



The Separationist

Volume 21, Issue 5

May 2014

Member Potluck
Sunday, May 18, 2014, 4 - 7 PM
RM Hendricks Park, 4953 - 4999 block of Virginia Ave, North Charleston

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Dig out your flip-flops, shorts, and sundresses, and get ready to enjoy good food and good conversation with your fellow free-thinkers and non-theists.

This year our annual May potluck will be held at **RM Hendricks Park** in North Charleston. From 526, take

right (if you go under the Don Holt bridge you've gone too far).

Look for us in the picnic shelter. There is a nearby enclosed playground for the kids plus plenty of room for games, so bring your Frisbees, softballs, and bocce sets!

Bring a dish to share and get to know your fellow members

over dinner. We are not assigning items, simply bring whatever food item you wish - salads, entrees, side dishes, and desserts are all good choices.



the Virginia Ave exit and turn right - the park is immediately on your left. From East Montague/Park Circle business district, turn left onto Virginia Ave - the park is on your

Items can be homemade or store bought. SHL will supply the paper goods and beverages.

NOTE: per city of North Charleston laws, **NO ALCOHOL** is allowed in the park. Please plan accordingly when making your potluck contribution decisions.

When: Sunday, May 18, 2014, 4pm
Where: RM Hendricks Park, North Charleston
Cost: Free!

We will not have a formal speaker meeting this month. However, we will have a very short business meeting during the potluck to elect the SHL Board for 2014 - 2015. All dues-paying members present at the potluck are eligible to vote!

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.

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.

Reasonfest

Thursday, May 1, 2014, 7:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry are proud to host **Reasonfest** on Thursday, 5/1, to mark the National Day of Reason.



Reasonfest will feature entertainment by stand-up comic and co-founder of Freethought Blogs, Ed Brayton, as well as a presentation by Jason Torpy, president of Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers. An open-mic session hosted by local poet and songwriter Jim Lundy will follow. Audience members will be invited to share their personal "pathways to reason," or how they left religion to become atheists or agnostics, and to read passages from their favorite free-thought writers.

A \$10 suggested donation at the door will raise funds for SHL's 20th year anniversary celebration this fall. Baked goods will be available for purchase.

The National Day of Reason was established in 2003 by the American Humanist Association and Washington Area Secular Humanists. It serves as a critique of the federally sponsored National Day of Prayer, which occurs on the same day and which many secularists regard as an unconstitutional violation of the separation between church and state.

Adopt-a-Highway

Saturday, May 3, 2014, 8:50am

Harborview Rd, James Island

For our May 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 sometimes we even find money amongst the trash!) 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, May 3rd. 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, [email our volunteer coordinators](#).

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, May 3 2014, 7:00pm

Park Circle Film Society, 4820 Jenkins Ave, North Charleston

Please join us for a viewing of [Mé-
liès and Melodies](#). This is a special night of live music by noted performing artist and composer Laura Ball, set to the classic silent films of Georges Méliès, one of cinema's greatest pioneers. Meet us inside the theater at 6:45pm. Following the movie we will enjoy drinks or a late snack/dessert at a nearby restaurant.



Georges Melies, a professional magician by training, first saw the new "moving pictures" in 1895. Little over a year later, Melies was filming and projecting his own creations. By accident, he discovered that he could use stop-motion photography to render trick visual effects. Melies was also the first to use techniques such as the fade-in, the fade-out, and the dissolve to create the first real narrative films. Melies made over 500 films, his

most famous being [A Trip to the Moon](#) (1902) (Voyage to the Moon). Melies, trained in classic eighteenth century theater, conceived all of his films in terms of fully played-out scenes. Unable to keep up with the changing industry, the end of his life was wrought with poverty, yet his films would be monumental stepping stones for great auteurs such as D.W. Griffith.

SHL Happy Hour

Monday, May 12, 2014, 6:00pm

Liberty Tap Room, 1028 Johnnie Dodds Blvd, Mount Pleasant

Join us for a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional)

and food with old and new friends! Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy – come join us!



NOTE: Happy Hour is on a different night this month.

Team Trivia



Thursday, May 15, 2014, 8:00pm
El Maguey, 401 Barony St, Monks Corner

Wed, May 28, 2014, 7:00pm
Steel City Pizza, 1440 Ben Sawyer Blvd, Mt Pleasant

Come out for a night of trivia and socializing! This is a team event and is free.

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

Team Trivia offers trivia nights at various places throughout the Charleston area on different days and times. We currently play on the **3rd Thursday** in Moncks Corner and on the **4th Wednesday** in Mt. Pleasant. Team members are



Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Team Trivia, cont.

welcome to play using the team name at any Team Trivia night. And if you would like to organize an SHL trivia night in your part of town (hello, West Ashley!) let us know. Organizers are responsible for checking in using our team name, welcoming players, and using any winnings from the previous week to purchase appetizers for the team. Please contact president@lowcountryhumanists.org for more info.

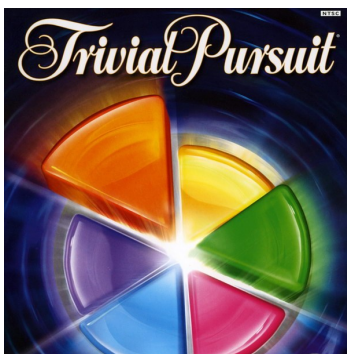
Game Night: Trivial Pursuit

Thursday, May 15, 2014, 7:00pm

Home of Kay Nielsen, 1351 East Vagabond Lane, Mt Pleasant (in Wakandaw Lakes)

Trivial Pursuit Tourney and pizza party!

We'll play as many boards as there are reasonable



sized teams so bring a Trivial Pursuit game Genius edition if you have one. Kay has one board.

BYOB and appetizer or dessert and we'll order pizza for either pick-up or delivery.

Let Kay know if you plan to attend at kay1210@knology.net

Directions: take Mathis Ferry Road to Wakandaw Lakes (just north of Bowman Road)

Turn into subdivision and take second right onto East Vagabond Lane (NOT West Vagabond). 1351 is a white brick house on the right.

We're looking forward to a lively night of Trivia!

Girls Night Out

Thursday, May 22, 2014,
7:00pm

Zia Taqueria, 1956A Maybank Hwy, James Island (in the Terrace Theater strip mall)



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

SHL Book Club

Sunday, May 25, 2014, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley

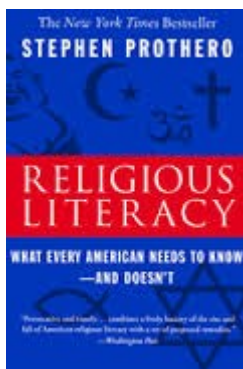
Our selection for the month of May is Religious Literacy by Stephen Prothero. Following is a brief description from the Amazon purchase site.

The United States is one of the most religious places on earth, but it is also a nation of shocking religious illiteracy.

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Book Club, cont.

- ◇ Only 10 percent of American teenagers can name all five major world religions and 15 percent cannot name any.
- ◇ Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe that the Bible holds the answers to all or most of life's basic questions, yet only half of American adults can name even one of the four gospels and most Americans cannot name the first book of the Bible.



Despite this lack of basic knowledge, politicians and pundits continue to root public policy arguments in religious rhetoric whose meanings are missed or misinterpreted by the vast majority of Americans.

"We have a major civic problem on our hands," says religion

scholar Stephen Prothero. He makes the provocative case that to remedy this problem, we should return to teaching religion in the public schools. Alongside "reading, writing, and arithmetic," religion ought to become the "Fourth R" of American education.

Many believe that America's descent into religious illiteracy was the doing of activist judges and secularists hell-bent on banishing religion from the public square. Prothero reveals that this is a profound misunderstanding. "In one of the great ironies of American religious history," Prothero writes, "it was the nation's most fervent people of faith who steered us down the road to religious illiteracy. Just how that happened is one of the stories this book has to tell." Literacy reveals what every American needs to know in order to confront the domestic and foreign challenges facing this country today.

Keep in mind that if you use the Amazon link provided on the SHL homepage for your book purchase our organization receives a 15% credit.

Book Group will review Religious Literacy on the 4th Sunday May 25th. at our usual time and location, the Barnes and Noble on Sam Rittenberg Blvd between the hours of 4 and 5:30. Keep in mind we will go out to socialize at a local restaurant after the meeting so bring your dining ideas in the West Ashley area.

SHL is affiliated with the Amazon Associates program! Our organization earns up to a 15% commission on items purchased at Amazon.com through the links on our Website. So, if you are buying the book club book (or anything else from Amazon), this is a super-easy way to contribute to SHL! Simply use the link at <http://lowcountryhumanists.org/default.php>

More Events

Mark your calendars for these upcoming SHL events!

Edisto River Float

June - exact date TBA

Night at The Joe! Riverdogs game & fireworks

Friday, June 20, Joe Riley Park

SHL 20th Anniversary Bash

Saturday, Sept. 20, Cypress Gardens

KEEP UP TO DATE!

The next issue of **The Separationist** is September, 2014. While some of our activities take a hiatus such as the monthly speaker meeting, many events continue thru the summer. Keep up to date with SHL summer events by signing up for our [email lists](#) or [meetup](#), or check postings on our [website](#) and [facebook](#) groups. Don't miss out!

T-Shirt design contest

SHL needs your help designing our new T-Shirts! Announcing our SHL T-Shirt design contest! We are now accepting submissions in two categories: a general design and a 20th Anniversary design. Winners will have their original designs on shirts worn by members all across the lowcountry. How cool is that!

* Contest is open to all dues-paying members.

* Deadline for all submissions is June 1, 2014.

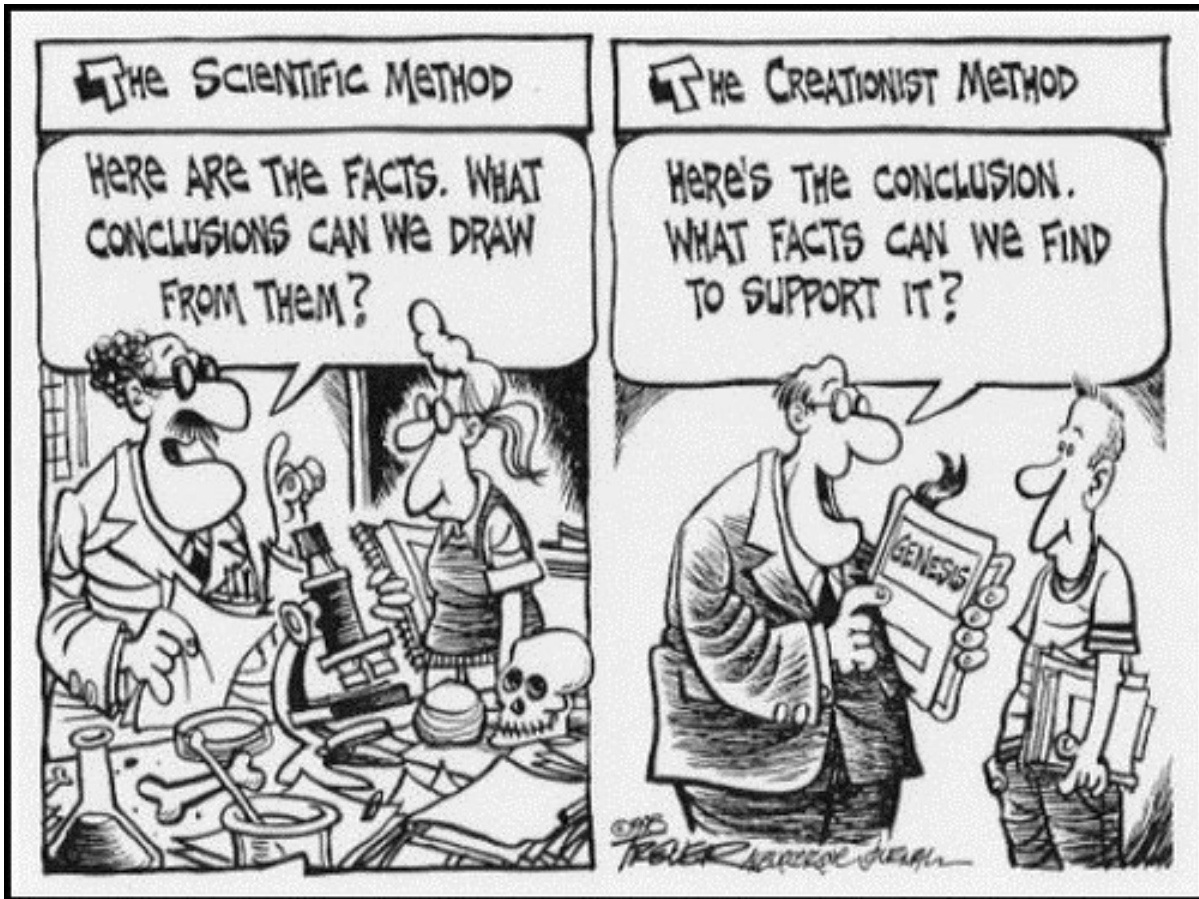


* Submit original designs via email to shl@lowcountryhumanists.org. Use subject line "SHL T-Shirt Contest" and include your name, address, email, and phone number in the body of the email.

* You may submit your design in .png, .jpg, or .pdf format. We may require that winning entries be resubmitted later for format and resolution changes based on the printer's requirements.

* You may submit as many entries as you like.

Good luck everyone!



Happy Anniversary SHL!

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

Atheists Bad, Christians Good: A Review of "God's Not Dead"

A smug Christian movie about smug atheists leads to an inevitable happy ending

A*theists bad, Christians good.* That's my four-word summary of [God's Not Dead](#).

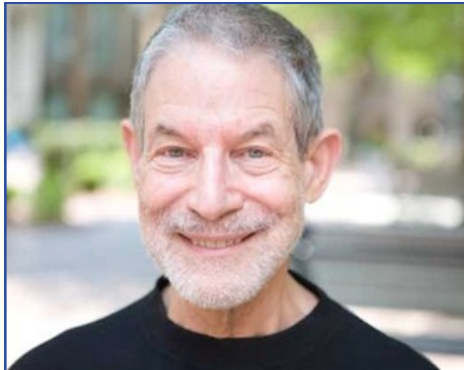
This anti-atheist movie would be more effective if it didn't portray every atheist as smug, angry, selfish, obnoxious, and unhappy. In contrast, nearly every Christian is kind, happy, generous . . . well, you get the idea.

The movie's two protagonists are atheist philosophy Professor Jeffrey Radisson and Christian student Josh Wheaton at fictional Hadleigh University.

Professor Radisson is a bully who on the first day of class uses his bully pulpit to require that each student sign a "God is dead" statement or else convince him that God's not dead — and, failing that, receive an F in the course. Radisson has been doing this for years, presumably without a complaint from students, other faculty, or administrators. In fact, he is about to become head of the Philosophy Department. He has a live-in girlfriend whom he started dating when she was his student, and he continually berates and belittles her in front of his academic colleagues. She turns to Christianity and finds the strength to get out of this abusive relationship after talking to Pastor Dave (more about him later).

Freshman Josh Wheaton is the only student in Professor Radisson's class who refuses to sign the "God is dead" statement.

Everyone encourages him to sign for the sake of his future career as a lawyer — except for Pastor



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.

Dave, who gives Josh the strength to enter Professor Radisson's lion's den, armed with [Matthew 10:32-33](#): "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown."

Radisson allows Josh three consecutive class sessions to make his case for God. Josh wisely requests that the class act as jury, and Radisson agrees. Perhaps Josh knows that most American students, just like their parents, believe in God despite signing the "God is dead" statement. (As a former professor, I think a rare accurate portrayal in the movie is of students who focus primarily on grades and are willing to say anything to improve them.)

In the first session, Josh cites the Big Bang as evidence that God created the universe according to Genesis ("Let there be light"). Despite countless possible rebuttals, Radisson simply quotes physicist Stephen Hawking saying that spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, and why we exist. He then taunts Josh by asking if he thinks he's smarter than Hawking.

In the second session, Josh refers to Hawking's comment that [philosophy is dead](#), adding that perhaps their philosophy class shouldn't exist. Professor Radisson is speechless, though he could have told Josh that Hawking is a physicist, not a philosopher, and that you can be an expert in one field and not in another. (The Hawking quote from Radisson was formerly a question for OnFaith panelists, and here's what [I said](#) then: "As accomplished a cosmologist as Stephen Hawking is, no scientist would ever declare, 'Hawking said it, I believe it, that settles it.' Scientists require evidence, not an appeal to authority.")

A vindictive Professor Radisson later confronts Josh for having the audacity to embarrass him in class and threatens not only to fail him, but also to make sure he never becomes a lawyer. When Josh asks Radisson why he's an atheist, Radisson replies that his mother died when he was 12, despite his prayers, so Radisson hates God for killing his

Herb Silverman, cont.

mother.

In the third and final session, Josh rightly asks Radisson how he could hate a God who doesn't exist. Again, Radisson has no response. (Real atheists, not the straw men atheists that some Christians invent, [don't hate God any more than they hate the Easter Bunny](#).) Josh then calls for a student jury vote, and they all agree that "God's not dead" as a bewildered Radisson leaves the room.

Other atheists in the movie include a snide, self-centered journalist and her atheist boyfriend. When she tells him that she has terminal cancer, he asks why this news couldn't have waited until the following day because she has just spoiled a nice dinner, and he immediately ends the relationship. She later breaks down while interviewing the Newsboys, a Christian rock group, and they convince her to become a Christian because that will give her hope.

The movie has a happy ending, at least for some Christians, because a car runs over Professor Radisson. Pastor Dave just happens to be nearby and encourages Radisson to become a Christian seconds before he dies.

The most effective way to convert atheists in the movie is not by reason or evidence, but by personal tragedy. Perhaps this will inspire some Christians to pray that atheists contract cancer or undergo some other misfortune, because the film rein-

forces the "no atheists in fox-holes" cliché.

The premise of the movie is ridiculous. Christians and atheists alike would be appalled if an institution of higher learning expected students to sign a "God is dead" statement. Universities that promote critical thinking must not require students or professors to believe a certain way and never question or change their beliefs. But shouldn't that hold true for both public and Christian universities?

As dogmatic as the fictional Professor Radisson is, he at least gave ample class time to a student who had a different opinion. Not necessarily so at some Christian universities. Perhaps Josh "Wheaton" is meant to represent Wheaton College, a Christian institution where students and faculty are expected to affirm a [statement of faith and educational purpose](#) that includes "God created Adam and Eve, distinct from all other living creatures." It's not difficult to see how such affirmations of faith might discourage critical thinking.

Charleston Southern University, in my hometown, expects faculty and students to accept [core values](#) that include the Bible being inerrant and infallible. Dr. Richard Johnson, a religion professor there, once invited me to debate the existence of God on his campus. However, the university wouldn't allow it and the debate took place at a nearby church. After the debate, Dr. Johnson asked if he could speak to the

secular student group on my College of Charleston campus. I readily agreed, and he also invited me to speak to his religion class. But the day before I was to speak, I was disinvited because his university objected. In an article about the incident in the *Charleston Post and Courier*, I said it reflects poorly on an academic institution that allows [only one point of view](#).

The *God's Not Dead* movie is probably intended for those who believe the myth that Christians in this country are being persecuted. (I suppose that's why so many politicians hide their Christian beliefs and pretend to be atheists.) At secular universities, students and professors are free to discuss and debate a full range of controversial ideas, including whether God is dead. And that's a good thing.

Our Officers

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SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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*SHL is a non-prophet
organization!*

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The Separationist

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

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