

Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

# The Separationist

Visit us at <http://www.atheistalliance.org/lowcountry>

October 2003

## **“Voodoo melodies in a Catholic Mass: an unexpected merging of pagan and Christian liturgies”**

### **A Talk By Speaker Robert Grenier**

4:00PM October 19, 2003  
Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street, Charleston

Robert Grenier, will be presenting an unusual talk for us at the October meeting of the SHL. The subject of the talk will be a setting of the Catholic mass intended to be sung as part of the celebrations surrounding the sesquicentennial of Haiti's independence set for January 1, 1954 and written by the Haitian composer, Werner Jaegerhuber just before his death in 1953. Conceived for a four-part chorus, solo soprano and organ accompaniment, this otherwise conventional composition is distinguished by the fact that the themes of many of its movements are based on the popular Voodoo melodies of that time. This composition proved to be controversial and provocative for many Haitian's of that generation. Indeed, a church performance was not allowed at the time. As we approach the bicentenary of the founding of the first Black Republic next year, this mass

can still raise questions as to what this composer intended by merging elements of these disparate religions into one work of art.

Robert Grenier is Associate Professor of Music at South Carolina State University, and choral director of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Columbia, South Carolina. A native of Canada, he received his Doctorate of Music from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

He has appeared as a soloist with a number of orchestras and opera companies in Europe and North America. In Europe he was soloist at the Paris opera for four years where he collaborated with Olivier Messiaen in the creation of his opera, *Saint François d'Assise*, commissioned by the French government.

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## **Highway Pickup**

The last 2003 Adopt-A-Highway pickup will be on Saturday, October 18, starting at 9:00 a.m. Our pickup area is Highway 61 starting two miles past Bees Ferry Road and ending two miles beyond that. The start is at Drayton Hall and ends a little past Magnolia Gardens. The Highway Department supplies everything we need: orange bags for the trash, orange vests, and pointy sticks but no gloves, so bring

your own work or garden gloves.

The clean-up shouldn't take more than two hours, and you're bound to find some interesting stuff along with the trash. We'll meet at the small parking lot just across the street from the main Drayton Hall entrance on Highway 61 at 9:00 a.m. to pick up the supplies and head out. Please call Gill Krebs at 763-4505 or e-mail him at [gill@cchat.com](mailto:gill@cchat.com) if you plan to help with the pickup.

## This Month's Speaker

*Robert Grenier...Continued from Page 1*

In South Carolina, Dr. Grenier has appeared in many opera productions at the Newberry Opera House and at Hiltonhead. In addition to teaching and performing, Dr. Grenier researches the art music of Haiti and has produced many first editions of this little known repertoire. This

research has lead to a number of lectures and publications including articles in the Journal for Black Music Research and The Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians where he was commissioned to write the first account of the history of Haiti's art music.

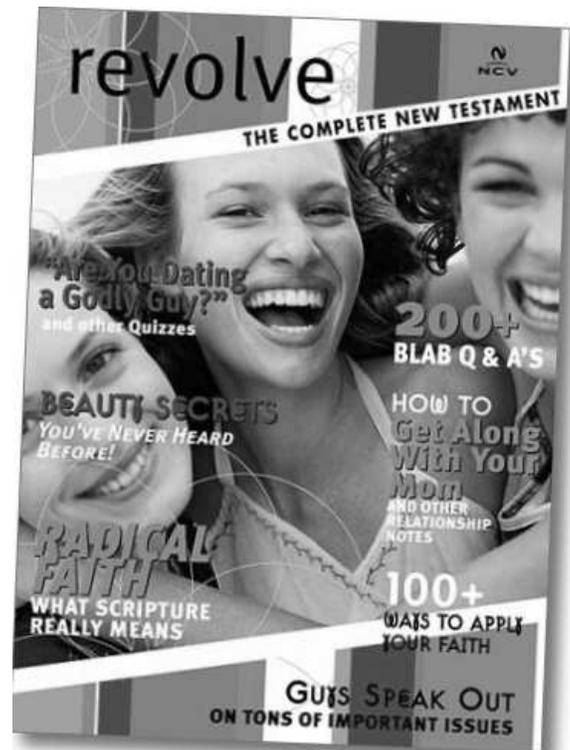
### Revolve: The New Testament Goes Cosmo

Here's the New Testament as you've never seen it before. "Revolve: The Complete New Testament" is an attempt to market the Christian Bible to teenage girls by making it look like the glossy magazines that you see in the checkout line at the supermarket.

Like those real magazines, the cover entices potential readers with teasers such as "Are you dating a Godly guy? and other quizzes" or "100+ ways to apply your faith". And articles on beauty secrets offer advice such as "As you apply your sunscreen, use that time to talk to God. Tell him how grateful you are for how he made you. Soon, you'll be so used to talking to him, it might become as regular and familiar as shrinking your pores."

It has often been suggested that there would be a lot more atheists, freethinkers, brights and agnostics out there if more people would really read the Bible. Unfortunately, the popularity of this new "version" will not help. Despite being called "one of the five best selling Bibles nationwide" and its subtitle claiming that this is somehow a complete account of the entire New Testament, this book does not actually attempt to reproduce the gospels in any way. The contradictions, mistakes, and unpleasantness of the actual Bible are swept aside and replaced by a few isolated and oversimplified quotations.

The creators of this hit promise us a version for boys soon. How about us? Are any of you out there ready to produce a "hot magazine" for religion-free teenagers?



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## Humanist Book Discussion Group

### Sharon Strong

The October meeting of the Humanist Book Discussion Group will take place on Sunday the 26th, 3:00-5:00PM at the Barnes and Noble bookstore in West Ashley, at 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd. The book we'll be focusing on will be *The Fundamentals of Extremism: The Christian Right in America*, a volume of essays edited by syndicated columnist and activist Kimberly Blaker and featuring a chapter written by SHL's own Herb Silverman. Our meeting will be structured a little differently this time, with a presentation by Herb followed by a Q&A session and book signing before turning to a more abbreviated discussion;

it is hoped that this event will appeal to a more general audience.

Herb's piece details his 1990 campaign for the governorship of South Carolina and (far more arduous) subsequent campaign to be qualified as a notary public in our state. The other chapters in the book explore the connections between Christian fundamentalism and such destructive social behaviors as the abuse of children, the disparagement of women, and the dismantling of the First Amendment. The book, like all our selections, is available at the West Ashley Barnes and Noble.

### SHL Information Table at Charleston Peace Rally

SHL members staffed a Humanist information table at a peace rally held in Charleston's Marion Square on the afternoon of September 13. Michael Epstein and Sharon Strong distributed newsletters and SHL literature to perhaps a dozen passersby. One such person said that he always carried with him in his wallet Herb Silverman's non-theistic invocation to the Charleston City

Council and was, of course, invited to join us at future SHL meetings. A number of people asked for the definition of Secular Humanism and were interested in knowing more about SHL and its activities. While SHL does not hold an opinion regarding specific conflicts such as the current situation in Iraq, the Humanist philosophy is opposed to religious wars.

### Macintosh Computers as Atheist Propaganda

You can learn a lot by visiting the Website at <http://objective.jesussave.us/propaganda.html>. For instance, we learned that there is *no evidence* for the theory of the evolution of species.

Well, actually, we didn't learn that because it is a ridiculous claim. There is, in fact, quite a bit of biological, geological, and mathematical evidence for evolution. No, what we *did* learn at this Website is that Apple Computers is trying to brainwash Macintosh users into being atheists. At first, we considered this to be more baseless paranoia on the part of Richard Paley, the professor of "Theobiology" who created the site, but in the end we were convinced that there is more to it than that!

We knew that the new Macintosh operating system was based on an Open-Source core called *DarwinOS*, but had not thought twice about why that name was chosen. However, prompted by Paley's Website, we probed further and found out that the program is, *in fact*, named after Charles Darwin and moreover that the icon selected for this program is a cheerful platypus named "Hexley"

wearing devil horns and holding a red pitchfork. (Paley insists that the name is suggestive of witchcraft, but the authors of the Darwin software admit that it was a misspelled homage to biologist Thomas Huxley who was a famous defender of Darwin's theories.) Another proposed icon for the operating system which was not selected, but would surely have offended the Christians at [jesussave.us](http://jesussave.us) had they known about it, is the parody of the "Jesus Fish" shown below.

Thus, even though we find it unlikely that anyone at Apple intends to "trick unsuspecting users into accepting Darwinism" or that the Apple symbol was chosen as a reference to the myth of Adam and Eve, as Paley claims, it seems that someone may have had in mind a message with anti-fundamentalist overtones in the selection of the name and icon for DarwinOS.



## Deistic Realizations

**Actor Peter O'Toole:** "When did I realize I was God? Well, I was praying and I suddenly realized I was talking to myself."

**Dog (thinking about its owners in a cartoon):** "They feed me, they pet me, they take care of me...they must be gods!!!"

**Cat (thinking about its owners in the same cartoon):** "They feed me, they pet me, they take care of me...I must be a god!!!"



## Letters to Editors from SHL Members

### Sent to the Post and Courier

With all the comments regarding the appointing of a gay Episcopal bishop, it is interesting to see many letters to the editor citing the "abomination" of a man lying with another man as written in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. It is also interesting how one can be selective in citing Bible passages.

If one were to follow the scriptures to the letter, then we should all be walking around with long beards as outlined in Leviticus 19:27, "...neither shalt thou mar the corners of your beard." Also, according to Leviticus 11:10, eating shellfish or any other seafood that does not have scales and fins is also an abomination. There goes the South Carolina shrimp industry.

According to Exodus 35:2 regarding working on the Sabbath, if you do work on the Sabbath, "whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death." O.K. Let's shut everything down on Sundays so we all won't be put to death. Although it seems to me that nobody pays any attention to this biblical verse.

In Exodus 21:7 it is apparent that I can sell my daughter into slavery. In addition, Leviticus 25:44 through 25:50 also approves the buying and selling of slaves. I was under the impression that owning or buying and selling slaves were illegal. Perhaps not, according to the Scriptures.

Finally, in Leviticus 24:16 it says that anyone who blasphemes the Lord shall be put to death and "all the congregation shall certainly stone him." I thought getting stoned from using drugs was against the law. Maybe not, according to Leviticus.

*Gill Krebs*

### Sent to the Charleston Mercury

We appreciate the thoughtful and well written article by Warren Moise on the subject of the changing view of "separation of church and state" in America.

We would like to contrast Moise's quotes that would seem to support a very weak "separation" with some alternative viewpoints from "founding fathers". For instance, the now famous phrase "wall of separation between church and state" was coined by Thomas Jefferson. He wrote about it in a letter to the Baptists of Connecticut whose freedom of religion was being violated by the majority Congregationalists, explaining that he believed freedom of religion depended upon a complete separation between government and religion. A statement from James Madison which is clearly relevant to Moise's arguments appears in his "Detached Memoranda". There, in explaining why an American President should not issue proclamations calling for a day of prayer, he argues that to do so

would "seem to imply and certainly nourish the erroneous idea of a national religion."

Based on these quotes, and the fact that the Constitution was explicitly and carefully written without any reference to the super-natural, we think that Moise is not giving the founders enough credit when he suggests that they would be surprised by the way the non-establishment clause of the Constitution is interpreted today.

However, whether they would be surprised by it or not is a moot point. Many of the founding fathers would certainly have been surprised and disturbed to learn that today people can own land and vote in America regardless of their race or sex. This, however, is not a good argument for returning to the inequities of the past.

There are many strong arguments in favor of a complete separation of church and state, one that would even exclude prayer at public school events and the phrase "Under God" which was added to the Pledge of Allegiance during the Cold War. People of many religious backgrounds -- people without any religion, religious minorities, and even Christian clergy -- have banded together to support this separation. To learn more about their reasons visit <http://www.au.org/resources>.

*Alex and Laura Kasman*

# Open Letter to National Public Radio

## by Richard S. Russell

Hello. My name is Richard S. Russell, and I'm the parliamentarian of the Atheist Alliance International, a collection of local grass-roots organizations representing atheists, agnostics, humanists, skeptics, naturalists, and freethinkers -- or, as we now say, brights.

I'm writing in response to the commentary about the new term "brights" that you aired last Thursday, Sep. 4. I'm sorry I couldn't have been faster, but a combination of minor surgery and computer problems slowed me down.

I suspect that, in the history of NPR, you've run interviews with civil-rights leaders about why they preferred to be called "blacks" rather than "Negroes" or "niggers", with feminists about why they preferred "women" to "girls", and with homosexuals about why "gays" was better than "queers" or "faggots". You may even have interviewed Ho-Chunks who pointed out that they've never called themselves "Winnebagos" -- an insult applied to them by a neighboring tribe.

But when it came to us brights, you consulted Steven Waldman, a theist from beliefnet.com, rather than the able, articulate, and readily available Mynga Futrell and Paul Geisert of the-brights.net, the people who originated the usage of "brights" to refer to people with a naturalistic worldview.

And, as is usually the case when theists are asked to describe unbelievers, Waldman's comments were 80% either wrong or irrelevant. He suggests that we are arrogant to call ourselves bright, implying that others are dim, when 3 minutes research on the website the-brights.net would clearly show that we intend the word to be used as a noun, not an adjective. We no more describe non-brights as "dim" than gays describe non-gays as "sad" or "morose".

Waldman's extensive use of statistics to illustrate that many intelligent people believe in God is completely beside the point. God belief isn't something that's determined by majority vote, and we brights have never tried to claim we're a majority anyway.

What we are is, clearly, a minority. But it's not as small a minority as you might think. A recent Gallup survey of religious belief showed that about 14% of the population doesn't have any. That means that about 1 out of 7 of your friends, neighbors, co-workers, teammates, and relatives is a bright. And, due to social pressure, that even includes some of the people sitting next to you in church, temple, or mosque.

Within the US, we brights are a minority comparable in size to blacks or Hispanics; more numerous than gays and lesbians; and far larger than Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists combined.

Yet we continue to get no respect and to have our common sense, morality, patriotism, and fitness for citizenship called into question without a qualm. Public officials feel perfectly free to appropriate our tax money to promote their own religious beliefs and wonder why we could possibly object to it.

For too long, we brights have been America's quiet minority, and we've paid the price for our silence. Now we ask only the simple right to name ourselves, and even such a normally enlightened news source as "All Things Considered" uses the occasion to consult somebody from the dominant majority to ridicule and demean us.

And heck, we're easy. While we'd like some respect, we'd probably settle for just a little common decency. How about it? Friends?

## Debate Update

Over 500 students, faculty and interested citizens packed the Physician's Auditorium at the College of Charleston the evening of September 24th to hear SHL president Herb Silverman and Jack Hoey of Seacoast Church debate the existence and relevance of God.

Both speakers were allowed 12 minute opening speeches followed by 6 minute rebuttals. Then each was allowed to ask the other questions. Finally, they both fielded written questions from the audience. It was a grueling but civil 90 minutes. Perhaps a central question of the debate, put by Herb, was why a person who tries all his or her life to be good and is good, must still believe in the resurrection to get everlasting life? Mr. Hoey said he didn't know, but it was true nonetheless. Still, this gave Herb a chance to point out an interesting aspect of Hoey's worldview. According to him, no one received eternal punishment before Jesus; and so it is only because of the coming of Jesus that people go to hell!

It was interesting to learn that although he is a

self-professed believer in Biblical Inerrancy, Hoey believes that certain passages of the Bible are poems, not meant to be taken literally. How one knows what is to be taken literally and what is a poem was not explained. The flames of hell, by the way, are a metaphor according to Seacoast Church teaching. Since the flames are usually mentioned in the same passages as the bliss of heaven, it seems the afterlife isn't what it used to be.

Afterwards, Herb received the predictable unpleasant email. (Why do believers think "the All Powerful" needs defending by humans?) One writer was apparently troubled by one question Herb asked which was why doesn't God give each of us the amount of evidence we will need to believe in Him, if He is loving and wants us to know Him? The answer given by the email writer: Herb was put here by God as a test to believers. I guess we all were. Let us go forth then and test them.

**THE SEPARATIONIST  
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Secular Humanists  
of the Lowcountry**

**Editors:**  
Alex and Laura Kasman  
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**SHL Calendar**

**Saturday, October 18:** SHL Trash Pick-up on Hwy 61 starting at 9AM. Contact Gill (763-4505 / gill@cchat.com) for more info or to volunteer.

**Sunday, October 19:** Robert Grenier's talk "Voodoo melodies in a Catholic Mass: an unexpected merging of pagan and Christian liturgies" at the monthly SHL meeting is open to the public and takes place at Gage Hall at 4:00PM.

**October 10-12:** Freedom From Religion Foundation Annual Convention. Washington, D.C. For more information go to [www.ffrf.org](http://www.ffrf.org)

**Sunday, October 26:** The October meeting of the Humanist Book Discussion Group will take place on Sunday the 26th, 3:00-5:00PM at the Barnes and Noble bookstore in West Ashley, at 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd. The book we'll be focusing on will be *The Fundamentals of Extremism: The Christian Right in America*.

**JOIN THE SHL**

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry is a group of freethinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the Charleston, SC area. The SHL is affiliated with American Atheists, the American Humanist Association, the Atheist Alliance, and the Council for Secular Humanism.

Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$24 (individual) or \$36 (couple or family); additional donations are always welcome. For more information consult our Webpage at:

[atheistalliance.org/lowcountry/join.html](http://atheistalliance.org/lowcountry/join.html)

**CONTRIBUTE...**

Please contact the editors with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions of short articles, news items, letters-to-the-editor or other information of interest to SHL members are always appreciated. (Note the mailing address, e-mail address, and Website listed elsewhere on this page.)

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