



The Separationist

Volume 23, Issue 2

February, 2016

Dr. Richard Carrier The Evidence for Jesus

Sunday, February 21, 2016, 4:00 PM, Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Inside this issue:

[Upcoming Events](#) **2**

[Herb Silverman](#) **8**

[Charity of the Quarter](#) **10**

[Find Us](#) **12**

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.

Did Jesus actually exist as a historical person?

For nearly two millennia, the answer was assumed to be Yes. But as scholars began to examine the evidence more critically, it became clear to all but the most Fundamentalist believers that the Jesus described in the Bible was a figure shrouded in myth and legend. Eventually, some daring freethinkers began to suggest that "Jesus the man" was as much of a myth as "Jesus the divine savior of humankind."

But can we prove that an historical Jesus never really walked the earth? For decades, the failure of a rigorous method for evaluating the evidence for Jesus' life has actually resulted in a bewildering variety of mutually-exclusive portraits of the "real" Jesus. They can't all be right. But they can all be wrong. Are they? And is there a scientific method that can even bring a little clarity to the quest for the historical Jesus?



That's what our speaker, Dr. Richard Carrier, will discuss in a presentation titled: "Applying Bayes' Theorem to the Historicity of Jesus and Its Lessons for Critical Thought."

Dr. Carrier will discuss his books "Proving History" and "On the Historicity of Jesus" and what he has learned from interacting with critics over adapting Bayes' Theorem to the task of analyzing the evidence for Jesus, and how such lessons become a window to understanding Bayesian reasoning and its application to all areas of critical thinking.

Richard Carrier has a Ph.D. in the history of philosophy from Columbia University and is a published philosopher and historian. He specializes in contemporary philosophy of naturalism and in Greco-Roman philosophy, science, and religion, and the origins of Christianity. He blogs regularly, lectures for community groups worldwide, and teaches courses online. He is the author of many books including *Sense and Goodness without God*, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, and *Proving History*, as well as chapters in several anthologies and articles in academic journals.

When: Sunday, February 21, 2016 at 4pm

Where: Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street

Cost: Free!

SHL will provide light snacks during the check-in and social period prior to the meeting.

We will be going to Tasty Thai & Sushi restaurant after the meeting and everyone is invited to join us.

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.

February 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6 Adopt a Highway Evolution of the Universe...
7	8 Origin of the Controversy	9 Happy Hour	10	11	12	13 Movie Club
14	15	16 Girls Night Out	17	18	19	20
21 Volunteer Activity Monthly Meeting	22	23	24 Team Trivia	25	26	27
28 Book Club	29					

Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

Adopt a Highway

Saturday, February 6, 2016, 8:50am

1011 Harbor View Rd, Charleston

Our next trash pick up will be on Saturday, February 6th. 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.



Meet at 8:50 am in the parking lot of the bank at 1011 Harbor View Rd (next to the Harris Teeter), James Island. Please join us!

If you have any questions, [email our volunteer coordinators](#).

See an event you want to attend? We'd love to have you join us! Some events ask for an RSVP which you can easily do via [Meetup](#) or [Facebook](#). This gives the event organizers an idea of how many are attending which is especially important when making reservations at restaurants, providing supplies, etc.

Evolution of the Universe... in a Necklace!

Saturday, February 7, 2016 10:00am—3:00pm

Brittlebank Park, 0 Lockwood Ave, Charleston

For all Elementary age children – No reservations required!

A bead for the galaxies, a bead for our solar system, a bead for life, and a bead for us ourselves! Participants will be able to easily recount the story of life after making a beautiful necklace of beads highlighting the major evolutionary events. Join Ms. Amy Monsky as she leads a retelling of the origin of the universe from the big bang to you.



This is an official event of Piccolo Darwin Week, part of the [Charleston STEM Festival](#).



Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

Lecture: The Origin of the Controversy

Monday, February 8, 2016, 7:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

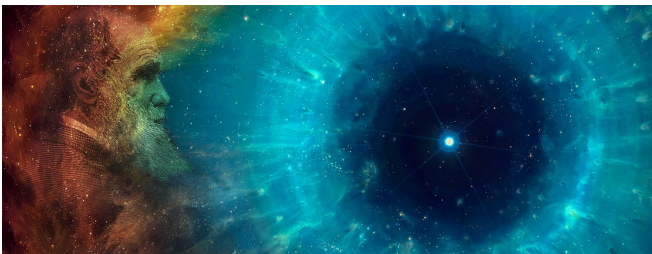
Darwin Week Lecture "The Origin of The Controversy: Revisiting the Battlefields of Science and Religion"

by historian of science Dr. Ronald L. Numbers.

Reception to follow

In the early nineteenth century, the harmony between science and religion was so pervasive that one contemporary dubbed it "The Age of Christian Science." The second third of the century, however, witnessed challenges to traditional Christian beliefs from astronomy, geology, anthropology, phrenology, and, most threatening of all, from biology. During these years religious leaders commonly portrayed themselves as the victims of scientific aggression. During the last third of the century such complaints were largely drowned out by the shouts of men such as Huxley, Tyndall, Draper, and White, who charged religion with being the historical aggressor against science. In the 1920s, fundamentalist Christians in the United States finally struck back, launching a crusade to eradicate evolution from the churches and schools throughout the land.

See [here](#) for more information about this and other Darwin Week activities.



SHL Happy Hour

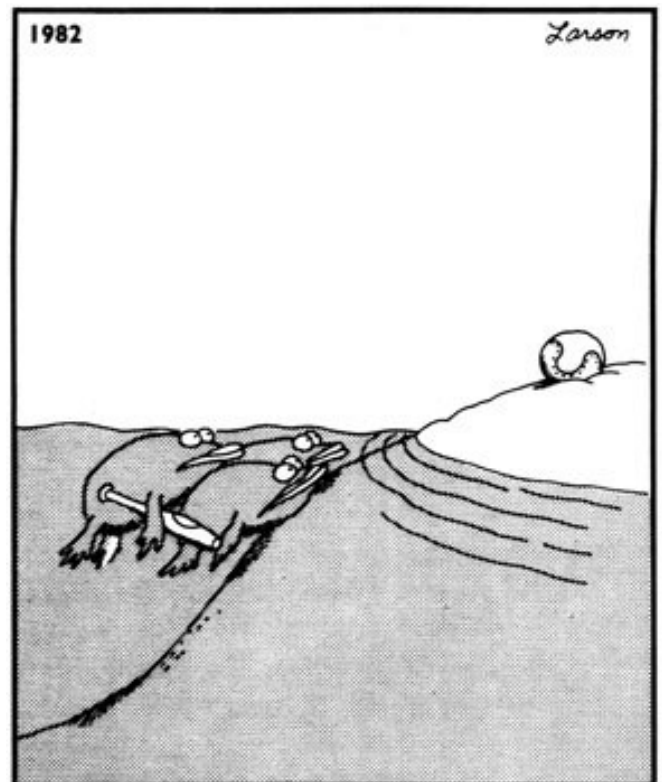
Tuesday, February 9, 2016, 6:00pm

Liberty Tap Room, 1028 Johnnie Dodds Blvd, Mt Pleasant



Happy Hour is always a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and yummy food among old and new friends!

This month we will meet at Raul's Maya Del Sol in the Park Circle neighborhood. Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy – come join us! *RSVP requested.*



Great moments in evolution

Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Movie Club

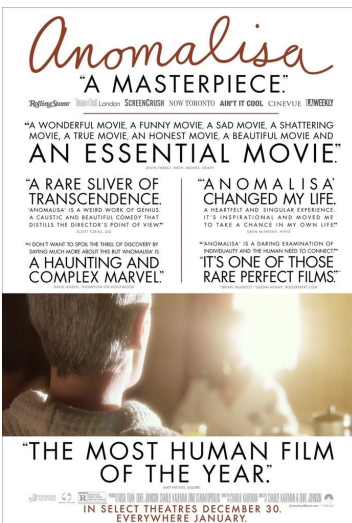
Saturday, February 13, 2016, time TBA

Terrace Theater, 1956 Maybank Hwy

Join us for a viewing of the film *Anomalisa* Saturday, February 13, at the Terrace Theater on Maybank Hwy on James Island. Showtimes have not been posted yet, so please check our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) group posting, or subscribe to the movie club [email list](#) or [SHL Meetup](#) for updates.

Following the movie we will discuss the film over dinner at a nearby restaurant. Please wait in the lobby for everyone to exit (some of us like to stay for all of the credits).

Charlie Kaufman and co-director Duke Johnson deliver a unique reflection on love, pain and loneliness in this animated account of one man's long dark night of the soul pierced by light.



Whether in his screenplays for *Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, or his directing debut, *Synechdoche, New York*, Charlie Kaufman's surreal, cerebral chronicles of despair, obsession and failure are like nothing else out there. So it was a given that his first animated feature, *Anomalisa*, co-

directed with stop-motion specialist Duke Johnson, was going to be another idiosyncratic entry in a small but wildly distinctive body of work. However, that doesn't nearly do justice to the beguiling poignancy and emotional nuance of this funny-sad, haunting meditation on depression and disorientation, disguised as a melancholy love story.

Girls Night Out

Tuesday, February 16, 2016, 76:00pm

Accent on Wine, 1056 E Montague Ave, North Charleston (Park Circle)

A fun night for secular girls to socialize! Accent on Wine is planning a special wine/beer tasting for our group.

Nursing infants okay, but otherwise adults only, please.
RSVP requested.



Pay it Forward

Do you have usable items that you no longer want or are you in need of an item? If so, join the [Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry Pay It Forward facebook group](#). This is a closed group for SHL members to post things they want to give away and for others to claim them. All items are free. Whether you are spring cleaning, looking for a few items for your apartment or dorm, looking for things you can make into crafts, or just want to free up a little space in your home, this is the place to post/find them.

Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Volunteer Activity: Community Potluck

Sunday, February 21, 2016, 12:40pm

Mall Park, corner of Columbus & America Streets,
Charleston

The Community Potluck began in 2011 by Occupy Charleston and other volunteers as a way to help those who are disadvantaged. It grew into a weekly event, often feeding up to 60 community members — in some cases this is their only meal of the day.

SHL will provide the February 21 community potluck. Volunteers are needed for donating food, preparing the items, and serving the meals. Food can be prepared in advance. Setup begins at 12:40pm and serving begins at 1:00pm on the day of the potluck.

The potluck is held at Mall Park, on the corner of Columbus and America Streets (near the Trident Palmer Campus), rain or shine. Contact our volunteer coordinators at volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org to coordinate needed items and volunteers.



The potluck will end in plenty of time to attend the monthly meeting at Gage Hall!

SHL Monthly Meeting

Sunday, February 21, 2016, 4:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Join us for our monthly meeting with speaker Dr. Richard Carrier. See [page 1](#) for details.

Team Trivia

Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 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. *RSVP requested.*



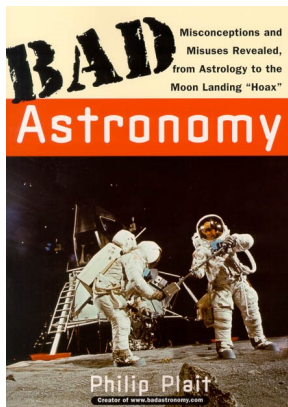
Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Book Club: Bad Astronomy

Sunday, February 28, 2016, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston

Our next meeting will be February 28, 2016 at 4pm to discuss our selected book *Bad Astronomy: Misconceptions and Misuses Revealed from Astrology to the Moon Landing 'Hoax'* by Phil Plait. Dr. Plait is a science writer



who works in the physics and astronomy department at Sonoma State University and is a gifted explainer of complicated systems that we all experience and, until now, mostly fail to comprehend.

We have also taken up the policy to select a book for the following month to enable clubbers to read ahead. For

March 27, we will discuss *All who go do not return* by Shulem Deen (4/24/2015) which is a moving and revealing exploration of Hasidic life, and one man's struggles with faith, family, and community. You can also [purchase a copy from Amazon](#) and a portion of the purchase price will automatically be donated to SHL.

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>

We Need YOU!

SHL would not be able to provide our members with such a large variety of activities without dedicated volunteers to lead them. We are looking for volunteers to lead the following activities—without volunteers we are in danger of losing these activities. Can this be you?



Family activities coordinator—the family activities coordinator schedules playdates, outings, and other activities for families with young children, makes reservations (when needed), and welcomes attendees. Previous events have included playdates at local playgrounds, outings at parks and museums, etc. Time commitment: once per month (more if desired).

Team Trivia coordinator—the trivia coordinator reserves a table large enough for the group, signs in using our team name (Happy Humanists), welcomes players, and uses any winnings from the previous week to purchase appetizers for the team. We currently play on the last Wednesday of the month at Steel City Pizza in Mt Pleasant but the coordinator is free to move the game to a new day or venue if desired. Time commitment: once per month.

Have something else in mind? We are always open to offering new activities for our members—either regularly scheduled or one-time events. Some of these may be game nights, bowling, bocce, bridge walks, billiards, political discussions, river floats, kayaking, biking, teen activities, etc.

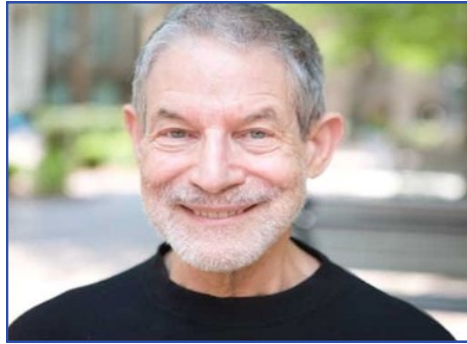
If you are interested in one of the above volunteer positions or in organizing another event, contact president@lowcountryhumanists.org. THANK YOU!

Herb Silverman

God's Own Party

I don't think politicians in a secular country should go around quoting the Bible to make their case for legislation. That's why I half agree with Virginia Rep. Dave Brat, the GOP lawmaker who famously upset former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor in a 2014 Republican primary. Here's the half with which I disagree. Brat indicated that it's fine for Republicans to quote from the Bible, but not for Democrats to do so. He said, "Our side, the conservative side, needs to re-educate its people that we own the entire [biblical] tradition." What especially drew Brat's ire was President Obama's arguments for allowing some Syrian refugees into the country, which included a biblical reference from James 1:27 about looking after widows and orphans.

If politicians, liberal or conservative, can't come up with good evidence-based reasons to support an issue, they shouldn't rely on an ancient pre-scientific book written by bigoted, misogynistic, homophobic, intolerant, superstitious men. I understand why politicians often pander to people who prefer theocratic



Herb Silverman is founder and President 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.

decisions. After all, political pandering is bi-partisan. Brat, however, takes it one step further. I mostly find his comments amusing, but if I were a Christian I'd probably be incensed by the way Brat is giving Christians a bad name (or worse name, depending on your point of view).

Some Republicans say we need to take our country back, but they usually don't specify from whom. Perhaps we need to take our country back from a black president, or from Democrats. But they are not saying we need to take our government back, so perhaps they want to take our country back to the bad old days before we adopted civil rights legislation and equal

rights for women and other minorities.

On the other hand, Christians usually want everyone to read the Bible. I often see conservative Christians on my street handing out Bible tracts to everyone, regardless of race, color, creed, or political affiliation. But Rep. Brat's mantra seems to be, "Take our Bible back (from Democrats)." And I understand why, because Democrats might quote passages that Brat doesn't want to hear. With all the Bible's contradictions and ambiguities, Republicans and Democrats alike can quote phrases to make their case. If you want to go to war, quote Matthew 10:34: "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." If you want peace, quote Matthew 5:39, about turning the other cheek.

You can even quote Jesus to show he was a secular progressive, maybe a communist. Examples include Mark 10:25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Matthew 19:21: To be perfect, sell your possessions and give

Herb Silverman cont.

them to the poor. Acts 2:44: All the believers were together and had everything in common.

A lot of Republicans either don't read the Bible or don't think it applies to them. Which brings me to Donald Trump, currently a favorite among evangelical Christians. Recently at Liberty University, Trump quoted from "Second Corinthi-

ans" (II Corinthians), which he referred to as "Two Corinthians." Trump rarely concedes first place to anything or anybody else. But during his speech he said the Bible was even better than his best-selling book, *The Art of the Deal*. Or, as Trump might say, "My book is the two best book in the world."

I doubt that "The Donald" or

lots of other politicians spend much time carefully studying the Bible they so effusively praise. Our country would be better served if politicians spent more time reading and governing according to our U.S. Constitution rather than according to any ancient, so-called holy book.

This piece was originally posted 1/21/2016 on huffingtonpost.com

Become a dues-paying member of SHL! Membership is open to all who support the purposes for which this organization is founded. The available membership levels and corresponding dues (new members and renewals) are:

- Individual \$35.00
- Family \$50.00
- Sustaining \$100.00
- Benefactor \$150.00
- 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!)

There are 3 easy ways you can join/renew:

- You can pay by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting.

- You can also mail a check to:

SHL
PO Box 32256
Charleston SC 29417-2256

Make checks payable to SHL and note "Membership" and level in the memo line. Please include your name, address, phone number, and email address.

- Or securely [pay online](#) and select your membership level in the dropdown box.



Charity of the Quarter

Caring for Our Own

Four times a year SHL board members select a local non-profit as our Charity of the Quarter. Funds are collected from SHL members during the quarter and then donated in the name of SHL.

However, for the first COQ of 2016 we are collecting for one of our own. Long time SHL member Mickie McClain suffered a stroke on Sunday, November 8. Mickie is making tremendous progress but still has lots of work ahead of her.

She has no insurance, and her partner Bernie is disabled and cannot drive. Donations will be collected by SHL and given to Mickie to help her and her family make ends meet during her long recovery.

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!](#)



Mickie has returned home. She has made remarkable progress but still has lots of work ahead of her as she recovers her mobility and motor skills.

Camp Quest

Camp Quest South Carolina is a place for fun, friends, and freethought! Our primary offering is our week-long sleepaway camp, held in Aiken, SC, for kids ages 8-17 years old. We are similar to other traditional sleepaway summer camps and provide a wide range of activities including sports, arts and crafts, games, swimming, nature walks, outdoor skills, and campfires. However, Camp Quest is unique in that we present our educational programs from a specifically secular and humanist perspective. This means that in addition to our traditional summer camp activities, Camp Quest offers educational activities focused on critical thinking, ethics, scientific inquiry, philosophy, and comparative religion.

Camp Quest is also particularly geared towards building a community for kids and teens from atheist, agnostic, humanist and other free-thinking families. However, Camp Quest is open to all kids and teens within the specified age range, and we work hard to create an environment in which all campers feel welcome. Our goal is to provide a place where campers can explore their developing worldviews and how to put their values into practice, ask questions, and make friends in an environment that is supportive of critical thinking and skepticism.

2016 is our FIFTH year and registration is now open! Click [here](#) to register for the 2016 summer session of Camp Quest South Carolina!



Essay by a 2014 camper:

Camp Quest

By Miranda DeNice McClain, age 10

This summer I went to Camp Quest. The reason Camp Quest is different from other camps is that it is for atheists. That means someone who does not believe in God.

I did lots of science activities [sic] at camp. Every day we would go to Morris lodge and choose an activity to do like board games, geology and radioactive hide and seek. In the morning we did cabin activities like extracting strawberry DNA. After lunch we went to the lake to swim. I had fun playing with my new friends. we played shark or tag, marco polo and built sand castles.

I made a sonic screwdriver pen from Doctor Who! We did the Holi festivale [sic] too. It was super fun, we threw paint dust at each other. I sneezed a puff of color.

I loved camp Quest because there were kids who think like me. I was free to be myself with no one to bully me for being defferent [sic].

And I liked Charlotte the Unicorn.

Did you know?

[Dues-paying members](#) of SHL are eligible to apply for a stipend to offset costs associated with attending atheist/humanist/secular conferences, camps, and events! Contact treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.com for info.

SHL Board for 2015-2016

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OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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The Separationist

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

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