



# The Separationist



The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry  
March, 1995

Editor: Herb Silverman  
Layout: David Sumner

P. O. Box 32256  
Charleston, SC 29417  
(803) 577 - 0637

## Paula Corbin Jones and Herb Silverman

**Y**es, the alleged recipient of unwelcome sexual advances from President Clinton will forever be historically intertwined with me. As you will recall, I have been on a five year quest to become a notary public. Granting me a notary would be an admission by the state that religious tests may no longer be a qualification for public office in South Carolina. After protracted litigation, former Gov. Campbell's office was required to disclose that he had approved 33,471 notary applications and denied only one—mine. Gov. Campbell claimed immunity from giving a deposition, where he might actually be compelled to state a reason for denying me a notary. The Circuit Court on Jan. 19 overruled his objections, citing the precedent of Ms. Jones. The Court said that if a sitting President Clinton could be deposed, then so could the former Gov. Campbell. A deposition date has been set for March 3. I am optimistic that when Carroll Campbell is forced to admit I was denied because I am an atheist, the court will then have a clear precedent to declare our state law unconstitutional.

Thanks, Paula! Incidentally, there is a major difference between Paula and me. Nobody has yet expressed an interest in publishing nude photos of me.

Is it a bad omen that Edmund Robinson, my ACLU lawyer in the notary case, has decided to quit the law to enter the seminary? I don't think it was a reaction to being a regular reader of the Separationist. Edmund has long been active in the local Unitarian Church. He will be entering Harvard Theological Seminary in the fall, with the intent of becoming a Unitarian minister. His strong liberal views will be sadly missed in the Charleston area. If all religious leaders were as concerned for the poor, as dedicated to securing justice and protecting human rights, and as committed to the principle of separation of church and state as is Edmund, we would live in a far better world. We would probably not even need organizations like our SHL.

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### Next Meeting

Sunday, March 19, 4-6 P.M.  
Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St.

*Spirituality Through Raising Hell*  
by Brett Bursey, Editor of Point  
The Public is welcome.

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## Brett Bursey to Speak

We are pleased to have Brett Bursey, editor of Point (South Carolina's independent monthly newspaper) and head of the Natural Guard. He will speak to us on "Spirituality through Raising Hell." Brett has fought for peace and justice for over twenty-five years, since organizing campus demonstrations against the Vietnam War at the University of South Carolina. Beaten, arrested, vilified and spied upon, Brett has campaigned against nuclear power, the draft, war, political corruption and

environmental degradation. His muckraking activities in his monthly newspaper have shamed and exposed many politicians and organizations. He may be South Carolina's only full time radical. After the talk, anyone interested can join us for dinner at Vickery's.

"Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blind-folded fear."

Thomas Jefferson

The Executive Committee of SHL voted to explore the possibility of changing our statement of humanist principles, which was taken verbatim from Free Inquiry magazine and adopted at our first meeting last May. These current principles appear on the following page. There were some concerns about a few of them, especially the potentially insulting use of the word "deplore" in the second principle.

Based on comments of members, I have written a first draft of new principles that incorporate most of the old ones. A two-paragraph statement, instead of a full page, would enable us to include it in each issue of the Separationist. The second paragraph consists of humanist values shared by most well-meaning people regardless of theology. The first paragraph contains principles that are probably unacceptable to those who believe in a God who rewards and punishes them for their behavior and their belief in His existence.

The draft was distributed at our February meeting. Our Humanist Reading Group will discuss the principles on Monday, March 13 at 7 p.m. at the home of Herb Silverman and Sharon Fratepietro in downtown Charleston (6 Peele Place, 577-0637). All members are invited to attend this special meeting and suggest changes and rewording. If you can't make the meeting, but would like to express an opinion, please give a call. Should we come to an agreement, the

new principles will be presented for adoption at our March 19 meeting. If the new draft fails to pass, we will keep our present principles.

## DRAFT OF SHL PRINCIPLES

We are committed to the application of reason, science, and experience for a better understanding of the workings of the universe and for solutions to human problems. We are skeptical of untested claims to knowledge, but we welcome new ideas. We believe in the human potential to pursue knowledge, find meaning, and derive responsible ethical codes entirely free from reference to supernatural forces. We are committed to the principle of separation of church and state. We respect the right to privacy and believe in the right to sexual and reproductive freedom commensurate with the acceptance of sexual and reproductive responsibility.

We are concerned with securing justice and fairness in society. We attempt to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, nationality, and religious beliefs, and strive to work together for the common good of humanity. We believe in supporting the disadvantaged and the handicapped so that they will be better able to help themselves. We encourage negotiation and cooperation as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding. We believe in the common moral and ethical decencies: altruism, compassion, honesty, integrity, and veracity. We want to protect and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species. We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.

"When the Devil quotes scriptures, it's not really to deceive, but simply that the masses are so ignorant of theology that someone has to teach them the elementary texts before he can seduce them."

Paul Goodman

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# The Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles and Values

- We are committed to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems.
  - We deplore efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to seek to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation.
  - We believe that scientific discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of human life.
  - We believe in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.
  - We are committed to the principle of the separation of church and state.
  - We cultivate the arts of negotiation and compromise as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding.
  - We are concerned with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance.
  - We believe in supporting the disadvantaged and the handicapped so that they will be able to help themselves.
  - We attempt to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.
  - We want to protect and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.
  - We believe in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest.
  - We believe in the cultivation of moral excellence.
  - We respect the right to privacy. Mature adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, to express their sexual preferences, to exercise reproductive freedom, to have access to comprehensive and informed health-care, and to die with dignity.
  - We believe in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility. Humanist ethics is amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences.
  - We are deeply concerned with the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.
  - We are engaged by the arts no less than by the sciences.
  - We are citizens of the universe and are excited by discoveries still to be made in the cosmos.
  - We are skeptical of untested claims to knowledge, and we are open to novel ideas and seek new departures in our thinking.
  - We affirm humanism as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others.
  - We believe in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, truth instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.
  - We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.
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Young men trying to gain favor with potential in-laws might wish to emulate David, that paragon of biblical virtue.

### Biblical Quote of the Month



"David slew 200 Philistines and brought their foreskins to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife."

1 Samuel 18:27

### Church Taxing Discussed

Michael Deanhardt gave an interesting and provocative talk at our Feb.19 meeting on taxing churches. To maintain religious freedom, he proposed that all non-profit organizations be taxed. A complete overhaul of our system would be needed, with powerful forces likely to fight such major changes. The audience discussed Michael's proposal, but no consensus was reached.

Also accompanying Michael from the Upstate were Gus Wentz, a member of the ACLU State Board, and Lee Deitz, president of the Secular Humanists of Greenville and Upstate South Carolina. Several of us purchased copies of *Leaving the Fold* published by Prometheus, which contains Lee's fascinating story.

### Guess Who Came To Dinner?



A couple of months ago, I responded to an article in the Charleston Post and Courier about the Rt. Rev. Allison, Episcopal bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina, who decried the modern day tolerance of heresy. John Thom, a teacher at Trident Tech, subsequently had a letter published that defended sanctions for heresy and criticized my "anti-intellectual" position. As Dr. McLeod-Bryant suggested when he spoke to us in January, I arranged a meeting with an

adversary in a friendly setting. Sharon and I invited John and his wife to dinner, along with SHL members Ewa Wojcicka and David Sumner.

First let me say that Our Catholic dinner companions were both very kind, nice, and sincere. I did, however, learn what it means to be more Catholic than the Pope. John could not condemn the Inquisition because we don't know what tribulations the church had to endure that might have justified the Inquisition. Our discussion about AIDS was the most memorable for me. John felt that a man with AIDS should not use a condom because condoms are a form of birth control condemned by the Church. Even more remarkable, such unprotected sex would even be preferable to masturbation, which the Church considers sinful. The conversation was interesting, the food was good, and nobody converted.



### Political Action



by Sharon Fratepietro

At his town meeting on February 25, 1st District Republican Congressman Mark Sanford offhandedly remarked that while he, personally, is a religious person, he does not believe public tax money should be spent on salaries for chaplains in the House and Senate.

### What You Can Do

I believe this kind of thinking needs to be applauded! I suggest writing or calling Congressman Sanford's office to encourage him to pursue funding cuts in this area. Surely, without encouragement, this is not a matter that South Carolina representatives would want to touch with a pole of any length. Reach Mark Sanford at 577-6433, or write to him at 640 Federal Bldg., Chas. 29403.

### Humanist Quote of the Month



"I respect faith, but doubt is what gets you an education."

Wilson Mizner

## LETTERS TO (THIS) EDITOR

*From SHL member Dinesh Sarvate:*

I am a great admirer of your sense of humor. It is one of the reasons you can take such an unpopular stand about religion and still be appreciated and respected by those who know you, like at the College of Charleston.

One of the most cruel English words we have is "bastard," which has been used through the ages to punish innocent children. It is symbolic of a base human desire to torture the weak and support injustice. I question your judgment about calling Jesus, indirectly, a bastard in the February issue of the Separationist.

Our basic principles include cultivation of moral excellence. We believe in the realization of the best and noblest that we can be. We believe in fairness, negotiation and compromise as a means of solving differences. We want to achieve mutual understanding. How then can we insult a great person, who is respected by a large percentage of the present population, whether we believe in him or not, just to irritate many or just to get a laugh?

On the other hand, what you did with the channeler Darlen-De is something I wish I were there to see. Congratulations for a job well done. Unfortunately, a large population just want to believe in such things. I remember one Indian officer actually taped a so-called Guru having sex with the officer's wife, just to let people know how the Guru was cheating and taking advantage of stupid people; but the stupid people just blamed the officer. The Guru kept his business as usual. In the end, let your brilliance and brilliant humor do the job as you follow a path of knowledge. Thanks for your work.

**Herb's response:**

You are right that the word "bastard" is an epithet that has often been used

inconsiderately with cruel intentions. The literal meaning of the word is "one born of unwed parents." Christians would have to agree that Jesus was, indeed, a bastard. I didn't mean to disparage Jesus, since a child who is born a bastard has done nothing wrong. I cannot condone, however, the inherent unfairness of the biblical quote last month from Deut. 23:2 that bastards even to the tenth generation shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. My intent was not to insult believing Christians, though that very well may have occurred, but to inspire those who love Jesus to be tolerant of children born outside of wedlock.

Unfortunately, a central tenet of Christianity is that we are all born sinners. In fact, the doctrine of "Original Sin," still espoused by many Christians, condemns to Hell all who do not accept Jesus as Savior simply because our progenitor Adam ate a piece of fruit thousands of years ago. This cruel doctrine is in sharp contrast to the humanist view that nobody, including Jesus, should be condemned for being a bastard or for any conduct of ancestors.

There is much in the Bible against which every instinct of my being rebels, so much that I regret the necessity which has compelled me to read it through from beginning to end. I do not think that the knowledge which I have gained of its history and sources compensates me for the unpleasant details it has forced upon my attention.

— Helen Keller  
The Story of My Life

*From SHL member Bill Upshur:*

I enjoyed your article "Atheist or Agnostic?" in the February issue of The Separationist and would like to comment on some of the points that you brought up in your comments about your "conversion" from agnosticism to atheism.

As you know, atheist means not a theist. Theists are of two types. One type *knows* that there is a God (that God exists). The other type *believes* that there is a God (that God exists). These types are often switched back and forth without recognizing the confusion that this switching can cause. Agnosticism (the idea that God is unknown or unknowable) would only apply to the *knowledge* type theism and not to the *belief* type of theism. A person could claim that they are agnostic in that they think there is no way that we can have knowledge that there is a God, but they could also class themselves as theist in that they believe that there is a God (although some agnostics could claim that they don't know what they believe).

The standards of what is to be accepted as *knowledge* and what is to be accepted as rational *belief* are too complicated to take up here, but I wish to point out the most confusing concept involved in discussions about Theism, Atheism and Agnosticism. The term "God is one of the most ambiguous words in the English language. Many times when atheism, agnosticism or Theism are discussed, there is not agreement on what the attributes of "God" are. And things go downhill from there.

If you can get a fairly clear understanding what the claims of the run of the mill Christian are about the attributes of God, you should have little difficulty seeing how appropriate the position of atheism is: that is, atheism as not believing or knowing that God exists or atheism as believing or knowing that type of God does not exist.

**From SHL member Sharon Fratepietro:**

I felt most heartened after attending the recent Christian-Jewish Council meeting where you and a Greek Orthodox priest debated the premise that a belief in God is essential to morality. First, I was impressed that the Council had the courage to invite a secular humanist to

publicly challenge its most fundamental belief. This openness shows a tolerance essential to preserving freedom from religion in this time of legislative pushiness by the religious right. Then I was thrilled to see the audience disapproval when a man who identified himself as a Christian conservative shouted out that homosexuals prey upon the young, during your contention that ideas about morality must remain open to changing knowledge about the nature of the human race. Finally, I'm sure all SHL members present felt proud about the brilliant defense of secular humanism you put forth. Your articulate, sensible and good-humored comments enormously benefit the intellectual climate of this Bible belt city.

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SHL members John and Sue Schweikart are columnists for Charleston's Free Time biweekly newspaper, which deals mostly with entertainment issues around the area. They write about local and national environmental issues and try to feature businesses that are recycling or doing other positive environmental activity. They have compiled a list of environmentally friendly businesses. If you have any recommendations, give them a call at 763-7273. What follows is a recent column of theirs submitted for inclusion in this newsletter:



Illegal aliens have always been a problem in the United States. Ask any Indian.

Robert Orben

A recent article in The Post and Courier caught our attention—not necessarily because of the environmental implications—more because it is another example of people failing to take responsibility for their actions and blaming music for so many of the world's problems. The article stated that two dozen teen-agers in Kenosha,



Wisconsin smashed compact discs and tapes at the urging of their pastor. The pastor wanted the youths to bring in materials they felt were not influencing them in a positive way. Such "subversive" and "satanic" acts as Roger McGuinn of the Byrds were destroyed in a sort of pagan ritual resembling something out of the *Lord of the Flies*. A CD from Slaughter was able to withstand several destructive blows from a log before a sledgehammer sent it into oblivion. Granted, Roger McGuinn hasn't made much radio-friendly music lately, and Slaughter hopefully has gone to "Hair-band Heaven," but the senseless destruction of someone's work is not something we believe churches should be encouraging. If you don't like a CD, tape or book that you buy—give it away, or sell it at a used record or bookstore. We wonder if Kenosha is anywhere near Rome, Wisconsin...."

John and Sue also asked to let you know that plans are being finalized for the Household Hazardous Waste Day to be held Saturday, March 25, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Ladson Fairgrounds. This is the time to organize all the containers of nasty chemicals and old paint to bring for disposal or recycling. There is no charge for this one-time event. Organizers encourage participants to pre-register with the Clemson University Extension Service at 722-5940.

**From SHL member David Peterson:**

Here's a real addition to anyone's library. I saw it for sale in Edward R. Hamilton's

catalog. The copy reads in its entirety: "Theomatics: God's Best Kept Secret Revealed. By J. Lucas & D. Washburn. Demonstrates how God assigned each letter and in turn each word of the Bible with a number of theomatic value, meaning all meanings in the Bible can be reduced to numbers—the same as everything else in creation, including atoms—sound fantastic—it is, and that's what Theomatics is all about."

**From an SHL member who wishes to use the pseudonym, "Angry Angus."**

It seems to me that the country is in a hell of a mess enough without some jackass Canadian movie maker doin' one of them quasi fictional films about boys being abused in a orphanage out on some island off the east coast up there. At least they should have kept the dam movie up there, but no, that cable network that goes by its initials (A&E) showed it on two nights, one being the Sabbath, mind you.

I don't think you oughta show how hurtin' little boys was related to the church group that ran the orphanage. It's disrespectful and after all, they was sort of on welfare. Even more disrespectful was the suggestion that the government was maybe involved in the cover-up. I think there needs to be some REAL CENSORSHIP of this trash before that kind of stuff gets down here.

In case you don't know about this outrage, it's called "The Boys of St. Vincent." You don't need to complain, I have already reported it to Ralph Reed.



**"Men are apt to be more influenced by words than by the actual facts of the surrounding Reality"**

Pavlov



## Letters to the (Other) Editor

The following letter by SHL member Sharon Robles was printed in The Post and Courier on Jan 30:

This is in response to the letter published Jan. 9 by Bruce Miller, chairman of the Charleston County Christian Coalition. The piece is titled, "Setting the record straight about Christian Coalition." Indeed, someone needs to.

The greatest danger inherent in this dialogue is not just the skewing of the facts, but the lulling of people into believing that the Christian Coalition (among other far-right organizations) is a harmless political group.

It is perhaps true that its rank-and-file membership consists of many frustrated people who are reaching out for some answers. And certainly this organization deserves to have a voice in America's free marketplace of ideas. But the issue here is that the Christian Coalition as a political organization is more than just a sounding board for frustrated citizens.

Their religious-right agenda includes censorship not only in the schools but of movies and television. Now we are beginning to see the emergence of a new strategy of "appearing to be moderate" on such issues as separation of church and state and tolerance of religious diversity. By parading an agenda to fix all our social ills in one fell right-wing swoop, they are attempting to deflect the negative attention many of their real platforms have earned them.

We need only compare recent quotes from the leadership of this organization with what they are currently saying. The contrast reveals this new about-face to be just another stealth tactic used to accomplish the goals of an intolerant organization striving to establish a theocracy, denying the rest of us our religious freedoms.

According to Mr. Miller, their membership comes from all types of denominations and the Christian Coalition is not a religious organization. Not a religious organization? The name itself would dispute this claim.

At the "Turn the Tide" forum here last spring, I was able to direct a telephone question to Christian Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed. The organization had been courting the Jewish community (to no avail) seeking an endorsement for its cause.

**"What Christians have got to do is take back this country, one precinct at a time, one neighborhood at a time and one state at a time."**

I asked Mr. Reed if there was any plan at the national level to change the name of the organization to the "Judeo-

Christian Coalition." He replied that early on they had tossed around names that might be more politically correct but, in the end, decided to "just call ourselves what we really are, the Christian Coalition."

This simple summation leaves little doubt as to what denomination takes priority.

In May 1990, in the Houston Chronicle, he stated: "What Christians have got to do is take back this country, one precinct at a time, one neighborhood at a time and one state at a time." Founder Pat Robertson stated during the "Road to Victory" Conference in Virginia (Nov. '91) that "we want to see a working majority of the Republican Party in the hands of pro-family Christians by 1996 or sooner. Of course, we want to see the White House in pro-family Christian hands, at least by the year 2000 or



sooner, if the Lord permits." This is not the language of a solely political group.

Today, Mr. Reed says, "We believe in a nation that is not officially Christian, Jewish or Muslim." To which voice do we listen?

The reason the Christian Coalition is being investigated by the FCC and the IRS is because it has so far overstepped the bounds of its 501c(4) status that demands that it not endorse candidates. Its thinly veiled endorsements are not well hidden behind its voter guides (33 million in the last election) and its blatantly slanted "questionnaires."

These questionnaires published prior to an election obviously seek to advance the political cause of one candidate over another by a biased representation of opposing candidates' views, whether they ever responded to the questionnaire or not. Many of our local politicians fell victim to this tactic.

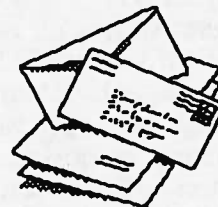
It is important to look beyond the rhetoric of this group when addressing the wide variety of social ills and concerns that confront us today. No one can point to the exact cause or causes of such social problems as welfare, homelessness and increased violence in our communities. However, in naming these ills, the coalition cannot claim the cure. The causes cannot be simply stated, and the solutions will ultimately be complicated and many-faceted.

Statistics show that Americans have remained steadily religious through the years as these elements within our society have continued to worsen. Prison rolls are filled with Christians, lifelong and born-again. It seems incongruous to assume that religion taking a greater role in our politics will be the simple remedy. In fact, quite the opposite; a group that isolates and dominates rather than embracing our differences serves only to fuel the fire of hostility that has caused religious wars through the centuries.

In an effort to broaden the appeal and fill the coffers of his organization, Mr. Reed suggests "casting a wider net" (Policy Review, 1993). According to

Skipp Porteous of the Institute for First Amendment Studies, we are seeing these cosmetic changes in the Christian Coalition because it "can't run stealth as easily as before."

Perhaps what we are seeing now is its greatest act of stealth yet...distraction from its true ambitions. "They may be casting a wider net," Porteous says, "but it's the same small boat of intolerance." Let the flocks be forewarned. If it smells like a wolf, growls like a wolf and bares its teeth like a wolf, then despite the soft, woolly appearance of sheep's clothing, it is a wolf."



**The following letter by SHL member Ellie Garvin was printed in The Post and Courier on Feb. 20:**

I commend Sharon T. Robles for her excellent Jan. 30 letter "Coalition's 'about-faces' are covering up its true agenda." It is a clear statement representing the position of many of us who, though religious, support the constitutional concept of separation of church and state and do not wish to have the state in charge of our religion.

Some of the responses to Ms. Robles that have appeared in your letters column have been interesting, responding to statements or positions that did not appear in her letter.

There was no indication in Ms. Robles' letter that Christians should be excluded from the political process. That is absurd. The contrary position is equally absurd—that non-Christians should be excluded and that any one group has the right to impose its religious beliefs on the rest of us. There is little disagreement that there are serious problems resulting from a crisis of morals and values: problems that attack the very

fabric of society such as violence, crime, lack of responsibility and discipline etc. We obviously need to address these problems, their causes and possible solutions. Someone once said that 'for every complex problem there is almost always a simple solution, and it is almost always wrong.' Sort of like saying that one minute of voluntary prayer in schools will reduce violence, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse and profanity.

As an attempt at balance and it an effort to determine what is factual, I would recommend a book, "The Religious Right: An Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America" (1994, Anti-Defamation League). Another view worthy of note is expounded by the Interfaith Alliance, an organization based in Washington, D.C. and led by mainstream Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious leaders, whose purpose is to provide a platform from which their voices can be heard.



Why was the human race created? Or at least why wasn't something creditable created in place of it? God had His opportunity. He could have made a reputation. But no, He must commit this grotesque folly-a lark which must have cost Him a regret or two when He came to think it over & observe effects.

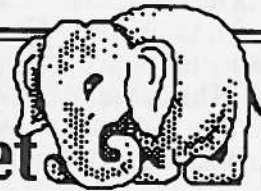
Mark Twain

Dr. Herbert Valentine, chair of the Interfaith Alliance and former moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA) says, "There is a pressing need for a civil discourse about the direction of our nation and the role religion can or should play. We believe that countering the radical right is a critical step that will allow us to move the discussion forward."

\$ If you would like to become a \$ member at this time, you can write a check for \$15 (\$25 for a family membership) made payable to Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry and sent to PO Box 32256 Charleston, SC 29417.

If you know of others who might be interested in joining, please let us know. It is our policy to send potential members two free copies of the newsletter.

**Don't  
Forget**



**If you haven't paid your  
dues, this could be your  
last newsletter!**