



# The Separationist



## Leaving a Living Legacy a talk by Vanessa Hill

at 4:00PM on September 18, 2005  
Gage Hall /4 Archdale Street, Charleston

Our first guest speaker for Fall 2005 will be Vanessa Hill, a spokesperson for the MUSC Transplant Center. In her presentation, which will use pictures and stories to introduce the audience to people who live today because of organ donation, Hill will be arguing that “Organ donation is a positive, miraculous means of living on through the hearts and lives of those who have no other medical option for survival.”

“I am a firm believer that life is too important to let the impact of one's presence on earth end when the breathing stops,” says Hill. “I personally believe that while donation is ‘the choice’ to make, I understand that it may not be for everyone. Yet, hearing the stories and seeing the faces of those who have received the miracle of life through donation/transplantation is food for thought. It is food for conversation. It's reason to believe that the lives that we lead are truly gifts.”

Hill says that the number of transplant patients waiting for lifesaving organs and tissue climbs everyday. Right now, it stands at close to 88,000 people, with 12 to 17 people on the list dying every day.

The subject of transplantation and the associated moral implications are of great importance to everyone, but perhaps especially to members of the SHL since we are currently considering taking action as a group to further promote organ donation in South Carolina as a group.

Vanessa Hill received a BA in Communications from North Carolina

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## Herb's Oxford Debate

by Sharon Fratapietro

Over the summer, a number of folks have asked me how Herb Silverman's debate at Oxford University on May 26 turned out. As Herb's wife and travel companion, I'm happy to report that it went very well. A good time was had by all, as we went through the age-old Oxford Union

ritual of drinks, dinner, debate and then more socializing in (for Herb's first time) black tie attire.

Here's a little background. The Oxford Union bills itself as “the world's most prestigious

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### **Living Legacy (continued from page one)**

State University in Raleigh, NC. After her initial assignment as a radio news anchor in Durham N.C. in 1980, she has worked almost exclusively in television news - as a reporter in Akron, Ohio, a news anchor in Florence, SC and most recently as a news anchor for WCIV in Charleston from 1994 until 1999. In 1999 she accepted a job as a transplant liaison for MUSC with responsibilities including development of marketing strategies, fundraising and organization of projects to enhance recognition and education of organ and tissue donation.

### **NPR broadcasts a Humanist Viewpoint in "This I believe" Series**

Check out Ruth Kamp's essay on her spirituality without traditional religious beliefs. It was originally broadcast on August 15, 2005 and can be found online at:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4792317>

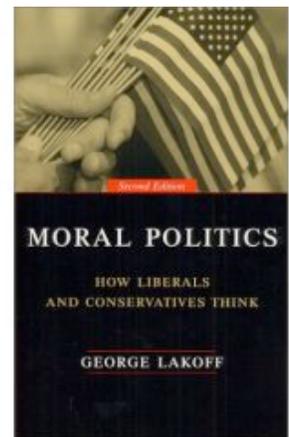
### **Diversity Program at UUC**

Throughout this year, the Unitarian Church is hosting a movie and discussion series about diversity issues. This month's theme is "Equal Rights and Inclusiveness" and will include the showing of the documentary "Tying the Knot." It starts at 6 PM in Gage Hall, just after our meeting. For more information and synopses of the scheduled events, contact Don Manning at 843-237-1125 or [DonManning@sc.rr.com](mailto:DonManning@sc.rr.com)

### **Humanist Book Group**

by Loretta Haskell

The SHL Book Club will meet at Barnes and Noble in West Ashley on Sunday, September 25 at 3:00 p.m. to discuss *Moral Politics 2nd Edition: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, by George Lakoff. In this discourse on how we think and talk about politics, Lakoff discusses how conservatives and liberals link morality to politics through the concept of the family and how these ideals diverge. Sam Moskow will lead the discussion and everyone is invited to attend whether or not they have read the book.



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**Herb's Debate (continued from page one)**  
**by Sharon Fratapietro**

debating society." Past guest debaters have included Malcolm X, Richard Nixon, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa, and the Dalai Lama. The Union is run by students at Oxford University, and throughout the school year debates take place on topics ranging from serious to frivolous.

Herb Silverman serves as president of the Secular Coalition for America (see the accompanying boxed text), so it was natural for the Oxford Union to invite him to defend the proposition, "Resolved: American religion undermines American values." Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, a Baptist minister and president of the national Interfaith Alliance, was the second half of that team. Opposing the proposition were Rich Lowry, editor of *The National Review*; Joseph Loconte, Fellow at the Heritage Foundation; and

Eric Metaxas, author of numerous books with Christian themes. At various points during the debate, students spoke briefly in support of each side. The audience included about 300 students and faculty.

Herb presented a terrific argument. His logic and humor drew applause both during and after the talk. Rev. Gaddy spoke convincingly about the "religification" of the current Bush administration, and today's "politicization" of religion. The three opponents insisted that America would not be the democracy and fine country it is today without the positive influence of Christianity. At the end, the audience voted for the winning team, and Herb's side won.

To those who ask about seeing a tape of the debate, at the time of this writing Oxford is attempting to correct a flawed copy.

**The Secular Coalition for America**

For some time many nontheists have wished for a national organization that would speak publicly with one loud voice on behalf of this country's multiple varieties of freethinkers. In response, through the efforts of SHL president Herb Silverman and a few other determined freethinkers, the Secular Coalition for America was born in 2002. It now includes five cooperative, national freethought organizations and numerous endorsing groups. The members are the American Humanist Association; the Atheist Alliance International; the Institute for Humanist Studies; the Internet Infidels; and the Secular Student Alliance.

The mission of the Secular Coalition for America is to increase the visibility and respectability of nontheistic viewpoints in this country, and to protect and strengthen secular government as the best guarantee of freedom for all. Herb Silverman has served as president of the Secular Coalition for America since its inception.

The Secular Coalition for America differs from other organizations that work for church-state separation, like the ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Unlike those groups, the Secular Coalition is a 501(c)(4) organization, with no legal limits on political lobbying, and lobbying on behalf of nontheists like those of us in the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry is its job.

We all know that our nontheist constituency is generally thought to be politically inconsequential. Just try to name an elected politician at any level of government who cares in any way about the concerns of nontheists, or worries about offending them with his or her positions!

Therefore, the Secular Coalition for America has just hired a lobbyist, former Nevada State Senator Lori Lipman Brown, to represent your perspective on Capitol Hill. We are a 30-million-strong constituency of voters informed about the issues and we now have a voice in Washington to educate and influence Congress about our concerns.

As president of the Secular Coalition for America, Herb Silverman spends much of his free time looking for large and small financial contributions. The coalition needs support now more than ever to meet its startup costs and ensure the future of this first-ever cooperative lobbying effort by and for American freethinkers. Find out more details by checking [www.secular.org](http://www.secular.org) or give Herb a call at 843-577-0637.

## Letters to the Editor by SHL Members

### Published in Post and Courier (August 19)

The Dorchester School District's decision to permit students to study the Bible in terms of its influence on culture and literature (Post and Courier, Aug. 8) should be viewed with alarm. After all, which teachers have the qualifications to objectively teach such a course?

What is expected to happen, for example, when a student asks if the Bible is based on actual history and/or facts? Faith-based teachers likely will answer, "yes." Teachers with a secular scientific perspective will likely answer, "no."

And, how many Muslim students will have to be enrolled in Dorchester County before a "Koran, Culture and Literature" course will be offered? Or how many secular students will there have to be before Darwin's "The Descent of Man" and its culture and literature will also be offered?

Dorchester's proposed "Bible Study," which is nothing other than a thinly disguised subterfuge to use our public schools to promote Christianity, is not only an undemocratic imposition of the will of the majority on to the minority, it is also extremely arrogant.

Public schools have the responsibility to be neutral in matters involving faith and religion, and "Bible study," no matter what form it might take, makes such neutrality impossible.

Students in Dorchester District 4 would be far better served by a course dealing with the fact that every known culture has stories similar to those found in the Bible and that every one of these different stories is faith-based. The main objective of such a course would be to promote tolerance and understanding. Unfortunately, tolerance and understanding are not characteristics of most of the religions in Dorchester District 4.

**William Dusenberry**

### Sent to the Post and Courier (June 20, 2005)

Over the past few weeks your paper has printed several letters (6/8, 6/10, 6/14) attacking the concept of evolution, or other letter writers, or public officials that writers feel are censoring Christian speech, activity, or limiting Christian choice. On (6/8/05) a writer misrepresents the evolutionists' position by a quote that is not identified (probably from some creationist) "In the beginning was nothing and from nothing everything evolved randomly by pure chance" This is not an evolutionist claim. Evolution is involved with the changes that have occurred after life forms existed on earth and it does not speculate as to any beginnings. He also classes evolution as a religion.

That "the Bible says that our supernatural God created all things in six days" is a religious belief, that life forms have evolved and do evolve is scientific fact. The concept of evolution is based on the fact that inheritable changes occur in living creatures and some changes survive and other changes do not and the environment is involved in this fact. This understanding is developed by way of experimentation and scientific inquiry which is science. It is not derived from a religious book (which is held to be Holy by some people) which would make it a religious idea. Creationism or intelligent design is not science, but religion and does not belong in the science department in public educational institution. Intelligent design would fit well in a course on comparative creation mythology.

There are many myths about the creation of the world or universe that are based on the same type of evidence as that of the creationist and advocates of intelligent design.

On (6/14/05) the writer states 'This country was founded by Christians on biblical principles and we need not forget our roots.' This claim is made time and time again, but it does not reflect the

historic facts. The key people involved in the formation of our Constitution were not Christians, although false claims to this effect are constantly made. Although, Patrick Henry wanted to form a Christian theocracy, he was opposed by Thomas Jefferson, who did not believe in the Trinity or the divinity of Jesus. Thomas Paine was a freethinker and George Washington was a Deist and referred to divinity as 'It.' In all of his thousands of letters Washington never mentioned Jesus Christ. He, at times, attended Christian churches, but never took communion or joined in the reciting of the Apostle's Creed. John Adams was not a Christian, but a Unitarian and he opposed doctrines of damnation and supernaturalism. Benjamin Franklin writes in his autobiography that he was a Deist. James Madison held that "Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise." He opposed having chaplains in Congress and the military and warned of the "danger of a direct mixture of Religion and Civil Government." There have been several letters to the editor of your paper that have quoted James Madison to the effect "We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God." None of the expert biographers of Madison have been able to find this quote in any writings or speeches of Madison. It apparently has been made up out of whole cloth by those who want to make the United States of America a 'Christian Nation' just as Iran is a 'Muslim Nation.' In fact the writer of the (6/14) letter states "It is OK for Israel to be Jewish and India to Hindu. It should be OK for America to be Christian since 85 percent of us claim to be Christian." America would be a 'Christian Nation' if it were not for the intelligence and

foresight of the founders of our great nation and the integrity of our court system. The founders included in our Constitution the First Amendment which, with the help of the courts, keeps the government out of organized religion and keeps organized religion out of the government. There were many Christians involved with the beginning of our nation, but the main leaders were not and had the founders wanted to make this into a 'Christian Nation' they would have certainly stated clearly that this was a 'Christian Nation' founded on the Bible and the Ten Commandments. But, this is not so. Our nation's founders were influenced by the French

enlightenment, John Locke and Montesquieu to have a separation of the different functions of government and to have representative government, none of which can be found in the Ten Commandments or any where in the Christian Bible. You find that the Bible advocated kings and had little tolerance for those that did not worship Yahweh or Jesus. If the folks that are trying to make America a 'Christian Nation' have their way, to be a good American you would have to believe in and worship no other God than the Christian jealous God and they would have to obey the diverse rules and laws found in the Bible, which, since they are the laws

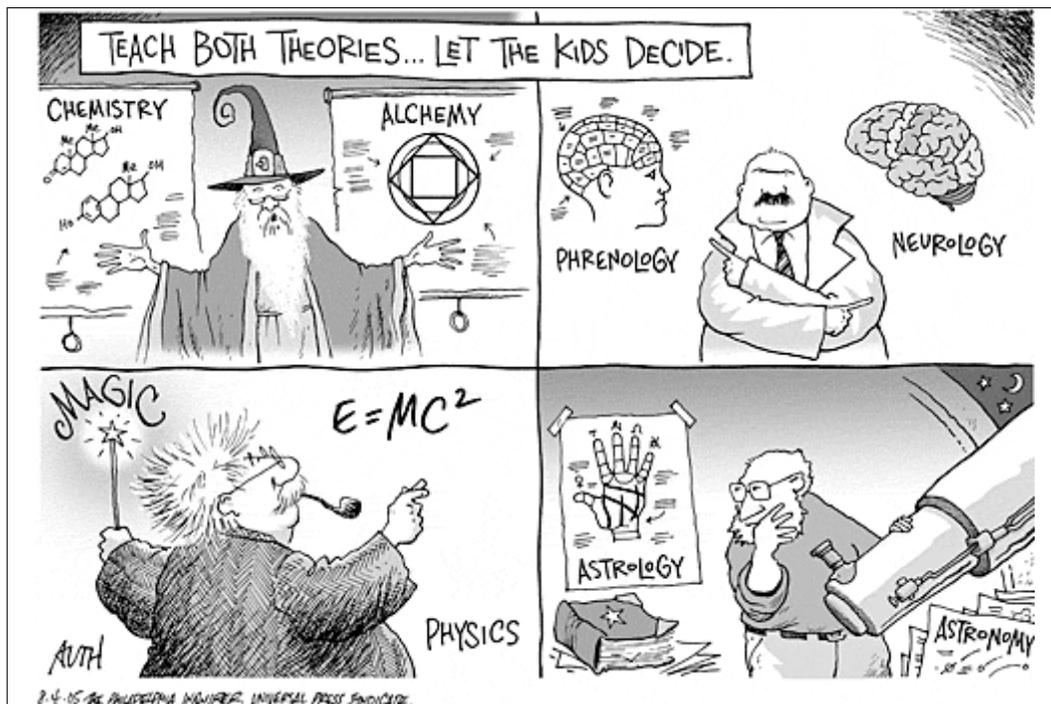
of God, would have to take precedent over the civil laws that are merely the laws made up by humans.

The main thrust of the letter of (6/10) was an objection to the MUSC policy regarding prayer at MUSC functions. It is amazing how many people who claim to follow the teachings of Jesus, publicly expose themselves as hypocrites and disobey Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matthew 6:5-6) by praying in public. This is especially true of people who represent themselves as Christian leaders and many seem to take offense if public prayer is not part of public nonreligious meetings.

**Bill Upshur**

**Don't Forget! Our next Adopt-a-Highway litter clean-up is Saturday September 17.**

Our stretch of adopted highway is on Harbor View Road on James Island. We will meet at the parking lot of the First Federal Bank (next to the Piggly Wiggly) at 8:50 AM. In exchange for our participation, the SHL gets a roadside sign that enhances our group's image through community involvement. Please join us. If you have any questions, contact Roger Prevost at 224-9360.



**The Separationist**

**Newsletter of the  
Secular Humanists  
of the Lowcountry**

**Editors:**

**Laura and Alex  
Kasman**

**SHL Calendar:**

**September 17 (Saturday) 8:50 am.**  
SHL Litter pick-up along Harborview  
Road. Contact: Roger Prevost at 224-  
9360.

**September 18 (Sunday) 4PM Gage  
Hall** Monthly meeting with speaker  
Vanessa Hill.

**September 18 (Sunday) 6PM Gage  
Hall** UUC Diversity Discussion Series  
shows *Tying the Knot*.

**September 25 (Sunday) 3PM. Bar-  
nes and Noble, West Ashley** SHL  
Book Discussion Group

**October 16 (Sunday) 6PM Gage Hall**  
UUC Diversity Discussion and Film:  
*Stolen Ground*, "White skin privilege".

**Join the SHL:**

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry (SHL) is a group of free-thinkers 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:

<http://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](mailto:newsletter@lowcountry.humanists.net) or use the contact information at the bottom of page 2.

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