



The Separationist



The Top Ten Reasons the Religious Right Ticks Me Off

a talk by Rev. Barry W. Lynn
4PM Sunday March 18, 2007

at Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street, Charleston SC

At our the March meeting of the SHL we are very fortunate to have a figure of national importance as our guest speaker: Barry W. Lynn.

Reverend Lynn, who has appeared on many television programs including PBS's "NewsHour", "Today Show", "Nightline", "Crossfire", "60 Minutes", "Hannity & Colmes", "Good Morning America" and "Larry King Live", will give our group a lecture entitled "The Top Ten Reasons the Religious Right Ticks Me Off".

In addition to his talk on Sunday at the SHL Meeting, Reverend Lynn will be speaking in Charleston on Monday evening at the Circular Church. His presentation there, beginning at 7PM, is entitled "God and Government: A Fiery Mix"

Since 1992, the Rev. Barry W. Lynn has served as executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a Washington, D.C.-based organization dedicated to the preservation of the Constitution's religious liberty provisions (www.au.org). In addition to his work as a long-time activist and lawyer in the civil liberties field, Lynn is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, offering him a unique perspective on church-state issues.

Lynn began his professional career working at the national office of the United Church of Christ, including a two-year stint as legislative counsel for the Church's Office of Church in Society in

Washington, D.C. From 1984 to 1991 he was legislative counsel for the Washington office of the American Civil Liberties Union.

In 1995, Lynn co-authored *The Right to Religious Liberty: The Basic ACLU Guide to Religious Rights*. His most recent book is *Piety & Politics: The Right Wing Assault on Religious Freedom*. He writes frequently on religious liberty issues and his daily talk show, *Culture Shocks*, is heard on radio stations around the country.

A member of the Washington, D.C. bar, Lynn earned his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center in 1978. In addition, he received his theology degree from Boston University School of Theology in 1973.

Lynn, a native of Bethlehem, Pa., lives in Chevy Chase, Md., with his family.



Legislative Update

Jacksonville Suit Settled

American Atheists announced an out of court settlement where the City of Jacksonville, Florida will post in all city departments & read aloud to department heads permissible policies regarding religious activities by employees & on city property.

The wording follows nearly verbatim an older US Supreme Court decision known as Lemon v Kurtzman or the 'Lemon Test.' Attorney Ed Kagin led the lawsuit since 2006 when a news story alerted the public to plans & spending for a prayer rally in hopes of reducing the high murder & violence rate in that City last year.

A government agency or agent must: (1) Follow a secular purpose (2) Neither inhibit nor foster religion & 3 not excessively entangle government with religious people or institutions.

The civil rights victory for taxpayers, seculars & American Atheists arose from a lawsuit which attempted to block the City of Jacksonville from spending over \$100,000 for a prayer rally alleged to be a murder abatement program.

-Contributed by Larry Carter Center

Who is the Congressional Atheist?

The Secular Coalition for America held a contest to find the highest publicly elected official who acknowledges being a nontheist. The person who first nominates the nontheistic politician will receive the \$1000 award. As of this mailing, the winner has not yet been revealed. The Secular Coalition for America will announce the winner and the political figure on March 12. Please check the website (www.secular.org) to see who is the first courageous member of Congress to acknowledge being a nontheist.

Senator Fair Strikes Again

A bill was introduced to the SC Senate in February that would make students at Bob Jones University eligible for state tuition grants (Hope Scholarships) even though the school is not accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The bill is number S484. You can read more at www.scstatehouse.net.

Pop Quiz: Which one of America's "Founding Fathers" objected to the suggestion that the first meeting of the Continental Congress in 1774 should begin with a prayer? Was it

- (a) John Adams (Massachusetts)
 - (b) Thomas Jefferson (Virginia)
- or
- (c) John Rutledge (S. Carolina)?

Make your guess and then see the answer (upside-down) below.



Answer to the Pop Quiz: Believe it or not, the objection came from South Carolina's own John Rutledge! The following excerpt from a letter by John Adams to his wife Abigail explains:

"Having a Leisure Moment, while the Congress is assembling, I gladly embrace it to write you a line. When the Congress first met, Mr. Cushing made a Motion that it should be opened with Prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay of N. York and Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina, because we were so divided in religious Sentiments..."

In the end, Samuel Adams convinced Jay and Rutledge to put aside their concerns so that prayers and a psalm were read by Rev. Duché of the Episcopal Church.

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An Introduction to the Charleston Chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State

by Reverend Monty Knight

The Charleston Chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State is comprised of citizens concerned with promoting and protecting the First Amendment to our nation's Constitution, with regard to 1) religious freedom, while 2) opposing any form of "established religion" in our nation's public life. Nationally and locally, AU members represent a variety of social, religious (or non-religious) and political affiliations and positions. AU is politically non-partisan.

Our local chapter of AU is affiliated nationally. If you wish to join Americans United, the address of the "national office" is 518 C Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002; the e-mail address is americansunited@au.org; and the web site is www.au.org. Members of Americans United receive the periodical, Church and State (published monthly, except in August), and a portion of membership dues is returned to our local chapter to help fund initiatives here in Charleston.

Our local AU chapter holds quarterly meetings (on Sundays, from 5-6:30 P.M.) at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1293 Orange Grove Road (West Ashley). The next scheduled meeting will be on April 29. Local citizens who support First Amendment rights and protections are urged to attend. If you wish to be on our local AU e-mail list, please send your e-mail address to Jan Harman (janharman@netzero.net). You will receive notice of meetings, minutes of the previous meeting and information concerning other local AU concerns and efforts.

Current local AU chapter officers are: The Reverend Dr. Monty Knight, President; Dr. Herb Silverman, Vice-President; Mrs. Jan Harman, Secretary; Ms. Loretta Haskell, Treasurer. If you wish to contact Dr. Knight regarding directions to First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which he serves as pastor, or discuss any other AU-related matter, his phone numbers are 571-5710

(church office) or 556-1417 (home). His e-mail address is firstccchas@aol.com.

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State was founded in 1947. AU is funded by private contributions. Throughout its history--and currently--Americans United has supported and promoted (thru education and information, protest and 'litigation) such First Amendment issues as: public education, in opposition to public funding of private/parochial schools; support of conscientious objectors, with respect to military service; recognition and support of religious and non-religious diversity in our national life; opposition to discrimination toward anyone with respect to their religion (or lack thereof); opposition to preferential religious texts or symbols in (or on) public buildings; opposition to public funds for religious programming in schools or prisons or other public institutions; the protection of personal and private religious freedom, while opposing sectarian religious observance in or involving public institutions (i.e. "personal and private devotions or prayers," versus any "established public devotions or prayers"); opposition to public funding of so-called "faith-based social services" (i.e. is the money being used to fund a "food and clothing" service to the economically disadvantaged, or is it being used to subsidize Vacation Bible School, or a church's, a synagogue's or mosque's "youth ministry," where a particular religion is being taught or promoted); opposition to the teaching of "creation science" (or "intelligent design") as "science" in our nation's public schools; recognition that "marriage" is a personal prerogative, with respect to the particular values (religious or otherwise) of any and all citizens, which is separate from a public "civil contract," which should not be denied to any consenting adult citizen irrespective of their gender or sexual orientation.

From New York Times, 2/8/07

Gloria A. Haskins, a state representative from South Carolina who is supporting Senator John McCain for the Republican nomination, said discussions with her constituents in Greenville, an evangelical stronghold, convinced her that a Mormon like [Presidential Candidate Mitt] Romney could not win a Republican primary in her state. South Carolina has one of the earliest, and most critical, primaries next year. "From what I hear in my district, it is very doubtful," Ms. Haskins said. "This is South Carolina. We're very mainstream, evangelical, Christian, conservative. It will come up. In this of all states, it will come up."

Bill Upshur

May 19, 1930 – February 21, 2007

**A Eulogy for Bill Upshur
Delivered by Herb Silverman
Unitarian Church of Charleston
February 24, 2007**

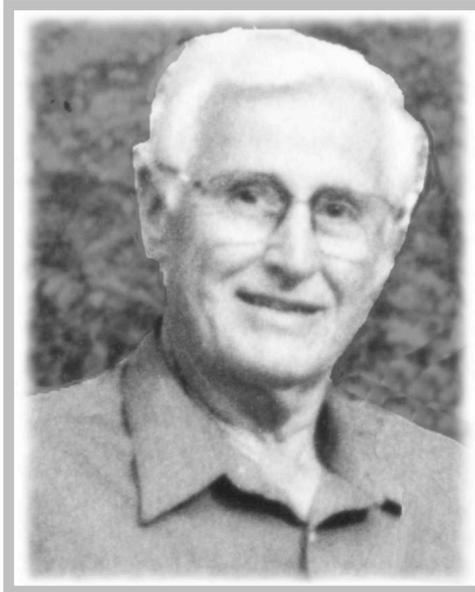
There are few sure things in life, but I thought my never joining a church would be one of them. I was wrong, and the one person most responsible for my joining a church—this Church, is Bill Upshur. Bill was a terrific evangelist, by example. We saw Bill's commitment and active involvement in civil liberties and social justice issues. We also saw a critical thinker who questioned the sacred, and yet was still a productive member of a church community. Many of us then properly questioned the stereotype we had about "church." When a local humanist group was still in the talking stage, Bill suggested we move ahead and invited us to meet in Gage Hall. And he had been quietly paying the rental fee for our monthly meetings there for a dozen years.

I hope nobody thinks the shirt I'm wearing is disrespectful. It's a special one for me, because it reminds me of Bill. A couple of years ago, Bill invited me to give a sermon here on "Positive Atheism." When I asked about the propriety of wearing this shirt in church, Bill laughed and said it would be the perfect shirt because "Smile, there is no Hell" is what positive atheism is all about.

I'd like to read two brief excerpts from people you all either know or heard about. The first is from Edmund Robinson, a long-time member of this church and now a minister at the Unitarian Church in Wakefield, Mass. It is from a 2003 sermon Edmund gave there entitled "No Invisible Means of Support". In it, he mentions two Charleston atheists he likes. I

was proud to be linked here with Bill. This is a portion of what Edmund said about Bill.

I came into Unitarian Universalism through the Unitarian Church of Charleston SC, the oldest Unitarian Church in the South. One of its mainstays is a dentist named Bill Upshur, who has been a member for about 40 years. Bill is a staunch civil libertarian and one of the nicest guys you could ever want to know. He has been everything in that church, along with his wife Jane, who teaches pathology at the local medical school.



There is an old saw about no atheists in foxholes, that even an atheist will reach out for divine help in an hour of need. But Bill tells about the time his wife collapsed, and was rushed to the hospital. She stopped breathing and had to be placed on a ventilator while they ran tests. When Jane was unconscious, a friend who knows Bill well, said: "I guess prayer is not an option."

Bill said, "If I thought prayers would have a one in a million chance of helping Jane, I would have prayed. But I think prayer is a futile, harmful and degrading gesture. Anyone who knows Jane realizes that she is a beautiful, compassionate, intelligent, sensitive, wonderful woman. Suppose there is an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good creature who is able to control whether she lives or dies. If I pray to this creature, it might let her live; if I don't, it will let her die. How could people worship such a being? Well, I did not pray, and not praying worked again! Jane survived, and the human beings involved with medical science and technology were able to figure out what was going on and bring her back to health.

I can just picture Bill saying those words.

Next, is a portion of a recent letter to Bill from Richard Dawkins: [See entire letter reproduced below.]

Bill, to me, was a role model on how to live, and how to die. After an Americans United for Separation of Church and State meeting, Bill told me the shocking news that he likely had terminal cancer. Yet he was as engaged at that meeting as he had always been. Several days later, when Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry members were gathering for trash pick-up for our "Adopt a Highway" program, I told those who didn't know about Bill's condition that he had just undergone chemotherapy and would certainly not be there. To my surprise, Bill showed up a couple minutes later and worked as best he could. Throughout his final months and days, Bill remained cheerful, lucid, and concerned about issues.

The future without Bill will be considerably dimmer, but his good works and inspiration will continue to be with us for many years to come.

**Open Letter to Bill Upshur
From Richard Dawkins
February 12, 2007**

Dear Mr Upshur,

Herb Silverman has told me of your remarkably generous gesture in donating \$20,000 to SHL by the splendid device of bidding for a copy of *The God Delusion*. Needless to say, I was delighted at this choice of vehicle for your generosity, and the story was duly posted on my web site

<http://richarddawkins.net/article,515,Copy-of-The-God-Delusion-Purchased-for-20000,Secular-Humanists-of-the-Lowcountry>

Unfortunately our server is heavily overloaded at present, so it is extremely slow to get in. We hope to get a new server up and running soon. If you do manage to get in, you might appreciate some of the Comments sent in about your auction. I especially appreciated the following (one can only conjecture at the story behind it).

19. Comment #17789 by DangerRuss
on January 16, 2007 at 12:09 pm
20,000 bucks? That's nothing. My copy cost me my wife and my house! Good on you, Bill.

As one who has suffered at the hands of divorce lawyers, it reminded me of the time when I was asked to contribute my own epitaph to one of those stocking-filler anthologies, and I wrote:

Others lived beyond his means,
A giver, not a taker.
He was less Selfish than his Genes,
More Blind than his Watchmaker

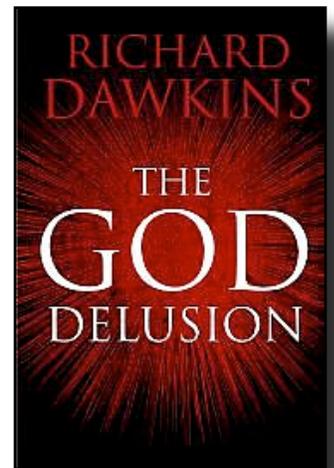
Herb also sent me the paragraph about you in the sermon "No Invisible Means of Support" by Edmund Robinson. Having read this, I hope you will not think me impertinent if I say you are clearly my kind of guy. You already possess the most expensive copy of *The God Delusion* in the known universe, so it would be otiose for me to offer to send you my latest book. I wonder, however, whether you like audio books? My wife, the actress Lalla Ward and I do a double act of readings, and we have made CD sets for both *The God Delusion* and *The Ancestor's Tale* (abridged). I have also abridged and read *The Origin of Species* on CD. If any of these appeal, please give me your address and I'll ask Amazon to send them to you.

With my very best wishes and deep appreciation
Yours sincerely,
Richard Dawkins

Humanist Book Group

The next meeting of the Humanist Book Club Discussion Group will be held at 4PM on March 25, 2007 at the West Ashley Barnes and Noble. Herb Silverman will facilitate a discussion of **The God Delusion** by Richard Dawkins.

George Johnson's review of this book in *Scientific American* said "Dawkins is frequently dismissed as a bully, but he is only putting theological doctrines to the same kind of scrutiny that any scientific theory must withstand."



**The Separationist
Newsletter of the
Secular Humanists
of the Lowcountry**

**Editors:
Laura and Alex
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**Secular Humanists
of the Lowcountry
P.O. Box 32256
Charleston, SC 29417**

SHL Calendar

**Movie Club
March 3, 2007**

Contact Jonathan Lamb at weatherfeller@gmail.com to join SHL members at a movie and discussion over dinner.

**SHL March Meeting
4:00 PM March 18, 2007**

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street, Charleston

Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, will be our guest.

**AU Special Meeting / Circular Church
7:00 PM March 19, 2007**

"God and Government: A Fiery Mix" with Barry Lynn.

**Book Discussion Group
4PM March 25, 2007**

Meeting at West Ashley Barnes & Noble to discuss "The God Delusion" by Richard Dawkins.

**Movie Club
April 7, 2007**

Contact Jonathan Lamb at weatherfeller@gmail.com to join SHL members at a movie and discussion over dinner.

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 Web-page 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 or use the contact information at the bottom of page 2.