



THE SEPARATIONIST

DECEMBER 2011

WINTER SOLSTICE POTLUCK AND BOOK AUCTION SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2011, 5 PM, 100 WILLIS LN, SUMMERVILLE

SHL's annual Winter Solstice Potluck will be held on December 18, 2011, at 5 pm at the Summerville home of Robert and Janet Rosenzweig. Please bring an appetizer, salad, main dish, side dish, or dessert to share. If you don't like to cook, wine, beer, and soft drinks are always welcome.

Also, bring books, CDs, or DVDs for our annual book auction. Proceeds will be donated to our Charity of the Quarter. Herb Silverman will be our auctioneer. (To keep the auction from lasting an eternity, please bring items related directly to humanism.)

If you're using Google Maps, MapQuest, or a GPS, the Rosenzweigs' address is 100 Willis Lane, Summerville, SC 29483.

If you prefer to kick it old-school, here are the directions:

1. Take I-26 West towards Columbia.
2. Take exit 199A. You'll be on 17 Alt going south.
3. When you can, get two lanes over.
4. Go approximately 2½ Miles (9 lights).
5. Turn right at Richardson. (A theater will be on your left, a park on your right, and you'll be facing Town Hall.)
6. Go 1 block.
7. Turn left at next light, which is Cedar Street (Rae Rocco will be on your left, the Commission of Public Works on your right.)
8. Cedar curves and becomes Central Avenue.
9. Go approximately 1 mile (2 lights).

10. After the second light (Carolina), go 1 long block past 4 or 5 houses.
11. When you see a yellow fire hydrant, turn right.
12. Enter immediately onto a diagonal gravel/dirt road facing you called Briarwood Lane
13. At Willis Lane, turn left.
14. The Rosenzweigs' house (100 Willis) is the first red brick house on right. It has white columns and black shutters.



If you get lost or need further directions, you can call the Rosenzweigs at (843) 851-2928 (home) or (843) 327-1266 (mobile).

We hope to see you there, and we would like to extend a special invitation to people on our mailing list who rarely come to meetings, as well as past speakers who are not members. There will be no meeting at Gage Hall this month but we will return to our regular meeting format in January.

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



<http://bit.ly/shlmeetup>



<http://bit.ly/shlhome>



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



<http://bit.ly/shlyoutube>



<http://bit.ly/shllist>



<http://yhoo.it/shlyahoo>

**SHL HAPPY HOUR
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2011, 6 PM**



SHL Happy Hour is quickly becoming a monthly tradition!

This month we will meet at Sesame Burgers & Beer, 4726 Spruill Ave in North Charleston (on the corner of Spruill and E. Montague, in the Park Circle neighborhood) on Tuesday, December 20, 6pm - 8pm(ish). Come relax among old and new

friends and enjoy a drink and friendly conversation.

Everyone is welcome—alcohol is optional and no topic is ever taboo.

Please join us!



**SHL MEETING
SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2012, 4 PM
GAGE HALL
4 ARCHDALE STREET, CHARLESTON**



Our next monthly meeting will be held on Sunday, January 15, 2012. Roy Speckhardt will be our speaker.

Roy is the Executive Director of the American Humanist Association, an organization that promotes humanism, a progressive philosophy, that without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to

lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity. (SHL is an AHA chapter.)

Before leading the AHA, Roy was Deputy Director of The Interfaith Alliance, a national grassroots organization with a membership of over 150,000. It has stood up to those amongst the religious right who would manipulate religion to serve their own partisan agendas.

THE SEPARATIONIST, DECEMBER 2011

**MOVIE CLUB
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2011**

The SHL Movie Club meets once a month, usually on the first Saturday, to view a film and discuss it over dinner. The movie is announced a few days in advance by email, on our website (<http://bit.ly/shlevents>), and on our information line (843-277-0948). To add yourself to the Movie Club email list, please visit <http://bit.ly/shllist>.

**BOOK GROUP
SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2012, 4 PM
WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE
1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

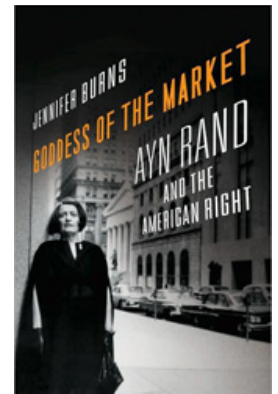
The Book Group will not meet in December. Our next meeting will be on January 22, 2012, when we'll discuss *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, by Jennifer Burns.

Ayn Rand's most famous books, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, continue to sell in the hundreds of thousands every year, decades after they were issued. Rand was a significant influence on Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales and Craigslist's Craig Newman. Since her death in 1982, she remains many things to many people, as she did throughout her prickly, anxiety-laced, amphetamine- and nicotine-fueled life.

Jennifer Burns, a University of Virginia historian, explicates the evolution of Rand's individualist worldview, placing her within the context of American conservative and libertarian thought: from H.L. Mencken to William Buckley to the Vietnam War. (Rand's opposition to the conflict drove most conservatives crazy.)

Burns does not give short shrift to the men in Rand's life: her longtime husband, Frank O'Connor, and intellectual partner and lover, Nathaniel Branden. Overall, this contributes to an understanding of a complex life in relation to American conservatism.

The book was recently issued in paperback. Amazon sells it for \$12.89 with used copies available for \$6 to \$10. Prices on bn.com are slightly higher.



WAR ON THANKSGIVING? HERB SILVERMAN

Many religious believers and atheists alike express regret at the crass materialism shown this time of year, when Thanksgiving now represents the prelude to a shopping spree for Christmas presents on “Black Friday.” I gained an appalling insight watching television on the Saturday after “Black Friday.” First I saw frenzied crowds of Egyptian protesters in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, risking their lives to demand freedom. Then I saw frenzied crowds of American shoppers, trying to push others aside to save a few dollars on sale merchandise. Though their causes were significantly different, the crowds looked the same. This is not a form of American “exceptionalism” to be proud of.

In recent years we were subjected to a media-manufactured “War on Christmas,” when pundits decry those who say “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas.” This year breaks new ground, because we just had a manufactured “War on Thanksgiving,” allegedly started by our commander-in-chief. President Obama gave a three-minute Thanksgiving Day speech without the word “God” in it. Here is a portion of what he said:

“We’re especially grateful for the men and women who defend our country overseas. To all the service members eating Thanksgiving dinner far from your families: the American people are thinking of you today. And when you come home, we intend to make sure that we serve you as well as you’re serving America. We’re also grateful for the Americans who are taking time out of their holiday to serve in soup kitchens and shelters, making sure their neighbors have a hot meal and a place to stay. This sense of mutual responsibility - the idea that I am my brother’s keeper; that I am my sister’s keeper - has always been a part of what makes our country special. And it’s one of the reasons the Thanksgiving tradition has endured.”

Imagine that. President Obama gave an inclusive speech showing support for the men and women who

serve overseas, and also praised those who help the less fortunate at this time of year. He even provided a biblical reference that this atheist likes, the one about being our brother’s keeper (and the updated sister’s keeper). However, many Christians would have preferred he thank an imagined God rather than the real people he did thank.

They probably would have been upset, too, had Obama read from the U.S. Constitution, a document with no mention of a god. We’re a country of both believers and non-believers, so Obama shouldn’t have to say anything about God, one way or another. Atheists and theists can agree on the value of setting aside at least one day per year to give thanks, though we may disagree over “to whom” and “for what.” This

should properly be left to individuals. On Thursday, I thanked my friends who prepared a wonderful Thanksgiving meal and provided us with the opportunity to share each other’s company.

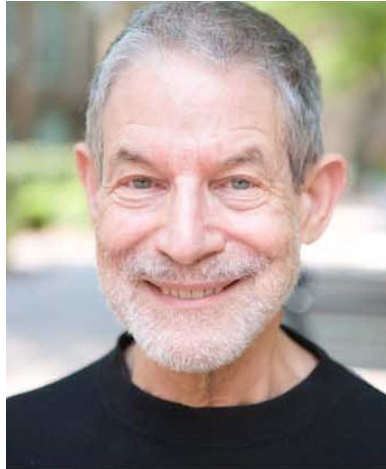
I expect the manufactured war on Christmas will soon begin. Despite our secular Constitution, some continue to call this a Christian country, but others now refer to it as a Judeo-Christian country. So “Happy Holidays” is no more a war on Christmas than it is a war on Hanukkah.

There are lots of reasons for the season, some good and some bad. Here’s my best reason for all seasons, for both theists and atheists: A reminder that the best wish of all is “Peace on earth and goodwill toward men and women.”

See all of Herb’s On Faith posts at <http://wapo.st/herb-on-faith>

CHARITY OF THE QUARTER SEA TURTLE RESCUE PROGRAM

The Sea Turtle Rescue Program is our Charity of the Quarter. The program provides a place for injured sea turtles to receive care and medicines. Our donations will help sustain these species into the next century and beyond. Please contribute by bringing a check to the meeting or donate via credit/debit card on our website.



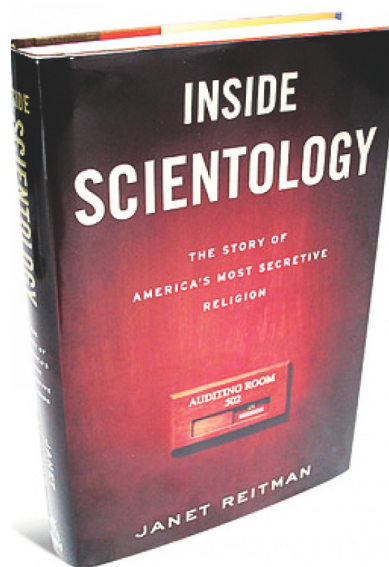
INSIDE SCIENTOLOGY: THE STORY OF AMERICA'S MOST SECRETIVE RELIGION
JANET REITMAN. VANGUARD PRESS
BOOK REVIEW BY BEN EDWARD AKERLEY

After many years as a mediocre, struggling pulp fiction turned sci-fi author, L. Ron Hubbard finally hit the big time with the 1950 release of *Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science*, an immediate best-seller promoted as a “poor man’s psychoanalysis.” However, critics wondered aloud why a single session with an auditor (instructor) cost \$25, which was \$10 more than most psychiatrists charged at that time. A five-week course at newly-opened centers in major cities cost \$500 although it enabled devotees to become “professional auditors” who could immediately begin seeing clients. More aggressive therapy was offered in ten-day segments known as “intensives” and cost \$600 to \$1,000 depending on the experience of the auditor. Unlike psychoanalysis, Hubbard’s regimen promised a cure as the seeker became a Clear—someone liberated from all aberrations and now infinitely more powerful and free.

Moving beyond Dianetics (meaning “through the mind”), Hubbard introduced a brand-new science in 1952: Scientology (meaning “the study of knowledge” or “the study of truth”) which focused on the anatomy of the human soul, an entity he named the thetan (which means “life”), since it existed wholly apart from the body, the mind, and the physical world. Thetans predated time itself and had drifted through the eons inhabiting and then exiting physical bodies which only served as temporary shells. Bored, they created the universe but ultimately got trapped in that creation as they became implanted with a host of both positive and negative ideas and saw themselves as nothing more than the bodies they inhabited. As theta beings, they lost their original power and Scientology’s principal goal was to restore that power and create Clears or OT (Operating Thetans) at the lowest level of advancement on what Hubbard called The Bridge to Total Freedom. Participants could later progress to higher OT levels with substantially more dollar

investment required.

For nearly a decade, Hubbard moved from messiah to Commodore as he commanded the church aboard his flagship, the *Apollo*, one of three ships that comprised a flotilla that sailed the seas to multiple ports-of-call. Once the seafaring expedition ended, operations moved to Clearwater, Florida, and other land-based US locales with Hubbard becoming more elusive and reclusive. After his death in 1986, Hubbard left behind an estate valued at nearly \$400 million. His successor to run the



newly-leaderless enterprise was David Miscavige, a 25-year old who had grown up in the church and rapidly revealed in the title of the pope of Scientology. Ruthless, autocratic, overachieving and unforgiving, DM accomplished two stellar feats: (1) exploiting to the maximum degree the celebrity status of megastars like John Travolta and Tom Cruise, about whom DM raved: “This guy is so famous, he could change the face of Scientology forever.” And (2) winning IRS tax exemption for the church in 1983 after 25 years of wrangling with their inefficient bureaucracy. A secondary benefit of the IRS ruling has been the ultra-secrecy of

all Scientology’s financial dealings once it became a certified non-profit entity. Too bad this same secrecy could not shield the church from innumerable lawsuits both at home and abroad about abuse, intimidation and in one case, a woman who died after 17 days of neglect under their care.

Ever since earning a M.A. from Columbia University’s School of Journalism, Janet Reitman has worked as a freelancer. When *Rolling Stone* assigned her to investigate Scientology in 2005, the resulting article “Inside Scientology” which appeared in 2006, served as a springboard to expand the probe, which took another five years to complete. In her endeavor, she was granted unprecedented access to the upper echelons of this still-myste-

INSIDE SCIENTOLOGY (CONT'D)

rious sect. Her goal was “to write the first objective modern history of the Church of Scientology,” America’s most controversial religion. More often, Scientology has been labeled a social movement, a self-help method, a transnational corporation and most damnably, a dangerous, evil cult. However defined, any organization claiming to be America’s fastest-growing religion—with millions of members in 165 countries, 8,500 church missions and outreach groups, and real estate on several continents valued at billions—constitutes a formidable force to be

reckoned with.

The investigator has done a masterful job of separating myth from fact, no mean feat, especially regarding the life of founder L. Ron Hubbard, who deserved notoriety for embellishing or inventing events from his checkered past. No sooner did this tome come off the press than church officials denounced it as shoddy, unscholarly and inaccurate. I defy anyone who reads this massive expose impartially to agree with those criticisms.

REASON RALLY MARCH 24, 2012, WASHINGTON, DC

The Reason Rally will be held March 24, 2012, in Washington, DC. The rally will be filled with music, comedy, and addresses by leaders of the secular movement. It’s billed as the largest gathering of the secular movement in history.

DC Rally Bus, a service that supports our First Amendment right to peaceably assemble by providing buses for rallies in Washington, DC, may send a bus to Charleston. Availability depends on demand; we need to sign up 40 riders by January 24, 2012. To register, visit <http://bit.ly/shl-bus>.

Note that the **Annual Convention of American Atheists** is scheduled for March 25th and 26th, 2012, in Bethesda, Maryland, and Richard Dawkins will be the keynote speaker. If you prefer to stay in DC for the conference, the DC Rally Bus isn’t your best bet for transportation, but special room rates are available for DC area hotels. See below for a phone number, or visit <http://reasonrally.org/find-a-hotel/>.



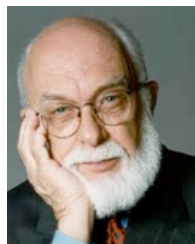
Richard Dawkins



PZ Myers



Taslima Nasrin



James Randi



Jamila Bey



Greta Christina

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.

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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>