



# The Separationist

Volume 21, Issue 2

February 2014

## Lucien Greaves: The Satanic Temple and the First Amendment

Sunday, February 16, 2014, 4 PM, Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

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### About SHL

The *Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry* was founded in 1994 by a group of local non-theists in Charleston, South Carolina.

Our members are freethinkers of many kinds. We call ourselves agnostics, atheists, skeptics, secular humanists, rationalists and scientific naturalists. We welcome you and all who are interested in participating in our friendly community, either as members or observers.

The purpose of our non-profit, educational organization is to promote the non-theistic, human-centered viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse and to strive to maintain the First Amendment guarantee of separation of state and church.

The Satanic Temple has gained international attention for its controversial forays into the Church-State debate where they have asserted equal rights for Satanists where religious privileges have been offered. The most notable of example has been in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma recently allowed a monument of the ten commandments to be erected on state capitol grounds. The 6-foot-tall monument was authorized by the legislature and signed into law by the governor, and its nearly \$10,000 cost was paid by Republican Rep. Mike Ritze and his family. The ACLU, on behalf of a Baptist minister, has filed a lawsuit seeking to have the monument removed. Recognizing that the government cannot favor one religion over another once it

has opened the public sphere, the Satanic Temple has requested to erect a monument of their own, and they've even raised the money in full to fund it.



Join Lucien Greaves, co-founder of, and spokesperson for, the Satanic Temple, as he

takes us through the history of Satanism, from the Old Testament to Romantic literature, witch-hunts and heresy, and modern Satanism and conspiracy theory. Lucien will also discuss the Satanic Temple and politics, reviewing Satanism as an atheistic religious narrative, highlighting its political activism for the disenfranchised, and sharing its future goals.

When: Sunday, 1/19/14 at 4pm Where: Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street Cost: Free!

Refreshments: **If your last name begins with the letters M-Pe**, please bring a snack for the pre-meeting refreshments table. Suggested snack foods are cheese, crackers, fruit, granola bars, cookies, cake squares – anything that one can eat without need of a fork or spoon. The snack item should be for about 8-12 people, which is the average number of servings in a typical container/bag. As always, SHL will supply the paper goods and beverages.

Though we normally go to a restaurant after the meeting, this time we will have a post-meeting potluck dinner in the meeting hall after the presentation. Please bring your favorite (homemade or store-bought) dish. SHL will provide drinks and paper goods.

## Sunday Quest

Sunday, February 16, 2014, 4 PM  
Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Sunday Quest, our new humanist youth program, will provide our children an opportunity to learn about humanism and all of its life-affirming ideals. Modeled after the Harvard Humanist Learning Lab and other secular Sunday schools, our goal with Sunday Quest is to create a safe space for children to explore their developing worldviews, think for themselves, connect with

their community, and build a strong ethical foundation. Each class will offer fun, interactive games and activities.

Scheduled during our third-Sunday monthly speaker presentation at Gage Hall, Sunday Quest will be geared toward children ages 5-12 years old. This is a drop-off program, and we welcome parents to attend the speaker presentation. If space allows, children

older than 12 years old may attend as program assistants and children younger than 5 years old may attend with a parent. The program will last approximately an hour to an hour and a half.

Space is limited, so pre-registration is required. Please email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org) to register your child(ren) or for more information.

# Upcoming SHL Events

Events sometimes get added after The Separationist is posted. Keep up to date with SHL events by signing up for our [email lists](#) or [meetup](#), or check postings on our [website](#) and [facebook](#) group.

## Adopt-a-Highway

Saturday, February 1 2014, 8:50am

Harborview Rd, James Island

For our February volunteer activity, we return to our "adopted" stretch of highway, Harbor View Road between *Darwin Street* (coincidentally) and Fort Johnson Road.

As always, participants get a sense of accomplishment from making the world a better place. And, significantly, a sign saying that the road is kept clean by "Secular Humanists" helps us let people know that we exist and that we care.



Our next trash pick up will be on Saturday, February 1st. 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 supermarket. (The supermarket is now a Harris Teeter, but was formerly a Piggly Wiggly. You can see the First Federal sign in the picture.) Please join us if you can. If you have any questions, [write to our volun-](#)

## SHL Movie Club

Saturday, February 1, 2014, 2:25pm

Terrace Theater, 1956 Maybank Hwy, James Island

Join us for a viewing of the film [The Great Beauty \(La Grande Bellezza\)](#). We will meet in the theater lobby at 2:10pm. Following the movie we will enjoy dinner at a nearby restaurant.

## Sunday Funday at the Park

Sunday, February 2, 2014, 11:00am

RM Hendricks Park, 4953-4999 block of Virginia Ave, North Charleston

Bring the kids and meet other like-minded families in a fun, casual, and judgment-free environment. Dogs on leashes are welcome, too! Don't have kids? No problem! Come on out! Sundays are fundays for everyone.

This event will include a craft for those who want to participate. We will be making Valentine's cards that will be delivered to a local nursing home. Because many organizations have a minimum age requirement due to rules and regulations that leave out younger children, this is a great opportunity for even littles to be involved in a community service project. (Location to be determined.) We will provide some supplies for the craft, but feel free to bring anything like construction paper, scissors, glue, glitter and things Valentine's related!



Inclement Weather: Northwoods Mall Play Area; Determination will be made by 10am that morning, if applicable.

## SHL Happy Hour

Tuesday, February 11, 2014, 6:00pm

The Original Ms. Rose's Fine Food & Cocktails, 1090 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley (near the North Bridge)

Join us for a relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and food with old and new friends!

## Upcoming SHL Events cont.

### Girls Night Out

Tuesday, February 18, 2014, 7:00pm

Buffalo Wild Wings, 109 Grandview Dr, Summerville

A fun night for girls to socialize! Nursing infants okay, but otherwise adults only, please.

### Team Trivia—3rd Thursday

Thursday, February 20, 2014, 8:00pm

El Maguey, 401 Barony St, Monks Corner

Come out for a fun night of trivia and socializing! This is a team event and is free. The trivia questions begin at 8pm.



Our team Happy Humanists is officially registered, so our points will be going for season totals.

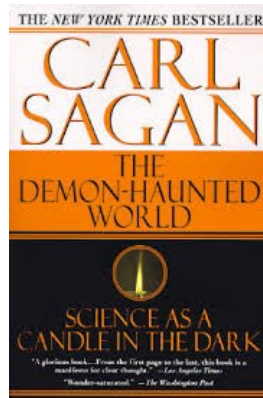
Team Trivia offers trivia nights at various places throughout the Charleston area on different days and times. Team members are welcome to play using the team name at any Team Trivia night.

### SHL Book Club

Sunday, February 23, 2014, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley

"The Demon Haunted World" by Carl Sagan was selected as February's book. Following is a brief description from the Amazon purchase site. Remember if you chose to [purchase the book from Amazon through our Website](#), the SHL will receive a percentage of the purchase price.



"How can we make intelligent decisions about our increasingly technology-driven lives if we don't understand the difference between the myths of pseudo-science and the testable hypotheses of science? Pulitzer Prize-winning author and distinguished astronomer Carl Sagan argues that scientific thinking is critical not only to the pursuit of truth but to the very well-being of our democratic institutions."

Remember that Book Group meets at the Barnes and Noble on Sam Rittenberg Blvd. each month on the fourth Sunday from 4:00 to 5:30 PM. After an engaging discussion we go out to one of a number of local

### Team Trivia—4th Thursday

Thursday, February 27, 2014, 7:00pm

Liberty Tap Room, 1028 Johnnie Dodds Blvd, Mt Pleasant (in the Publix shopping center)

Come out for a fun night of trivia and socializing! This is a team event and is free. The trivia questions begin at 7pm.

Our team Happy Humanists is officially registered, so our points will be going for season totals.

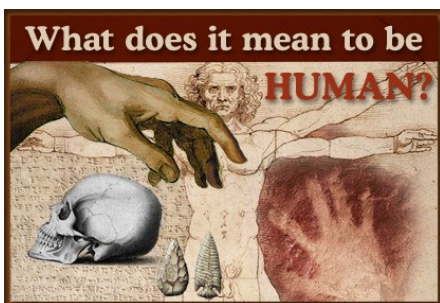
Team Trivia offers trivia nights at various places throughout the Charleston area on different days and times. Team members are welcome to play using the team name at any Team Trivia night.



## Darwin Week in Charleston

### February 8–13, 2014

2014 marks Charleston's 14th annual Darwin Week! Scheduled events include Living Religiously as a Naturalist; Search for Other Worlds; What Have We Learned About Human Evolution Since Darwin?; Darwin Fulfilled: Transitional Fossil Whales from Charleston, South Carolina; What Does It Mean To Be Hu-



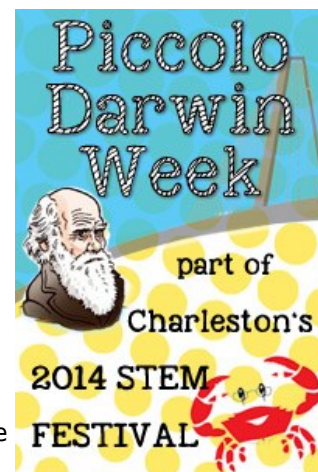
man? An Interfaith Conversation on Science, Religion and Being Human;

Neuroscience and the Spirit: Has Science Proven the Existence of God?; and Intelligent Design: Is This the End of Evolution? All events are free and open to the public. See [dillonr.people.cofc.edu/DarwinWeek.html](http://dillonr.people.cofc.edu/DarwinWeek.html) for event details, times, and locations.

### Piccolo Darwin Week

2014 marks the first-ever celebration of evolutionary science for children and youth! Piccolo Darwin Week is part of [Charleston's 2014 STEM Festival](http://charleston's2014stemfestival.com). Admission to all events free, but most require reservations.

Scheduled events include Evolution of the Universe... in a Necklace? (hosted by SHL's very own **Amy Monsky**); The Universe Verse; Animal Attraction; and Your Most Ancient Relatives: Chemosynthetic Bacteria? See [dillonr.people.cofc.edu/](http://dillonr.people.cofc.edu/) for event details, times, and locations.



## Debates!

**Debate: Christianity or Atheism: Which makes more sense? Herb Silverman debates Wallace Marshall**

Thursday, March 20, 7:00, Physician's Auditorium, CofC



Herb Silverman is founder and president emeritus of the Secular Coalition for

America and founder of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry. He has written articles for *The Humanist*, *Free*

*Inquiry*, and the *Huffington Post*. He has also been a regular contributor to "On Faith," a forum produced by the *Washington Post*. His latest book is [Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt](http://www.amazon.com/Candidate-Without-a-Prayer-An-Autobiography-of-a-Jewish-Atheist-in-the-Bible-Belt/dp/0805241110).

Wallace Marshall is Director of the Charleston chapter of Reasonable Faith, a Christian apologetics organization. He received his M.Div from Princeton Theological Seminary and his PhD. from Boston College, where he studied the historical interaction between science, religion, and philosophy in the West.

Are you planning on watching the livestream broadcast of Bill Nye (the Science Guy) vs Ken Ham (founder of the Creation Museum) debate **Is creation a viable model of origins in today's modern, scientific era?** on February 4? Would you like to watch in the company of other freethinkers? Join the Secular Student Alliance at the College of Charleston on Tuesday, February 4, 7:00pm in room 206 of the Stern Center to view the debate. Feel free to bring munchies to share.

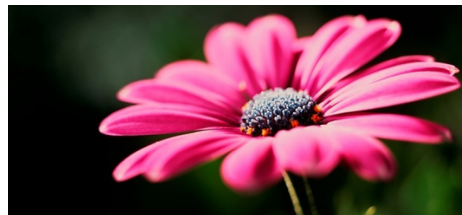
## Charity of the Quarter

Our first Charity of the Quarter for 2014 is the [South Carolina Women's Choice Fund](#).

**Every year thousands of women sacrifice food, risk eviction, and pawn their possessions in order to raise money for an abortion. Some are forced to continue the pregnancy, abandon their education, and stay trapped in poverty.**

Women face these difficult situations because the government denies abortion funding to women in need. The South Carolina Women's Choice Fund (SCWCF)

is an affiliate of the National Network of Abortion Funds and provides financial assistance to



residents of South Carolina seeking an abortion in South Carolina or in neighboring states and to non-residents seeking an abortion in South Carolina.

*Four times a year SHL collects donations on behalf of a worthy local charity. You can donate by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to*

SHL  
PO Box 32256  
Charleston SC 29417-2256

*Make checks payable to SHL and note COQ in the memo line.*

*Or securely [donate online!](#)*

## Take our Survey!

Do you like organizing or hosting events? Or do you enjoy working behind the scenes? We are looking for people with skills, motivation, vision and experience to help run and guide SHL in the future. If you would like to be more involved in leading SHL, please complete our short [member involvement survey](#).



# War, Mathematics and God

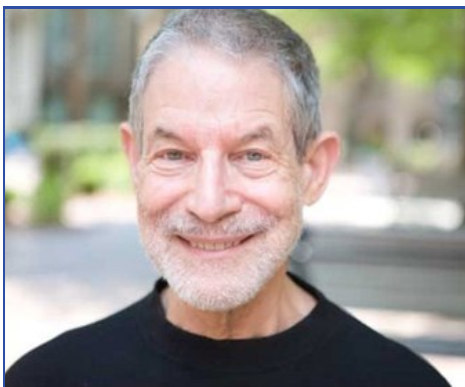
I've been actively engaged in two wars in my life, but I don't receive or deserve veterans' benefits. My most recent service occurred during the manufactured war by *Fox News*, the "War on Christmas." Yes, I plead guilty to wishing people "Happy Holidays" around winter solstice time, and I have even been known to provide a pagan history lesson to those who insist on telling me that Jesus is the reason for the season.

My earlier war arrived as a card game I learned at five, a game called "War." Two players are dealt 26 cards face down. Each then simultaneously shows the top card, and the player with the higher card takes both exposed cards and places them at the bottom of the player's stack. If both cards are of equal value, there is a "war." Each combatant places the next three cards face down, and the fourth face up. The card of higher value captures all the cards played and puts them at the bottom of his or her stack. The war ends when one person has all 52 cards.

I was very good at "War," or so I thought. I hadn't yet heard about "confirmation bias," which can cause us to remember more victories than defeats.

When I finally realized that the game was skill-free, I lost interest. Knowing that the outcome is completely determined once the deck is shuffled and dealt, I began to invent variations. For instance, I'd put all four aces (the highest value) in one stack and

the remaining 48 cards in the other stack. After playing five



**Herb Silverman** is founder and President Emeritus of the [Secular Coalition for America](#), author of [Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt](#), and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the College of Charleston.

times, the stack with four aces won all, but once. I concluded that it was better to start with the four-ace stack.

I hadn't realized that I was applying a naïve version of a [Monte Carlo method](#), where a large number of repeated trials produce reasonably accurate probabilities for the outcome of an event. In fact, the simplistic childhood card game of "War" has much in common with my subsequent career as a research mathematician. Mathematics is also a completely determined game that starts with a set of assumptions called axioms (the axioms for "War" are shuffle and deal) and follows rules from which the truth of mathematical statements (conjectures) can be discovered. What makes mathematics more interesting than "War" is the ingenuity required to prove or disprove conjectures

based on the axioms.

Mathematicians usually begin with axioms that seem "self-evident" because they are more likely to guide us to real-world truths, including scientific discoveries and accurate predictions of physical phenomena. Most ancient religions are also loosely based on an axiom or a set of axioms. The most common axiom is "God exists," which is not as self-evident as it appeared to be in a pre-scientific world.

I ask you: Which abstraction is more practical for better understanding and solving real world problems: mathematics and its scientific implications, or God? Even religious believers no longer attribute an eclipse to God's wrath. We know that the [next total lunar eclipse](#) will be on April 15. And most believers accept that earthquakes have more to do with plate tectonics than with God's anger over specific human behaviors. A "God axiom" might give comfort to some, but it lacks predictive value.

The assumptions (axioms) in monotheistic religions usually include these attributes for their God: omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and infinite. However, religious apologists who want to avoid contradictory axioms have difficulty trying to justify an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God who allows so much needless suffering.

As a youngster with an Orthodox Jewish background and an inter-

est in mathematics, an infinite God with infinite power who lived an infinite amount of time fascinated me. I felt that studying "infinity" would help me understand God. Later, I learned that infinity is a theoretical construct created by humans, and that the number "infinity" does not exist in reality. So if finite man created infinity, I reasoned, perhaps finite man created God and gave him infinite attributes. Infinity is a useful concept to help solve math problems, so maybe an infinite God could merely be a use-

ful concept to help solve human problems.

Mathematicians, unlike most theologians, recognize that their axioms are just made up, but believers assume their god is real and infinite because a finite god would be limited and could be replaced by a more powerful god. However, we now know mathematically that there can't be a largest infinity. In fact, there are [infinitely many infinities](#). So any infinite god could theoretically be replaced by a

more powerful infinite god.

Since the standard God axioms are contradictory, I wonder if there is a way to believe in a God with all those attributes when there is no objective evidence that such a God could exist. Yes, but it requires an infinite amount of faith.

This piece was originally posted January 29, 2014 on [huffingtonpost.com](http://huffingtonpost.com)

## Become a Humanist Celebrant

A Humanist Celebrant plays a role similar to that of a traditional clergyperson with one difference: humanist ceremonies express our positive, nontheistic philosophy of humanism instead of traditional faith. Humanist Celebrants conduct humanist, non-religious, and interreligious weddings, commitment/same-sex unions, memorials, baby namings, and other life cycle ceremonies. Humanist Celebrants

are legally recognized in all states and worldwide, being accorded the same rights and privileges granted by law to traditional clergy. The Humanist Society offers different endorsement options for those considering a one-time experience, those wishing to be regular celebrants as well as leader celebrants, lay leaders, and chaplains. [See the endorsement guidelines](#) to learn more.

**As representatives of AHA, Celebrants, Humanist Ministers and Chaplains are in a unique position to work with their communities in promoting humanism.**

## Time to Join/Renew!

It's time to pay your dues for the 2014 calendar year. Our largest expense is bringing in outstanding speakers for the monthly meetings. Although we usually balance things out with a handful of local guests who do not re-quest travel or honorarium, the regional and national figures require us to pay travel costs and/or a small honorarium. We occasionally invest in sponsorships or marketing initiatives to hopefully reach potential new members such as an setting up an informational table at the Flowertown Festival and sponsoring a light display at the Holiday Festival of Lights. Finally, there are smaller costs such as the rental fee for Gage Hall, credit card processing fees, meeting refreshments, PO Box rental, member perks such

as stipends for attendance at Humanist/Atheist/Freethought events, and more. We are proud of the fact that we do not require membership to attend our activities. Instead, we hope that you see the great value in your annual donation to maintain a robust and active secular humanism organization in the Charleston area.

Membership is open to all who support the purposes for which this organization is founded. The available membership levels and corresponding dues are:

- Individual - New Member \$35.00
- Family - New Member \$50.00
- Individual - Renewal \$35.00

- Family - Renewal \$50.00
- Individual/Family - Sustaining \$100.00
- Individual/Family - Benefactor \$150.00

Individual/Family - Lifetime \$500.00

Dues are tax-deductible, as we are a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. (As we like to joke, we are also a "non-prophet" organization!) You can join/renew by cash, credit card or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to SHL, PO Box 32256, Charleston SC 29417-2256 (make checks payable to SHL and note Membership Dues in the memo line). Or securely [pay online](#) and select your membership level in the dropdown box.

## Happy Anniversary SHL!

2014 marks the SHL's 20th anniversary! Watch for upcoming special events!



## Our Officers

President: Amy Monsky  
Vice President: Herb Silverman  
Treasurer: Jason Gregory  
Secretary: Laura Kasman  
Newsletter Editor: Sue Edward

## Contact us!

SHL  
Post Office Box 32256  
Charleston, SC 29417-2256  
843-670-0290  
president@lowcountryhumanists.org

SHL is a non-prophet  
organization!

# SECULAR HUMANISTS



## OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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## 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.*