



The Separationist



Misconceptions About the Bible: Fundamentalism - Left and Right

a talk by John Huddleston, College of Charleston
4PM September 16th at Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street

John Huddleston, associate professor of religious studies at the College of Charleston, will be our guest speaker at the September meeting of the SHL. The meeting will be held at 4PM on September 16th at the usual location, 4 Archdale Street in downtown Charleston, SC.

Professor Huddleston is an expert on Biblical studies, history and religion of ancient Israel, Egyptology, and Jewish history. At the meeting, he will be speaking about "misconceptions and abuses of the Bible on both sides of the aisle".

John Huddleston received his M.A. and Ph.D in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan (1996), with additional post-graduate work in Biblical/Modern Hebrew, Egyptology, and archeology in universities in Jerusalem, Italy and Denmark. He is a frequent lecturer in synagogues and churches in the Charleston area. In addition to various articles he has a forthcoming volume dealing with the River Nile in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Egypt.

"Teaching the Bible in a secular, liberal arts institution can be a subversive enterprise. Any talk of authors,



redactors, compilers, and their motivating ideologies situates the Biblical text within its human context, and ultimately explains it as a human product, an approach in accord with the humanities. As a historian of religion rather than a theologian, I do not presume to get into the mind of the God of the Bible or speculate about divine motivations aside from what I find in the text. Students frequently ask me, "Why did God, who is omniscient, do X with Abraham

and not Y?" I can offer plenty of reasons—social, historical, political—for why the author might wish to portray God in such a fashion, but as an academic in a secular institution I deal with historical, political, and social factors rather than theological truths. For me, it is the human dimension of the Bible that makes it most appealing as an object of study, that allows me to ask questions that would otherwise be less relevant from a purely theological perspective. It is my goal to instill in students an appreciation for the underlying strategies and ideologies that inform these ancient writings, biblical or otherwise."

NEW: SHL Charity of the Quarter

Beginning in September, we will be collecting donations from members to give to charitable organizations in the name of the SHL. A new charity will be selected every two months that we meet (four charities per year). The first organization we are collecting for is "Susan G. Komen for the Cure" (see figure at right). Donations given during September and October will go to this organization. You can also contribute by registering as part of the SHL run/walk "Race for the Cure" team.

See the article on page 4 for more details.

It's **WHO** we are. An organization started in memory of a woman just like you and me. A woman who had a sister, Nancy G. Brinker, who promised she wouldn't stop until she found a cure.

It's **WHAT** we do. Offer support and hope to everyone touched by breast cancer.

susan g. Komen FOR THE cure

It's **WHY** we're here. To end breast cancer forever.

Legal Notice

The SHL is a nonprofit educational organization, founded in 1994, and incorporated under the laws of South Carolina. As such, the SHL is required to govern itself according to bylaws approved by the membership. As it had been more than 10 years since the bylaws were first enacted, and the SHL has grown considerably since then, some updates were needed. Over the summer, members Frank Hay and Larry Carter Center took on the job of checking over our bylaws carefully in order to recommend amendments as needed. In order for these changes to become permanent, according to article 16 of the bylaws, they must be approved "by two-thirds of the members present at a meeting called for this purpose where all members have been given notice of the proposed changes (including a discussion of pros and cons) by a mailing postmarked at least two weeks before the vote is taken." This notice serves as the written notice for the proposed changes (below) and the vote will take place at the beginning of our September meeting at Gage Hall, September 16, 2007 at 4p.m. Three amendments to the existing bylaws were proposed, and are unanimously recommended for approval by the SHL Board in order to

bring the bylaws up to date with the current needs of the SHL. They are:

1) Article 3 Affiliations: Changed to read "SHL is an affiliate of the American Humanists Association."

Pros: The AHA hosts our website for free. Cons: None apparent.

2) Article 7 Leadership: the size of the Board of Directors is changed from at least 6 persons and not more than 10 persons, to at least 6 persons and not more than 15 persons. Pros: The increased number of activities the SHL has become involved in over the last few years requires a larger board than 10 persons. Cons: None. All Board members are also active members of the organization and receive no monetary compensation.

3) Article 8 Terms of Office: Terms of office for Board members and officers is changed from two years to one year.

Pros: members are more likely to volunteer for a shorter term of office. Cons: None apparent.

The complete bylaws (16 articles, 3 pages) will be available for interested members at the September meeting.

New SHL Officers

The SHL elected new officers at the annual business meeting held at the Potluck in May. As you may already know, founder and long-serving President of the SHL, Herb Silverman and his wife, Sharon Fratepietro are away on sabbatical for the year. They are living in Virginia near the Washington, D.C. area, where in addition to continuing his math research, Herb will be able to be more involved with the day-to-day operations of the Secular Coalition, of which he is president. Sharon will be busy also, volunteering with Experience Core/DC as a tutor in inner city schools.

Please get to know our new officers and thank them for their commitment.

President: Sam Moskow
Vice President: Jonathan Lamb
Treasurer: Frances Hay
Secretary: Sharon Strong

Treasurer's report

As of July 23, 2007

Income

Dues	444.00
Interest income from CD	351.97
Vanguard Dividend	17.89
Donations	2.00
T-shirts	24.00
<u>Donations(Charity of the Quarter)</u>	<u>250.00</u>
Total Income	\$1089.96

Disbursements

Refreshments	15.52
Checks	15.00
Newsletter	0
Stamps	0
Memorial Donations	400.00
SHL sign	52.14
<u>Safe Deposit Box</u>	<u>33.75</u>
Total Disbursements	\$516.41

Cash in bank accounts:

Checking	\$3419.18
Vanguard Money Market	
(Bill Upshur's gift)	\$21,179.86

Contact Information for the SHL:

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E-Mail: shl@lowcountry.humanists.net

Web: lowcountry.humanists.net

Mail: P.O. Box 32256
 Charleston SC 29417

Published Elsewhere by SHL Members

Letter to the Editor

Published in the Los Angeles Times on Sunday, 6 May.

In South Carolina, we also have a "standard" — at no extra cost — "In God We Trust" plate. Thanks to the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry, of which I'm a member, there is now a specialty plate that reads "In Reason We Trust," featuring a prominent American flag. It costs \$30 extra, but none of the money goes to our organization.

As other nonprofit groups receive money from plates, this doesn't parse, but then, this is South Carolina. I doubt we'll see the American Civil Liberties Union suing the state over this. The ACLU's income is quite limited, and they've got more important issues to fight.

DAVE PETERSON
Port Royal, S.C.

Letter to the Editor

Published June 12 in the Post and Courier

In a June 6 letter to the editor, the writer ends with the question "... please tell the just how do you make a tree?"

This is an excellent question and one to which our public schools obviously do not pay sufficient attention.

A comprehensive answer would take too much space to include in a short letter to the editor, but if your writer and other readers of The Post and Courier are truly interested in learning the answer to this question, there are a number of books that will help.

I would suggest "The Ancestor's Tale" by Richard Dawkins, "Origins" by Neill deGrasse Tyson and Donald Goldsmith, "Origins of Existence" by Fred Adams and, of course, "On the Origin of Species" by Charles Darwin.

If these books don't answer the mystery of how a tree, or a frog, or a bird, or a human being came to be, I have several others I might suggest.

CISCO H. LINDSEY
Isle of Palms

Published August 5 in Post and Courier's Faith and Values Section along with responses from clergy and politicians in answer to the question "Should a candidate for public office talk about their religious faith while campaigning?"

A candidate's religious affiliation is an interesting bit of information similar to birthplace, age, marital status and profession. No decision on whether to vote for a candidate should be based on religious affiliation alone.

Voters need to know how the presidential candidates arrive at their positions on the critical issues facing our country. An open-minded and intelligent voter will want candidates who are equally open-minded and intelligent, who arrive at decisions based on facts and clear, logical thinking.

Unfortunately, some candidates base their positions on polls and others base their positions on dogmatic principles, religious or otherwise. An intelligent, open-minded candidate

will not impose his religious beliefs on others. Suppose a candidate believes that it is wrong to use electricity on Saturday or to eat swine. Should that belief be imposed on others?

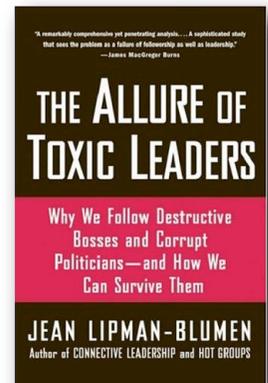
No decision in government should follow from religious beliefs alone. Rational and objective thinking is the only acceptable basis on which public policy should be made. So, a rational candidate will certainly support equal civil rights for all citizens even if the candidate's religious organization denies religious rights to certain members.

A prime example is marriage between two people of the same gender. There is no rational reason to oppose this as a civil right and no honest, open-minded, and intelligent candidate would oppose this civil right even if his religious group holds a narrow-minded opinion to the contrary.

SAM MOSKOW
President, SHL

Humanist Book Group

The Humanist Book Discussion Group meets the 4th Sunday of every month, September through May, at the West Ashley Barnes and Noble at 4 p.m. Sharon Strong is the organizer for this year's meetings. Below are the Humanist Book Group's selections for the fall of 2007. Everyone is invited and it is not required that you have read the book to attend.



September 23 The Allure of Toxic Leaders by Jean Lipman-Blumen. (facilitated by Frank Hay) "A solid look at a dismaying business trend.... Examines the seemingly inexplicable reasons why many employees are loyal to CEOs and politicians who abuse power, cook finances and otherwise virtually destroy their companies.... Offers numerous examples in both politics and business of toxic leaders who have survived crises and received accolades despite their obvious flaws.... The book's strength is the detailed psychological approach to examining the phenomenon of loyalty to toxic leaders."--Publishers Weekly

October 28 American Fascists by Chris Hedges (facilitated by Loretta Haskell)

November 25 I Sold My Soul on eBay by Hemant Mehta (facilitated by Larry Carter Center)

New: Charity of the Quarter

Beginning in Fall 2007, the SHL will be collecting money from members for charities selected by the Board of Directors. An individual charity will be selected for each quarter. At the end of that set time period, a single check for the entire amount donated will be presented by the SHL to the chosen charity. Two important purposes will be served by this new activity: we hope to be able to aid some charities in their important work, and we hope to also increase public awareness of our organization and our Humanist principles.

For our first charity, beginning in September, we will be collecting donations for Susan G. Komen for the Cure to coincide with the "Race for the Cure" held on October 20th in Charleston. This organization is dedicated to eliminating breast cancer and supporting those suffering from the disease. They are best known for the "Race for the Cure," in which a team of SHL members will also be participating. More information about this charity can be found at www.komen.org. If you would like to run/walk with other SHL members, an SHL team has been regis-

tered and is ready for people to join. Go to www.komenlowcountry.org, click on "join an existing team" and search for "Secular Humanists" to find our team. NOTE: deadline for registration is Friday, Sept 28. Participant registration is \$20 + an optional \$3 for the TShirt (The team captain suggests that those who have SHL TShirts wear them, even if they get the Komen shirt - they'll want a clean shirt to change into afterward anyway and can wear the Komen shirt then).

Donations will be collected at the September and October meetings of the SHL or can be mailed to our PO Box during those months. Please make the donation in the form of a check made out to "Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry", but include "donation for Charity of the Quarter" in the memo so that we know what it is for. Then the SHL will present The Komen Foundation with a check for the total amount donated.

In November and December we will be collecting money for a different organization: Lowcountry Orphan Relief.

Volunteer News

Volunteer Network Summer Activities

The SHL's "Volunteer Network" arranges for a team of SHL members to help out at some local charity each month. Jonathan Lamb, vice-president of the SHL, coordinated all of our activities over the summer. In June, we helped to paint two rooms at the Carolina Youth Development Center. These rooms, used by orphans who live at the facility, were in bad shape when we arrived. But, the SHL team cleaned and completely painted one room, and nearly finished another. Then, in July we returned to the Lowcountry Food Bank which we had worked at earlier in the year. This time, however, rather than sorting

food donations, we helped to clean and paint the warehouse in preparation for an inspection. Finally, in August, some volunteers from the SHL helped out at Lowcountry Orphan Relief, sorting donations and putting together a "care package". Thanks to all of



the volunteers who joined the SHL team at any of these activities. To join us at a future volunteer event, make sure that we have a current e-mail address for you (since all members are notified by e-mail of these volunteer activities) or contact our coordinator, Jonathan Lamb (weatherfeller@gmail.com).

SHL Trash Pickup Sunday October 7, 2007

Our stretch of adopted highway is on Harbor View Road on James Island. On Sunday October 7th, SHL volunteers will meet at the parking lot of the First Federal Bank (next to the Piggly Wiggly) at 9:20 AM. In exchange for our participation, the SHL gets a roadside sign that enhances our group's image. It's also good exercise! If you have any questions, contact Roger Prevost at 224-9360.

Note the unusual meeting time. This is the first time we will be doing our pickup on a Sunday and hope that some new people will be able to join us.



Supreme Court Rules that it Won't Rule on FFRF Lawsuit

On June 25, in a 5-4 decision, the United States Supreme Court ruled that taxpayers have no right to challenge discretionary spending by the executive branch. In particular, they ruled that the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) had no standing to challenge the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Essentially, this means that regardless of whether the administration's spending of government money on religious programs is illegal, we have no way of using the court system to halt it.

In theory, it is up to the legislature to attempt to rein in the White House in the case of such abuses. However, in the opinion of the Separationist, there is a terrible flaw in this reasoning. The Bill of Rights contains protections for minorities. In particular, it asserts that even in a democracy, the majority cannot decide to eliminate the rights of a minority group or of an individual. The executive branch and legislature, which as elected bodies are subject to the whims of the majority, are not going to be able to do this. It is only the courts which are in a position to defend the rights of the minority, and this has traditionally been part of their responsibility. By claiming that they will not do so, at least when it takes the form of discretionary spending by the President, the Supreme Court is endangering minority rights in this country.

At least, that is our opinion. Here is what some others had to say about it:

Annie Laurie Gaylor of the FFRF: "It's one thing to disagree with FFRF on the merits of our lawsuit, but it's quite another to bar the courtroom door. What is the Supreme Court majority afraid of in letting us argue our case?...Of course, we anticipate that it [the current decision] will give aid and sustenance to theocrats who want to shield the government from challenge when they unite church and state."

Dan Barker of the FFRF: "This means we have a constitutional separation between church and state, but no way to enforce it if the executive branch chooses to violate it with 'discretionary' actions."

Barry Lynn of Americans United: "Taxpayers should be allowed to challenge public funding of religion, whether the money is allocated by Congress or the White House. However, it is important to note that this ruling applies to only a few situations. Most church-state lawsuits, including those that challenge congressional appropriations for faith-based programs, will not be affected."

Ralph G. Neas of People for the American Way: "The Supreme Court just put a big dent in the wall of separation between church and state, and a big smile on Pat Robertson's face. Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice and allied Religious Right groups have long

called on the Court to restrict the right of Americans to challenge government expenditures that unlawfully mix church and state."



Anne Gaylor, Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker of FFRF on the steps of the Supreme Court with lawyer Rich Bolton.

On the other hand, Bruce Hausknecht of Focus on the Family said: "This was a win because it rejects the theory of taxpayer standing that would have allowed liberal groups to reach into the executive branch to complain about every speech, every meeting and every action that the president might take with regard to faith or faith-based initiatives."

"The religious factions that are growing throughout our land are not using their religious clout with wisdom. They are trying to force government leaders into following their position 100 percent. If you disagree with these religious groups on a particular moral issue, they complain, they threaten you with a loss of money or votes or both. I'm frankly sick and tired of the political preachers across this country telling me ... that if I want to be a moral person, I must believe in A, B, C, and D. Just who do they think they are?"

-- Senator Barry Goldwater, R-Arizona, Congressional Record, September 16, 1981.

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

**Editors:
Laura and Alex
Kasman**

**Secular Humanists
of the Lowcountry
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SHL Calendar

**SHL Movie Club
September 1, 2007**

Contact Sue Edward bflosue@earthlink.net to join SHL members at a movie and discussion over dinner, first weekend of the month.

SHL Regular meetings resume

September 16, 2007 / 4:00 PM Gage Hall
John Huddleston from the College of Charleston speaking.

SHL Book Discussion Group

September 23, 2007 4:00 PM West Ashley Barnes and Noble. **The Allure of Toxic Leaders** by Jean Lipman-Blumen. (facilitated by Frank Hay)

Trash Pickup

9:20 AM SUNDAY October 7, 2007

Meet at the parking lot of the First Federal Bank (next to the Piggly Wiggly) at 8:50 AM. Contact Roger Prevost at 224-9360.

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.