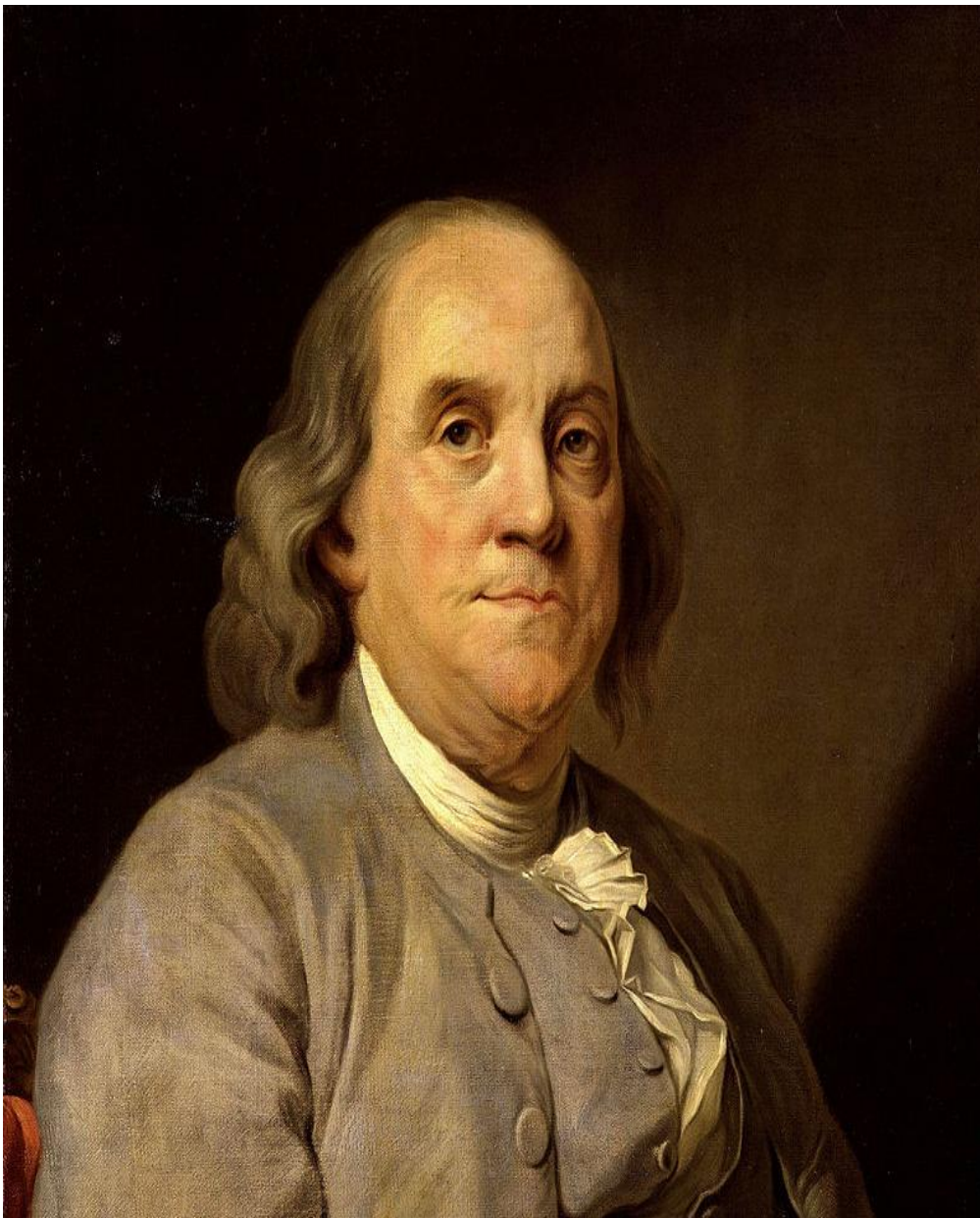


The New Criterion

Dispatch May 13, 2016 12:01 pm

Week in review

by Benjamin Riley



Joseph Duplessis, Portrait of Benjamin Franklin, 1785, National Portrait Gallery, Washington

Recent links of note:

How moderate are moderate Muslims?

Rod Liddle, The Spectator

Quick answer: not very. Trevor Philips's ICM poll contained some appalling, if not startling, findings—namely that only 53 percent condemn violence against those who mock Mohammed; only 34 percent would contact police if they believed someone close to them was involved with jihadism; and only 66 percent completely condemn stoning those who commit adultery. Add this to the fact that a fair number hold what Rod Liddle riotously describes as “views about Jewish people which Ernst Röhm would have thought a bit gamey.” Cut through the platitudes continually bandied about regarding Islam: it is a religion of peace and most Muslims are moderates, and one arrives at the real conclusion.

The Deobandis were also regarded as “moderate,” you see—and indeed, compared to some of the Salafist and Wahabi maniacs, they are a little more amenable in general. Not all of them yearn for the annihilation of the Ahmadiyyas or whatever other sect fails to believe precisely what they believe. But while there is a healthy trickle of clear blue water between what most British Muslims believe and what, for example, is believed by the Islamic State, there is an ocean between what they believe and what the rest of us here in the UK believe.

Doublespeak on Islam

Ben Weingarten, City Journal

And on the topic of so-called “moderate Muslims,” did you know that London's new mayor, Sadiq Khan, is on record having called them “Uncle Toms”? But don't just take the man at his word—his actions are quite clear, too. One need only look to the man's record as a lawyer, continually representing Islamist extremists when the British state brings cases against them, to understand his deep commitment to nugatory ideology. Of course, now that Mr. Khan is mayor of London, his tone has softened. But as Ben Weingarten perceptively notes this week in *City Journal*, “If Sadiq Khan truly wishes to separate himself from Islamists and establish himself as a Western liberal, he would proclaim that words and cartoons don't kill people, jihadists do, and that totalitarian Islamist ideology has no place in Western democratic societies.” We're waiting.

Ben Franklin's Guide to Making Friends

William Damon, The Hoover Institution

Community is dead; long live community. Despite increasing ease of access to each other through technology—think how easy it is now to connect with someone in Borneo and just how hard it was even two decades ago—it's plainly clear that we, as humans, are not getting any closer. Consumed as we are in our devices, beholden to the sickly glow of the smartphone screen, we've lost sight of the essential fact that humans are not solitary animals, able to derive all essential nutrients from the electronic IV-drip of wireless connectivity. And so a group of enterprising Americans has revived an old-fashioned idea: Ben Franklin Circles. In the eighteenth century, Franklin founded a conversational group focused on fostering community. According to William Damon, writing for Hoover, that urge is more needed now than ever. Organized by Emily Esfahani Smith, the former Managing Editor of *The New Criterion*, the Ben Franklin Circles movement is sponsored by both the

92nd Street Y and the Hoover Institution and aims to encourage “citizens taking matters into their own hands and discussing among themselves the best ways to lead productive, fulfilling, and purposeful lives and to improve society.” No one thing will bring us back to the pre-digital ideals of community, but the Ben Franklin Circles movement is a start.

From our pages:

Gallery chronicle

James Panero

On recent shows in New York.

Benjamin Riley is managing editor of *The New Criterion*.