



The

# Separationist



## "How Evangelical Christianity Differs from Mainstream Christianity"

a talk by the Rev. Dr. Monty Knight

7 PM Sunday January 18, at Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street

Our first speaker of 2009 will be the Reverend Dr. Robert Marsden (Monty) Knight, who will help us understand the differences between evangelical Christianity and mainstream Christianity.

Rev. Knight is the current president of the Charleston chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and he has served as pastor of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Charleston since 1994.

Please note later time! Due to a special UU Church event, we are meeting at 7 p.m. this month only. For those interested, we will also meet for dinner at Vickery's at 5:30, *before the meeting.*

Prior to this he was director of the Dorchester County Mental Health Clinic in Summerville and worked as a pastoral counselor and marriage and family therapist in private practice since 1975. He is an adjunct professor of clinical counseling at Webster University (Charleston campus) and writes a periodic column in the Sunday "Faith and Values" section of The Post and Courier.

Monty and his wife, Jackie (a social worker with the South Carolina Dept. of Mental Health) are the parents of five adult children, and they have four grandchildren.

## SHL Charitable Giving Campaign Update

by Jonathan Lamb

SHL Charitable Giving Campaign continues to be very successful after one and a half years. In mid-2007, the Board decided the organization should do more to demonstrate our humanistic principles in the community. The board chooses four charities for the organization to support each year. The organizations we support must be local, secular non-profits that do work in areas aligned with secular humanists' principles. Groups we have thus far supported include: Windwood Farm, Planned Parenthood, Carolina Youth Development

Center, My Sister's House, and Lowcountry Orphan Relief. As of December 2008, we have raised a total of \$6,400 from SHL members for these causes. The hope is that members will donate to these groups through the SHL, allowing us to write one check to the charity in the name of secular humanism.

If you would like to suggest a charity for our support, please send an e-mail to [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).

## Charity of the Quarter

The SHL Charity of the Quarter for the first quarter of 2009 is Operation Home, a grassroots, non-profit service organization that makes emergency home repairs for disadvantaged residents of Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester counties in South Carolina. Founded in 1997, Operation Home's mission is to provide safety, handicapped access and dignity to our neediest neighbors. Clients are referred by social workers, case managers and community outreach volunteers of other agencies, such as the Red Cross, Berkely Electric Cooperative, East Cooper Community Outreach, and many others. According to their web page, in 2007, Operation Home assisted over 140 families: 35 were provided critical home repairs, 60

were provided with air conditioning units, and 46 households were provided with heaters.

Most of the families helped contained a child or elderly family member.



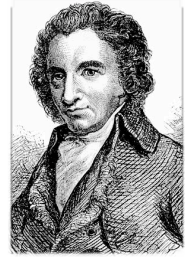
Examples of emergency home repairs that have been provided include roof replacement, wheelchair ramps, floor repairs, running water, and others necessary to prevent homelessness and keep vulnerable citizens in homes that are safe and decent. More information is available on their web page at [www.operationhome.org](http://www.operationhome.org).

To make a donation, please make your check out to the SHL and indicate as a memo that the money is for the charity of the quarter. Send your check to the SHL c/o our treasurer, Frances Hay, P.O. Box 32256, Charleston, SC 29417, or turn it in at our January or February meeting at Gage Hall. After March 1st, we will pool all the money collected and present it as one gift to Operation Home in the name of the SHL.

**Thank you!**

## 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. At the next meeting, on January 25th, the group will meet to discuss the classic freethought book *Age of Reason* by American "founding father" Thomas Paine.



Published in three parts in 1794, 1795, and 1807, *Age of Reason* was a bestseller in America, where it caused a short-lived deistic revival. In it, Paine advocates reason in the place of revelation, leading him to reject miracles and to view the Bible as an ordinary piece of literature.

Everyone is invited the discussion and it is not required that you have read the book to attend.

## Reminder! Next Adopt-a-Highway litter pick-up is Saturday, Feb 7th

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



### Contact Information for the SHL:

Phone: 843-556-4490

E-Mail: [shl@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:shl@lowcountryhumanists.org)

Web: <http://lowcountryhumanists.org>

Mail: P.O. Box 32256, Charleston SC 29417

### Officers of the SHL

President: Jonathan Lamb

Vice President: Herb Silverman

Treasurer: Frances Hay

### Newsletter Co-editors

Laura and Alex Kasman

## Freethought Billboard Campaigns Building Momentum

by Jonathan Lamb

In 2008 numerous secular organizations in the United States have been taking to the streets with their message that non-religious people exist in significant numbers and deserve to be acknowledged. It has been found that billboards are one of the most effective advertising methods for secular humanists because they are so "in your face". People must drive past them every day on their way to work or school and it is much more difficult to just turn the page or change the channel. Also, unlike print or internet advertising, they generate controversy. Controversy equals free media attention on television and radio. So there is plenty of bang for the buck. The Freedom

God. Now Stop Worrying and Enjoy your Life." Using a similar approach, AHA came up with: "Why Believe in a God? Just be Good for Goodness' Sake." This slogan was posted on 230 Washington, D.C.



buses and generated enormous media interest. Spokespeople for AHA were quoted in all major newspapers, interviewed on television news programs and on the radio. According to Fred Edwards, Director of Communications for AHA, "By the beginning of December

we'd received 37,742 hits on our campaign website, logged 638 new members and received over \$6,000 in new contributions."

Freethought Action (FTA) is a relatively new organization dedicated to marketing rational thought in Amer-

ica. They focus on helping local humanist organizations run advertising campaigns in their own towns. Their slogan is quite powerful: "Don't Believe In God? You Are Not Alone." So far, the closest these billboards have come to the South is Pennsylvania and New Jersey.



From Religion Foundation (FFRF) has been in the secular billboard business for at least two years and has sponsored them in a couple places around the country. Their messages include: "Imagine No Religion" and "Beware of Dogma".

The American Humanist Association (AHA) had wanted to do their own advertising blitz but wasn't sure of a good slogan. In October the British Humanist Association gave them a start when they unveiled a bus advertising campaign in the UK that stated: "There's Probably No



## 2009 Membership Dues

Dear new and returning members, if you haven't paid dues at a recent meeting, it's time to send them in for 2009. Just \$24 (individual) or \$36 (couple or family) gets you this newsletter mailed to your home 9 times a year, and supports our speaker series at Gage Hall, refreshments at meetings, and community outreach activities. All dues and donations are tax deductible.

Please send your check made out to "Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry" with the form below to **SHL Treasurer, P.O. Box 32256, Charleston SC 29417**. If you have any questions, please write to our treasurer, Frances Hay, using the e-mail address [treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org).

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Individual \_\_\_\_ Family \_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you do not want to receive a printed copy of the newsletter: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Checking the line above will save trees and reduce our operating expenses. You can always download an electronic copy of the newsletter from [lowcountryhumanists.org](http://lowcountryhumanists.org).)

New member \_\_\_\_ Renewing member \_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!**

## SHL Volunteer News

by Nancy Worley

At our December Potluck Party, we raised \$500.00 for gift cards for the PAL cottage residents. Initially, we were going to give each resident a \$50.00 holiday gift card. However, the Charleston community was exceptionally generous this year and each of the girls received many gifts. Betty Johnson, Residential Counselor at the PAL cottage, shared that the girls usually don't receive much if anything on their birthdays and asked if we instead might give each of the girls a gift card on her birthday. Therefore, we will send a birthday card from SHL with a \$50.00 gift card enclosed for each girl's birthday throughout the year.

Volunteers are needed on January 24 from 10AM to 2 PM to paint the Residential Counselor's office and to finish the curtains for two bedrooms. CYDC will supply the paint and brushes for the

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painting job. Volunteers for sewing curtains should bring a portable sewing machine.

Three of the girls will begin GED classes in January so tutoring opportunities will be available. The knitting class meets on Sunday afternoons and has three beginning knitters diligently working on scarves.

Contact Nancy Worley at 763-4044 or at [volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org) or in person at the next SHL meeting if you are interested in volunteering or have any questions.

*With the proceeds from this year's book sale we will send a birthday card from SHL with a \$50.00 gift card enclosed for each girl's birthday throughout the year.*

## Recent Published Letters by SHL Members

### Unfair Comments (published in Post and Courier Nov 30, 2008)

I was pleased with the diversity shown in the Nov. 23 Faith & Values section. Beside the seven articles about religious faiths, including quotes from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other religious leaders, you reprinted an article from The Wall Street Journal titled, "Nonbelievers get out their message, too."

That article described new non-religious traditions, such as HumanLight, to celebrate the holiday season. It pointed out that we humanists and atheists are not trying to evangelize. Instead, we hope to make the public more comfortable with the concept of atheism and give fellow nonbelievers a sense of community. We are also trying to encourage timid friends and neighbors to come out of their nontheistic closets.

There was, however, one aspect of this article that was typical of stories about nonbelievers, but rarely found in articles about religious believers. The article on nonbelievers contained quotes from people of faith who disprove of atheists.

It also cited unsubstantiated allegations of atheists mocking and insulting Christmas, and it mentioned a giant sign put up by a Christian group asking: "Why Do Atheists Hate America?"

Don't get me wrong. I think it is a step in the right direction that positive voices on atheism are now being heard, even if they are invariably countered by opposing voices, presumably a result of the newspaper's intent to be fair and balanced.

However, I doubt that any fair and balanced newspaper would print only positive articles about one political party while always countering positive quotes with negative quotes when writing about the opposing political party.

HERB SILVERMAN

### Respect diversity (published in Post and Courier Dec 27, 2008)

Across the 1,000-square-mile area of rural Oklahoma County, Okla., where I grew up, there were no Jews, pagans or Native Americans; Kwanzaa and Festivus had not been invented, and it was before "MASH" introduced us to Boxing Day.

Appropriately, we celebrated Christmas and wished each other "Merry Christmas."

Four decades later, having spent many Decembers in scattered metropolitan areas, including five in the Far East, I've come to appreciate the diversity of our planet's civilizations.

For Americans, the New Year arrives on Jan. 1, yet a billion Chinese will celebrate it on Jan. 26, and a billion Muslims will celebrate it on Dec. 29. Pagans, native cultures and a slew of others recognize the Winter Solstice.

We do not live in the homogenized society of our youth. From Thanksgiving through the early months of next year, there is a plethora of "holidays."

Saying "Happy Holidays" isn't part of a war against Christmas, it is respecting diversity.

DENNIS K. BIBY

*Editor's note: An email exchange between Mr. Biby and an unidentified Charlestonian that followed publication of this letter is posted on the SHL discussion board <http://lowcountryhumanists.org/phpbb/viewtopic.php?f=16&t=589>*

### Prop 8 the Musical, pokes fun at hypocrisy of the religious right

The passage of Proposition 8 in California, a ballot initiative to amend the California State Constitution to ban same-sex marriage, gave rise to a star-studded comic internet video starring Jack Black as Jesus. Google "Prop 8 The Musical" to watch. Here's an excerpt of the script:



*Gays and people who love them:* Our love is not a sin!

*Prop 8 proponents:* Well the Bible says it's so!  
(Jesus materializes)

*Jesus:* Well the Bible says a lot of things, y'know

*Lead Prop 8 proponent:* Jesus, doesn't the Bible say these people are an abomination?

*Jesus:* Yeah but you know it says the exact same thing about this shrimp cocktail...Leviticus says shellfish is an abomination.

*Woman wearing peace sign:* What else does the Bible say, Jesus?

*Jesus:* The Bible says a lot of interesting things...like you can stone your wife or sell your daughter into slavery

*Lead Prop 8 proponent:* Well we ignore those verses...

*Jesus:* Well then friend it seems to me you pick and choose

*Prop 8 proponents:* We pick and choose!

*Jesus:* Well please choose love instead of hate besides your nation was built on separation of church and state!

**The Separationist**

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

**Editors:**

**Laura and Alex Kasari**

Important Notes:

Due to a scheduling conflict the  
January SHL meeting will begin at  
7 PM, later than our usual time.  
Also, please note that your 2009  
membership renewal form is  
enclosed.

**Join the SHL:**

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry (SHL) is a group of freethinkers 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 International, 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 our activities. For more information consult our Web-page at:

<http://www.lowcountryhumanists.org>

**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@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org)

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

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