



# THE SEPARATIONIST

MARCH 2013

## ANDY THOMSON: WHY WE BELIEVE IN GOD(S) SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2013, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

We are the first generation in the history of the world who knows how and why human minds generate, spread, and consume religious beliefs. Yet, few realize how close we stand to a comprehensive psychological science of religious belief. The implications are limitless. Join us on March 17, at 4 pm, when our guest speaker, J. Anderson Thomson, Jr., M.D. (Andy), will lay out the fundamentals of the cognitive science of religious belief and the supportive evidence.



Dr. Thomson is a psychiatrist in private practice in Charlottesville, Virginia. He is also a staff psychiatrist at Counseling and Psychological Services at the University of Virginia Student Health Services and the Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy at the University of Virginia. He is

a Trustee of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. His current research interest is in the area of evolutionary psychology and using its principles to understand depression, suicide terrorism, and religious belief.

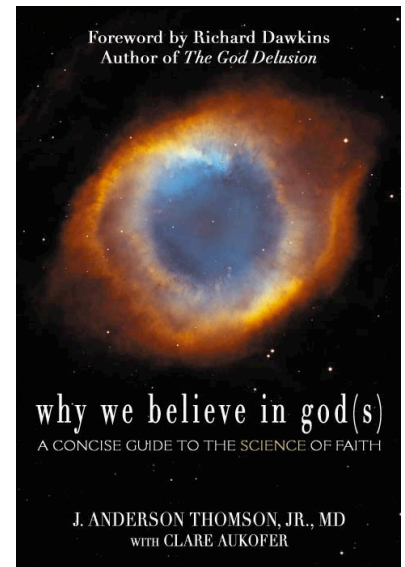
Dr. Thomson has published papers on a variety of is-

ues, including racism, narcissistic personality disorder, forensic psychiatry, depression, and PTSD, and has written psychobiographical essays on Lee Harvey Oswald and Robert E. Lee. His latest book, *Why We Believe in God(s): A Concise Guide to the Science of Faith*, was released in 2011.

Dr. Thomson has been a featured speaker at several atheist conferences including American Atheists 2009 and Atheist Alliance International 2009 for which he spoke about his theories on the cognitive origins of religious belief.

In an interview with the *Austin American-Statesman*, Thomson stated, "There is a massive, irreconcilable conflict between science and religion. Religion was humanity's original cosmology, biology and anthropology. It provided explanations for the origin of the world, life and humans. Science now gives us increasingly complete explanations for those..."

As always, we will go to dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting.



### 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/shltube>



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**BOOK GROUP**

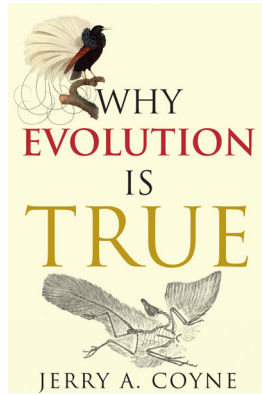
**SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 2013, 4 PM  
WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE  
1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

On March 27, 2013, our book group will discuss *Why Evolution is True*, by Jerry A. Coyne.

In the debate about creationism and intelligent design, there is an element of the controversy that is rarely mentioned—the evidence. Yet the proof of evolution by natural selection is vast, varied, and magnificent. In this succinct and accessible summary of the facts supporting the theory of natural selection, Jerry A. Coyne dispels common misunderstandings and fears about evolution and confirms the scientific truth that supports this amazing process of change. Weaving together the many threads of modern work in genetics, paleontology, geology, molecular biology, and anatomy that demonstrate the “indelible stamp” of the processes first proposed by Darwin, *Why Evolution Is True* does not aim to prove creationism wrong. Rather, by using irrefutable evidence, it sets out to prove evolution right.

Richard Dawkins says that “Coyne’s knowledge of evolutionary biology is prodigious, his deployment of it as masterful as his touch is light.”

The book group discussion will run from 4 to 5:30, and we’ll go out to dinner afterward.



**FAMILY NIGHT**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2013, 6 PM  
CHUCK E. CHEESE  
7258 RIVERS AVE, NORTH CHARLESTON**

Chuck E. Cheese’s is the ultimate place Where A Kid Can Be A Kid. Join us on Thursday, March 28, at 6:00 pm for an evening playdate. (For those who haven’t been to CEC in a while, they mark your and your kids’ hands with matching numbers so that you are the only one who can leave with them.) There is a toddler area, too, for smaller children to play.

To RSVP or for questions, please email [SecularCharlestonMom@gmail.com](mailto:SecularCharlestonMom@gmail.com)

**TEAM TRIVIA**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2013, 7 PM  
BIGHORN’S SPORTS GRILL  
7832 RIVERS AVE, NORTH CHARLESTON**



Do you know who stole the Queen of Hearts’ tarts? In what year did *The Legend of Zelda* debut? Who’s the only performer to receive an Academy Award nomination for acting in any of the *Star Wars* movies? If you can answer these questions and more, we need you! Join us for Team Trivia on Tuesday, March 26, at Bighorn’s Sports Grill. Our team is “The Happy Humanists.”

**VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2013, 8:30 AM  
PET HELPERS  
1447 FOLLY ROAD**



For its volunteer activity of March 2013, SHL is returning to Pet Helpers! Pet Helpers is a non-profit pet shelter and low cost spay/neuter clinic on James Island. After a brief training session, SHL volunteers will be assisting with the animals’ “morning rituals” of cleaning, feeding, and walking. Volunteers will also get to help make

treats for the animals (a great activity for the kids!) Volunteers coming to help out will also have an opportunity to play with the animals.

Come and meet us at Pet Helpers (1447 Folly Road) at 8:30 AM on Saturday, March 23rd. Children are welcome to come and help out as long as they are supervised by an adult. All volunteers should wear long pants and close-toed shoes. Pet Helpers also accepts donations of pet toys, Pedigree canned dog food, Friskies or 9 Lives canned cat food, towels and sheets, etc.

### CHARITY OF THE QUARTER THE PALMETTO HOUSE

Every two months, SHL selects a local charity to support. The Palmetto House is our charity of the quarter for March and April.



The Palmetto House is a temporary residence for single women and families who find themselves homeless. The mission of the Palmetto House is to provide a safe and comfortable residence and nourishing meals while assisting residents in the successful transition into the workforce, a stable home and becoming a self-reliant and contributing member of the community.

On May 4, SHL will also perform a number of service projects at The Palmetto House as part of the Summerville Cares Day of Service.

To donate to The Palmetto House, please visit <http://bit.ly/shl-community>

### FLOWERTOWN FESTIVAL SUMMERVILLE



Save the dates!  
SHL will have a table at the Flowertown Festival in April.

The festival runs from Friday, April 5, through Sunday, April 7. Hours are 9:00 am to 6:00 pm on Friday and Saturday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm on Sunday.

We need your help to make our presence at the event as engaging and constructive as possible. You can pitch in by volunteering to staff the table, setting up, brainstorming ideas, preparing materials for giveaway, or in any way you can think of.

If you'd like to lend a hand, please join us for a planning committee meeting on Sunday, March 24, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at the West Ashley Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg.



### CAMP QUEST 2013 REGISTRATION

Registration for the 2013 summer session of Camp Quest South Carolina is open!

Camp Quest South Carolina will be held in Aiken, South Carolina. Camp will run from July 21-27, 2013. Kids must be at least 8 years old on the first day of camp to attend. Campers ages 16 and 17 will be counselors-in-training (CITs).

The early registration fee is \$525 for the first camper and \$500 for each additional camper from the same fam-

ily. The basic registration form and \$100 deposit must be submitted by May 15 to qualify for the early registration rate. Beginning May 16, the registration fee is \$575 for the first camper and \$550 for each additional camper from the same family. Limited financial aid funds (camperships) are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

To register and for more information, please visit <http://CampQuestSC.org>



## WHAT I THOUGHT OF CAMP QUEST TRINITY STRAUSS, 12 YEARS OLD

**M**y name is Trinity Strauss and I really liked my experience at camp Quest. At Camp Quest I learned what an atheist was and that it's ok to be an atheist. I also learned more than religious things, I learned how to dissect a cow eye, how to juggle better, chemistry, how to tie-dye, and much more. One of my favorite things that we did at Camp Quest was learning about local animals in South Carolina. I learned that lizards don't always have legs (the glass lizard). I thought it was cool when I learned how to see the difference between male and female in turtles. I thought it was really funny when we all saw that the logo for the animal company was different from the real animal that they wanted it to look like.

Usually for summer vacation my sisters and I go to my aunt's house in Dryden Michigan. Instead of going to my aunt's house we all stayed in South Carolina to try something different for summer. So my sisters and I didn't have to stay at home while my mom works, she let us go to camp.

At Camp Quest I had a BLAST! I made a lot of friends and all of my counselors were great. Girl's cabin had the most beautiful view of the camp. In the view I could see the side of Morris lounge, part of the lake and the glacier, the twisted and curved sidewalk, and I could feel a little bit of the summer breeze. During down time I made friendship bracelets for everyone in girls cabin one. The showers were decent but very chilly. I thought it was very fun cleaning up the cabin during cabin clean up. When the girls won Charlie the unicorn we saw that there was a hole in it so we put a battery inside it to pretend that it was Charlie's replaced kidney (look up Charlie the unicorn candy mountain on You Tube for more information). We also gave him a bridal so it looked more tamed.

Camp Quest learning activities were the best. One of my favorite activities was Socrates Café. I talked about how I felt about the selected topic with the group and when it was time to go to our next activity we ended up talking about a whole different topic. My next favorite was juggling because I already knew how to juggle. Mr. Harry taught me so well I juggled for the talent show. An-

other activity that I liked was camping stuff. The day that I went to the camping stuff I learned how to make knots. One of the knots I made was so sturdy that it would only budge if the rope snapped or the thing that it was attached to broke. The other activities were fun too but not as fun as the ones that I listed.

Every morning we woke up and went to breakfast. Before we ate we all said our cabin cheers. Then we all could eat. I really liked the food because it was way better than school food. At the end of lunch Ms. KT talked about other religions. I thought it was cool because I don't know much about religions. After that Mr. Todd told us about famous people who had an interesting religion. I thought that was interesting because I thought that famous people would try to do what the people that they knew did.

At the end of the day everyone was always exited for the evening activity. Sometimes we all had a campfire. At the campfire one of my favorite activities was the oracle. It was really 3 counselors with their body under a sheet. If you ask them a question then they each say one word at a time to answer the question but they don't know the question until you ask so they have to make the answer up. My other favorite activity was when we got to cook marshmallows and put them in gram crackers and chocolate. Another evening activity was the carnival. It was outstandingly fun. Everyone tried to play as many games as possible in an hour and a half to get as many tickets as possible to win as many prizes as possible. My favorite game was the karaoke. The songs I sang were "The Ring Of Fire" by Jonny Cash and "Jar Of Hearts" by Christina Perry. One of the prizes was to splat a pie in a counselors face. My friends and I shared all of our tickets so we could splat 2 counselors in the face. There was a dance for one of the evening activities. It was really fun but not many people got asked out to dance.

There were many more things that I did at Camp Quest but it would take too long to type. Whoever is reading this message right now if you went to Camp Quest I hope you had a great experience like I did.

SHL offers stipends to children attending Camp Quest or Camp Inquiry.  
These essays were written by recipients of stipends who attended Camp Quest in 2012.

**CAMP QUEST  
SYDNEY STRAUSS, 10 YEARS OLD**

This summer my sisters and I went to Camp Quest instead of my Aunt Diane's. Camp Quest is really fun and I hope I can go again. At Camp Quest we get to do a lot of fun things. It is my first year going to Camp Quest. We met so many new people.

At Camp Quest we get to do challenges in a team. We had to make up a team name and a music video. My team was Cat Scratch Fever. The next night we got some materials and did an egg drop. Then we did a fashion show. The last night we got some ingredients and made a dish for the judges. My team cut open a Twinkie and stuffed it with yogurt and Cheerios and on the side we had rice with potato chips in it.

My three favorite afternoon activities were the carnival, movie night, when they tell you the roles and act it out. I got 492 tickets on carnival night. There are so many games and there is karaoke. On movie night you get popcorn and we watched How to Train Your Dragon. It was really fun how we did the rules at Camp Quest like wearing your nametag and being with other people and stuff.

My absolute favorite thing is that it is not a religious camp. Dr. KT (she's a graduate from a religious school) teaches about a religion every day. She taught us about atheist, humanist and more. I liked that she used props sometimes to explain it. She tells us in a fun way and it is really cool.

I like that there are a lot of people to meet and to be friends with. Everyone is nice and fun. The counselors are nice and if you forget something somewhere they'll get it for you. They will also tell you when it's time to go. I think Camp Quest should be longer and that everyone could go.



**CAMP QUEST  
JACQUELINE STRAUSS, 12 YEARS OLD**

This was my first summer going to sleep away camps. This is also my first summer at home. Usually I go to my aunt's house. I really liked Camp Quest; I liked it better than the other sleep away camp and all the other day camps I've been to. It was really cool.

One of my favorite parts about Camp Quest is the fact that it's nonreligious. I liked learning about what different cultures there are, like Buddhism, Hinduism and many more. I also liked learning how other religious people act. Some people fast, some have special diets and some have to wear special clothes. Anyway, I liked learning about other religions.

One of the other things I liked about Camp Quest was the rock wall. It was very challenging and different from any other rock wall I have climbed. I also liked dissecting a cow eye, movie night and the carnival. It was also fun when they tell you the rules and act it out.

I wish that Camp Quest were longer (maybe 10 days or 2 weeks). I also think it would be cool if there was a ropes course and archery. I hope I can come next year!

**MEMBERS!  
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR STIPENDS**

If you plan to attend a regional or national secular conference or a child will be attending Camp Quest or Camp Inquiry, you are encouraged to apply in advance for a \$200 stipend to help defray the travel/event costs. In return, we ask applicants to submit a newsletter article summarizing the event.

Only one stipend per membership per year. An individual may not receive more than one stipend every two years. We award a maximum of five stipends per year.

If you're interested (or would like more information), e-mail your name, the event you're going to attend, the date of the event, and an estimate of expenses to [treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org) for consideration.

SHL offers stipends to children attending Camp Quest or Camp Inquiry.  
These essays were written by recipients of stipends who attended Camp Quest in 2012.

## WHY ATHEISTS SHOULD EMBRACE AMERICA'S "GODLESS" CONSTITUTION HERB SILVERMAN

Many atheists, myself included, are offended by what we view as unwarranted antagonism toward atheists. I've participated in a number of debates on topics like "Can we be moral without a belief in God?" In these debates, I try to change stereotypical opinions that atheists are inherently immoral and untrustworthy. It's sad that debates like this even take place in the twenty-first century. It would be unthinkable to see a debate in this country on "Can a Jew be moral?" or "Can a Catholic be moral?"

For decades, Gallup has asked people if they would vote for a generally well-qualified person for president who happens to be Catholic, black, Jew, atheist, woman, Mormon, Muslim, or gay. While our country is becoming more tolerant toward all these groups, atheists remain consistently at the bottom of the approval list. The good news is that "only" 43 percent of those polled in 2012 said they would vote against an atheist, the first time the percentage has fallen below 50 percent.

We are fortunate that our secular Constitution makes no mention of any gods and guarantees freedom of religion. Nevertheless, many politicians fail to understand that religious freedom includes the freedom not to believe. Why else would Joe Lieberman, who in 2000 became the first Jewish vice presidential candidate on a major ticket, have the chutzpah to say during his campaign, "The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, not freedom from religion."

But enough complaining. The political climate for atheists has improved, and will continue to improve. There will come a day when an open atheist can be elected president. Some might say that atheists are "blessed" to be living in the United States rather than in countries like Afghanistan, Iran, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. What these countries have in common is that atheists can face the death penalty for

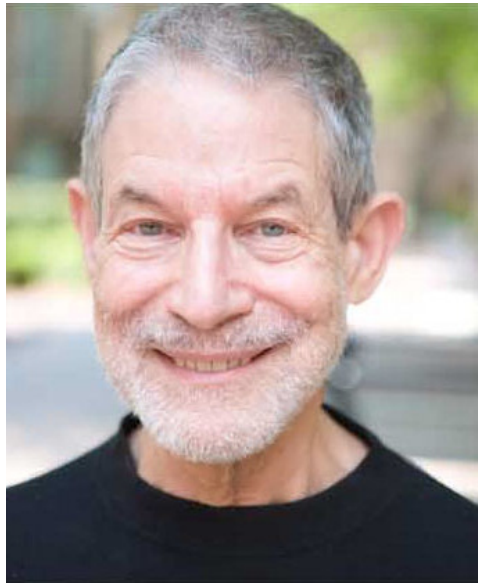
their critical thinking. Other Islamic countries, including Bangladesh, Bahrain, Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, Tunisia and Turkey, have also stepped up prosecution for "blasphemy" and for any criticism of religion. Some countries even ban atheism, and force their people to officially adopt a faith.

The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) recently highlighted the criminalization of atheism in many parts of the world. In a document submitted to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, the IHEU pointed out that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent treaties protect the freedom of conscience for everyone, including the right to reject any religion or belief and the right to openly criticize religion.

Many Muslims, both here and abroad, worry about a rising tide of "Islamophobia." However, the cure some have proposed is far worse than the disease. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) would like to see Western countries criminalize the denigration of religion. The head of this 21-country Arab League told the U.N. Security Council that the OIC will propose a binding international framework to ensure "that religious faith and its symbols are respected."

Some of the countries in the OIC fail to see the hypocrisy of prohibiting the denigration of any religion while at the same time sanctioning the death penalty for atheists who live responsibly and peacefully without religion. Perhaps that's their version of freedom of religion, but not freedom from religion.

Political leaders in every country, including the United States, must understand that we can't have freedom of religion without freedom from religion. We either have freedom of conscience and belief or we don't. And our godless U.S. Constitution says we do.



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

**A WILD WEEKEND  
AMY MONSKY**

I feel tremendously honored to have been a part of the team that brought Richard Dawkins to Charleston for a weekend packed with activities and activism. SHL has a talented board of directors, and I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize each person for his or her efforts, without which this event would not have been possible.

First of all, plain and simple, this event would not have happened without Herb Silverman, SHL's Vice President. It was his connections and efforts to arrange the logistics of the weekend that made this weekend possible. Alex and Laura Kasman (SHL's webmaster and secretary, respectively, and co-volunteer coordinators) handled many of the College of Charleston logistics with the overflow rooms and managed to get the 3rd overflow room on the spot. Matt Dean (SHL's newsletter editor and my predecessor) created the beautiful flyer that was posted everywhere as well as those super cool magnets, bumper stickers, and postcards that were given out at the event. And for those who made it into the auditorium, that banner hanging up is the creation of Matt as well. Matt also handled press releases and advertising for the event. Jonathan Lamb is SHL's treasurer and is responsible for all the financial transactions involved in this event. Sue Edward (SHL's movie club and happy hour coordinator) did a great deal of promoting this event to other groups and networks. Sharon Strong staffed our table and both she and Jason Gregory, who also made the beautiful informational poster about SHL that was just outside the inner auditorium doors, helped out with crowd control.

In addition to board members, there were many other people who contributed to the success of this event. Thank you to everyone who helped promote this event by hanging flyers. There were so many people who helped with this, it's impossible to name everyone. Not only did it help advertise this weekend, seeing our flyers alongside those of Seacoast Church and other community events helps people see that we are a part of this community and not just any part, but an equal part. It

helps the community see that we are a group in our own right, not just as an opposition to religion or a counter-view. For the event itself, thank you to Nicole Imlas, Garrett Gehlhausen, Jennifer and Garret Lovejoy from Western NC Humanists in Asheville, and Alex Zygmunt from Piedmont Humanists in Greenville for their efforts in crowd control and staffing the table. It was an incredibly moving experience to see people come together - not just from our own group, but from across the state and across the region - to make this weekend a reality.



*Photo by James Connelly*

SHL wasn't the only organization that sponsored this event. We are grateful that the Biology, Philosophy, and Religious Studies Departments as well as the Secular Students at the College of Charleston were co-sponsors as well.

Finally, I'd like to thank those most responsible for the success of the weekend, and that is all of you! Without people, this group and this event would be nothing. Richard Dawkins may be the world's most influential evolutionary biologist, but unless someone comes to listen to him and be passionate about his message, it doesn't mean anything. While Richard Dawkins is tremendously inspirational on his own, seeing 1200 people come together was inspiring in its own right and there is a tangible current of enthusiasm and motivation flowing through our group right now. Richard Dawkins brought the show. Now it is up to us to continue this momentum.

We have several meetups throughout the month, and there is something for everyone. We have a fantastic speaker lined up for this coming Sunday's meeting. If you are new to the group or to humanism and feel more comfortable as an observer, that is perfectly okay. But the growth and success of this group is ultimately up to those who take an active part in the group, so please take that part. Take ownership and make it yours. Tell us what you'd like to see or help us plan events and other activities. If you have professional talents you'd like to donate, wonderful! Let us know.

# 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

President: Amy Monsky  
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>*