

FIG Leaves

Volume 12 Issue 7

July/August 2003

July Meeting: on Tuesday 22 July

A history of Zionism, the political search for a Jewish homeland.

What is Zionism? When and where did it begin? How did a religion become a nationality? Is Zionism a religious movement and would a theocratic state be possible in Israel in the twenty-first century? Is Zionism just a maverick in the sweeping history of modern European nationalisms, and what does it have to do with the search for the messiah? Can Israel become just another secular state, and can the "holy tongue" of the prophets become just another modern language? Roder will raise these questions, and try to answer at least some of them.

Wolf Roder is Emeritus Professor of Geography at the University of Cincinnati. Over the years he has taught geography of the Middle East and geography of

From the Editor:

We shall be unable to produce an August issue of FigLeaves. Your editorial team will be out of town from 8 to 20 August, which is the exact time for the production of the Newsletter. On the other hand, no Fig meeting with a speaker is planned for August either, so no announcement will be missed. There will be the annual picnic and potluck at the spread of Edwin and Helen Kagin, bring a swimsuit.

Deadline for the September FigLeaves will be 5 September and you may expect that issue to fall through your mail slot about the 18th of the month. Potluck will be on Tuesday, 9 September, but the place "where" has not been decided. We anticipate talks on the subject of Einstein and Religion and on the

FIG Meeting of June 26, 2003

Speaker: Richard T. Hull, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, SUNY-Buffalo

The Case for Physician-Assisted Suicide

In the absence of the FIG President, Program Director Joe Levee introduced the speaker. He pointed out that Professor Hull's wife was here attending a conference at the University of Cincinnati and Joe was therefore able to persuade him to talk to our group while in Cincinnati. Professor Hull mentioned that his interest in philosophy was concentrated in the field of bio-ethics while his wife, a neuroscientist was studying the sexual behavior of males, using rats as models for research.

Cont. on page 3

Study of "male sexual behavior" can have interesting ramifications. When they moved into a new house

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Events

July Meeting

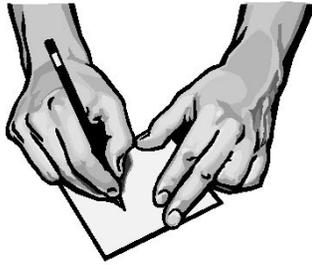
History of Zionism
Tuesday July 22nd at 7:00 PM
At the Vernon Manor Hotel,
400 Oak Street, Cincinnati

No August Meeting.....

The Annual Picnic
Sunday, 17 August 2003

September Potluck
Tuesday 9 September 2003

Letter To The



FYI on my thinking

What in the world can the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) be thinking? "Faith based" solutions for Social Services? The demand for "free" medical care, prescription drugs and more government involvement seems to be the clarion call of this organization. Why not go to the church, synagogue or mosque of choice for their handouts? After all, the religious gorillas already don't pay taxes on the billions of dollars in real estate, investment income and myriad cash cows under their 501C-3 exemptions.

As a tax-paying Secular Humanist, I totally resent any reason for the commingling of government and religion--a concept absolutely prohibited by our Constitution. Unfortunately, of late the religious (liberal and conservative) community has the ear of our President, our Supreme Court and our State governments. Why else affirmative action, gun control, school bussing, the skewing of our First Amendment, inserting "under god" in our Pledge and on our currency and allowing socialistic ideas to be advanced by law? It continues to amaze me how States Rights have been violated by our courts.

Should we older folks be rewarded just for being alive by stealing from others, alive or dead? Of course not, nor should those receiving alms be forced to hear "the word" or be subjected to accepting belief in the supernatural before their needs are fulfilled?

Today a Pat Robertson or similar character is dressed in a Robin Hood outfit, but only wants to give to "believers" while he robs from anyone who has worked to improve his or her lot in life. Joining him is Maid Hillary and the Merry Men (and women) of Hollywood. Fascinating....politics do make for strange bedfellows--AARP included.

-- Maurice J. Koch, Jr. North Avondale

To the Editor:

Religion and government are tools created by human society to preserve and perpetuate itself. Both these tools are antiquated. Religion is like the nail. Government is like the hammer. Both have co-

evolved and are co-dependent. The "wall of separation" between the two represents wishful thinking on the part of a small minority.

The reason religion and government are antiquated is because a declining percentage of humans must deal regularly with violence. Religion and government are useful for helping humans organize for the purpose of meting out violence. But, just as there are declining numbers of farmers, there are declining numbers of warriors and professional hunters.

It may seem odd to claim a lesser need for those with careers devoted to violence during our current hysteria over terrorism, but this hysteria will pass. And the problem of terrorism will not be resolved anyway by an overall increase in violence. Rather the solution will flow from the courage to calm down and "demilitarize."

Both a nail and a hammer are forged metal shapes. Now look at the similarities between religion and government. They both rely on experts forcing laymen to do their bidding. The alternatives to religion and government are patience and understanding. What's best for human society will arise spontaneously, assuming religion and government militarism don't obliterate us first.

As I got more deeply into the anti-creationist literature, I began to notice that much of it seemed to be soft-pedaling Darwin's theory. The reason in some cases was obvious and forgivable. People who serve the cause of science education by repeatedly testifying against creationist initiatives come to understand that they can't succeed without support from other, less dogmatic, Christians; but the unvarnished Darwinian vision isn't reassuring to even the mildest supernatural belief.

— Frederick Crews, NCSE Reports (Nov.-Dec. 2002) p. 28

FIG Leaves Volume 12, Issue 6, June 2003 - Editors welcome thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons. Submit in Electronic format via the internet - figleaves@fuse.net; on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 19034, Cincinnati, OH 45219. Contributions received before the first Friday of the month will be considered for publication that month. All material printed in FIG Leaves may be reproduced in similar publications of non-profit groups which grant FIG Leaves reciprocal reprinting rights as long as proper credit is clearly attributed to FIG Leaves and the authors and do not necessarily reflect opinions of the editor or the Free Inquiry Group, inc., its board, or officers.

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Assisted Suicide from Page 1....

in an upscale neighborhood near Buffalo they had visits from 27 Girl Scouts selling cookies the first year. They bought from every one. They anticipated a greater number the next year but they had none. They observed the girls move from the house on one side of them to the house on the other side and avoid their property completely. They eventually learned the reason from a friend. He attended a planning session for neighborhood caroling during the yule tide. In attempting to avoid offending anyone in this diverse neighborhood they were careful in their selection. Someone on the committee asked, "What about the sex therapists?" Their friend asked, "Who?" The answer was "The Hulls." So that's why their house had been avoided during the Girl Scout cookie sale.

The speaker then shifted focus to the subject at hand. He told how he had become interested in end-of-life decisions and physician-assisted suicide through personal experiences with these issues in his own family. In 1974, his father-in-law, a retired postal worker, collapsed in a department store. Two clerks gave him CPR while they waited for the ambulance to arrive. In the ride to the hospital, the emergency technicians failed to continue the compression and gave the patient oxygen alone. At the hospital, the ER physicians managed to restart his heart but the patient sustained a permanent loss of brain function although he was not classified as brain-dead. The treatment consisted of forced nutrition and hydration. The son and daughter of the patient asked the attending physician about discontinuing this program, but were told they could not do so without specific instructions from the patient. Even with such instructions, they could not do so if one member of the family objected. His wife would most certainly have objected. They continued the treatment for three weeks when a second heart attack took his life.

Professor Hull's next personal experience involved his brother, John, a horticulture scientist. His specialty was thornless blackberries and elm trees. In 1976, John Hull, a smoker and heavy drinker was diagnosed with neck cancer. He underwent radiation therapy followed by what was called radical dissection of the neck. His recovery was slow and required a hospital stay of 78 days. After a brief period out of hospital, he experienced difficulty in swallowing, and was readmitted. Upon examination another tumor was found in his esophagus. He was referred to an

other physician who had a more focused protocol of radiation. While this treatment was being arranged, the attending physician discovered that the original tumor had re-seeded itself and had grown around his right carotid artery. This was inoperable, neither could it be treated with radiation. John Hull was eventually referred to hospice care where it was determined that since he had such a strong family support, the hospice type care could best be delivered at home. Eventually as his condition worsened, he developed delusions, hallucinations and psychotic episodes. The attending physician eventually told Professor Hull she couldn't understand why his brother didn't simply pull out his feeding tube. If he did that she could not reinstall it unless he gave permission. If he refused, all she could do was administer morphine to relieve his pain and he would then die within a few days. This exchange was reported to John Hull. After an episode of difficulty in breathing, John pulled out his feeding tube. The doctor was called and when she arrived she asked John Hull if he wanted her to reinstall the tube. He said, "No." She gave him an injection of morphine, which failed to act because of his circulatory problems. She then gave him a second injection in the vein in his hand. This had a more immediate effect. John Hull lived for several more days. His death certificate read: "Cause of death: Cancer and sequelae."

The third experience involved Professor Hull's parents and occurred about five years later. In 1981, he received a telephone call from his father who said that he had made a promise to his wife, an Alzheimer patient, that he would not die before she did. He went on to say that he was feeling increasingly that he was not going to be able to keep this promise unless they could go together. He asked his son to call any physicians he knew who might be able to suggest a way to accomplish this. The physicians mostly suggested that this was probably a passing irrational fear and that if he had really wanted to commit suicide, he would already have found a way. His father died the next morning while trying to get out of bed. His mother found the body. Despite the promise his mother took her husband's death calmly. She lived another six years going in and out of periods of lucidity. When she had a stroke that prevented her from swallowing, the doctor asked if he could install a feeding tube. Professor Hull asked if this was a treatment or a way of life. The doctor indicated that it was the latter and that she

would have to continue on the tube to keep her alive. Hull knew from discussions they had had about his brother's situation that she would not have wanted such treatment. He declined to have the feeding tube installed. His mother died five days later.

These experiences conditioned the speaker's thinking about physician-assisted suicide and other end-of-life issues. In his father-in-law's case, there had never been any discussion about what his wishes might have been if such an event ever occurred. In view of the practice at the time and the lack of any prior discussion, Professor Hull felt that the physicians had acted properly. He viewed his brother's case differently. When John Hull started treatment his chances of survival were deemed to be 25 percent. With the finding of a second tumor, they dropped to ten percent and with the re-emergence of the initial tumor they dropped to zero. His wish to die was not unreasonable but his care giver was licensed to provide only terminal care and could not legally assist in his suicide as might be done in Oregon or The Netherlands. She did, however, give him information as to how he, himself, could get around the legal prohibitions by refusing forced nutrition. She then would be able to give him palliative care, morphine injections that might deaden his pain.

Professor Hull pointed out that his father's case illustrates points that opponents of physician-assisted suicide make. First the patient's request to die was made only once and was not the result of a terminal diagnosis. Further, his decision to die, because of the promise made to his wife, would not be taken seriously even in a permissive legal physician-assisted suicide environment. Third he was not experiencing any severe physical suffering and fourth his motivation was to spare his wife's concern about being left alone by killing her first. His was not the kind of motivation that would have been recognized by any well-regulated scheme.

The ability to invoke physician-assisted suicide is the only element in the dying patient's dwindling resources that can send a message to physicians, insurance carriers and politicians that care is not adequate. Far too many patients spend their last days without adequate palliation. Those physicians sensitive to their cries are reluctant to write prescriptions for additional narcotics in the present political climate for fear of criticism by state health departments and federal drug agents. In New York State in the 80's there was a law

suit brought by Dr Timothy Quill and a number of his patients against the state and which sought to overturn the law prohibiting physician-assisted suicide. The State Supreme Court decided in favor of the State. The Federal Appeals Court reversed that decision. However the Supreme Court of the United States held that there is no constitutional right to physician assisted suicide. But they did find that states could enact such legislation if they so desired. Oregon then passed its physician-assisted suicide law, which has been confirmed twice by the voters. US Attorney General John Ashcroft has issued a directive that prohibits the use of narcotics in physician-assisted suicide because this does not fall within the definition of medical usage under the Controlled Substances Act. A Federal judge has stayed the implementation and the appeal is now working its way back through the Federal Court system. Some physicians view it as an affront to their profession to suppose their work extends to a duty to kill by assisting at suicide. But it is an affront to dying patients and their families to be forced to beg for more narcotics to relieve pain. This is especially true when the response to their pleas often is an insensitive: "we don't want to make an addict of you."

There are three main arguments in opposition to physician-assisted suicide. The first is the religious view that we do not "own" our lives. They are owned by god and the termination of any life is his decision. The flaw in this argument is that if it is used to justify legislation, it violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. A second argument in opposition turns on the consequences supposed to follow any favorable physician-assisted suicide legislation. This is the so-called "slippery slope" argument. If we allow competent individuals to opt for physician-assisted suicide, then we might extend it to formerly competent who have become incompetent meanwhile. We will then find it irresistible to extend it to severely handicapped newborns so the end result would be to extermination of the incompetent, the insane and finally to euthanasia. The third argument is that it will radically change the practice of medicine. People will fear that their physicians will no longer fight to keep them alive. Arguments in favor focus on the suffering and despair of patients who are dying or are suffering from degenerative diseases for whom a continuation of life no longer holds any interest. The "slippery slope" can be blocked by careful wording of the legislative enactment. The Oregon law requires (1) that two physicians certify to the competence and terminal state

of the patient, (2) mandatory waiting periods, (3) the patient must have a consistent and unwavering desire to die and (4) an annual review of all cases of assisted

The following was published by the American Humanist Association in the May/June 2003 issue of its Humanist magazine. Joe Levee was invited to be among the seventy or so original signers.

HUMANISM AND ITS ASPIRATIONS

Humanist Manifesto III, a successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The lifestance of Humanism guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of Humanism, not what we must believe but a consensus of what we do believe. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:

Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.

Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.

Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.

Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.

Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.

We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.

Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.

Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

Humanists are concerned for the well being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process and a planetary duty to protect nature's integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.

Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world

Quote

Roadmap to Peace

At a conference in Washington speaker after speaker denounced the document as a "Roadmap to hell." [Gary] Bauer organized a letter to Bush from two dozen evangelical leaders, warning that any attempt to be "evenhanded" between Israel and the Palestinians would be "morally reprehensible." "If they do anything other than make Jerusalem the capital of Israel, they would be messing with the word and the power of God," Robertson told Newsweek. [House Republican leader, Tom] DeLay pitched in, too. Speaking to Jewish political activists in Washington last week, he said, "Israel is not the problem in the Middle East. Israel is the solution." He spoke no Hebrew this time, but it still sounded like a prayer.

— Newsweek (2 June 2003) p. 35

Unquote

Booknote:

Y: The Descent of Men, Revealing the Mysteries of Maleness

by Dr. Steve Jones

(Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2003)

Dr. Jones combines scientific and cultural insights about the evolutionary and biological latecomer we call the male. In Y: The Descent of Men, Jones marshals the most recent research to reach a conclusion that many women and some men have long held. Males are the weaker; the second sex. Indeed, this century might be called the "age of women," given the growing list of males' biological shortcomings. While Jones uses the most up-to-date scientific research as a basis for his argument, his ultimate focus is on the ways in which science influences how men--compared to women--interact with the world.

Dr. Steve Jones is professor of genetics and head of the Galton Laboratory, University College, London. He has previously written three books, two of which were published in the United States: Darwin's Ghost (2000) and The Language of Genes (1994). He has written for the New York Review of Books and has a regular column about science in the London Daily Telegraph.

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Comments from the Secular Humanist discussion group.

Howard Dean made his formal announcement of candidacy on 24 June. He was the first candidate in recent history who did not include the words "God Bless America" in his speech. Indeed, the word "God" did not appear in the entire speech. The only references he made to religion were to talk about how tired he is of right-wing fundamentalist preachers telling people how to act. This comment is not in the original transcript, he ad-libbed it in his speech, but is something he likes to talk about at every campaign stop. His entire speech is full of subtle messages about inclusiveness and advocates support for reason and rational thought over blind faith. He even quoted Tom Paine!

Significantly, he used the following phrase from the Declaration of Independence: "we hold these truths to be self evident: that all are created equal and are endowed with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," leaving out the reference to "men" and to the "creator."

That Explains It.

God cannot do an unjust thing because whatever He wills or does is therefore just, his will being the measure of justice.

— Bishop Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) in Ductor Dubitatum

With our nation engaged in war, it is important to remember that organizations in the peace movement in fact have been astonishingly successful at influencing an administration in its determined rush to war.

President Bush announced early on that he had no intention of going to the United Nations to get approval for a war — but thanks to the attention shined on the issue by us, he did. The President insisted he didn't need Congressional approval to go to war — yet he was at last convinced to enlist the support of the Congress. He said he wouldn't go back to the U.N. — but he did.

At each stage, dialogue occurred and dissent registered. And the worldwide peace movement has gained strength and breadth on a scale that seemed unimaginable even a few months ago.

— American Friends Service Committee, Special Bulletin (Spring 2003) p. 1



BOOK REVIEW

The World of the Ancient Greeks

by John Camp and Elizabeth Fisher

(London: Thames and Hudson, 2002)

On the face of it this looks like a mere coffee table book, full of photographs and diagrams, with a vague text signifying very little. And indeed, the book has 376 illustrations, more than a quarter in color. That means there are two to four illustrations on every page, each and every one of them with a long legend explaining and integrating the picture into the text. The legends do have to be read to understand what is going on, but if you follow the thread the reader will draw a clear understanding of the role of Greek language and culture in classical civilization.

A distinctly Greek culture is discernable in the mists of pre-history some two millennia before Christ, which is itself a Greek word, and the language remained in general use in the eastern Mediterranean until the conquest of Byzantium by the Ottoman Turks in the mid-fifteenth century. The high period of Greek and Greco-Roman civilization runs a thousand years from the epic poetry of Homer around the eighth century BCE to the scientific achievements of Ptolemy near the end of the second century CE. In this age the Greeks laid the basis of western civilization in general, and of European civilization specifically. Many of the basic aspects of our world were invented by the Greeks, or transmitted to us by Greek thinkers from yet older civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean. The many words in our language that derive from classical Greek usage testify to the importance of their culture.

The Greeks appear to have invented democracy, the idea of government controlled by the people with the rulers elected by a vote of all eligible citizens. This brought with it the need for supervision of the elected against corruption, and the invention of rhetoric and advertising to promote the candidacy of the eager.

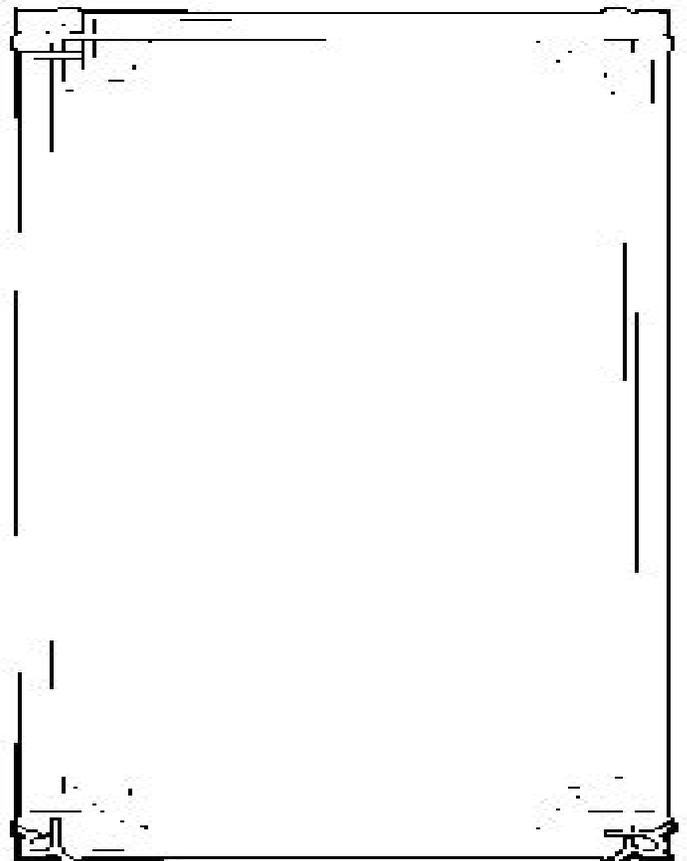
The first scientists arose among the Greeks. Science in this context refers to the systematic investigation of nature, including our own thought, for its own sake, not as an ancillary to some practical pursuit. Thus, Greeks developed the systematic beginnings of philosophy, of geometry, of earth science, and of many other aspects of knowledge.

The Greeks surely did not invent sports or com-

petitions, but they created in the Olympic games the first international meetings for sport among all the Greek peoples. These are the same Olympic games that were revived by 19th century Europe and today are celebrated every two years by the entire world.

Finally, the myths of Christianity, the books of the New Testament were written in the Greek language. Most of the early defenders of Christianity, the Church Fathers wrote in this language. And Greek remains the language of some of the Orthodox churches to this day.

Many other aspects of ancient Greek civilization are fundamental to our world. The beginnings of theater and drama, their arts of sculpture, painting, and architecture remain influential, our styles of writing prose and poetry date to ancient models, the Greeks learned much about navigation, and first measured the circumference of the Earth. The book by Camp and Fisher provides a broad and balanced introduction to the Greek ages and the concerns of their time. The pictures display a great deal of the reality of their time, and of the archaeology which has revived it for ours. For anyone who has even a slight interest in our cultural roots it is indispensable reading, viewing, and





Annual Picnic August 17th 1:00 PM
September Potluck Tuesday 8th 6:30 PM

July Meeting - July 22, 2003
(no August Meeting)



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P.O. Box 19034
Cincinnati, OH 45219

FIG

Our Purpose

The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded in 1991. FIG is allied with the Council for Secular Humanism and an affiliate of the American Humanist Association. Our members are mostly secular humanists. However, we welcome to our meetings anyone interested in learning about or furthering our purpose.

To foster a community of secular humanists dedicated to improving the human condition through rational inquiry and creative thinking unfettered by superstition, religion, or any form of dogma.

In accordance with our purpose, we have established the following goals:

- To provide a forum for intelligent exchange of ideas for those seeking fulfillment in an ethical secular life.
- To develop through open discussion the moral basis of a secular society and encourage ethical practices within our own membership and the community at large.
- To inform the public regarding secular alternatives to supernatural interpretations of the human condition.
- To support and defend the principles of democracy, free speech, and separation of church and state as expressed in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

For more information, write the Free Inquiry Group at the address above, e-mail figleaves@fuse.net, or leave a message at (513) 557-3836. Visit our web site at gofigger.org