic" nature of rape in Egypt. She's never been there, or anywhere in the Middle East.

But in a world in which sexual violence remains as unconscionably prevalent as in ours, shouldn't anyone who cares about women – about human rights – be asking all sorts of questions, including delicate ones? And why are questions that stray beyond the secular considered so

particularly delicate? Look critically at someone's god and gird for the lightning.

Oates calls herself a humanist, rejects the conventional notion of divinity and told me, "I don't have a sense that there are sacred institutions. To me, all religions and all churches are created by human beings." In that regard, she added, "They're not that different from, say, the whole legal culture or the medical culture or the scientific culture." About which you can say or ask almost anything at all.

She finds certain barriers and etiquette curious. "If you thought that women were being mistreated 50 miles from where you are, you might want to go help them," she said. "But if you were told it was a religious commune or something, you'd think, 'Uh-oh, that's their religion, maybe I shouldn't help them.' It's like religion is under a dome. It gives an imprimatur to behavior that shouldn't be tolerated."

Is she saying that Islam oppresses women?

Although she expressed concern about Shariah law, she didn't go that far, and she noted that most religions were patriarchies. Islam stands out for her in terms of the extra-special sensitivity surrounding discussion of it. She said that while religion in general is still coddled in the United States, where churches get tax exemptions and God is on money and in inaugural speeches, we've indeed become less reluctant over time to poke fun or hurl barbs at Christianity or Judaism. She pointed to the unapologetic examination of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests.

"We can have cartoons about the pope," she said. "Making fun of the pope just seems to be something that a Catholic might do." She added, "But if you have a cartoon, or make a film, about radical Islam, then you're in danger of your life."

Comment: Exactly. – JR

IS THE POPE CATHOLIC?

Steven Mazie

(Reprinted from *BigThink.com*, 7/31/2013)

Everyone is agog about the gay-friendly sentiment Pope Francis expressed on his flight home from Brazil. "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will", the pontiff said, "who am I to judge? They should not be marginalized. They are our brothers."

Three thoughts.

One: Believe the hype. This is a big deal. Cardinal Timothy Dolan can jump on "CBS This Morning" and insist that Pope Francis's words represent no switch in Church doctrine that says *homosexuals* are to be tolerated while *homosexual conduct* is not. The pope's message, says Dolan, "... may be something people find new and refreshing. I for one don't think it is".

But Andrew Sullivan is on the money with his analysis of why Pope Francis's line is both new and refreshing:

"The Church does not teach that homosexuality is a choice, and so, to sustain the stigmatization of homosexuality in the face of new research and data, Benedict had to opine that gay people are

intrinsically outside 'the direction of creation' and our very nature is 'somehow distorted'.

"Dolan can spin this any way he wants. But the proof of the malice was the blunt discrimination against gay priests regardless of their conduct in 2005, the absurdly brutal attacks on gay parents and gay people in the debate over civil marriage equality, and the obsessive-compulsive insistence on never hiring lay people who might conceivably be married to someone of the same gender (something never done with, say, re-married or divorced heterosexuals).

"Dolan and Benedict have never, ever spoken of gay people the way Francis did."

Two: This is genuine. The "who am I to judge?" line appears to have come from Pope Francis in a sincere spirit of toleration for gays and lesbians. The message was delivered off the cuff. It was not a prepared speech. It was not vetted by advisers. Its language was not fussed over and tweaked to prevent misunderstanding. It was an in-the-moment expression of a moral principle: people who are good-faith followers of God are welcome in the Church. Catholic doctrine should not be interpreted to shun gays and lesbians.

Three: This is not postmodernism. It is not an expression of "anything goes". It is not an abrogation of papal power. It is not an indication that the pope is uninterested in moral absolutes. Notice the two conditionals that precede the pope's humble "who am I to judge?" He said this is true if the person "seeks God", first of all, and if he "has good will", second. Gay atheists are still hellbound, presumably (along with straight atheists), as are lapsed Catholics who are gay but refuse to follow other Church teachings. And Pope Francis will judge you, or reserves the right to judge you, for character flaws and malicious acts. But just being gay does not, by itself, trigger papal condemnation. You are our brothers, gays (and lesbians). You will not be marginalized.

One wonders how Pope Francis is feeling after his impromptu press conference heard 'round the world. Does he regret stirring the pot with this, to some, heterodox message? Is he proud to have done so? Did he secretly plan to drop the toleration bomb from 35,000 feet when he shuffled back to the journalists' cabin?

Comment: If Francis' comments were not just a conversational lapse but representative of his true feelings, and if the long history of the Vatican is a guide, he'd do well to hire a food taster. – JR

WHAT IF THEY GAVE AN ANTI-GAY WAR AND NOBODY CAME?

(Excerpted from Daily Kos, 8/1/2013)

American Family Radio promoted it all. So did the Family Research Council, and Concerned Women for America. AFR's Sandy Rios predicted that "thousands of ex-gays will descend on Washington" for an August 1 press conference at the Supreme Court, an Ex-Gay Lobby Day on Capitol Hill, and an Ex-Gay Pride banquet at the Family Research Council.

All of this feverish activity was in celebration of Ex-Gay Pride Month, and in spite of what Pride Month organizer Christopher Doyle in *The Christian Post* called "un-American" LGBT rights advocates who have "shut us out", explaining that "because of all this homo-fascism and indoctrination in the media, ex-gays aren't given a fair shake."

Then came the day: August 1. Fewer than ten people showed up for the press conference and for Lobby Day, and the banquet was cancelled.

Comment: Guys, what did you expect? The only truth-tellers in America, Limbaugh and Beck and Santorum, have told you over and over: the homo-fascist conspiracists and us – their humanist and rationalist running dogs – control everything. – JR

IGNORING THE B.S. IN THE BIBLE ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

Dan Savage

(Reprinted from bigthink.com, 6/30/2013)

We ignore the bullshit in the Bible about race, about slavery. We ignore the bullshit in the Bible about women. We ignore the bullshit in the Bible that women should be killed on their wedding nights if they're not virgins, that parents have a right to murder their disobedient children.

There is all sorts of crazy bullshit in the Bible that we just ignore, that religious people ignore, and we're all going to have to get there for homosexuality. The Bible got slavery wrong, something as easy and obvious as slavery, as Sam Harris wrote in *Letter to a Christian Nation*.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount couldn't spare a sub clause to say "Don't own people"? If the Bible got slavery wrong, something easy and obvious, a moral outrage, the odds that the Bible got something as complicated as human sexuality wrong is pretty high. And what religious people have to reconcile themselves to is just dropping it, ignoring what the Bible says about gay people the way they ignore what the Bible says about polyester and lobster and figs and shrimp and women.

A LEADER OF THE RELIGIOUS LEFT SUMS UP THE SUCCESS OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

Barry W. Lynn

(Excerpted from Piety and Politics: The Right-Wing Assault on Religious Freedom)

(Rev. Lynn is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and has been the Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State since 1992. – JR)

In the end, I believe the Religious Right, through its constant promotion of various forms of civil religion, has exchanged mere symbolism for substance, formulas for faith. Its claims to be protecting our religious heritage ring hollow when one looks at what it actually defends: a bland system of watered-down religiosity forever yoked to the government, a scheme where the rules are rigged so that the perceived needs of the state always reign supreme and

religion is little more than a useful prop for policy objectives that may or may not coincide with the teachings of the founder of Christianity. ... The offense is compounded by accusing those of us who unmask it for the faux spirituality that it is of being antifaith. That is appalling.

The leadership of the Religious Right long ago traded true spirituality for something else – for prepackaged, public-consumption religion guaranteed to do nothing to advance the true mission of the church. What did they get in return? A Nativity scene flanked by elves on the town green for two weeks every year and bragging rights about God's magnificence appearing on tens and twenties.

RAND PAUL ESCALATES THE WAR ON WOMEN

Edd Doerr, President,

Americans for Religious Liberty

The loony Tea Party senator from Kentucky—and possible 2016 presidential aspirant—has launched a new attack in the war on women's rights of conscience, religious liberty and health. Seeking to upset the Supreme Court's landmark *Roe v Wade* ruling recognizing every woman's fundamental right to choose to terminate a problem pregnancy, Paul and the "National Pro-Life Alliance" are pushing, in his words, a "massive, national, grass-roots campaign" to pressure Congress to pass a theology-based "personhood at conception" bill to undo *Roe*.

Paul is soliciting donations to pay for a massive television, radio and ad campaign, planted newspaper columns "to be distributed free to all 1,437 daily newspapers" in the US, "extensive personal lobbying of key members of Congress", and an "extensive email, direct mail and telephone campaign to generate at least one million petitions to Congress".

This is really quite a stretch, considering that even voters in poor, Republican-dominated, Religious Right-leaning Mississippi defeated a "personhood at conception" state constitutional amendment by 58 to 42 percent. Senator Paul either has not read or does not agree with the constitution of his own state, which declares in its Bill of Rights, Section 5, that "No human authority shall in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience."

Comment: Hello, Little Blastula – here's your Voter I.D. – JR

TEXAS OFFICIALLY LOSES IT: BANS TAMPONS AND DIABETIC SUPPLIES FROM SENATE CHAMBER. GUNS OK

Thomas Barr

(Excerpted from HuffingtonPost, 7/12/2013)

(Editor's note: The time frame of this story is July, when women were protesting and filibustering the Religious Right-controlled Texas Senate's maniacal rush to make abortion all but impossible in the state. – JR)

Idon't even know where to start with this pathetic display of nonsense from the Texas Legislature and Department of Public Safety. It seems so much like something ripped

from *The Onion*, but sadly, it's not. The Texas Department of Public Safety forced women to hand over their tampons and pads before entering the Senate chamber today. Not only that, but they were also forcing diabetics to hand over sugar packets and other diabetes supplies which are lifelines when dealing with low blood glucose levels.

And the kicker – those with concealed handgun licenses who wanted to enter the Senate chamber were not only allowed to keep their handguns, but they were allowed to bypass the long lines and enter through a "special" CHL (concealed handgun license) line. ...

So the Texas Department of Public Safety was hard at work confiscating dangerous and deadly maxi-pads and tampons, as well as scary diabetic supplies, while Jimbob with his two teeth and his Ruger .380 was allowed immediate access to the Senate chamber. Please tell me I'm not the only one who feels like they've been transported on a first class ride to the Twilight Zone.

TRAITORS

Arthur Harris

Whistle blowing is both honorable and useful when used to divulge crimes of embezzlement, robbery, murder, political chicanery and similar malfeasance, but must be used judiciously when security is at stake.

In examining the mindset of the Snowdens and Mannings ["Is Bradley Manning a Hero? How About Edward Snowden?" – PIQUE, July], who assume the mantels of righteousness, and in doing so, aid our enemies, what makes them think that they alone can make the decisions as to what secret intelligence should be released to the public? They were not elected to any position where they have the authority, nor are they are specialists in the areas that enable them to determine the result of their actions. Full of themselves, they assume that role without regard to our needs and blithely ignore the attacks by those who would harm us.

After 9/11 and until the Boston Marathon bombings, many attacks were thwarted though phone and computer eavesdropping. Are we to end our counterintelligence programs? Must our choice to be to end eavesdropping and accept these attacks?

When our enemies attack us we have no choice but to protect ourselves and retaliate. Sadly, these protections result in a reduction of our freedoms. We now accept, because they are needed, searches before boarding airplanes, and on entering many buildings, street surveillance cameras, more police in subways, the list goes on.

Each of these actions chip away at and change the ways that we used to live. Can we afford to reverse this trend, knowing that our society is under attack from within and without? Our old, more open society, may not be possible if we are to survive.

New newspaper articles report Snowden has given documents to the Chinese that compromise our efforts, yet he blithely dismisses evidence that China has been carrying

on cyber war against the U.S. for years.

These people are traitors and should be tried and, if convicted as such, pay extreme penalties.

READERS RESPOND TO: “WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN SOMEONE ASSUMES YOU’RE A BELIEVER?”

In the July issue, Flash Light commented on CNN’s Wolf Blitzer’s on-air gaucherie of assuming that Moore, OK, tornado survivor Rebecca Vitsmun would “thank God” for being spared. Vitsmun, it turned out, is an atheist, and said so, politely. Flash offered his own hypothetical response, and wondered how other PIQUE readers would respond to the assumptions of the faithful. So did we.

To the Editor: My response to the faithful: “As a secular humanist, I don’t share your belief in a higher being. Rather I believe that all we humans have on earth are one another and we should treat our fellows as well as possible.

“I respect your faith and the views of others because I well understand how hard life is and that you need to do whatever you must to get you through the night.” (*Optional: “As long as it doesn’t keep me awake.”*) — *Donna Marxer*

To the Editor: In years past I’d try to think of some witty or at least smart-alecky riposte. But now I think the subject is too important to simply “assume” the other person is indeed an ass and to reply thusly. Instead of a remark that would end the conversation, I now think it’s better to pose a question that might further conversation and with luck increase understanding. Something like, “Did you know that lots of people don’t believe in any gods?”

At that point, I would hope to have an opportunity to mention some of the reasons why I am happily among that number. — *Brad Wheeler*

AND MORE READERS HAVE MORE TO SAY (including about “What do you say ...?”)

To the Editor: Re July PIQUE: I do agree with your comment [“Is Bradley Manning a Hero? How About Edward Snowden?”] about *NYTimes* columnist David Brooks’ “over-the-top condemnation” of NSA leaker Snowden. Brooks’ “conservative” principles are as insufferable, to me, as the sanctimony of the conservative in the “Newsroom” [“Further Thoughts for This July 4: An Honest 3-1/2 Minutes of TV”] that “newscaster McAvoy” rants about. My infrequent reading of Brooks leads me to believe that he might be the very conservative that “McAvoy” nails.

Loved the pieces on Ingersoll and Shaw: PIQUE always stir my imagination.

Finally, my answer to the question of belief: “I was born into Catholicism, was an altar boy at 7, an insecure sinner until 17. One Saturday I walked out of the confession box and had an awakening. Unlike Paul, I no longer saw a need for a God or a divine Jesus or to be forgiven for my sins. Sins were simply acts of life: not always telling the truth, thinking ungenerous thoughts about friends and family, thinking about sex, always. In college I found abundant literature

and like-minded friends to confirm my new found ‘beliefs’: that I’m the steward of my conscience, free to ‘pursue {my own} happiness in [my] own way’, in Ingersoll’s words. Religion not needed.”

Grand issue! — Remo Cosentino

To the Editor: I often get astonished responses when people ask my age and I say, “82”. Since I’m trim and fit, I invariably get “God bless you”, or “God has truly blessed you.” To which, with a smile on my face and a casual tone, I say, “No, God has had nothing to do with it. I’ve blessed myself by taking good care of myself, because I’m really accountable for my own health and for myself.”

If the response, as it usually is, is God-centered, I say, again with a friendly smile, “I really believe that each of us is self-accountable, self-responsible, and subject only to the whims of luck, circumstance and self-determination as to what happens to us.” The person usually gets my drift at that point. I never have to say, nor do I wish to, that, “I really don’t believe in the existence of a deity called God.” Once that is said, the mind of the other or others usually becomes closed or alienated, unless there is an appropriate venue for continued discussion. I believe that I make more of an impact this way.

Re “Is Bradley Manning a Hero? ...” Bradley Manning is more a hero than a traitor, very much in the tradition of Daniel Ellsberg, except that he is in the military and had to know that his life would be forfeit if caught, as he was. To be from within and to see the military imperviousness to morality at its worst, he saw only its continuation unless there was sudden and total exposure, which he did and is paying its heavy price. The same, more or less for Snowden, though the purity of his motives is much less clear. The power structure of our social entities can get clearly out of whack, if not for the sacrifices of whistle-blowers willing to put themselves in real harm’s way to reveal often glaring behaviors and bring things back into a more equitable balance, if only for a while. These people serve the social good and are to be commended for doing so.

The piece on Ingersoll was most stirring, and probably the best patriotic oratory for July 4th I’ve ever read. Quite a guy! And another great issue; my continued kudos.

— *Stan Friedland*

To the Editor: From Ingersoll right through to Shaw, July PIQUE is a delight! Thanks! — *Phil Appleman*

To the Editor: PIQUE was a gift from a friend here in San Diego. As I am sure you understand, there are so many books, magazines, newsletters, and websites to read that it sometimes becomes overwhelming. But I so enjoyed reading the current PIQUE that I have decided to subscribe! I envy you – I wish we had that many interesting and talented skeptics here in San Diego. — *Paul Wenger, President, San Diego Association for Rational Inquiry*

To the Editor: This last edition was more super good than ever! Thanks. — *Bob Miller*

To the Editor: I just want to say again how much I enjoy/appreciate PIQUE. For July the excerpted speech of Ingersoll was particularly worthy of publishing for us readers to think

about. Also the other articles provide us with much food for thought. Congratulations on your fine continuing editing. I look forward to each edition.

—Giles Kelly, Washington, D.C.

BARNEY FRANK COMES OUT. AGAIN.

As Hemant Mehta wrote in his Friendly Atheist blog August 3: “Yes, former Congressman Barney Frank is gay. Yes, Barney Frank is a liberal. Yes, Barney Frank is a Democrat from generally-progressive Massachusetts. And yes, we all probably assumed he was an atheist. But until now, his official religious affiliation had always been ‘Jewish’.”

Not any more.

(From *Real Time Overtime 8/2/2013 on HBO*)

Bill Maher: You were in a fairly safe district. You were not one of those Congresspeople who have to worry about every little thing. You could come on this show, and sit next to a pot-smoking atheist, and it wouldn't bother you.

Barney Frank: [Pointing back and forth to himself and Maher] Which pot-smoking atheist were you talking about?

Bill Maher: Ooh, you *are* liberated!

Barney Frank: No ... I regret ... I had asked my governor to appoint me to the open Senate seat and he decided not to, and I was looking forward to having my husband Jim hold the Constitution, not the Bible, and affirm, not swear, that I was gonna be a wonderful Senator.

A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR EQUALITY

(Forwarded on Facebook by Gretchen Robinson)

If elected right-wing politicians are entitled to legislate women's sex lives, shouldn't that work both ways?

Ohio left-wing Democrat Nina Turner recently introduced a bill in the state senate that would require man seeking erectile dysfunction drugs—Viagra, Cialis, Levitra—to: See a sex therapist; Get a cardiac stress test; Have a sexual partner affirm his impotence with a notarized affidavit; Receive information on the benefits of celibacy.

Why not?

A MAYORAL-ELECTION NON-RECOMMENDATION

John Rafferty

As the president (and the editor) of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, I am not allowed to promote any candidate in these pages or in any other “official” capacity. What's more, I don't want to. (And I am, by the way, still undecided in re this month's Democratic mayoral primary.)

But I can offer a humanist/rationalist opinion.

I don't care a hairy rat's arse about any candidate's sex life, real, virtual, or tweeted. What does concern me is reckless behavior, overweining hubris, and never-ending, serial mendacity.

If a candidate with such qualities should run in the New York City Democratic mayoral primary on September 10, and place higher than fourth, I'm going to stop running “Why We Live in New York” articles.

Page 7
Thursday, September 26
Book Launch Wine Social
John Rafferty's

Page 12
for Mayor
A non-recommendation

Page 2
are you? (Are you?)
What type of atheist

Page 1
Overturing Citizens United

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

