



The Separationist

Volume 23, Issue 3

March, 2016

Dr. John Huddleston Mythicist Mystagoguery

Sunday, March 20, 2016, 4:00 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.

Was Jesus just a myth?

Some atheist activists (including our February speaker, the historian Dr. Richard Carrier) claim that the odds are in favor of that possibility. But maybe there is actually good, impartial evidence to support the hypothesis that Jesus existed as a living human being.

For our next meeting, professor of religion Dr. John Huddleston returns to SHL to consider the quest for a historical Jesus within a broader academic context, in a presentation titled: "Mythicist Mystagoguery: Some Critical Comments on Richard Carrier's Vanishing Jesus."

According to Dr. Huddleston, this talk will address some problematic issues in the interpretation of ancient texts, biblical and otherwise, and their historical implications in Richard Carrier's recent work.

Topics to be discussed include the question of what counts as a primary



Dr. Huddleston holds a Ph.D. in Biblical and Near Eastern studies from the University of Michigan and teaches in the department of Religious Studies at the College of Charleston. His research interests focus primarily on the history, society, and culture of the ancient (and sometimes not so ancient) Middle East.

When: Sunday, March 20, 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.

After our meeting, please join us for dinner at Toast restaurant, 155 Meeting Street - a short 5 minute walk away.



source, the appeal to the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish texts in support of a pre-Christian dying/ rising messiah myth, the argument from silence and appeal to (or rejection of) hypothetical or lost sources, and the question of the brothers of Jesus.

In addition, Dr. Huddleston will situate the quest for a historical founding figure in its larger academic history and context vis-a-vis other figures such as Muhammad and the Buddha (Sakhyamuni).

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.

March 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 Conradance night	5 Movie club
6	7	8	9 Happy Hour	10	11	12
13  DAYLIGHT SAVINGS	14	15 Girl Night Out	16	17	18	19 Volunteer activity
20 Monthly meeting  Spring is here!	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 Book club	28	29 Team Trivia	30	31		

Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

Conradance Night

Friday, March 4, 2016, 7:30—10:30pm

Felix C. Davis Community Center, 4800 Park Pl East
(inside the Park Circle circle), North Charleston

Do humanists have rhythm? Can atheists dance? Time to find out!



Maybe you've already heard the buzz about contra-dancing--an energetic style of folk dancing for couples, with moves similar to square dancing (but a lot more fun). Dances are led by a caller who describes the specific moves to be done by the dancers, so it's ideal for newbies and youngsters (teens and up will catch on quickly, though little ones are welcome to hang out at the venue, too).

Although it's a couples dance, you don't have to bring a partner. Music is always live. You can find out more about Conradance and the local folk dancing scene at the Web site of Charleston Folk (<http://charlestonfolk.weebly.com/contra-dancing.html>).

Many SHL members come to these dances regularly already, so don't be shy: wear a humanist T-shirt if you like, bring a spare, and be ready to sweat a little with your SHL friends. A good time is guaranteed for all!

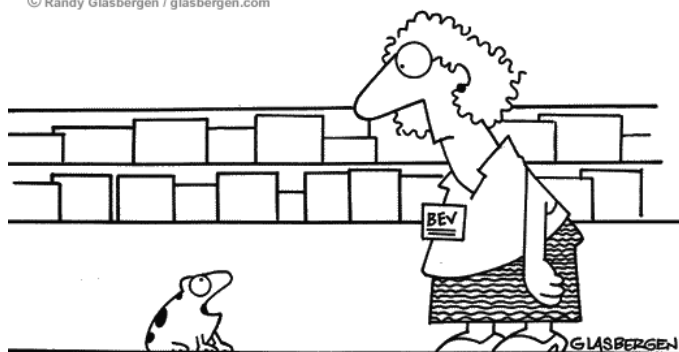
Arrive promptly at 7:30 PM for beginner instruction.

In addition, you are welcome to join us beforehand at the nearby Panera Bread for a light supper: let's meet at 6:00 PM at the restaurant at 5070 International Blvd.

Cost for the dance: \$8 (ages 13 and up); children 6–12 accompanied by a paying adult are half price (\$4); children 5 and under are free. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times.

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.

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**"I need a Get Well card for my cousin.
He got dissected this morning."**

Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, March 5, 2016, 3:45pm

Terrace Theater, 1956 Maybank Hwy, James Island

Join us for a viewing of the documentary film Spotlight on Saturday, March 5, 3:45pm at the Terrace Theater on Maybank Hwy.



SPOTLIGHT tells the riveting true story of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Boston Globe investigation that would rock the city and cause a crisis in one of the world's oldest and most trusted institutions. When the newspaper's tenacious "Spotlight" team of reporters delves into allegations of abuse in the Catholic Church, their year-long investigation un-

covers a decades-long cover-up at the highest levels of Boston's religious, legal, and government establishment, touching off a wave of revelations around the world. Directed by Academy Award-nominee Tom McCarthy, SPOTLIGHT is a tense investigative dramatic-thriller, tracing the steps to one of the biggest cover-ups in modern times.

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 watch all of the credits).

SHL Happy Hour

Wednesday, March 9, 2016, 6:00pm

Kickin' Chicken, 1179 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston (West Ashley)

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 Kickin' Chicken in West Ashley (it's near the North Bridge). Everyone is welcome. Don't be [shy](#) – come join us! *RSVP requested via [Meetup](#) or [Facebook](#).*



Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

Girls Night Out

Tuesday, March 15, 2016, 7:00pm

Fuji Steakhouse, 2150 Northwoods Blvd, North Charleston

A fun night for secular girls to socialize! As an added treat our new friend at Palmetto Brush, Andre Singleton, will be helping us bring our inner artist out.... He will come to the restaurant with all the supplies for us, with two different painting choices.



Please sign up and pay in advance so that our instructor can purchase the required supplies. To sign up, go to www.palmettobrush.com/portfolio.html and choose Funky Bottles/Funky Beach (he gave us a discount!) and reserve your spot there.

* Nursing infants okay but otherwise adults only,

please. *RSVP /prepayment with Palmetto Brush is required; in addition, please RSVP with our Happy Hour coordinator via Meetup or Facebook.*

SHL Volunteer Activity: Planting at Colonial Lake

Saturday, March 19, 2016, 9:00am

Colonial Lake, corner of Broad St and Ashley Ave, Charleston

We will be helping the Charleston Parks Conservancy with their biggest project to date: planting public gardens at the newly renovated Colonial Lake.

Check with our volunteer coordinator volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org for more details



SHL Monthly Meeting

Sunday, March 20, 2016, 4:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Join us for our monthly meeting with speaker **Dr. John Huddleston**. See [page 1](#) for details.

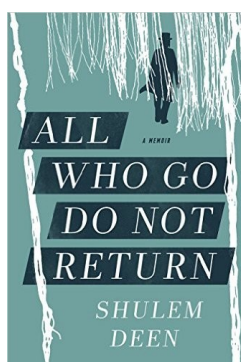
Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Book Club:

All Who Go Do Not Return: A Memoir

Sunday, March 27, 2016, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston



This March, we are discussing *All Who Go Do Not Return: A Memoir* by Shuleem Deen. This first time author writes compellingly in a revealing exploration of Hasidic life through one man's struggle with faith, family, and community.

Shuleem Deen was raised to believe that questions are dangerous. As a member of the Skverers, one of the most insular Hasidic sects in the US, he knows little about the outside world—only that it is to be shunned. His marriage at eighteen is arranged and several children soon follow. Deen's first transgression—turning on the radio—is small, but his curiosity leads him to the library, and later the Internet. Soon he begins a feverish inquiry into the tenets of his religious beliefs, until, several years later, his faith unravels entirely.

Now a heretic, he fears being discovered and ostracized from the only world he knows. His relationship with his family at stake, he is forced into a life of deception, and begins a long struggle to hold on to those he loves most: his five children. In *All Who Go Do Not Return*, Deen bravely traces his harrowing loss of faith, while offering an illuminating look at a highly secretive world.

Afterward we will go to dinner at a nearby restaurant.

If you'd like to read ahead, In April we will discuss a fascinating book by an author with a local history. *Slaves in the Family* by Edward Ball is a celebrated work

of narrative nonfiction that won the National Book Award. Although the story is told about plantation life in Charleston, it has the power to change the American conversation about race.

You can [purchase copies of these books from Amazon on the SHL page](#) 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>

Team Trivia

Tuesday, March 29, 2016, 7:00pm

Bucca's Bar & Grill, 1000 Tanner Ford Blvd, Hanahan

NOTE: THIS IS A NEW VENUE!



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 via [Meetup](#) or [Facebook](#)

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?



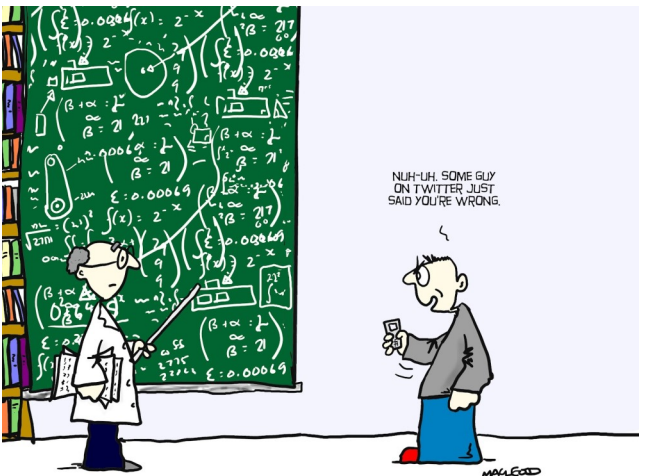
Family activities coordinator—the family activities coordinator schedules playdates, outings, and other activities for families with young children, makes reservations (when needed), and welcomes attendees. Previous events have included playdates at local playgrounds, outings at parks and museums, etc.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

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 the above volunteer position or in organizing another event, contact president@lowcountryhumanists.org. THANK YOU!

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.



Herb Silverman

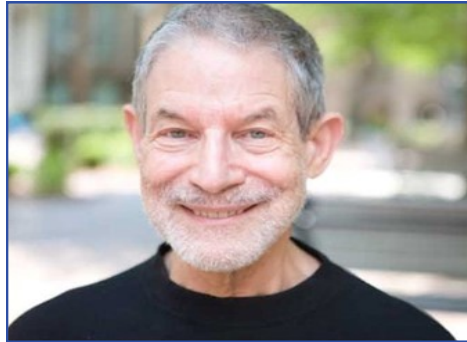
My Brief Support for Marco Rubio

I came close to supporting Marco Rubio for president when he reportedly had the courage to say that there are not many answers in the Bible. I say "reportedly" because this was one of many Ted Cruz fabrications. Rubio really said, "[All the answers are in the Bible.](#)"

I wouldn't mind Rubio's actual statement so much if he were not responsible for policy-making decisions in a secular country. However, Rubio is on the [Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee](#). Yes, science! I checked carefully and there are no science answers in the Bible, unless you accept this biblical view of science: The sun revolves about our fixed and flat earth, which is less than 6,000 years old, and humans didn't evolve but were created in their present form. When Rubio was asked about the age of the Earth, he said, "[I'm not a scientist, man.](#)" That's for sure.

Nevertheless, Rubio makes decisions in many areas where he is not an expert: science, economics, education, military, foreign policy, healthcare, environment, poverty, immigration, and taxation. Rubio is perhaps an expert only in politics, where he has spent his entire career. I don't expect politicians to be experts in all or even most areas, but I do expect them to read or hear from experts before making decisions that affect us all. You don't have to be a scientist to accept the non-controversial findings among scientists that the Earth is approximately 4.54 billion years old, and that climate change is real.

Rubio's personal (or pandering?)



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.

views are bad enough, but for Rubio the crux of the disagreement is "whether what a parent teaches their children at home should be mocked and derided and undone at the public school level." He added, "[I don't want a school system that teaches kids that what they're learning at home is wrong.](#)"

Because some parents teach their children that evolution is a myth, that blacks are inferior to whites, and that women should be subservient to men, does Rubio want schools to avoid offering more modern points of view? If so, why not just keep children away from public schools so they won't be exposed to scientific and social views that conflict with literal interpretations of the Bible or whatever their parents believe? Oh, wait! We already allow home schooling.

At a town hall meeting before the Iowa caucus there, an atheist attendee said to Rubio that he was acting as if he were running for "Pastor-in-Chief" rather than

"Commander-in-Chief," and asked how he would defend the rights of nontheists if elected president. The best Rubio could offer is that people have the right to believe whatever they want. He added, "This nation was founded on the principle that our rights come from our Creator," and "[If there is no creator, then where did your rights come from?](#)"

Good question. Let's assume that there really is a creator who also gave us some rights. Aside from which creator and what we know about him/her/it, what are these rights? The notion that our rights would have a firmer foundation if we believed they came from a creator is nonsense. We would need to interpret what the creator said, and our interpretation would depend on our moral sensibilities.

Rubio's rights-granting creator, the God of the Bible, condemns many rights guaranteed by our Constitution and Bill of Rights. For instance, the First Commandment (thou shalt have no other gods) conflicts with our First Amendment, which guarantees the right to worship one, many, or no gods. You won't find democracy in the Bible, but you will find the divine right of kings. You won't find treating women as equals or condemnation of slavery, but you will find punishment for blasphemy.

According to the Constitution that Senator Rubio swore to uphold, our "rights" come from "we the people." Rights have evolved over millennia, thanks to evidence, rational thought, empathy, and moving away from bronze-age theology. No creator

Herb Silverman cont.

endowed us with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights are specified in our founding documents, written by some of the best thinkers in the Enlightenment era, though they would probably change some wording today. "All men are created equal" would likely become "All people are created equal," including women and blacks.

All cultures have promoted variations of the "Golden Rule," the major difference being who was included within the scope of mor-

al norms. For much of human existence, only members of a person's tribe, clan, ethnic group, or religion were entitled to moral respect, but that changed when we became more enlightened. Religions endorsed tribal morality when that was the prevailing ethic, and now most religions are inclined to support the prevailing ethic of universal human rights.

Those who find all their answers in the Bible presumably ignore the Constitution when it conflicts with the Bible. As for me, I feel

fortunate to live in a country with a godless Constitution. But those who would rather be governed according to biblical rights (and wrongs) might prefer living under a theocracy—as long as it is *their* theocracy and not some theocracy of infidels. This atheist is almost tempted to say, "Thank God we live in a secular country."

This piece was originally posted 2/29/2016 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.

SHL Named FBB's 'Team of the Month' for February

This just in from the Foundation Beyond Belief!



Our [February Team of the Month](#) is Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry! Based in Charleston, SC, the team was chosen because of their strong commitment to their community illustrated by their regular service events that address a variety of needs. Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry ended 2015 as a Level 1



team and was previously honored as February 2014's [Team of the Month](#).

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.

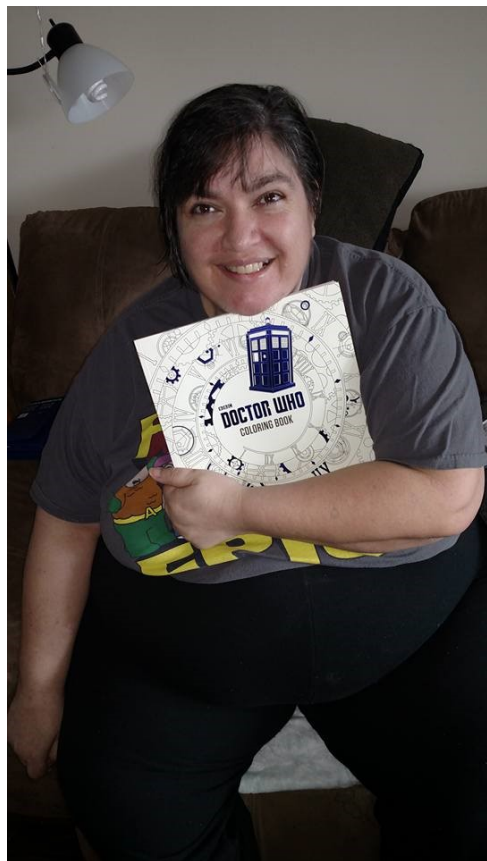
She has no insurance, and her partner Bernie is disabled and cannot drive. Donations will be collected by SHL and given to Mickie to help her and her family make ends meet during her long recovery.

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!



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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SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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organization!

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The Separationist

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

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