



THE SEPARATIONIST

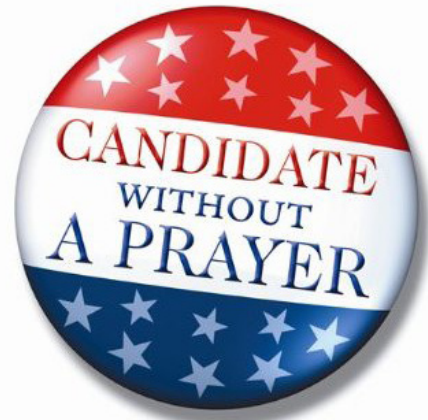
FEBRUARY 2012

HERB SILVERMAN: CANDIDATE WITHOUT A PRAYER SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2012, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

Our speaker for February is SHL's founder and vice president, Herb Silverman.

Herb is also founder and president of the Secular Coalition for America and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the College of Charleston. He ran for governor of South Carolina in the 1990s to challenge a state law that required religious belief to hold public office. After an eight-year battle, Herb won a unanimous decision in the South Carolina Supreme Court, which struck down this religious test requirement.

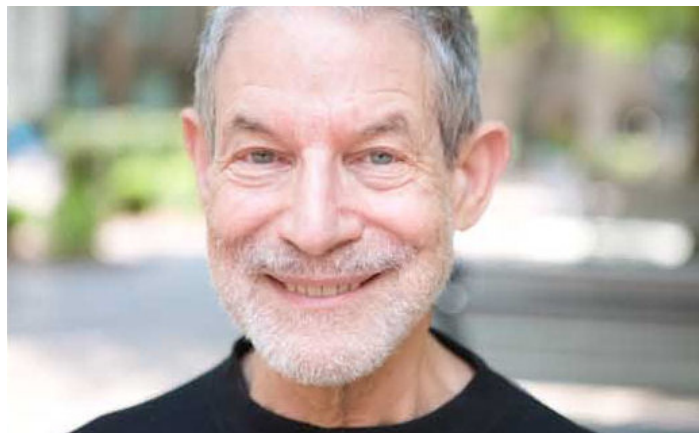
In his recently released autobiography, *Candidate without a Prayer*, Herb tells his iconoclastic life story. Equal parts Bertrand Russell, Woody Allen, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, he takes the reader from his childhood as an Orthodox Jew in Philadelphia, where he stopped fasting on Yom Kippur to test God's existence, to his adult life in the heart of the Bible Belt, where he became a legendary figure within America's secular activist community and



*An Autobiography of a Jewish
Atheist in the Bible Belt*

HERB SILVERMAN

Foreword by RICHARD DAWKINS



remains one of its most beloved leaders.


Never one to shy from controversy, Silverman relates many of his experiences facing Christian fundamentalists of all stripes in open debate. He is equally candid about the battles he has faced in the secular community itself and the many hurdles he overcame in the historic step of politically uniting the country's major secular, humanist, and atheist groups under the banner of the Secular Coalition for America.

As always, we'll meet at 4:00 pm in Gage Hall, located at 4 Archdale Street in downtown Charleston. The meeting runs until 5:30 pm, and we'll go out to dinner afterward.

FIND US ONLINE! WE'RE (VIRTUALLY) 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> (family)

MOVIE CLUB

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2012

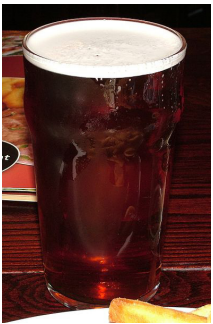
The SHL Movie Club meets once a month, usually on the first Saturday, to view a film and discuss it over dinner. The movie is announced a few days in advance by email, on our website (<http://bit.ly/shlevents>), and on our information line (843-277-0948). To add yourself to the Movie Club email list,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

SHL HAPPY HOUR

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2012, 6 PM

MAD RIVER BAR & GRILLE

32 NORTH MARKET ST #B, CHARLESTON



February's Happy Hour will be on Tuesday, February 21, from 6 - 8pm-ish at Mad River Bar and Grille, 32B North Market Street in downtown Charleston (it's an old church that's now a bar - how cool is that!)

Join us for a relaxing evening among old and new friends. We talk about anything and everything - no topic is taboo. Everyone is welcome, and alcohol is not required.

DARWIN WEEK

FEBRUARY 6 THROUGH 12, 2012

Everyone is invited to attend the twelfth annual celebration of Darwin Week in Charleston. All events are free.

The Evolution of Complex Animals, February 6, 4:00 p.m., CofC School of Sciences and Math Auditorium.

Does Evolution Lead to Evil? Two Christian Perspectives, February 7, 7:30 p.m., Second Presbyterian Church.

The Ice-Age Dispersal of Humans to the Americas, February 9, 4:00 p.m., CofC School of Sciences and Math Auditorium, and 6:30 p.m., Duckett Hall Auditorium, The Citadel.

Alleged (a film about the Scopes trial), February 10, 6:00 p.m., CofC New Science Center Auditorium. A birthday party for Charles Darwin follows.

Science and the Christian Religion: A Sermon in Three Acts, February 12 at 11:00 a.m., Circular Congregational Church.

BOOK GROUP

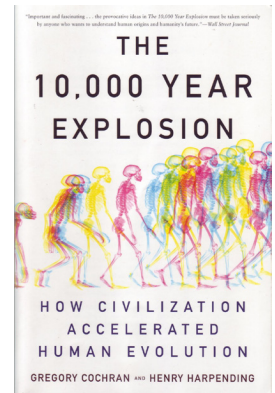
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2012, 4 PM

WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE

1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON

The Book Group will meet on February 26, 2012, to discuss *The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution*, by Gregory Cochran and Henry Harpending.

Resistance to malaria. Blue eyes. Lactose tolerance. What do all of these traits have in common? Every one of them has emerged in the last 10,000 years.



Scientists have long believed that the “great leap forward” that occurred some 40,000 to 50,000 years ago in Europe marked end of significant biological evolution in humans. In this stunningly original account of our evolutionary history, top scholars Gregory Cochran and Henry Harpending reject this conventional wisdom and reveal that the human species has undergone a storm of genetic change much more recently. Human evolution in fact accelerated after civilization arose, they contend, and these ongoing changes have played a pivotal role in human history. They argue that biology explains the expansion of the Indo-Europeans, the European conquest of the Americas, and European Jews’ rise to intellectual prominence.

Ranging across subjects as diverse as human domestication, Neanderthal hybridization, and IQ tests, Cochran and Harpending’s analysis demonstrates convincingly that human genetics have changed and can continue to change much more rapidly than scientists have previously believed.

Barnes & Noble sells the book online for \$15.39, with used copies available for less than \$10. There are three copies of the book in the Charleston Public Library system.

As always, we’ll meet at the West Ashley Barnes & Noble, located at 1812 Sam Rittenberg Boulevard. The discussion (which promises to be a particularly lively one this time) runs from 4:00 pm till 5:30 pm, and we usually go out to dinner afterward.

CHARITY OF THE QUARTER SOUTH CAROLINA STRONG

In 2011 we raised over \$2,300 for four worthwhile causes: Charleston Animal Society, Crisis Ministries, Walk 4 Autism, and the Sea Turtle Hospital. (We showed the sea turtles a lot of love, raising \$750.)



In January and February we are pooling donations for a local organization called South Carolina STRONG: Sustaining, Teaching, Rebuilding Our New Generation. SC STRONG works to rehabilitate criminals and substance abusers and move them into economic self-sufficiency. They provide a self-governed residential community where residents learn and teach academic and vocational skills, interpersonal skills, along with the attitudes and values necessary to live a drug- and crime-free life in mainstream society. All participants come to SC STRONG voluntarily, either as an alternative to incarceration, reentry to society after prison, or referred by social service agencies or homeless shelters.

We're hoping to see wider participation from SHL members this year. Keep in mind that most of the donations are less than \$50, so every little bit helps. Our goal is \$600 by the end of February, so bring your cash or check donation to our January or February meeting. You also have the option of donating on our website via credit or debit card (visit <http://bit.ly/shldonate>).

Thank you for your support of charitable causes in the name of Secular Humanism.

HOW ARE WE DOING? MEMBER SURVEY

We want to hear from you! Our new member survey is designed to help us better serve the needs and interests of our members.

Please visit <http://bit.ly/shlsurvey> to take the survey.

If you prefer a paper survey, call 843-277-0948 or email shl@lowcountryhumanists.org. And feel free to email or call with comments or questions.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2012, 8:50 AM FIRST FEDERAL OF CHARLESTON BANK HARBOR VIEW ROAD, JAMES ISLAND



The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry are active in the South Carolina Adopt-a-Highway program. We pick up litter from a two-mile stretch of Harbor View Road on James Island four times a year. Our official SC Department of Transportation sign is on the corner of Harbor View and Fort Johnson Roads and lets the community know that SHL participates in this program. Our next trash pick up will be on Saturday, February 4. 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, contact our volunteer coordinator, Kristen Channel, at 860-326-6079 or kristenchannel@gmail.com.

LEWIS BLACK FEBRUARY 10, 2012, 8 PM N. CHARLESTON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Lewis Black's live performances provide a cathartic release of anger and disillusionment for his audience. Lewis yells so we don't have to. (If you're not familiar with his unique brand of comedy, visit <http://bit.ly/shlid>.)

Lewis brings his "In God We Rust" tour to North Charleston this month. Since his irreverence and skepticism are popular with atheists everywhere, several SHL members will attend. To purchase tickets online, visit <http://bit.ly/blacknpac>.

THE DEATH OF GOD

In October 1965 *Time* magazine stirred up a tempest among the general public with a cover story called “Christian Atheism: The ‘God Is Dead’ Movement.” The story focused on recent developments in Christian theology in which academics discussed the need for society to recognize that it behaved as if God were no longer active in the world. They claimed that modern man functions without the need for some transcendent explanation of life, and theologians had difficulty in finding words to describe God. The argument went as follows: what could theology say about religion when God, as Friedrich Nietzsche said, is dead? The God of the Christian past no longer served a function.

The movement got its name from the title of Gabriel Vahanian’s book *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era* (1961), but the controversy was stirred by the work of Thomas J. J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (1966). The movement attempted to create a theology which recognized the futility of using the traditional definitions of God, yet it accepted that the historical Jesus spoke to man in his current context, a context of a culture where mankind created a life defined in the secular. One had to discern the profane form of Jesus’s presence in the world and live with the world’s contradictions. As Altizer remarked, “Once we confess that Christ is fully present in the moment before us, then we can truly love the world and embrace even its pain and darkness as an epiphany of the body of Christ.”

“Atlanta, Ga., Nov 9—God, creator of the universe, principal deity of the world’s Jews, ultimate reality of Christians, and most eminent of all divinities, died late

yesterday during major surgery undertaken to correct a massive diminishing influence.

Reaction from the world’s great and from the man in the street was uniformly incredulous... From Independence, Mo., former President Harry S. Truman, who received the news in his Kansas City barbershop, said I’m always sorry to hear somebody is dead. It’s a damn shame.” Source: *motive*, Methodist student magazine, as quoted in *Time*, 87 (8 April 1966): 68.

The public debate was brief. While general-circulation magazines and newsmagazines joined religious publications to carry twenty-six articles about the issue in 1966 and 1967, by the following year religious publications and journals of opinion carried only seven articles about the movement, and the issue moved back into the academic world.

The controversy reflected a growing split between the mainline Protestant churches, which were more open to new theological trends and focused on social issues, and conservatives in those denominations (sometimes even whole denominations), who insisted on the faith of their fathers, a faith that focused on a triune God, the inerrancy of the Bible, the need for personal salvation, and tradition. Conservatives added new theological offensives to their lists of objections to mainline leaders. One response to the controversy was a bumper sticker, an increasingly popular means of expression dur-

ing the decade, reading “My God is not dead. I talked with Him this morning.”

“*The Death of God.*” *American Decades*. 2001. *Encyclopedia.com*. (January 30, 2012).



**LOBBY DAY FOR REASON
MARCH 23, 2012, WASHINGTON, DC**

The Secular Coalition for America will host the Lobby Day for Reason on March 23, 2012, an event to allow atheists, agnostics, humanists, and secular Americans to directly lobby their members of Congress on the issues that matter to us.

By joining SCA for this exciting event, you will be trained on the basics of lobbying and on the specific topics on which the Secular Coalition for America is currently lobbying. In-person lobbying from constituents is the single-most effective method of reaching and influencing elected officials.

The Lobby Day for Reason is free to attend and will include all of the training and materials you will need.

To register, visit <http://bit.ly/reasonlobby>.

**AMERICAN ATHEISTS NATIONAL CONVENTION
MARCH 25 AND 26, 2012, BETHESDA, MD**

The Annual Convention of American Atheists will be held March 25th and 26th, 2012 (following the Reason Rally) at the Bethesda North Marriott and Convention Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

This year's theme: "Come out! Come out! Wherever you Are!" This packed-to-the gills convention will concentrate on all aspects of coming out of the atheist closet to your friends, family, and co-workers.

Last year, nearly 800 people joined in the largest American Atheists convention ever, and this year, AA hopes to break the record. The schedule features some the movement's best speakers, live entertainment, and good old-fashioned atheist socializing.

The venue is the beautiful Marriott Bethesda North, which is right next to a Metro stop and boasts beautiful updated rooms.

Richard Dawkins is the event's keynote speaker. Other speakers include Pastor M, a closeted atheist who works as a preacher at a church, ministering to believers; Brian Barnard, Lead Attorney for the Utah Highway Cross case which recently went all the way to the US Supreme Court; Larry Beinhart, an author best known for his novel *Wag the Dog*, which became the film with Dustin Hoffman and Robert DeNiro; and many more.

For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/aacomeout>.

**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>.

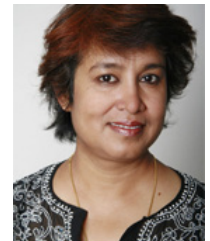
Note that the **Annual Convention of American Atheists** is scheduled for March 25th and 26th, 2012, in Bethesda, Maryland, and Richard Dawkins will be the keynote speaker. If you prefer to stay in DC for the conference, the DC Rally Bus isn't your best bet for transportation, but special room rates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



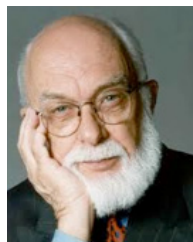
Richard Dawkins



PZ Myers



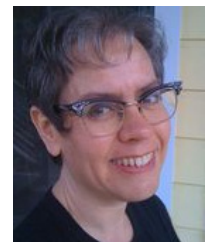
Taslima Nasrin



James Randi



Jamila Bey



Greta Christina



Fred Edwards



Sean Faircloth



Hemant Mehta

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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OUR OFFICERS

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Vice President: Herb Silverman

Treasurer: Jonathan Lamb

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>