



The Separationist

April 2019

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 Separationist is 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 SHL newsletter editor's with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions such as short articles, news items, letters to the editor, or other information of interest to SHL members are always welcome.

The editors can be contacted at:

newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org

President's Corner

The Christian right has been organizing for 40 years, electing fundamentalist Christian culture warriors to school boards and city and state legislatures on the national level.

We've seen the fruits of their efforts. Project Blitz is a national program coordinated by three religious right groups and meant to erode the separation of church and state. The Project Blitz strategy is incremental to minimize organized opposition and to normalize Christian supremacy.

You've seen the bills around the country and here in SC that are pushing to have "In God we Trust" on school walls, require public schools to teach the Bible, and to allow teachers to promote religion. They're pushing "freedom of religion" legislation that allows governments to discriminate against non Christians, especially in adoption and foster care. In 2018, over 200 Project-Blitz aligned bills were introduced in state legislatures around the country.

Are we, as secular voters, going to get as organized as the Christian right?

Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry founder Herb Silverman, realizing that secular Americans needed to band together as a voters, founded the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) in 2002, bringing together major national atheist and humanist organizations. The SCA is training and mobilizing secular Americans to stand up for our secular values.

You can sign up for action alerts through the SCA, and they'll give you an easy way to contact your legislators about issues important to secular Americans. Please consider joining national secular organizations like the American Humanist Association, Freedom From Religion Foundation, American Atheists, or other SC member organizations that fund the SCA.

I'll be organizing visits to our national legislators to educate them about issues important to secular Americans and talking to them about relevant bills. Let me know if you want to join those visits. Right now, the SCA is urging us to support the Freedom of Religion Act of 2019, which prevents the US government from discriminating, based on religion, against those seeking to immigrate to the US. Please let your US Representative know you support the First Amendment and the FRA-2019. If you're not sure who your US rep is, go to <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>.

Bonnie Cleaveland

Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry President

SHL Main Events

Sunday, April 21, 2019 Gathering
at
Gage Hall

The tortured path to ranked choice voting in Maine

Hosted by Bonnie Cleaveland



The State of Maine is currently engaged in a ranked choice voting (RCV) experiment for state and federal legislative offices and for the governorship. Could RCV serve as a national template achieved through individual state action? RCV may eventually motivate adopting Single Transferable Vote (STV) multi-member Congressional districts, with voters using RCV to elect several Congresspersons simultaneously, thereby eliminating single member districts and gerrymandering.

Maine's 2010-2018 governor Paul LePage, an extreme populist with polarizing rhetoric, election performance, and governance style similar to Donald Trump's, provoked Maine's RCV citizens' initiative. The parallels invite speculation about potential application on the national stage. Maine's case illustrates that political, statutory, and constitutional hurdles seriously impede effective electoral reform.

Dr. Richard Nunan is a philosophy professor at the College of Charleston with affiliated faculty status in Women's and Gender Studies, Film Studies, and the Honors College. For five years, he was editor of the American Philosophical Association's Newsletter on Philosophy and Law. He has broad interests, but, in recent years, he's primarily researched the philosophy of law, philosophy and film, and philosophical issues concerning gender rights and gender identity questions.



Where?

843 Korean BBQ & Sushi House
6601 Rivers Ave.
North Charleston



When?

Wednesday, April 10th, 2019
6:00 PM

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'll meet at 843 Korean BBQ and Sushi House, North Charleston. Hope to see you there.

Hosted by: **Elizabeth Taylor**



Volunteer Activity: Adopt a Highway

Saturday, May 4, 2019

9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Details in May issue.



SHL had a great highway cleanup on February 2nd with eleven volunteers making a difference in our Lowcountry Community. Here is a photo of your Happy Humanists at work.

Picking up trash at the side of the road is a lot more fun than it sounds. We enjoy each other's company and conversation. It is a pleasant walk in the fresh air. And we usually find some interesting items.

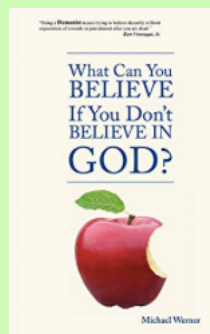
As always, participants get a sense of accomplishment from making the world a better place and enjoy a chance to talk as we walk. We also have a sign put up by the Dept. of Transportation there that says that the road is kept clean by "Secular Humanists," which helps us let people know that our group exists and that we care about our community.

SHL will provide the necessary supplies, including trash bags, gloves, and reflective vests. Please join us if you can.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email our volunteer coordinators.

Hosted by Laura Kasman

Book Group for April



What can you BELIEVE, if you don't believe in God? By Michael Werner (2017) Humanist Press LLC, PB \$15.85, Kindle \$7.99.

Also Amazon Review: Many people criticize the "rise of the Nones" for its nihilism. "There's no God," full stop, is not a useful replacement for the comfort and guidance traditional religion seeks to provide. Michael Werner's thoughtful new book, "What Can You Believe When You Don't Believe in God?" confronts this criticism head-on. Werner believes in plenty. He believes in the lifestance many call "humanism," which he puts in compelling historical perspective. He believes in knowledge, and how humankind can attain it, without the benefit of supernatural revelation. He believes in shared human values, and in a thoughtful process for developing them.

The book is also available online at **Amazon** Books. Remember that when you buy it through the purchase site at the SHL website icon for amazon, SHL receives credit.

Where? West Ashley Barnes and Noble Sam Rittenberg Blvd.

When? 4:00 to 5:30 4th Sunday of April the 28th.

Book Group had a rewarding discussion, with seven in attendance at the March review of *The Necessity of Atheism*. We always have dinner after the meeting and this month with a strong recommendation from our member Leonard we went to Señor Tequila.

Book Group is an opportunity to share the Secular experience with like minded free thinkers. If you like to read, this is the place for you. Hope to see you at the April meeting.

Upcoming SHL Event: SHL Egg Hunt

April 14, 2019 11:00 am

Hampton Park

55 Cleveland Street

Downtown

Charleston, SC



Join us at the picnic tables around the pond in Hampton Park for the third annual SHL Spring Egg Hunt! Bring your lunch to eat after the hunt and we'll have games and prizes for the kids! If you would like to bring some filled eggs for the hunt please do and arrive around 10:40 to hide them! Let me know if you plan on bringing some eggs to hide in the comments so I know about how many I need to bring. Please let me know how many kids you are bringing in the comments! Looking forward to it!

RSVP via Meetup

The Leading Edge of Reason

Contributions from our Community of Free Thinkers

***Editor's note:** The following is another offering from a series of interviews of Herb Silverman by Scott Douglas Jacobsen:

Herb Silverman is the Founder of the Secular Coalition of America, the Founder of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry, and the Founder of the Atheist/Humanist Alliance student group at the College of Charleston. Here we talk about the philosophy of mathematics, science, and theology in a new series on the **philosophy of mathematics**.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Mathematics works within the constraints of structure or order, relationships between and within structure and order, and the changes in structure or order and the relationships between structure and order.

Philosophy of mathematics deals with the

meanings of mathematics, whether its interpretations or its assumptions and derivations. It asks fundamental questions relating to the structure of the universe, as these question the basic operations behind science in many ways.

What are some basic principles of mathematics? How does this relate to the philosophy of mathematics and, more generally, the philosophy of science? Where does mathematics reach a limit and philosophy of mathematics some extra legs, in some fundamental and important ways?

Dr. Herb Silverman:

I'll begin by describing some differences between mathematics and the sciences, mathematics and philosophy, and how they approach fundamental questions like the structure of the universe. I'll then bring in theological approaches to the same fundamental questions.

Mathematicians begin with assumptions (axioms) and try to discover what may logically be deduced from the axioms. Theoretical mathematicians are not concerned with whether the axioms are true. Axioms in some branches are contradictory to axioms in others. The axioms in Euclidean geometry have led to discoveries on planet Earth; results from the axioms in non-Euclidean geometry were applied many years later by Einstein for his general theory of relativity, when he showed we live in a non-Euclidean four-dimensional universe, consisting of three-dimensional space and one-dimensional time.

The 19th-century mathematician Gauss referred to mathematics as the “queen of the sciences,” perhaps because mathematics is essential in the study of all scientific fields. And physicist Eugene Wigner wrote “The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences.” Unlike mathematicians who are free to begin with any consistent set of axioms, scientists always begin with axioms (hypotheses) they believe to be true. Using the scientific method (collecting data and testing empirically), they hope to find sufficient evidence for their hypotheses to be elevated to theories (like gravity, natural selection, big bang, general relativity). When scientific statements are translated into mathematical statements, including about the structure of the universe, we apply mathematics to solve scientific problems. Perhaps that’s why Galileo referred to mathematics as the language in which the natural physical world is written.

Philosophy of mathematics looks into questions about mathematical theories and practices, which may include the nature or reality of numbers, the nature of different mathematical disciplines, limits of formal systems, and why mathematics coming from human minds can have such a relationship with reality. Philosophers, like scientists and unlike many mathematicians, care about whether their axioms are true and what implications they have in the real world. Philosophers, like most mathematicians and unlike scientists, stay mostly in their mind and don’t draw conclusions based on applying the scientific method. College courses in logic are taught in either philosophy or mathematics departments.

Kurt Gödel, a mathematician/logician, made a ground-breaking discovery in mathematics that also has implications to both science and philosophy. And it’s a rather disturbing discovery. Gödel showed that with just about any set of axioms there must be at least one true but unproveable statement. In other words, not all true statements in mathematics have formal proofs. Furthermore, we have no way of knowing in advance whether a statement is really hard to

prove (or disprove), or whether it is impossible. For instance, mathematician Andrew Wiles proved Fermat’s Last Theorem 358 years after it was proposed by Fermat in 1637. The proof was difficult but provable. We don’t know if questions about the beginning of our universe and multiverses is really hard to answer completely or is logically unanswerable. Or maybe the human mind is not bright enough to figure it out. I’d say my cat is incapable of learning integral calculus, just as humans might be incapable of answering some deep questions about the universe. And then there’s artificial intelligence.

To give more complete answers about math, science, and philosophy, I’d have to be an expert in all those fields, which I am not. I’m a research mathematician specializing in Complex Variables, but I’m not an expert. I’m not quite an expert in the subfield of Geometric Function Theory, but I might be considered an expert in a much smaller subfield of GMF in which I proved the first theorems. But very few mathematicians work in that area, which has no known applications to other branches of mathematics or usefulness other than to help me get tenure. Deciding on who are “experts” in a field is not clear cut, but I think the number of experts on any topic is inversely proportional to the evidence available on that topic. And by that criterion, we are all experts on God because there is absolutely no evidence for her/his existence. Anyone can make up stuff about God or quote stuff from books made up by others. In fact, acknowledging my ignorance qualifies me as a top God expert. To paraphrase Socrates: “He who believes he knows something when he knows nothing is less wise than he who knows he knows nothing.”

This brings me to debates I’ve had with some religious people about fundamental questions. They differ considerably from discussions I’ve had with scientists and philosophers. When these theists were given contradictory or unanswerable questions that didn’t match reality, a response was often the unfalsifiable, “God works in mysterious ways.” Assertions about holy book predictions coming true are usually post-dictions (written after the event) or interpretations that they try to make say what they don’t say. While all of us are susceptible to confirmation bias, I think that’s particularly true in religion. One theologian claimed that the Bible had it right in ways that prominent scientists who believed in an eternal universe had it wrong. Genesis opens with “In the beginning,” which was alleged to be scientific evidence that the Bible described the big bang. I pointed out that Genesis goes on to say that God then created two lights, the greater to rule the day, and the lesser the night. Almost as an afterthought, God then made stars (which biblical writers did not know were other suns, many larger than our sun).

To describe a significant difference between mathematicians and theologians, I’ll close with a

popular cartoon on the door of many mathematicians. It shows one mathematician explaining his complicated multi-step proof. Another mathematician interrupts, and says, "I think you should be more explicit here in step two." Step 2 says, "Then a miracle occurs."

Jacobsen:

Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Dr. Silverman.



Editor's Note: If you are interested in further reading of Scott Jacobsen's interviews with Dr. Silverman you can find them at the following web sites.

<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-4-jacobsen/>

<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-5-jacobsen/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwXTptXbRqw&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-3-jacobsen>

<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-6-jacobsen/>

Letter to the Editor
Post and Courier
March 13th 2019

Like most authors, I'm pleased when readers ask me to sign a copy of one of my books. But, like other authors, I never sign books written by someone else. So, I was surprised to learn that President Donald Trump recently signed Bibles in a Baptist church in Alabama.

I understand that some devotees believe that God (apparently a Republican) intervened in the last presidential election to make Trump president. But even his most ardent supporters don't believe Trump is God or an author of any part of the Bible. Some of us even suspect our president has never read the Bible, except for 2 Corinthians, which Trump referred to in prepared remarks at Liberty University as "the whole ball game."

Here's my take on why our president might have felt justified in signing Bibles.

Donald Trump takes credit for the book "Art of the Deal," written by journalist Tony Schwartz. Since there is much controversy over who wrote the Bible, perhaps President Trump is perfectly willing to take credit.

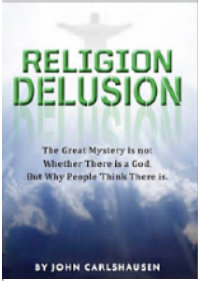
After all, a wrathful Donald Trump demands 100 percent loyalty, doesn't admit to mistakes, blames others when things go wrong, never apologizes, claims to know more than any expert in any field, doesn't recognize a power higher than himself and expects others to believe he is perfect or suffer grave consequences. That sounds a lot like the kind of god many people believe in.

Herb Silverman
George Street
Charleston

Editor's note: The leading edge reflects the writings of freethinkers. Rather than ask for submissions we will be reviewing various local social media to be included each month on this designated page in the Separationist. Suggested writings are welcome. Please send letters or articles to newletter@lowcountrynewsletter.org.

Reason Without Borders

Articles and Opinions Beyond the SHL Community



Editor's note: The author of this book asked me to mention it. It was also mentioned by the Washington Area Secular Humanist.

Here is a brief description from Amazon Books.

**WANT A REALITY CHECK?
READ MY BOOK RELIGION
DELUSION.**

This book needed to be written. A book about the folly of Religion. Folly is described in the Dictionary as being foolish, lack of sense and unwise conduct. This describes Religion perfectly.

It is foolish to believe there is an invisible friend in the sky called God, who is watching over you and seven billion other people who reside here on Earth.

He is watching over us twenty four hours a day and has been doing this for Centuries.

Anyone who believes this nonsense is being foolish and is definitely lacking common sense.

Unwise conduct is killing yourself and other people in the vain hope that you will go to Heaven where 72 virgins will be waiting for you.

Best Wishes,
John Carlshausen.

Friendly ~~A~~theist

BY HEMANT MEHTA

February 22, 2019

A high school pre-AP Biology teacher in Kentucky has been accused of promoting Christianity in the classroom, and you don't have to take my word for it, because there's video evidence.

Where there are apparently multiple instances of this happening, one particular incident was caught on tape. It began when the teacher showed this wordless one-minute video of the M51 Whirlpool Galaxy in which, from a distance, it appears as if there's a cross at the center of it. (It's nothing of the sort.)

Then, to hammer the point home, the same teacher showed students a video of Pastor Louie Giglio explaining that the image is somehow proof of "Jesus everywhere." (Giglio is the same science-ignorant Christian who claimed that the structure of a laminin molecule also showed God's existence.)

The Sign of the Son of Man
Discovered in Deep Space!
Indescribable!

And if you think there's no way a teacher would be dumb enough to show this to students, a girl in the class recorded the entire thing:

The girl's mother gave even more context to the situation on the Blasphemy in the Bluegrass podcast. Another student

apparently ratted out her daughter to the teacher, saying she had recorded that particular lesson. The teacher asked the girl to delete the video. She said she would. She didn't. And that's why we have the recording you see above.

The same girl told her vice principal about it earlier this week... and that led to him fighting over the phone with her father about how the girl wasn't allowed to record in the classroom. (The VP didn't address the proselytizing.) Principal Matt Mason was of little help, too.

Now the Freedom From Religion Foundation has written a letter to Superintendent Matt Robbins, who oversees Daviess County High School. The specific names of the people involved have been redacted in the previous link at the request of the family. FFRF says this is not the only example of the same teacher promoting Christianity in the classroom; in fact, the same teacher shows videos of "church sermons" in class.

Ms. [redacted]'s actions constitute an egregious violation of the First Amendment. We write to request that Ms. [redacted] be formally reprimanded for her conduct, and that the District provide adequate assurances that no [Daviess County] Public Schools teachers will be permitted to use their classroom to proselytize other peoples' children.

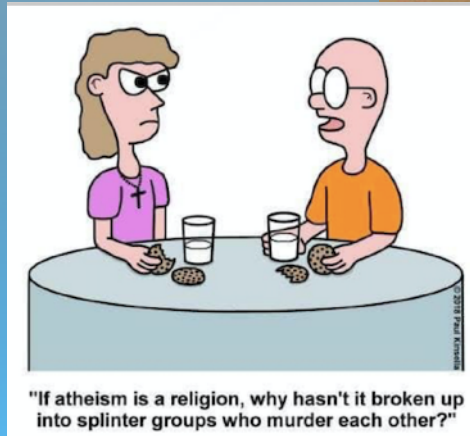
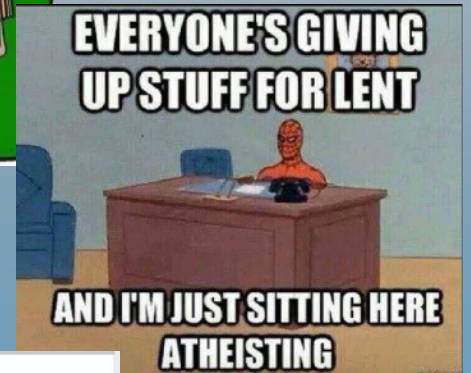
For now, according to the girl's mother, the administrators at the school say they've begun an investigation — though who knows what that entails — and

the girl has been moved to a different biology class during the same period. What we don't know is what the District will do about this teacher. There's absolutely no room in a public school to promote Christianity — certainly not in a science class, and certainly not with the sort of bullshit theology that people like Giglio use to "prove" God is everywhere. It's bad enough when he does it in church. For a teacher to spread his Christian nonsense is flat-out illegal.



Reasonable Humor

Quips and Cartoons offered by membership from online sources





April




Charity of the Quarter



"Fresh Future Farm leverages unused city assets to create food and job opportunities that will transform the current food desert into a more self-reliant and robust community." "Established in late 2014 on a vacant North Charleston, SC lot, Fresh Future Farm sows healthy food to harvest community and independence. Food access is an \$11 billion business in South Carolina and a comprehensive way to bring green jobs to blighted communities." "They have a store in a food desert in N. CHS, providing fresh produce to underserved neighborhoods."

Please help SHL make a difference: Contributions can be made at the Monthly Gathering at Gage Hall or contact our SHL Treasurer: Garrett Gehlhausen at treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org .

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1  April Fool's Day	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 SHL Happy Hour 	11	12	13
14  SHL Egg Hunt	15	16	17	18	19  Full Moon	20
21 SHL Gathering 	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 SHL Book Group 	29	30				

SHL Board for 2018-2019

Bonnie Cleaveland, President
Steffi Green, Vice President
Garrett Gehlhausen, Treasurer
Member-at-Large, Tom Jhou
Member-at-Large, Joshua Pershin
00 00 00

Volunteer Coordinator, Laura Kasman
News Letter Editor's *John and Barbara Childs*

SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE
LOWCOUNTRY

Contact us!

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SHL is a non-prophet
organization

Staying Connected

You can find us all over the internet, we're (nearly) omnipresent.

Web: lowcountryhumanists.org

Meetup: <https://www.meetup.com/owcountryhumanists/>

Facebook: [CHSHumanists](https://www.facebook.com/CHSHumanists)

Twitter: [@CHSHumanists](https://twitter.com/CHSHumanists)

YouTube: [Charleston Humanists](https://www.youtube.com/CharlestonHumanists)

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a *non-prophet* organization

