



# THE SEPARATIONIST

SEPTEMBER 2013

## DARREL RAY: HOW RELIGION DISTORTS SEXUALITY SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2013, 4 PM GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE STREET

Each species has a unique reproductive strategy. Human sexuality is different from other species but not so different that other species don't share key strategies. Even those strategies that are "most human" are shared by other species. Unfortunately, religion's view of sexuality is almost diametrically opposite of what we humans are really like. Please join us at this event to meet Dr. Ray and learn the difference between human sexuality and religious sexuality.



Darrel Ray is a writer and speaker on leadership and organizational development and author of two books on the topic. He is also the author of *The God Virus: How Religion Affects Our Lives and Culture* (2009) and *Sex and God: How Religion Distorts Sexuality* (2012).

Dr. Ray's books will be on sale at the event and he will be glad to sign your copy. As always, we will go to dinner after, and Dr. Ray has expressed interest in going to dinner with us. So don't miss this chance to learn from and socialize with one of the leading Freethinkers in the US!

### ABOUT MEETING REFRESHMENTS

In another innovative move for SHL, it has been suggested that those attending meetings bring a small snack item from time to time. To even out this little task over the membership/attendees so that no one is asked more than once a year to bring a snack item, we are asking that each member/attendee whose last name begins with one of the letters in parentheses bring their snack item during the stated months:

September 15 (A-C)  
October 20 (D-F)  
November 17 (G-H)  
January 19 (I-L)  
February 16 (N-Pe)  
March 16 (Pf-Sm)  
April 20 (Sn-Z)

Suggested snack foods are cheese, crackers, fruit, granola bars, cookies, cake squares—anything that one can eat without need of a fork or spoon. Please bring enough for 8-12 people. SHL will supply the paper goods and beverages.

It may take a couple of months until we have this down, and we will be happy for whatever snacks are brought. If you have any suggestions on how to simplify this process, please let us know.

### FIND US ONLINE! WE'RE (NEARLY) OMNIPRESENT!



<http://bit.ly/shlmeetup>



<http://bit.ly/shlhome>



<http://bit.ly/shltube>



<http://bit.ly/shllist>



<http://on.fb.me/shlFB> (main)  
<http://on.fb.me/shlfamFB> (family)



<http://yhoo.it/shlyahoo> (family)

**GAME NIGHT**  
**MAGIC: THE GATHERING**  
**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2013, 7 PM**  
**MEMBER'S HOME**  
**NORTH CHARLESTON**

Get your best deck together and pit your skills against Gothers for glory, knowledge, and conquest! Who will reign supreme in this strategic game of mana, creatures, and enchantments? Come to this fun game night to find out!

All experience levels are welcome! For those who have multiple decks, please consider bringing an extra deck to share with newbies.

Michele Turner has graciously agreed to host this event and will provide light snacks and beverages. Please feel free to BYOB as well as a snack to share. For more information, including the address and directions, please email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).

**ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY**  
**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2013, 8:50 AM**  
**FIRST FEDERAL OF CHARLESTON BANK**  
**HARBOR VIEW ROAD, JAMES ISLAND**



SHL Volunteering is back after a summer vacation. Our first event is an Adopt-a-Highway Litter Pick-up on our usual stretch of Harborview Road. We have bags, gloves, orange safety vests, and long handled “picker-uppers” provided by Palmetto Pride and the SCDOT. Kids are welcome (with parents), but the traffic is fairly fast along this road so parents

should use their judgment.

Our next trash pick up will be on Saturday, September 7. We will meet at 8:50 am in the parking lot of the First Federal of Charleston Bank on Harbor View Rd, James Island. It's right next to the Piggly Wiggly. The pick up usually last about an hour and a half.

Please join us if you can. If you have any questions, write to our volunteer coordinators, Alex and Laura, at [kasmansc@comcast.net](mailto:kasmansc@comcast.net) or call our Adopt-a-Highway liaison Roger at 843-224-9360.

**THE SEPARATIONIST, SEPTEMBER 2013**

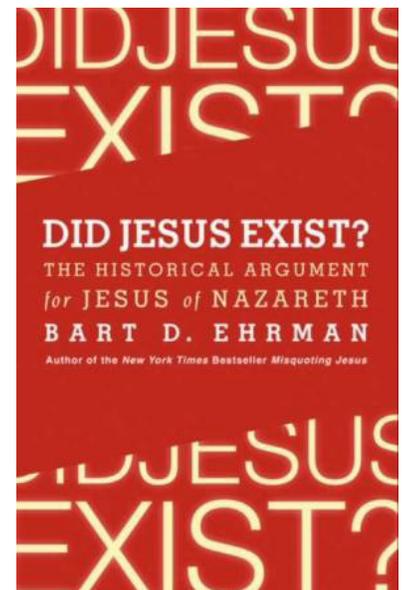
**BOOK GROUP**  
**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2013, 4 PM**  
**WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE**  
**1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

In *Did Jesus Exist?* historian and Bible expert Bart Ehrman confronts the question, “Did Jesus exist at all?” Ehrman vigorously defends the historical Jesus, identifies the most historically reliable sources for best understanding Jesus’ mission and message, and offers a compelling portrait of the person at the heart of the Christian tradition.

Known as a master explainer with deep knowledge of the field, Bart Ehrman methodically demolishes both the scholarly and popular “mythicist” arguments against the existence of Jesus. Marshaling evidence from within the Bible and the wider historical record of the ancient world, Ehrman tackles the key issues that surround the mythologies associated with Jesus and the early Christian movement.

In *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*, Ehrman provides a robust defense of the methods required to discover the Jesus of history.

We will discuss this book at our first meeting of the season. We will go out to dinner after the meeting.



**TEAM TRIVIA**  
**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2013, 7 PM**  
**BIGHORN'S SPORTS GRILL**  
**7832 RIVERS AVE, NORTH CHARLESTON**

Do you know which sport was frequently depicted in the paintings of Edgar Degas? In what country are you most likely to encounter a Tasmanian devil? If you can answer these questions and more, we need you! Join our team, “The Happy Humanists,” for Team Trivia!

**CHARITY OF THE QUARTER  
LEUKEMIA AND LYMPHOMA SOCIETY  
LIGHT THE NIGHT**

**L**ight The Night is an annual evening fundraising walk that raises funds to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma. Once again, Camp Quest South Carolina and SHL are teaming up with Foundation Beyond Belief to support this worthy cause.



Our local walk will be held on November 7, 2013, and will begin at 7:00 pm, with registration beginning at 5:30 pm and a Remembrance Ceremony at 6:45. Teams will walk rain or shine. (Strollers are welcome, please no pets, skateboards, bicycles or skates.)

Last year, our team raised \$3700 and was named the top corporate fundraising team in the Lowcountry. Across the US and Canada, 150 FBB teams raised \$430,000 combined, the largest amount ever raised by a first year non-corporate team and the 4th largest amount raised by any team in the nation in 2012.

To learn more, visit <http://bit.ly/lfsfb>.

To participate, visit <http://bit.ly/shl-cq-ltn>.

**NATURAL HISTORY IN THE LOWCOUNTRY  
PART I OF 4: FORESTRY  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2013, 1 PM & 3 PM  
CAW CAW INTERPRETIVE CENTER  
5200 SAVANNAH HWY, RAVENEL**

**L**ed by Charleston County Parks and Recreation, kids will investigate various species of trees and plants and their roles in forest cycles. They will learn about tree growth rings and management techniques and write in field notebooks about tree characteristics.

There will be two sessions, each 90 minutes in length. The 1 pm session is for pre-K and elementary kids. The 3 pm session is for middle and high school students. Cost is \$5 child. To RSVP (required) email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).

**YOUTH PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2013, 6:30 PM  
NORTHWOODS MALL FOOD COURT  
2150 NORTHWOODS BLVD, N CHARLESTON**

**F**or parents who are interested in discussing and planning the upcoming youth programs, including third-Sunday humanist programming and our science-based educational scout-inspired programs. (For details on the programs, please see page 4.)

These programs are for all our children—please help us shape it. We need all kinds of help, from planning/organizing to writing descriptions to designing materials to volunteering to lead activities and more. There is a fun little playground in the food court for those who need to bring children. Please feel free to eat beforehand or to eat something from the food court during the meeting.

**HUMANIST YOUTH PROGRAM: HUMANISM  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2013, 4 PM  
GAGE HALL  
4 ARCHDALE ST**

**C**ollege of Charleston Professor of Religious Studies and Camp Quest senior leader Katie Hladky will kick our Humanist Youth series off with a program on Humanism itself. Kids will learn about the principles and values of humanism and get to know some famous freethinkers through fun interactive activities and games.

This program is free, but space is limited. To RSVP (required) email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).

**BREAKFAST SOCIAL  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2013, 9:30 AM  
GOLDEN CORRAL  
4968 CENTRE POINTE DRIVE**

**W**hile our church-going friends are at church, enjoy a fun and friendly breakfast with other humanists and get your day off to a great start!

**SUNDAY FUNDAY AT THE PARK  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2013, 11 AM  
RM HENDRICKS PARK  
VIRGINIA AVE NEAR LINCOLN AVE**

**A**ll are welcome! The park is in North Charleston on Virginia Ave near the intersection of Lincoln Ave.

## INTRODUCING SHL'S HUMANIST YOUTH PROGRAM AMY MONSKY

I am pleased to announce that SHL will be launching a brand-new program designed specifically for kids! We will continue to offer all of the same family activities you have come to know and love over the past four years, but with some fantastic additions, making this the most comprehensive humanist-youth-oriented program yet!

Families will enjoy getting to know each other and building our community at casual meetups at local parks each month, as well as festive ones planned for the holidays. In addition to our traditional fall picnic at the corn maze in October and our holiday cookie party in December, a super-cool evolution activity will make its debut in February as the first-ever activity just for kids during the College of Charleston's annual Darwin Week.

A large element of humanism is a belief in science as the best way of understanding the world, and science programming will play a prominent part in our educational offerings. We have partnered with Charleston County Parks and Recreation to put together a themed set of programs for the year. When they're not busy partying during the holidays, our kids will enjoy learning about the natural history of the lowcountry throughout the rest of the year with fun, hands-on programs such as Bird Study, Forestry, Soil and Water Conservation, and Salt Marsh Ecology. We'll have two tracks—one for elementary-aged kids and younger and one for middle and high-school kids—so that the content be age-appropriate and kids will have excellent opportunities for peer bonding. We have offered educational programs in the past, but we are kicking them up a notch. Think scouting. For Humanist youth. Like with merit badges, our kids will have the opportunity to earn "badges" for participation and achievement. (The exact details of the "badges" are being worked out, and we welcome any and all input from parents.)

No humanist program would be complete without a humanism component. Fortunately, we have that covered! We are especially proud of this new and exciting

offering which we feel will provide our children an opportunity to learn about humanism and all of its life-affirming ideals. Modeled after the Harvard Humanist Learning Lab and other secular Sunday schools, our goal is to create a safe space for children to explore their developing worldviews, think for themselves, connect with



their community, and build a strong ethical foundation. Scheduled during our third-Sunday monthly speaker presentation at Gage Hall, SHL's humanist youth program will be geared toward children ages 5-12 years old. If space allows, children younger than 5 years old may attend with a parent and children older than 12 years old may attend as program assistants. We are pleased to offer our pilot program at zero cost to participants, but space is limited, so pre-registration is required.

Because consistency is key to a successful program, priority will be given to those who plan to attend the entire series.

We will celebrate the close of our very exciting year with an outing to a local park. Perhaps we will take a canoe trip. Perhaps it will be a nature hike or a trip to Bee City. Whatever we decide, it will be a fun way for families to connect.

We are thrilled with the possibilities this year brings, but we cannot do it alone. We welcome the suggestions, feedback, and general input of parents. We are also relying on parent volunteers to assist with our humanist program. Together, we can build a meaningful community for ourselves and our children. We invite all parents to participate in a planning meeting on Wednesday, September 11 (details on page 3). If you aren't able to come to that meeting, but want to stay involved, please email Amy Monsky at [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org). We also invite all parents to join SHL's online community just for secular parents. We can be found on Facebook and Yahoo!, both under the name Secular Humanist Families of Charleston.

We look forward to a fun, action-packed year for our families and kids. We hope you do, too!

## ARE ATHEISTS SMARTER AND HUMBLER? HERB SILVERMAN

What should we make of a recent study that, like earlier ones, says atheists are more intelligent than religious believers? This latest is really a study of 63 individual studies, in which 53 showed less religiosity among the more intelligent participants. Hmm. Most atheists, myself included, have a skeptical nature and want to delve deeper into such studies—even when they put us in a favorable light.

For instance, how was intelligence defined and measured? Intelligence was defined in this study as the capacity for analytical thought, problem solving, and the understanding of complex ideas. The studies, which included a life-long analysis of the beliefs of 1,500 gifted children with IQs over 135, showed fewer religious believers among the gifted than in the overall population. Additional studies corroborated that religiosity tends to decrease with increased educational level. For example, only 7 percent of the members in the National Academy of Sciences believe in a personal god.

You could argue that the studies might be flawed for a variety of reasons, which include ignoring emotional intelligence and other worthwhile qualities that can contribute to a high quality of life. However, religion aside, I think most people believe that scientists (and even mathematicians) are smart. The cliché, “You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out,” means you can do it even if you’re not that smart.

But I’d rather let others discuss the relationship between religiosity and intelligence.

I’m more interested in perceived character flaws of atheists, perhaps related to intelligence. Some atheists come across as arrogant and smug when they gratuitously criticize and even mock religious beliefs, occasionally quoting ludicrous biblical passages to those who don’t interpret the Bible literally. Yet I can make a case for ardent atheists being more humble and open to change than religious fundamentalists, illustrated by the T-shirt phrase: “Will Convert for Evidence.” Richard Dawkins, the world’s most famous atheist, supported a bus ad campaign with the relatively humble slogan, “There’s probably no God.” I’ve yet to see a comparable religious ad that says “There’s probably a God.”

Which of the following sounds more arrogant?

Worldview 1. I know God created the entire universe just for the benefit of humans. He watches me constantly and cares about everything I say and do. I know how He wants me and everyone else to behave and believe. He is perfect and just, which is why we face an eternity of either bliss or torture, depending on whether or not we believe in Him.

Worldview 2. We’re the product of millions of years of evolution. Most species are extinct, as humans will eventually be. I hope to make a positive difference because it’s the right thing to do, not because of future rewards or punishments in an afterlife. When I don’t know something, which is often, I say, “I don’t know.”

As to humility, who’s the most humble person ever? Moses. How do I know? The Bible tells me so. In fact, Moses himself in Numbers 12:3 informs us he is. Some skeptics will question whether bragging about humility is an oxymoron, but here’s a justification for Moses’ claim, beginning with a joke.

A scientist is called to testify as an expert witness. The judge asks him about his credentials, and the scientist says, “I’m the most brilliant, respected, and articulate scientist in the world.” When a friend later asks why he was so boastful, the scientist replies, “After all, I was under oath.” Since Moses was under God’s oath, he was required to tell the biblical truth about his humility. In fact (actually fiction), the Five Books of Moses were supposedly dictated by God to Moses, so Moses had no choice about how to write it all down, including his humility and even a description of his own death.

There’s no credible evidence that Moses existed, let alone a God with whom he conversed. But some preachers and religious leaders also claim a direct link to God, which give them the authority to always “know” the absolute Truth with a capital “T,” as they confidently decree everything that God expects of us. Yes, we might all occasionally need an arrogance check, but such preachers are far from Snow White. Perhaps they should be asking “Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the most arrogant one of all?”

See all of Herb’s On Faith posts at <http://bit.ly/herbonfaith>

# THE SEPARATIONIST

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

*Opinions expressed in *The Separationist* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.*

*Please contact the editor 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 welcome. Contact the editor at [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org).*

# THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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## OUR OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Jason Gregory

Secretary: Laura Kasman

## JOIN SHL

*SHL is a group of freethinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the greater Charleston, South Carolina, area. SHL is affiliated with American Atheists, American Humanist Association, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Atheist Alliance International, Council for Secular Humanism, and the South Carolina Progressive Network. Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$35 (individual) or \$50 (couple or family). Additional donations are always welcome. To join, visit our website at <http://bit.ly/joinshl>, and for more information about our activities, visit <http://bit.ly/shlevents>*