



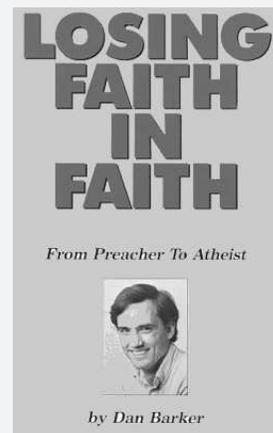
Losing Faith in Faith a talk by Dan Barker

4:00PM April 17, 2005
Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street, Charleston

This month we are extremely pleased to have as our speaker Dan Barker, one of the most prominent freethinkers in America today. As the Public Relations Director of the Freedom From Religion Foundation based in Madison Wisconsin, he has appeared on dozens of talk shows, radio programs and public forums as a passionate advocate for freethought, reason and humanism.

Barker's life story is exceptional for an atheist. "Called to the ministry" at the age of 15, Dan worked 19 years as an evangelical missionary throughout the United States and Mexico. He also wrote, produced, performed and recorded hundreds of pieces of Christian music in English and Spanish, many of them bestsellers and still earning royalties. However, in the early 1980's Barker made a personal intellectual journey from evangelical minister to atheist. In an act of almost unbelievable courage considering his situation, he openly admitted his change of mind to his family, friends and employers. It cost him his career, his marriage and most of his friends at that time.

Dan is the author of *Losing Faith in Faith* (1992), part autobiography and part analysis of the fallacies, inconsistencies, and harm of Christian doctrine and theistic dogma. His background gives him the unusual perspective of being able to see the world through a fundamentalist's eyes, while thinking with a humanist's brain. When it comes to Christian reactions to atheists and atheism, he has lived through it all. We are very lucky to have Mr. Barker as a guest. Please join us for what is sure to be a very engaging afternoon.



SHL Named AHA Chapter of the Year!

(See page 4 for details.)

Letters to the Editor by SHL Members

**Published in P&C
February 25, 2005**

I read with interest (and amusement) your Feb. 18 article that Roman Catholic Church leaders are gravely concerned about a shortage of exorcists, especially in the United States. To combat the problem, the Vatican is sponsoring an intensive eight-week training course in Rome to help future priest-exorcists tell the difference between demonic possession and psychological or physical trauma.

I suggest, instead, a two-second course you can take in the comfort of your own living room: Rational Thinking.

Have you noticed that demons and devils never possess people who don't believe in them? No Vatican-sanctioned exorcist can claim such a 100 percent success rate.

Put down that Bible for a change, and pick up a copy of Carl Sagan's "The Demon-Haunted World." If you need even more help, consult a physician – but not a witch doctor.

Herb Silverman

Sent to P&C

Within the past week, there have been two letters attacking Herb Silverman because he suggested that a small dose of reason would obviate the need for the Catholic Church to train priests as exorcists. I have a question: did either of Herb's critics read the book he suggested: Carl Sagan's "The Demon Haunted World"? Of course not. Their minds are made up and they do not wish to be confused by facts or rational thinking. People like this don't read books; they cling to the myths and superstitions with which they were brainwashed as children. Another recent letter writer bemoaned the fact that 60% of college professors believe as Herb does. This statistic also applies to scientists. (You can check it on the internet.) Professors and scientists *do* read books, and they apply the scientific method to claims of the paranormal and supernatural, and reject a belief in demons, ghosts in the attic, werewolves, vampires, 72 virgins awaiting martyrs in paradise, angels and all sorts of imaginary gods. Eventually, education will lay to rest the human propensity to believe in fantasy, but I fear not for a long, long time. Galileo Galilie was convicted in 1633 by the Roman Inquisition for contradicting Church teaching that the Earth was the center of the universe, and it took hundreds of years for people to accept his teachings. John Scopes was convicted in 1925 for teaching Darwin's theory of evolution in public school, and 80 years later we are still fighting that battle. Religious mythology dies hard. Demons, indeed.

C. H. Lindsey

**Published in the Charleston City Paper
March 31, 2005**

My family and I have purchased more than 20 tickets at the Charleston IMAX theater and had every intention of purchasing more. When friends and relatives visited the lowcountry, we often recommended that they see the aquarium and catch an IMAX movie. We had also been considering having a birthday party for our daughter there...but no longer.

We will no longer be purchasing tickets, no longer be suggesting that our guests see a movie and would never think of having a party at the Charleston IMAX. At least, not until they reconsider and bring the movie *Volcanoes* here to Charleston.

According to articles that appeared in national news sources this week, the manager of our IMAX theater is quite concerned that some members of the audience at *Volcanoes* might be offended by a few lines in the film. Well, there are lots of movies out there that we find offensive. (In our case, it is nothing anyone could say that offends us, but rather too much violence, too many really gross things, or too much of Jim Carrey making weird faces.)

However, I do not expect theater owners to prevent *other* people from seeing these movies simply because we don't like them. We don't go to see them, and we let the people who like that sort of thing go.

Personally, we would really like to see *Volcanoes*. We thought it sounded like a fascinating movie when we first heard about it and were looking forward to it. Now we learn that we won't be able to see it because one or two sentences of the narration are not in complete agreement with some people's interpretation of the bible.

Of course, the theater manager has the right to decide which movies to show at her own theater. If she thinks she will lose money by bringing in *Volcanoes*, she does not have to bring it here. Then again, we also have the right to boycott the theater to remind her that she needs to consider our opinions as well. I will do everything I can to advertise this fact to the many members of the Charleston community who I believe will join me in this boycott. And as for people who live elsewhere, they learned enough about it from watching CNN and reading their newspapers. Judging from the reactions of friends and colleagues in other states who forwarded the news stories to me via e-mail, this all was enough to make many potential tourists reconsider the thought of even visiting Charleston, let alone seeing an IMAX movie while here!

Alex Kasman

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Letters to the Editor by SHL Members

Sent to P&C

Dear Editor,

In a recent letter which appeared in your 3/2/05 edition titled 'Free speech,' the writer began by criticizing a public speech (not a classroom lecture) by a University of Colorado professor, but his main attack appears to be against people that have different religious ideas from his own. Mistakenly, he characterizes German Nazis as "an atheistic group of fanatics." The writer admits that the university professor has a right to freedom of speech, but he contradicts this by claiming that the teacher has no freedom of speech when expressing his ideas "from the sanctioned podium of a classroom." He wanted to know how the professor, that he attacked, became "a tenured head of a department? Has he always held these views and was promoted anyway or has he just come out of the closet?"

He then turns to what appears to be his main issue by stating that he has "been told by a learned person that at least 60 percent of college professors are atheists". He then asks "What sort of 'Americas' are we breeding if that is the environment to which our young people are being exposed?" The writer appears to want our college and university professors to have to pass a test of religious correctness to teach in higher education and probably all teaching positions. He seems to be uninformed or misinformed about people that have not found any credible evidence to support the claim that there is a supernatural being that is involved in the daily activities of humans. If his statistic of "at least 60 percent college professors are atheists" is accurate, what is the evidence that they have harmed our young people? The American atheists that I know and whose writings I have read have advocated intellectual integrity, caring for other humans and personal responsibility. They stress the importance of evidence in evaluating claims and they emphasize the use of reason and inquiry to find out what is really happening, and what the consequences of acts may be in the short and long run.

There have been some horrible totalitarian leaders that were atheists such as Joseph Stalin, and Pol Pot, but not Adolf Hitler. Hitler opposed atheism and like the writer of the letter, he did not respect others that had religious views

that were different from his own and he wanted to deprive them of their rights.

Bill Upshur

Published in P&C March 11, 2005

In a March 2 letter decrying freedom of speech on college campuses, the writer wronged atheists by repeating the popular but ludicrous lie that Hitler and the Nazi party were "fanatical atheists."

The belt buckles of Nazi uniforms bore the slogan, "Gott mitt Uns" (God is with us).

Number 24 of the 25 points of the German Workers Party (a.k.a. the Nazis) was that their party stood for "Positive Christianity."

A catechism for this new "Positive Christianity" published in 1934 included the words, "The German religion is a religion of the people. It has nothing in common with free thought, atheist propaganda and the breakdown of current religions."

In his *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that "faith is often the sole foundation of a moral attitude" and argued that an attack against religion is an attack against the legal foundations of the state.

In his Reichstag speech of 1938, Hitler famously said, "I believe today I am acting in the sense of the Almighty Creator. By warding off the Jews I am fighting for the Lord's work." After all, why would "fanatical atheists" discriminate between Jews and Christians? Only fellow religionists care about the details of someone else's belief in invisible supreme beings. Why would "fanatical atheists" round up and exterminate "godless" communists as the Nazis did? Clearly the Nazis were NOT atheists.

Germany is much more secular today than at any time during the reign of the Third Reich. During World War II, the majority of Germans identified themselves as religious Christians. Obviously, the Nazi plan never could have succeeded as it did without the willing complicity of millions of Christians in the murder of their fellow citizens and neighbors.

Laura Kasman

What that tells me is that the judge is going to judge me not only according to the laws of the country that I'm a citizen of but by the laws of a religion I'm not a part of and not required to be a part of.

– Separationist co-editor Alex Kasman, quoted in 3/25/05 Post and Courier, commenting on the visit to Charleston of the Ten Commandments monument which (former) Judge Roy Moore sought to install at his courthouse.

Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry Named AHA Chapter of the Year!

The American Humanist Association has chosen the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry as their 2005 AHA Chapter of the Year out of more than 100 affiliated chapters! According to the AHA, the chapters receiving this award are chosen based on how well they are promoting Humanism as seen in their program initiatives, their public impact, and in their individual and AHA membership development over the last year. In the past year alone, the Lowcountry's membership has increased by 24 members, bringing the Chapter up to 116 members.

The SHL was commended for activities which have resulted in a large amount of positive press coverage over the past year, including recent articles in the Post and Courier, and in the national press thanks to the "In Reason We Trust" license plate initiative. In addition, our president, Herb Silverman, who is also an AHA board member, is in the process of putting together a contribution to

a serial panel discussion that will appear in The Charleston Post and Courier's "Faith and Values" section to provide readers with a Humanist perspective. We were also recognized for being a humanist group in an area of the country that is less accepting of non-theists than others.

The Chapter of the Year award, which includes \$500, will be presented at the "Humanism on the Rise" AHA annual conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, May 5-8. It would be excellent if several members could attend. The SHL has funds set aside to help cover costs for anyone who would like to attend but cannot due to financial constraints. The award will be presented on Saturday, May 7, at the Humanist Awards Luncheon, 12:00 Noon to 2:45 PM.

To reserve a room for the conference, call the Hyatt Regency Albuquerque at (505) 842-1234. For current information and to register online, visit:

www.americanhumanist.org/conference/

Help Advertise Reason by Bill Dusenberry

We need creative ideas about how to publicize our "In Reason We Trust" special South Carolina license plate. One idea involves the development of a questionnaire in which one must decide what they rely on when making rapid, or almost instantaneous responses.

For example: You are driving on the Interstate when you observe a car approaching from the opposite direction. You:

- (a) continue on with the expectation that a deity will protect you from any possible collision;
- (b) reduce your speed, and try to determine where the oncoming car will probably go;
- (c) apply your brakes while pulling over to the shoulder and stop as quickly as possible;
- (d) don't have any idea what you'd do, you'd hope you'd react in a way that would avoid any collision.

The choices must have at least one answer that is totally based on reason, and another choice based totally on faith. These choices don't necessarily involve driving, they can involve any rapid decision one is compelled to make in life in general.

After we have identified the best ten questions to put on the questionnaire, we might put them into an advertisement for our "Reason Plate." Those completing the questionnaire would then be able to make a determination if the "Reason" plate was right for then or not.

Please send your questions, with four multiple choice responses, to bishopbill@comcast.net.

Editor's Note: Remember, anyone in the state can get an "In Reason We Trust" license plate at their local DMV. Photos of the plate and instructions on how to obtain one can be found on our website at lowcountry.humanists.net/IRWT.html.

Humanist Book Discussion Group

Loretta Haskell

The SHL Humanist Book Club will meet on April 24 at the West Ashley Barnes and Noble at 3:00 to discuss Amy Chua's *World on Fire*. In a review by Scott Albers from Swans.com he describes Chua's book as one of the most important political works to be written in the past ten years.

Chua argues that human beings have profoundly different levels of access of economic resources, that globalization progresses against an uneven human geography of skills, that globalism and international free trade tend to exaggerate, not reduce the differences between people and ethnic groups and that when these differences are aligned with ethnicity that what follows is an increasingly disenfranchised and destitute majority. Sharon Fratepietro will facilitate the discussion and everyone is welcome to attend

Dawkins ups the ante for Secular Coalition

by Herb Silverman (reprinted from Humanist Network News)

At the Atheist Alliance International Convention over Easter Weekend, I led a breakout session on the Secular Coalition for America and the importance for us to hire our own lobbyist in Washington, D.C.

Richard Dawkins (British professor, popular science writer and prominent freethinker) attended and was very supportive of our efforts.

At the evening banquet, Dawkins got up and told the audience that he would like to start a new "meme" and pledged \$1,000 toward hiring and keeping an SCA lobbyist. The meme spread that evening and we received pledges and checks for more than \$7,600. Others in attendance infected by the meme said they would donate on the SCA Web site.

We now have about \$60,000 in contributions, with another \$40,000 pledged for a second year. The member organizations are very excited about

the possibility of hiring the first lobbyist to represent us, the non-theistic community. We think this approach will be a significant step forward in getting us a place at the table of public opinion, influencing legislation, and gaining respect for our point of view.

So let's keep Richard Dawkins' meme alive! To donate on our Web site, check www.secular.org. Alternatively, you can mail your check or money order made out to Secular Coalition for America to:

Secular Coalition for America
c/o The Institute for Humanist Studies
48 Howard Street
Albany, NY 12207-1608

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact me at silvermanh@cofc.edu.

I can live with doubts and uncertainty and not knowing. I think it is more interesting to live not knowing than to have answers that might be wrong...I don't feel frightened by not knowing things, by being lost in a mysterious universe without having any purpose, which is the way it really is so far as I can tell. It doesn't frighten me.

– Physicist Richard Feynman

THE SEPARATIONIST
Newsletter of the
Secular Humanists
of the Lowcountry

Editors:
Alex and Laura Kasman

SHL Calendar

April 17, 2005: *Losing Faith in Faith;*
April meeting of SHL with guest Dan
Barker – Our guest at this month's regular
meeting of the SHL is Dan Barker from the
FFRF speaking about his experiences as a
Christian evangelist and his "conversion" to
atheism.

April 24, 2005: *Book Discussion Group*
– Meet at 3PM at the West Ashley location of
Barnes and Noble to discuss Amy Chua's book
World on Fire

JOIN THE SHL

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry (SHL) 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, American Humanist Association, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Atheist Alliance, Council for Secular Humanism, and the SC Progressive Network.

Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$24 (individual) or \$36 (couple or family); additional donations are always welcome. Members receive this newsletter and can participate in activities planned for the Lowcountry. For more information consult our Webpage at:

lowcountry.humanists.net

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. Write to us at newsletter@lowcountry.humanists.net or use the contact information at the bottom of page 2.

On the Web at [HTTP://LOWCOUNTRY.HUMANISTS.NET](http://LOWCOUNTRY.HUMANISTS.NET)

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