

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

February, 2016

Darwin Day/SHSNY Anniversary Celebration February 12 – Book now – page 7.

Is it Spring yet? Is the election over yet? No such luck. We look at that election from both real and comic-strip perspectives, salute Michael Newdow, contemplate a 1 percent boost in intelligence, nominate 2016's first Dumbth, and bemoan a USA that's #1. We have not one, not two, but *three* None stories, and celebrate secular Presidents Day with not one, not two, but *three* presidents. – JR

LET'S CELEBRATE PRESIDENT'S DAY WITH GEORGE WASHINGTON (Feb 22)

Of all the animosities which have existed among mankind, those which are caused by a difference of sentiments in religion appear to be the most inveterate and distressing, and ought to be deprecated. I was in hopes that the enlightened and liberal policy, which has marked the present age, would at least have reconciled Christians of every denomination so far that we should never again see the religious disputes carried to such a pitch as to endanger the peace of society. – *Letter to Edward Newenham, 1792*

AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN (Feb 12)

My earlier views of the unsoundness of the Christian scheme of salvation and the human origin of the scriptures, have become clearer and stronger with advancing years and I see no reason for thinking I shall ever change them. – *Attributed to him after Willie Lincoln's death in 1862*

I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men, who are equally certain that they represent the Divine will. I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probably that God would reveal His will to others, on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed that He would reveal it directly to me. ... But these are not the days of miracles. ... I must study the plain, physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right.

– *In a speech to clergymen regarding the struggles he was having over the Emancipation Proclamation.*

AND EVEN THIS OTHER AMERICAN SAINT (Feb 6)

We establish no religion in this country. We command no worship. We mandate no belief, nor will we ever. Church and state are, and must remain, separate.

– *Ronald Reagan*

A LINCOLN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY David Rafferty

(Excerpted from Greenwich (CT) Time, 7/26/2015)

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the murder of Abraham Lincoln. It's also presidential election season, so like clockwork, 2016's presidential hopefuls are showing up in and around Greenwich looking to raise money and, in the spirit of the anniversary, trying hard to compare themselves to the Great Emancipator.

Good luck with that. Because Lincoln was a Republican, albeit at a time when being a Republican meant being progressive, and it's the GOP hopefuls who most want to claim his mantle. He was down home and folksy. The Bible was a favorite book. The saintly picture we have of Lincoln is everything presidential aspirants want to be. Of course, today's right-wing loves Vladimir Putin's leadership skills almost as much as Lincoln's, so there is that.

But why Lincoln? The vision of Lincoln today is of a self-made man who came from nowhere. With a spine of steel and a gut feeling that he alone knew what was best for our nation in a time of crisis, he got the job done in the face of tremendous opposition. From Bush to Trump, they all want to be that tough guy who'll save us from ourselves.

Anyway, instead of wondering who the next Lincoln will be, let's mosey down factual memory lane and recall some of Lincoln's actual accomplishments (besides, you know, the big one).

Sure, he benefited from obstructionist Southern senators and congressmen being conveniently out of the way, but check this list. Lincoln moved forward the largest government jobs program at the time by authorizing the construction of the transcontinental railroad. He signed the Morrill Act, leading to the creation of land grant colleges. He began the creation of the National Parks System. And he passed the Homestead Act, the single most important step

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in helping immigrants become not just citizens but full partners in the growth of this country. Ever.

Can you imagine today's Congress or Republican presidential aspirants doing any of those things? First they'd have to admit that government programs actually work. Then admit that immigrants are actually people, not lepers. They'd check how it would play on Fox News and then continue to dither when polls show that some farmer in Iowa may not like it. Like I said, no chance.

How about Lincoln the man? Remember, Lincoln was a product of the 19th century, and if he were actually reincarnated he'd be a very different person today. The Bible was a favorite book? Sure, but so was *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the works of Shakespeare. Today he'd have the entirety of the Amazon catalog to choose from. He'd be influenced by the words and thinking of ancient writers and philosophers, as well as today's best minds. In 1860, Lincoln surrounded himself with his personal best and brightest, but their knowledge and understanding was still severely limited. Today's Lincoln would have been more well-rounded, have additional influences. He'd go to the movies and be touched by great storytelling that reflects the times we live in. He would travel outside the United States and absorb different cultures. He would visit museums and have his eyes opened to abstract imagery and breathtaking beauty that Americans in the 1800s had no idea existed. Through the miracle of modern transportation he'd see firsthand the despair facing many of his own countrymen and he'd have no choice but to be moved.

A 21st century Lincoln would resemble nothing like the inconceivably petty and cement-headed presidential candidates who hold themselves up as his heirs. For some, if they've ever visited a museum other than the Creationist Museum they'd never admit it. To be a Republican presidential aspirant today, intelligence, education, empathy, culture, must all be scorned. Science must be ignored. Time-travel Lincoln to today, give him a year to get up to speed, and once he got over the disgust he'd have at what his party has become, he'd take the lunch money of his supposed heirs and make them run home to their mamas. Then he'd stomp Hillary.

THE SECOND AMENDMENT AT WORK FOR YOU IN 2015

(From "Keystone Progress Daily Funnies 12/2/2015)

Up to November 30 in the United States of America,

there were ...

21,175 gun-related suicides

11,175 gun-related homicides

1,000 killed by police

639 children killed by guns

306 mass-shooting deaths

52 people shot by toddlers

45 school shootings

0 tyrannical governments overthrown.

You're welcome. — The National Rifle Association

WE'RE NUMBER 1 – WITH A BULLET – LOTS OF BULLETS!

Ben Norton

(Excerpted from "Nothing to be proud of: The real American exceptionalism is selling the most weapons in the world — by far", on *salon.com*, 12/30/2015)

American exceptionalism — the notion that the U.S. is somehow an exceptional country, with no parallels in the world — is largely a myth. There is, however, one way in which it is absolutely true: The U.S. sells more weapons than any other country. The U.S. has just five percent of the global population, but sells more than half its weapons. And this number is increasing. A new congressional study found that foreign arms sales by the U.S. increased by almost \$10 billion in 2014 — up 35 percent.

No other countries even come close to the U.S. in weapons sales. As much as politicians and the media fear-monger about Russia, it sold just \$10.2 billion in weapons in 2014 — a decrease from 2013. This pales in comparison to the \$36.2 billion in arms sales the U.S. made in the same year. That is to say, the U.S. sold over 3.5 times more weapons in 2014 than Russia, the world's second-largest arms dealer.

Sweden came in third, with a bit over half of Russia's arms sales. France and China followed with \$4.4 billion and \$2.2 billion, respectively. Who is receiving the many billions of dollars of U.S. weapons? Primarily South Korea, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. South Korea bought \$7.8 billion in weapons in 2014. According to the report, this is more than any other country — but this may be an underestimate, compared to U.S. deals with the Gulf monarchies. South Korea, a close Western ally, is building up its arsenal as tensions escalate between it and North Korea.

Iraq reportedly purchased the second-most, at \$7.3 billion. This is unsurprising, considering the U.S. destroyed the Iraqi government after its 2003 invasion and subsequently built a new Iraqi government and military that is largely reliant upon it.

What is much less discussed, however, are the rapidly accelerating arms deals between the U.S. and Gulf monarchies. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, in particular, are buying more and more American weapons. In the past five years, the Obama administration has done well over \$100 billion in arms deals with the Saudi monarchy. From 2010 to 2014, the U.S. sold more than \$90 billion in weapons to the Saudi regime. In October 2015, the Obama administration approved over \$11 billion more. Less than three days after the November Paris attacks, the U.S. sold another \$1.3 billion of bombs to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is among the most reactionary and repressive countries on the planet. The theocratic regime, ruled by an extreme interpretation of Sharia law, has been described as the "fountainhead" of militant Sunni Islamism and "an ISIS that has made it". Dissidents who challenge the Saudi regime are beheaded. The absolute monarchy beheads someone for drugs every four days, on average.

Former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham has identified Islamic

extremist groups like ISIS and al-Qaida as “a product of Saudi ideals, Saudi money, and Saudi organizational support”. U.S. government officials secretly admit among themselves that extremist groups like al-Qaida are supported by rich Saudis, but say little, because the Gulf monarchies have the world’s largest oil reserves.

Qatar, another growing recipient of U.S. weapons, is not as extreme as Saudi Arabia, but it is part of a larger constellation of extremist, modern-day slave states in the Gulf. Like Saudi Arabia, it funds Salafi Islamist groups around the world. And, like Saudi Arabia, the U.S. recently sold it \$11 billion in weapons.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar are using these new weapons primarily in two conflicts. They are brutally bombing Yemen – the poorest country in the Middle East – in a nine-month-long war. Human rights organizations say the Saudi-led coalition is committing egregious war crimes; the U.N. says it is responsible for two-thirds of civilian casualties. The chaos the Saudi bombing and Qatari invasion have fomented is helping al-Qaida and ISIS expand into Yemen.

The Gulf monarchies are also funneling weapons to Islamist groups in the Syrian civil war – a catastrophic conflict in which more than 20 countries are embroiled. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, along with Western ally and NATO member Turkey, have been supporting Salafi groups like al-Nusra, al-Qaida’s affiliate in Syria. In effect, then, with its ever-accelerating arms trade – ostensibly to bolster allies in the so-called war on terror – the U.S. is in fact further fueling the extremism it purports to be fighting.

The military-industrial complex, about which President Dwight Eisenhower warned in his 1961 farewell address, is alive and well. And the more the U.S. exports weapons to these regimes, the more it will pour gasoline onto the flames of extremism.

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

– Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 16, 1953

IN GOD WE DO NOT TRUST

John Rafferty

(Based on and excerpted from “Federal Lawsuit Seeks To Remove ‘In God We Trust’ From U.S. Currency”, by Michael Stone on Progressive Secular Humanist 1/12/2016)

Michael Newdow may have lost his (some would say quixotic) crusade to remove “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance, but he is the closest thing the freethought movement has to a just-won’t-quit



marathoner. He’s back – with a new federal lawsuit that argues “In God We Trust” should be removed from U.S. currency because it violates the separation of church and state.

The lawsuit contends that IGWT on paper money and coins violates the constitutional rights of those who do not believe in God. And he’s using one of the most powerful weapons of the Religious Right—the infamous Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993—against the bastards. He claims that having IGWT printed on U.S. currency violates that fundamentalist-pandering law that any other Supreme Court but this one would have deemed unconstitutional. “Friendly Atheist” Hemant Mehta notes:

The federal lawsuit ... may be unique for relying not on the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause, but on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). In essence, Newdow takes the same argument used by Hobby Lobby to get out of covering contraception for its employees and says that the U.S. Treasury can’t push God onto atheists without a “compelling governmental interest”.

The lawsuit correctly points out that the phrase has “continued to be a tool used to perpetuate favoritism for (Christian) Monotheism”, and “has also continued to perpetuate anti-Atheistic bias”. What’s more ...

Defendants [the government] have substantially burdened Plaintiffs [us] in the exercise of their Atheistic (and similar) beliefs by requiring them – as the price to pay for using the nation’s coins and currency bills – to personally bear a religious message that is the antithesis of what they consider to be religious truth.

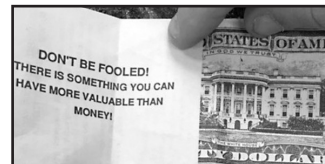
Personally, I didn’t much care about the “under God” suit because I’d rather see the whole damn Pledge junked. (Children swearing their loyalty every morning – what are we, North Korea?) But, as someone who has for several years followed Greta Christina’s lead in inking out “In God We Trust” on the currency in my pockets I’m delighted by – and supportive of – Mr. Newdow’s new crusade.

So, where do I send some inky bills?

CHRISTIANS OFFER WAITERS SOMETHING GREATER THAN MONEY. BUT NO MONEY.

John Rafferty

We first mentioned this ugliness a couple of years ago, but if the several recent mentions on the internet and in social media are any measure, more and more



Good Christians are stiffing restaurant wait staffs with come-to-Jesus “tips” instead of, you know, tips.

When folded and slid under a left-behind saucer or utensil, the religious tract looks like a \$20 bill to a waiter who makes three or four dollars an hour and depends on tips to rise to poverty level. But, *surprise!* unfold it and find the admonition to “start reading your Bible”.

There now, isn’t that better than money? Don’t you feel better, uplifted? I’m sure the Good Christian does.

IS XENOPHOBIA INHERENT IN ORGANIZED RELIGION?

Lawrence Krauss

(Transcribed [and much of his off-the-cuff speech smoothed out] from <http://bigthink.com/videos/lawrence-krauss-on-organized-religion>. – JR)

It's hard to lump religion which comes in many different forms, shapes, sizes, and is viewed many ways by different people, in a single framework. Ultimately, I think religion is a negative force for humanity because what it does – at least organized religion around the world – is it implies things about the real world that are just not true. That are in disagreement with the evidence of empirical testing in science. And while they may provide comfort to people, inevitably whenever you make decisions based on something that's a myth, the decisions lead to bad consequences, whether you're teaching children or subjugating women.

So religion of course at various times in human history for individuals has provided comfort. It has provided opportunities for groups to sometimes do progressive things. But inevitably it's based on myth and superstition, based on ideas created by Iron Age peasants who didn't even know the Earth orbited the sun. And ultimately why we should view that as wisdom is beyond me.

The saddest part that's characteristic of everything, including the Koran—and I don't want to label just the Koran in this regard because I think it's characteristic in the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Abrahamic religions—is the xenophobia that religion introduces. It's Us versus Them; we are absolutely right because we believe this or because we follow these traditions and other people are absolutely wrong because they don't.

Then the question is what do you do to the people who are wrong because they're not part of your group? Well in many cases you kill them or you ostracize them or you send them to hell. No one mentions hell more than Jesus. Supposedly he was a loving savior, but he uses the word hell more than anyone else in the Bible. So that's the same kind of xenophobia, in fact it's worse in my mind. As my late friend Christopher Hitchens would say, Saddam Hussein only condemned his victims to violence and death—until they died. What about a god who condemns you to eternal pain forever? Far worse than Saddam Hussein in the sky.

So I think the kind of xenophobia, the fact that people who don't conform are to be ostracized or killed, is prevalent in every religion and I can understand it because these religions were based, in some sense, [on] preserving order within a tribe. They're all outgrowths of tribal behavior. To preserve order within a tribe, it's always Us versus Them. Here are rules that define you as a Christian or a Jew or a Muslim. You do those rules and you're distinguishable from the other and the other is to be swept away.

Now in the current world I think there's no doubt that right now Islam is a source of more violence than any number of the other organized religions. It's not the unique

source of violence, but I think the problem is just one of timing. Islam is 500 years younger than say Christianity, and five hundred years ago Christianity was producing far more violence than Islam ever is today, from the Crusades to the Inquisition. So it's not surprising that a younger religion in some sense is coming through its growing pains. The problem is we live in a time where there's access to much more destructive forces, so you've got to worry a little bit about that.

The real difference that I see between Islam and, say, Judaism ... (I mean the Old Testament is *more* violent than the Koran. It's full of violence, oppression, genocide, hatred. It's an awful book and it's amazing that we present it as a moral standard. If you actually read the Bible, it's a disgusting, disgusting document. There's beauty in the psalms and the poetry of the psalms perhaps, but it's every bit as violent if not more so than the Koran) ...

The fundamental difference, it seems to me, is that we've *learned* – even highly religious people take the Bible allegorically. When it says you can stone your children if they disobey you, no one takes that seriously anymore. The difference is that many people take the Koran, every word of the Koran, as not only divine, but literally. And therefore when it exhorts them to violence, they take that literally. That's not done any more in the older Abrahamic religions. ... In fact, when we talk about religion in general, many people call themselves religious because they think if they don't, they're not good people.

Richard Dawkins's foundation did a poll after the most recent census in England, which asks what your religious affiliation is. For the first time only 53 percent of people said they were Christian, or about that number. The poll took the people who listed Christian in the box and asked, Do you believe in the virgin birth? Do you believe in transubstantiation? The whole list of the standard parts of Christianity. Most of those people said No. So, why did you check the tick that said you're a Christian? And they said, We like to think of ourselves as good people.

And that's what seems to me the thing that we have to overcome the most – is people recognizing that you can be a good person by accepting reality for what it is and questioning everything, including questioning the existence of God. There's nothing wrong with that. I get letters from kids all the time who say, you know, I'm happy to read your books or see your movie because it tells me I'm not alone. I'm not a bad person for questioning what my elders or pastor or teachers say. In fact we should be encouraging our children to question everything. It's part of education.

SKIPPING THE MORAL MIDDLEMAN

Richard Dawkins

(Excerpted from his new book, *Brief Candle in the Dark*)

There are good verses as well as nasty ones in both the Old and the New Testaments. But there has to be some criteria for choosing which are good and which bad. To avoid circularity, that criteria must come from outside the scriptures. It is hard to piece together where

our dominant criteria for morality come from, but they are clearly exhibited in what I called [in *The God Delusion*] the “shifting moral *zeitgeist*”.

We today are twenty-first-century moralists, unmistakably labeled with twenty-first-century values. Even the most advanced and progressive thinkers of the nineteenth century, men like T.H. Huxley, Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln, would appall us with their racism and sexism if they were to enter a modern dinner party or web chatroom. Huxley and Lincoln both took the inferiority of black men for granted, and many of the US founding fathers owned slaves. Most of the world’s democracies introduced female suffrage as late as the 1920s, France in 1944, Italy in 1946, Greece in 1952 and Switzerland not until a staggering 1971. Justifications for opposing women’s suffrage unbelievably included: “It’s not necessary because women just vote with their husbands anyway.”

The moral *zeitgeist* moves inexorably in one direction, with the result that even the most progressive thinkers of the nineteenth century tend to lag behind the least progressive thinkers of the twenty-first. Since we evidently have preferred and agreed standards for cherry-picking, why bother to go to the Bible at all, if we seek moral guidance? Why not go straight to our moral *zeitgeist* and cut out the scriptural middleman?

THEN THEY CAME FOR ME

Jonathan Engel

So Donald Trump wants to enact a (temporary) ban on Muslims entering the United States. Apparently his mechanism for doing so would be to have U.S. Customs agents ask all people entering the country if they are Muslims, and turn away those that answer “Yes”. Does anyone really think that this would keep us safe? To believe that, you would have to believe that people who have no qualms about murdering scores of innocents in cold blood would balk at telling a fib about their religion, which is, of course, ridiculous. (As an aside, let’s keep in mind the fact that religion is something people *choose* and frequently change. “Yeah, I was a Muslim when I left Saudi Arabia, but now I’m not, although there’s a reasonable chance that once I walk out of the airport I’ll change my mind once more and become a Muslim again”). So who would the Trump plan keep out? Everyday, law-abiding, truth-telling Muslims. The liars, of course, would have no trouble getting in. But for Trump and his followers, this ridiculous plan would further their goal of keeping as many brown-skinned folks out of the country as possible, the actual intent of the people who want to come here be damned.

Before we go any further with this, a little background on yours truly. I was raised in the Jewish religion (bar mitzvah and everything), but as an adult I have come to disbelieve in the supernatural, and so I don’t really consider myself to be a member of any religion. But I do consider myself to be ethnically/culturally Jewish, which to me is something else altogether. And it is as an ethnic/cultural Jew that I say this: Any Jew (religious or otherwise) who

supports Trump and his neo-fascist policies is a dangerous ignoramus who knows nothing about history. The only long-term hope for Jews to live peacefully here in the U.S. or anywhere else in the world (with the exception of Israel) are societies that are dedicated to the principles of tolerance, pluralism, diversity, and fairness and freedom for all. (Israel has its own reasons to adhere to these principles as well, but that’s another story, for another time). Once we say that it’s okay to treat any group, Muslim or otherwise, as pariahs outside of society, worthy only of discrimination and ostracism, it will be okay to do that to any other group as well. And once that principle has been established, history tells us that the haters will eventually get around to the Jews. They always have. That’s history, and those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

Martin Luther King warned us that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. That concept applies to this situation as well. Institutional hate and discrimination against any minority group legitimizes hate and discrimination against any other minority group. It is therefore essential to Jewish self-preservation in the United States that we always speak out against bigotry. Even if you’re so hard-hearted that you don’t care what happens to innocent Muslims, speak out against bigotry as a general principle. As Pastor Martin Niemoller famously wrote:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.

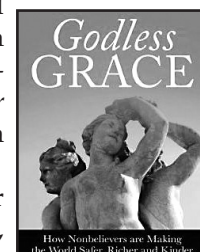
As Jews, we must not wait until they come for us again. The time to speak out is now, for *everyone!*

DAVID ORENSTEIN READS FROM AND SIGNS HIS NEW BOOK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5.

David, the Paleolibrarian blogger, Ph.D. and SHSNY Board member, will read from and sign copies of his new book from Humanist Press, *Godless Grace: How Non-Believers are Making the World Safer, Richer and Kinder*, written in partnership with Linda Ford Blaikie, L.C.S.W.

Evolutionary biologist and author (*Why Evolution is True*) Jerry Coyne says, “It is time to get rid of the misconception that nonbelievers are somehow lesser or even warped human beings; we’re just as moral and generous as everyone else, and our lives have purpose – just not a purpose derived from ancient works of fiction. *Godless Grace* goes a long way to dispelling those myths, as well as the unconscionable demonization of nonbelievers based solely on their dissent from widespread superstitions.”

Book Reading and Signing
Friday, Feb 5, 7-8:30 pm, B&F Books,
6 60th Street, West New York, NJ



SHSNY CALENDAR: FEBRUARY - APRIL 2016

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

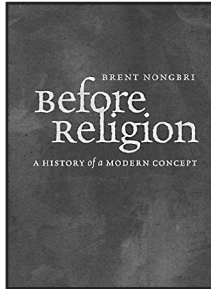
THURS, FEB 4, 7-8:30 pm
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK

40 East 35 St. (basement)

We'll discuss

***BEFORE RELIGION: A History
of a Modern Concept***
Brent Nongbri

For much of the past two centuries, religion has been understood as a universal phenomenon, a part of the "natural" human experience that is essentially the same across cultures and throughout history. Brent Nongbri shows that the idea of religion as a sphere of life distinct from politics, economics, or science is a recent development in European history.



Examining a wide array of ancient writings, Nongbri demonstrates that in antiquity, there was no conceptual arena that could be designated as "religious" as opposed to "secular". – *All formats.*

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 Stone Creek Lounge

Great Lectures: 4th Wednesday
at Stone Creek Lounge.

Studying Humanism: Last Monday
at the Community Church of NY

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

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

THURS, MAR 3, 7-8:30 pm
Community Church of New York
THIS IDEA MUST DIE:

***Scientific Theories that are
Blocking Progress***

John Brockman, Ed.

Each year, John Brockman, publisher of Edge.org – "The world's smartest website" – challenges some of the world's greatest scientists, artists, and philosophers to answer a provocative question crucial to our time.

In 2014 he asked 175 brilliant minds to ponder: What scientific idea needs to be put aside in order to make room for new ideas to advance? Dawkins and Pinker head the distinguished list, while Geoffrey West challenges the concept of a "Theory of Everything" and Alan Guth rethinks the origins of the universe. – *Paper, Kindle, Audio*

SHSNY BOOK CLUB

THURS, APRIL 7, 7-8:30 pm
Community Church of New York
***THE ORIGINS OF
POLITICAL ORDER:***

***From Prehistoric Times to the
French Revolution
PART I***

Francis Fukuyama

Bestseller Fukuyama provides a sweeping account of how today's basic political institutions developed from tribes to national governments. We'll read and discuss the first half of this blockbuster (Chaps 1-15), then the second half in May. – *Paperback*

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MEET US ON MEETUP

www.meetup.com/shsny-org/

TEXT US ON TWITTER

@NY_Sec_Humanist

SHSNY MOVIE NIGHT

MON, FEB 8, 6:30 pm
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St (Lex-3rd Aves)

CREATION

This brilliant 2009 film explores the human story behind how Darwin (Paul Bettany) saw the world and changed it forever. His daughter Annie's death has broken Darwin's faith in God, but has galvanized that of his wife, Emma (Jennifer Connelly). Friends urge him to finish his revolutionary work, while Emma objects, leaving Darwin with an agonizing choice.



After-Film Discussion:
**Will his "theory" ever be
universally accepted?**

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

BRUNCH & CONVERSATION

SUN, FEB 21, 11:30 am
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St. (Lex-3rd Aves)

We gather in the saloon's back room, where we have enough privacy to have different conversations around the several large tables, as well as the big one led by Dorothy Kahn.

The expanded pub-grub menu has been enhanced with an \$11 breakfast special, the Bloody Marys are hot, the beer is cold, and conversation sparkles.



Come join 20 or more freethinkers for food, fun and conversation.

Discussion:
Becoming a None: Our Stories.

SHSNY CALENDAR: FEBRUARY - APRIL 2016

GREAT LECTURES ON DVD

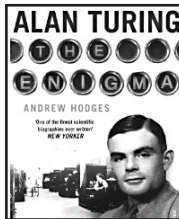
WED, FEB 24, 7 pm

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

ALAN TURING: THE ENIGMA

Dr. Andrew Hodges

Oxford professor Hodges's book was the basis for the last year's film, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, about Turing's revolutionary 1936 idea – of a universal machine – that led to the



modern computer. And of how his work led to breaking the German Enigma ciphers during World War II. At the same time, this is the tragic story of a man who was arrested and disgraced because he lived in a society that defined homosexuality as a crime.

Great Lectures on DVD is FREE

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

STUDYING HUMANISM

MON, FEB 22, 6:30-8:30 pm

Community Church of NY

40 East 35 St. (basement)

2015-16 Meeting/Discussion #5

ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM

IN AMERICA

Let's discuss its history and current manifestations. Readings:

Book: Jacoby, Susan: *The Age of American Unreason*. (paperback)

Online:

• *The Tea Party is Timeless*

http://www.cjr.org/second_read/richard_hofstadter_tea_party.php

• *Why Anti-Intellectualism is Dumb*

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/thomas-white/why-anti-intellectualism-is-dumb_b_4842808.html

NOTE: Studying Humanism is a study group. If you have not done the reading, you may audit the discussion. All are welcome!



BOOK NOW

FOR OUR BIGGEST EVENT OF THE YEAR!

SHSNY 8th Annual

Darwin Day Celebration

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 7pm

Byblos Restaurant

80 Madison Ave. (28 Street)

Confirm your place at our celebration of Charles Darwin's 207th birthday – and the 28th Anniversary of the founding of SHSNY – along with 60 or more of your fellow freethinkers at top-rated Byblos in midtown.



The highlight of the evening will be a brand-new performance by our own Richard Milner.

"Darwin, Wallace, and Other Voices in My Head"

After a lifetime of study, he says, Mr. Milner has developed close personal friendships with certain famous dead white men, and will channel their quirks, their humor, and their wisdom. He promises also to demonstrate how Victorian spiritualists produced "ghostly writing".

Don't miss it, because it's going to be fun! We'll feast on a bountiful buffet (lots of veggie choices) ... mingle, mix and make new friends ... vote for the Dumbth of the Year ... and enjoy a fascinating and fun presentation ... all for ...

*Just \$60 per person,
tax/tip included (cash bar).*

Prepay (credit card or PayPal) at www.shsny.org. Or mail your check to SHSNY, PO Box 7661, New York, NY 10150-7661.

Questions? Call 646-922-7389 (leave a callback number).



HOW I BECAME A NONE

Carlos Martin Mora

My parents were what could be termed as “very religious”. My father was an active participant in the Knights of Columbus, served as lecturer at Sunday mass, and was a man who could always be counted on to financially support Our Lady of Lourdes School parish in upper Manhattan. This parochial school is in Harlem, and it is the school that my four siblings and I attended from first through eighth grades in the late Sixties and early Seventies.

My mom did her part by driving the rectory attendant to the grocery store every week, keeping the priests well fed. And my father, a liquor store manager at the time, would keep the priests and pastor Monsignor Cahill happy by keeping the rectory supplied with an ample amount of “Christmas Cheer” all year round.

I had a great childhood, and my adolescent years at Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx brought an awakening that felt at times painful, but that I now know was necessary. I dealt with two “heavy issues”, my sexual orientation, and later, my disbelief.

I called myself an agnostic for a very long time, till in 1996 I decided to call myself an atheist.

The agnosticism came from faults I found in my early upbringing - inconsistencies I uncovered as I thought. The disconnect I saw with how women were treated, for example and, of course, how gays were treated by an often homophobic society, all had a definite hand in making me a disbeliever.

HOW I BECAME A NONE

Norm Condit

It’s rather trite, really. I read the entire Bible and stopped believing. Many, *many* non-conversion stories start the same way. As a military brat I was used to moving from base to base every year or two. My mother (daughter of a Dutch Reformed Church minister) urged her children to go to the Protestant church nearest where we lived at the time. So I became a Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Southern Baptist (they have the best hymns!), etc.

I was a Christian for 56 years (compared to others who have shared their stories about “How I Became a None” I’m a very slow learner.) Then I came down with a vision problem that kept me out of work for two months. I’d always wanted to read the Bible but never had the time. So, with a magnifying glass, I read all 1,700 pages of the Bible, line by line, word by word. And emerged a non-believer.

After being disillusioned by the Bible, I joined the local Unitarian/Universalist Church, along with a very intelligent Italian Catholic friend to search further. I read over a hundred books about the Bible and religion, participated in many discussion groups, talked with ministers, priests and rabbis, and eventually concluded that since mankind has had over 10,000 religions and 100,000 named goddesses and gods, and no proof of truth in *any* of them, that the only sane position was to be a non-theistic agnostic/atheist.

My fellow seeker also left the U/U Church but he became an Orthodox Jew, underwent a ritual circumcision, now has a seven-inch beard, observes all the restrictions on diet and travel, etc. Go figure.

HOW I BECAME A NONE

Samuel Hughes Milligan

Papa was a New Deal Democrat, and was fond of saying that Roosevelt was the greatest man that ever lived. Once, someone suggested differently. “Charlie,” the man said, “a lot of people think that Jesus Christ was the greatest man who ever lived.” “That’s all well and good,” Papa responded, “but Roosevelt did things for poor people.”

Papa was a wonderful man, but his income was never more than modest. He certainly never got to be, as Mama would put it, “as rich as a radio evangelist”.

My parents were indefatigable readers, and Papa once decided to read the entire Bible, I think to find out what all the brouhaha was about. I assume he wasn’t impressed, for he never mentioned it, other than to say that he had finished it. I do know that he had no use for miracles, in particular the idea of virgin birth. “Sammy,” he said, “if nothing goes in, nothing comes out.”

House Accompanist

Both my parents were devoted amateur singers. Papa, in line with his heritage, loved Irish songs, and Mama, in line with her Welsh antecedents, loved Welsh songs. Actually, Mama had a trace of Breton blood as well, but tended to soft-pedal that, since her paternal great, great grandmother got pregnant with the help of a Breton sailor, without benefit of clergy, as we used to say. Mama was surprisingly liberal for her time and place, but drew the line at a bar sinister across her escutcheon. But I look at it this way. “No” is such a harsh and cruel word, especially when a sweet-talking young sailor is involved.

First Baptist vs. Sacred Heart

I started piano lessons at an early age, and as soon as I was competent, served as the family accompanist. I began playing the organ in high school, and soon found myself musically involved with both the Catholic and Baptist churches in my little one-horse Texas town. I was hardly the greatest organist to come down the pike, but, as G.B. Shaw once wrote, defending his ability as a music critic, “In the land of the deaf, the one-eared is king.”

In those days, both churches actively despised each other. The Catholics averred that the Baptists were heretics, and would burn in hell, while the Baptists retorted that the Catholics were drunken idolaters, and were also hell bound. Surely nobody suspected at the time that such bitter enemies would one day get together in order to trounce the abortionists and gay rights activists. If your enemy is my enemy, then I guess we must be friends.

I mentioned this mutual hatred to my mother. “Sammy,” she said, “you need to remember that all religions are essentially cruel, so if you want a system of ethics that isn’t, you’re going to have to make one on your own.” Which is how it turned out.

The Family Bigot

My parents were not rattled in the least when I told them that I was gay, having already figured it out on their own. The only homophobe in my family was my Southern Baptist sister-in-law, whose indignation was easily ignored, as were most of her opinions, much to her chagrin. In later years, after harrying my long-suffering brother to his grave, her last days were spent, as she put it, “waiting for my maker to call me home”, uttered with deep sighs of resignation. I don’t think she realized that the rest of us were also waiting for her maker to call her home.

One day in 1948 Papa decided that his Irish songs demanded accompaniment by the national instrument, so a small Irish harp was acquired, and I began lessons. This was endorsed heartily by Mama, since the harp is also the national instrument in Wales. The harp was a fortunate choice, for, since being poor, I needed scholarships to afford college, and if I would switch to pedal harp, could get financial aid. Harp students were rare, and schools needed harpists for school orchestras. I went through college entirely on scholarships. The harp would eventually furnish me with a long and successful career here in New York, where I moved after finishing my music degree in 1957.

Finding My Ethical System

That same year I encountered a remarkable book, *A Short History of Confucian Philosophy*, by Wu-Chi Liu. Therein I found the system of ethics that has suited my needs to this day. Confucianism is based on five principles—human-heartedness, right justice, proper social conduct, wisdom and sincerity. Religious dogmas tend to be set in stone, and so do not work well in our modern world; Confucianism, not being a religion, grows and changes as needs arise. In the New Confucianism movement of today, for example, the old patriarchal family ideal can be replaced by something more realistic and fair. Another example—filial piety is to be extended to all the elderly, not just one’s own forbears.

Speaking of filial piety, I’d like to clear up a common misconception. Ceremonies honoring the memory of one’s forbears is not ancestor worship. That dismissive label was applied by Christian missionaries.

Confucianism has nothing to say about God or lack of God, since ethical conduct is valid in its own right, and need not depend on fear for its enforcement. Confucius once chided a student who asked about how to serve the spirits, advising the young man to work at serving his fellow man and not bother about the spirits.

The End of Faith

So while creating an ethical system on my own was certainly a worthy endeavor, Confucianism gave me a bespoke system, beautifully thought-out, and backed by centuries of eminent authority.

Over those years religion was, basically, of little interest to me. After all, it takes a lot of energy to keep track of everybody that one is supposed to hate. Eventually, any hazy notions of religion were permanently sacked when I saw Carl Sagan’s “Cosmos” in 1980. This was the blinding light on my road to Damascus. Why clutter the beauty of

nature with religion? Our splendid universe needs no outside assistance. Sagan explained it all in his first sentence—“The cosmos is all that ever was, is, or ever will be.” No creator need apply. So, you might say the only thing I worship is music. It occupies every moment of my day. And music has been good to me. I have achieved success in my field, and moreover, still find opportunities for performance in spite of my 84 years.

Confucius Gets the Last Laugh

Ultimately, my ethical system is useful on a daily basis without sacred mysteries of any sort. Of the five virtues, human-heartedness is by far the most important. As recorded in the Analects, Confucius said “In helping others, we ourselves are helped. In elevating others, we ourselves are elevated.” This takes work, of course, but, given human nature, no ethical system worth its salt will be a pushover. But it’s easier when lubricated with laughter. Democritus taught that cheerfulness is man’s natural state. And so I believe. Confucius, according to the Analects, also enjoyed a good laugh. The Gospel tells us that Jesus wept. Nowhere does it say that he ever laughed.

NOT SO FAST, NONES

Edd Doerr

Much is being made of recent poll findings that about a quarter of Americans are now religiously unaffiliated or “nones”. These findings, however, obscure the considerable diversity among the “nones”, just as there is enormous diversity among religious “believers”.

In *Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents are Raising Their Children*, Christel Manning, a professor of religious studies at Sacred Heart University and herself a “none” and a parent, shows that only a minority of the unaffiliated are actually nonbelieving secularists, the rest being “seekers”, unaffiliated believers, or simply indifferent. She shows that the “nones” tend to be younger, under 35, and that their positions often change when they marry, especially when they become parents.

Tell Us Your “None” Story, And Get a Free Humanist Book

Send your “How (or When or Why) I Became a None” story to editor@shsny.org and, if yours is chosen for publication (we’ll help with the editing), choose one of these books by SHSNY members as our “Thank you”.

- Philip Appleman: *The Labyrinth: God, Darwin, and the Meaning of Life*
- Giddian Beer: *Kouken: Jewels, Jolts & Jeremaids*
- Jennifer Michael Hecht: *Stay: A History of Suicide and the Philosophies Against It*
- Philip Kitcher: *Life After Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism*
- Massimo Pigliucci: *Answers for Aristotle: How Science and Philosophy Can Lead Us to a More Meaningful Life*
- John Rafferty: *A Fit of Pique: Dispatches from the Culture Wars*

POLITICS AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE, 2016

Wiley Miller

(Transcribed and excerpted from the "Non Sequitur" comic strip, 1/4-1/9/2016. The setting is Flo's diner in coastal Maine, but I won't try to duplicate Mr. Miller's characters' DownEast accents. — JR)

Flo: Hey there, Todd! Haven't seen you around for a while.

Todd: Yep, took some time away. Once I saw campaign ads startin' up, I decided to save my sanity and leave the country until the election year was over.

Flo: Oh, dear ... I hate to tell you, Todd, but the election year is just startin'.

Todd: *What?* So what do you call last year?

Flo: How about the worst pre-game show ever.

Fat Guy Customer: Or the longest cocktail hour.

Todd: That means I wasted a whole year.

Flo: Well, the good news is that you avoided a year of fear-mongering rhetoric disguised as debates.

Todd: Oh, so it wasn't a complete waste of a whole year.

Flo: Bad news is, we haven't even got to the primaries yet.

Todd: *(sigh)* There has to be a better way.

FGC: Try bourbon.

Flo: Um, Todd, don't you think leaving the country just to avoid campaign ads was a little extreme?

Todd: Your right, Flo, we shouldn't run away from our civic duty no matter how annoying it is.

Flo: Ah, well said, dear, but I meant you could have just recorded all your TV programs and zapped past the ads like the rest of us.

FGC: It's the American way.

Irate Woman: Excuse me, I heard what you people said, and I am offended.

Flo: What? We were joking about the presidential race.

IW: And I say race is nothing to joke about.

Flo: Uh, I don't know where to go with that.

IW: You can start with an apology, racist.

Todd: Oh, look, time to leave the country again.

IW: I'm still waiting on an apology for offending me.

Flo: *What?* You misunderstood what was said here.

IW: Well, it's your responsibility to be sensitive to others not in the conversation.

Flo: Ah, I see ... you expect me to apologize for something I never said while you were eavesdropping, right?

IW: When you say it like that, it sounds crazy.

Flo: You think?

IW: Which offends me.

Flo: Oh, dear Lord.

FGC: This is why I'm not on Facebook.

IW: Okay, things have escalated out of control here. We should act like adults and apologize to each other, then move on with our lives.

Flo: Okay, together on the count of three.

IW: One ...

Flo: Two ...

IW: Three. I'm sorry you're a racist.

Flo: I'm sorry you're insane.

READERS RESPOND TO JANUARY PIQUE

To the Editor: Interesting as ever. First, a shout out to Donna Marxer for her dressing down ("Science and Art: A Response to Michael Shermer", January) of Michael Shermer ("Why People Believe Weird Things", November) on his put down of art in our cultural lives. We are not scientists, and never pretend to be. We are decidedly not pseudoscientists. As vital as science is and has been to our material lives, it cannot assume the same space as the arts in our lives as humans. Art and science should be the foundation for living a meaningful and good life as responsible humanists.

The story about the Hasidic young women ("The Death of Faigy Mayer", January) is immensely depressing. Why should one care? Because good human beings are trapped in these religious mental cages from which there is no escape. A waste of human lives.

I know I can't, but I vote for all the entries for the Dumbth award. — *Remo Cosentino*

Comment: Remo, give me a choice — *Choose! Vote!* — JR

To the Editor: Kudos to Donna for giving Michael Shermer his comeuppance for his gratuitous denigration of the Arts. My reasons for living are nature and art. Humans, a lot of the time not so much. — *Gretchen Robinson*

To the Editor: I just want to say that as much as I like all the issues of PIQUE, this last one was spectacular. A pleasure to read, to learn, and think. — *Jack Herschlag*

QUICK, QUICK, STILL TIME TO CAST YOUR VOTE FOR DUMBTH-OF-THE-YEAR 2015

We won't count the votes until we're assembled at our Darwin Day/SHSNY Anniversary banquet February 12, so you can still get your vote in at editor@shsn.org. Here's your slate of dunderhead nominees for the horse's-ass statuette.

Dr. Ben Carson gets two nominations, one for "My own personal theory is that [Biblical] Joseph built the pyramids to store grain", and another for his opinion that homosexuality is a choice, i.e.: "Because a lot of people who go into prison go into prison straight — and when they come out, they're gay."

Anti-feminist **Phyllis Schlafly**, addressing the problem of sexual assaults on college campuses, has a simple solution: Get rid of the women, i.e.: "One solution might be ... to arbitrarily admit only half women and half men."

Nevada Assemblywoman **Michele Fiore** believes that cancer is a fungus that can be flushed out of the body with baking soda. "We can put a pic line into your body and we're flushing with, say, salt water, sodium cardonate [sic — it's "bicarbonate"] through that line and flushing out the fungus."

The Catholic League's **Bill Donohue** called the Crusades "just wars" and in an Obama-hating rant unleashed this whopper: "Regarding that other fable, the Inquisition, the Catholic Church had almost nothing to do with it."

Actress/multiple-lives nutcase **Shirley MacLaine** suggested that perhaps the Holocaust was karmic payback: "What if most Holocaust victims were balancing their karma from ages before, when they were Romans putting Christians to death."

Constitutionally-ignorant Congressman **Sam Johnson** (R-TX) is outraged that cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy are no longer required to say “so help me God” when reciting the Honor Oath. *“Let me be clear, Americans have the freedom of religion – but not freedom from religion.”*

Associate Justice of the Supreme Court **Antonin Scalia** actually said out loud at his granddaughter’s commencement: *“Class of 2015 ... Humanity has been around for at least some 5,000 years or so, and ...”*

Fox News host and “War on Christmas” warrior **Gretchen Carlson**, complaining about a Festivus pole display in the Washington state capitol, said: *“I’m all for free speech and free rights, just not on December 25th.”*

OUR FIRST 2016 DUMBTH NOMINEE

John Rafferty

Here’s South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, who last month pleasantly surprised all the non-Neanderthals watching her State of the Union Republican rebuttal speech that (gently) rejected blowhard Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim xenophobia (Cruz, Rubio and Carson are only slightly less shrill). Wow, good for you, Gov.



But dumbth will out. Just two days later, this likely Republican VP nominee, talking to local reporters, said that Trump’s demands to “ban all Muslims” were “the one thing that got me”. After all, she said,

“When you’ve got immigrants who are coming here legally, we’ve never in the history of this country passed any laws or done anything based on race or religion. Let’s not start that now.”

Really? Never? Okay, aside from the internment of Japanese-Americans in WWII, which almost everyone else knows about, Governor, let’s see what a less-than-five-minutes “U.S. racist laws” search on Google can turn up.

The Founders themselves, probably realizing that their “three-fifths of a person” dodge in the Constitution left a couple of possibilities open for free blacks (they might even become, you know, “African-Americans”) clarified their intentions by passing *The Naturalization Act of 1790* that limited citizenship to “free white persons”. That law stayed on the books until it was successfully challenged on behalf of freed blacks after the Civil War.

Southern states couldn’t re-institute legal slavery after the Civil War (Sorry, Governor, of course I mean “The War of Northern Aggression”), so South Carolina and others instituted “**Black Codes**”, some with as many as 50 proscriptions that curtailed the freedom of movement, association and speech of the just-freed slaves.

Just anti-black? No, no – America has always been a “gorgeous mosaic” of racism. The *Chinese Exclusion Acts / Immigration Exclusion Act of 1882* prohibited citizenship for Chinese immigrants, and were followed up with more anti-Chinese acts in 1884, 1886 and 1888.

The *Immigration Act of 1917* excluded “Asian Indians”

because their “racial or ethnic status was unclear”.

The *Immigrant Act of 1924* barred the entry into the U.S. of “aliens ineligible to citizenship” because Japanese and other Asians were barred by the “whites only” stipulation of the 1790 naturalization law.

The *Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934* cut Filipino immigration to a quota of fifty persons per year, and all Filipinos in the United States were reclassified as “aliens”.

The *Alien Land Laws (1913, 1920, 1923)* barred Asian immigrants from owning land and other forms of property.

The *McCarran-Walter Act of 1952* abolished the 1917 Immigration Act, but introduced ethnic quotas, e.g.: one hundred “Chinese” were allowed entry per year.

Governor, take a tip from James Bond/Sean Connery: *Never say never.*

WHY WE LIVE IN NEW YORK # 117

(Excerpted from an anonymous post on winningdemocrats.com, 12/12/2015)

Sometimes you come across a story so bizarre and absurd, you think it must be satire. This is one of those times. The town of Woodland, North Carolina’s city council decided to reject environmentally friendly solar panels because residents voiced some of the most ridiculous concerns imaginable.

A local man named Bobby Mann claimed solar panels would “suck up all the energy from the sun”.

Really. Another resident, named Jane Mann—who is, inexplicably a retired science teacher – voiced her concerns also, saying, “... photosynthesis, which depends upon sunlight, would not happen and would keep the plants from growing”. She said she has observed areas near solar panels where the plants are brown and dead because they did not get enough sunlight. She also questioned the high number of cancer deaths in the area, saying no one could tell her “that solar panels didn’t cause cancer”.

So, according to a handful of clearly ignorant residents of Woodland, NC, solar panels will suck up all the energy from the sun *and* cause cancer.

NEIL DE GRASSE TYSON ON THE MEASUREMENT OF OUR INTELLIGENCE

(Transcribed from a video on #NeilDeGrasseTyson)

So let’s invent a measure of intelligence that makes humans unique. Let’s say: Intelligence is your ability to compose poetry, symphonies, do art, math and science and so on. Let’s say, okay? Let’s make that as the arbitrary definition of intelligence for the moment.

Chimps can’t do any of that. Yet we share 98-99 percent identical DNA. The most brilliant chimp there ever was maybe can do a little bit of sign language. Well, our toddlers can do that. Toddlers. So ... here’s what concerns me deeply. Deeply.

Everything that we are, that distinguishes us from chimps, emerges from that one percent difference in DNA. Maybe the difference between constructing and launching

a Hubble telescope, and a chimp combining two finger motions as sign language – maybe that difference is not all that great. We tell ourselves it is. ... We tell ourselves it's a lot. Maybe it's almost nothing. How would we decide that?

Imagine another life form that's one percent different from us. In the direction that we are different from the chimp. Think about that.

We have one percent difference and we're building the Hubble telescope. Go another one percent. What are we to them? We would be drooling, blithering idiots in their presence. That's what we would be. They would take Stephen Hawking and roll him in front of their primate researchers and say, "Well this one is like the most brilliant among them because he can do sort of astrophysics in his head.

"Oh, isn't that cute! Little Johnnie can do that too. Oh, that's so nice ..."

Convention dictates the opposable thumb as being the distinguishing trait of Homo sapiens, presumably because it allows the possessor to throw feces projectiles with greater aim and precision, a skill prized among primates.

– Brooke McEldowney in his comic strip "Pibgorn"

If we will learn from our past our own future may yet prove brighter than that of the other two chimpanzees.

– Jared Diamond

OUR FIRST NON-ENDORSEMENT OF ELECTION YEAR 2016

John Rafferty

As a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, SHSNY and/or its officers (including me) is/are prohibited from making any official endorsement of any political candidate. However, as an educational tax-exempt, we may report what politicians – like Presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders – actually say. Like this:

"Religious freedom in this country is part of our Constitution, and all of us agree with that. And you have many different religions, and people have the right, in this country, to practice the religion that they believe in.

"But we also have a separation between religion and state. We know how dangerous it is, historically, for governments to get deeply involved with religion... Let's not confuse and merge religion and state. That is not what our Founding Fathers wanted, and they were right. The attempt by today's Republican party to confuse and merge religion and state is dangerous, un-American, and a repudiation of the secular values upon which this nation was founded.

"I believe in women's rights and the right of a woman to control her own body. I believe in gay rights and gay marriage. Those are my views and it is no secret." Just sayin'.

Darwin Day Banquet Feb 12 –
Book your place now!
Page 7
Celebrate Presidents Day
Page 1
In God We Do Not Trust
Page 3
The None's Stories
Pages 8-9
Vote for the Dumbth-of-the-Year
Page 10
Our First Non-Endorsement of
Election Year 2016
Page 12

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