

FIG LEAVES

Volume 13 Issue 5

May 2004

May Meeting: Sunday, 23 May (Note day and date)

Speaker: Tim Madigan on Mark Twain

Mark Twain (1835-1910) is one of America's most beloved authors. Yet his trenchant criticisms of organized religion, and his opposition to America's growing militarism and colonial aspirations in the early 20th Century, remain relatively unknown. This is partly due to the fact that his literary heirs would not allow some of his more scathing works to be published until many decades after his death. In this talk, Tim will discuss the role Twain played as an ardent anti-imperialist, as well as a true "devil's advocate" (he felt that Satan had never been given a proper argument for the defense). He'll examine such humorous works as *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*, which are rich with reflections on the barbarous nature of religions and the ridiculous stories of the Bible.

Special attention will be paid to his magnificent novella *The Mysterious Stranger*, whose hero is the nephew of Satan himself, and which deals with such issues as human cruelty, free will versus determinism, and the need for scapegoats in a theocratic society. Not surprisingly, this was one of Twain's posthumously published works. Its tone is grim, and unlike the previously mentioned works, there are no humorous interludes in it. The work ends with a magnificent description of why human beings are continually enticed into going to war by demagogues, who usually rely upon supernatural justifications to rouse people's hatreds to a fever pitch. At a time when the United States again finds itself an occupying force in a foreign land, and while religious rhetoric and fundamentalist assumptions dominate our political world, Twain remains as fresh and as relevant as during his own lifetime.

Tim Madigan is Editorial Director of the University of Rochester Press, Chairman of the editorial board of *Free Inquiry*, and a member of the editorial board of *Philosophy Now* magazine. Tim is one of our favorite speakers and a long-time friend of FIG, having spoken to us at our first meeting and many times since.

June Meeting:

In June, Zachary Miner will discuss "New Religious Threats to American Freedoms," a look at the "Mind Siege" movement and how it affects secularists. Zachary is a field organizer for CFI-On Campus (formerly the Campus Freethought Alliance, or CFA).

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Events May Potluck

Tuesday, 11 May 6:30 PM
at the home of **May Meeting**

Sunday, 23 May
7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor
400 Oak Street,
Cincinnati, Ohio

June Potluck

Tuesday, 8 June 6:30 PM
at the home of the

June Meeting

(Tentative) Tuesday, 23 June
7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor
400 Oak Street,
Cincinnati, Ohio



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April Meeting

History of the Hebrew Bible: Current Academic Understandings.
Brant Abrahamson, Teacher of World History at Riverside-Brookville High School in suburban Chicago.

Mr. Abrahamson started by saying that what he proposed to do for this talk was to summarize the latest academic understanding how this book, this artifact, this Hebrew Bible came into existence. He also noted that since there continue to be disputes, what he would present would be how he perceived or interpreted the current understandings. Since the research is ongoing, there have been changes in perceptions over the last twenty years and probably would continue to be as new discoveries are made.

He then moved to a consideration of the pre-history of the Israelites. They lived in an area called Canaan about 200 miles from north to south on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. The first time the Israelites came to the attention of any ruler in this area was in 1223 BCE when the Egyptian pharaoh, Merenptah, came into contact with this group of people that he called Hebrews. They were one among a number of tribes that he said he smashed. There exists a stele celebrating this victory

After 1200 BCE a succession of famine years plagued the region. These probably were due to a change in weather patterns caused by or contributed to by volcanic eruptions in Iceland. A long winter drove a series of migrations resembling a domino effect across Europe. On the Greek Islands all Mycenaean cities were destroyed. A people who migrated by sea as far as Canaan became known as Philistines. In this period the Hebrews did not yet have a written language, but they did have stories that told how they came to exist as a group, how they related to their gods, and who their great men were.

Generally, they had the oral history of the immediate past that people still living could remember. But, beyond the living memory, such history quickly shifts into saga and myth. The myths tend to get more elaborate as time progresses. They include snippets of happenings from other times that become mixed together and also include borrowing from other cultures. Sagas tend to congregate around heroes who are mythical themselves. Great deeds are attributed to one man. In pre-literate society, the story teller must make his story interesting to his hearers, encouraging him to add details of what he thinks might have been, should have been, would have been. As the generations pass a simple story becomes more and more elaborate.

Looking for a moment at the specific Israelite myths: Many of the stories in Genesis are of the borrowed variety –the garden of Eden story, Noah's flood, and the Tower of Babel are all reworked Mesopotamian myths that had been circulating for a thousand years. Abraham's journey from the city of Ur up the Euphrates river, southwest through Canaan, over to Egypt and back to Canaan again is an almost stereotypical hero's quest myth. The first Moses story is also borrowed from Mesopotamia. Sargon of Akkad in the third millennium BCE is said to have survived as a baby by being put in a reed basket protected by women. In looking at other Moses stories in the Torah, we need to remember that Canaan was an Egyptian imperialist province from 1550 to 1200 BCE. It was during this period that the Pharaohs were in the habit of taking Canaanite boys back to Egypt, training them, Egyptianizing them, then as adults sending them back as administrators or leaders of army contingents. Such boys were given Egyptian names, which Moses is.

By about 1100 BCE the Canaanite cities were destroyed. From the Israelite standpoint, it is easy to imagine they were destroyed by their ancestors. The stories



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became convoluted in Joshua and Judges. Often there were stories of the Israelites battling the Philistines but from a historical perspective it was the Philistines who came in with the Sea Peoples who destroyed the cities.

By thousand BCE the Israelites did not yet have writing so historical knowledge remained oral. In the 800's the Israelites began to build and settle in cities. The first of these were in the northern area. The earliest example of Hebrew writing came from this area. One of the factors that distinguishes one people from another is their language. It separates people who speak a certain language from others who do not speak it. Another marker by which archaeologists differentiated Hebrew sites from others is the absence of pig bones. The Israelites of all the Canaanite groups did not eat pork.

Omri, the first Israelite king and his son, Ahab, built the first city, Samaria. At this time Jerusalem was just a small hill town . It didn't become a city until the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 BCE. Many refugees fled south. Among them were priests who brought their sacred scrolls. Here we find the beginning of written history.

Brant then referred to the handout he had distributed earlier, calling attention to the column identified as E with chapter and verse references to Genesis, Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These are referred to as the Elohim documents because they used Elohim as the name for their god. These references were in the scrolls their priests brought from the north when they fled the Assyrian invasion. In the Jerusalem scrolls god was referred to as Yahweh. These references are identified as J on the chart. El had a different personality than Yahweh. El was a fearful god who ruled by fear. No one dared to look at El much less talk to him, not even Moses. Yahweh was more down to earth. He could stay for supper with Abraham and Sarah. He was a god you could argue with and a god that Sarah could laugh at when he told her that she would get pregnant at her advanced age. There were other differences too. In these

old documents, the ark of the covenant story is mentioned only in J, the tabernacle story is only described in El.

When Hezekiah was king in Judah, he had priests of the north with their E documents and priests of Jerusalem with their J documents. He called them together and told them to harmonize the two different sets. Neither side was willing to give up any scriptures, thus they just put them together. That is why we encounter a number of stories about the same events but with slightly different viewpoints. For example, Moses is a more important in the north while Aaron is bigger in the south. King Hezekiah, Jerusalem, and the developing Torah survived the Assyrians by paying all the tribute they demanded.

Modern research began with the "higher criticism" of the Bible, which started in Germany about two hundred years ago.

.....
: A Generous Offer by Brant Abrahamson
: Our speaker on the Hebrew Bible on 27 April 2004.
: Any FIG member interested in the history of the
: Hebrew Bible can receive a written script of his April 27
: FIG meeting lecture (16 pages) and/or the 13 lesson se-
: ries (94 pages) that his colleague and he developed for
: young adults. Send an e-mail request to teacherspr@aol.
: com or a post card to Brant Abrahamson, 3731 Madison
: Avenue, Brookfield, IL 60513. Include your postal address
: and specify "script" and/or "lesson series." There is no
:

The scholars took a translation of the Hebrew Bible as it then existed and reviewed three books of the Torah. They put the texts referencing El alongside the same texts referencing Yahweh and engaged in careful textual comparison.

By 650 BCE one encounters the merged scrolls E and J along with some prophetic writings, Amos and Isaiah for example. It is hard to tell exactly what is original because their books were rewritten and heavily edited for centuries thereafter.

Brant then moved to King Josiah whose reign began in 638 BCE. He was the great grandson of Hezekiah. Most of the present Old Testament was written during his reign. He had the scribes write a history going back to when Saul became the first

king, and coming down through David and Solomon and continuing to his own time as king. Josiah introduced new ways of worshipping . He had the priests reenact the creation stories, exodus stories and the mythological stories of his group.

A new threat arose in the east in the person of Nebuchadnezzar who became king of Babylon in 605 BCE. He conquered everything west to the Mediterranean. This effectively ended the Kingdom of Judah. It also began the Babylonian Captivity. Leading Jews were taken to Babylon. They were allowed to live in their own communities and continue to worship Yahweh. They also refined and elaborated their scriptures. The revised scrolls and their changes are identified as P on Brant's handout. The bulk of this material was written after 500 BCE. After 50 to 75 years the captivity ended and the Jews in Babylon were allowed to

return to Jerusalem. They found that the people left behind had reverted to worshipping the old gods. The returned priests had been influenced by Zoroastrian monotheism and they took their tribal god, Yahweh, and transformed him into a universal deity. Books continued to be written through the Persian era, the Greek of Alexander, and down to the Roman occupation.

At this time the priests cut off the inclusion of any more books. The apocryphal Books of the Maccabees may have been the last. That is where the Hebrew Bible stands today.

Anyone who has an interest in the subject may find it useful to have copy of the handout or refer to the appendix of the

• *Quote* • • • • •
• Scientific knowledge had freed
• the nineteenth century from the
• past, and the passport to freedom
• was something called the scien-
• tific method.
• — Robert Bruce Mullin, When Science
• • • • • *Unquote*



The anti-Darwinian views of Michael J. Behe in a nutshell:

Darwinism—even if true—has no resources to support any real philosophy, whether conservative or liberal, vegetarian or royalist. Organisms have traits, the traits vary, some variations help the organism leave more offspring than other organisms—that’s the whole Darwinian ball of wax. Nothing in Darwinism tells you what those traits should be, either now or in the future, or even what a “trait” is. Nothing says whether it is the average of the traits that is important, the novelties, or the most extreme variation. “Important” has no meaning in Darwinism other than to leave more offspring, which can be done by means pleasant or brutal. A person can use Darwinism to justify any preference; he simply points to some person or animal with the trait he likes and argues that it’s natural. And everyone else can do the same. Postmodernists are not known to be hostile

to natural selection.

Like most Darwinian enthusiasts, Prof. Arnhart does not distinguish between what the theory actually explains, which is very little, and what it merely rationalizes post hoc, which is practically everything. Consider, as an example, that Darwinism predicts ultimately selfish behavior as organisms strive to continue their own genetic line. By looking around them, however, Darwinists belatedly noticed that humans happily cooperate and, in cases such as celibate clergy, even sacrifice their own “genetic good” for others. Something was amiss. So computer models were generated to try to squeeze human behavior into a Darwinian framework. Lots of computer models. Some models didn’t work at all; others gave the Darwinists something close to what they were looking for. But the entire procedure was an exercise in rationalization. Darwinists didn’t tell us what human nature is or should be—they looked to see what humans were doing and then tried to fit it into their theory. Nor did they tell us how humans came to have such unique and complex abilities as speech and abstract thought. Rather, they started with the fact that we have them.

Darwinists effectively exploit popular

confusion over the word evolution. Sometimes the word indicates simply descent with modification, leaving open the question of how the staggering changes in life forms could possibly have occurred. Other times Darwin’s particular mechanism of natural selection is added to the meaning. It is critical for people interested in the subject to understand, when they hear it said that evolution is supported by overwhelming evidence, that virtually all of the evidence concerns just common descent. The experimental evidence that natural selection could build a vertebrate from an invertebrate, a mammal from a reptile, or a human from an ape is a bit less than the experimental evidence for superstring theory—that is, none at all.

Prof. Arnhart has numerous misconceptions about my position. Most importantly, while I do agree that common descent is supported by the bulk of the evidence (although admittedly there are difficulties at higher phylogenetic levels), I certainly do not think we have any reason to suppose the process occurred by random mutation and natural selection, the position Prof. Arnhart attributes to me. Rather, before we make hasty, uninformed guesses about things as enormously complicated as whole organs and animals, we must first

look at life’s foundation—molecules and cells—to see what natural selection can explain there. As I’ve written, Darwinism quickly runs into nasty problems even at the ground level of life—the one we can examine in greatest detail. To say the least, that makes me skeptical that natural selection can explain significant developments at higher levels of biology. It is much more plausible that the purposeful design everyone sees in life is real, rather than just apparent.

The relationship between Darwinism and real science is parasitic. The theory’s main use is for Darwinists to claim credit for whatever biology discovers. If research shows that humans are selfish, Darwinism can explain that. If science shows we are unselfish, why, it can explain that, too. If we are a combination of both—no problem. If cells are simple or complex, if sexual reproduction is common or rare, if embryos are similar or different, Darwinism will explain it all for you. The elasticity of the theory would make Sigmund Freud blush.

Michael J. Behe, Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University and a fellow of the Discovery Institute, is the author of *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (1996).
From: <<http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/ar->

FH is Back!

Due to a variety of circumstances the newsletter Freethought History had to suspend publication in 1999. However, it is now resuming regular publication with four issues to appear each year.

As before the newsletter will report on important events, such as the Jefferson Conference at the University of Paris in 2001, and the recently concluded Giordano Bruno symposium hosted by the Alliance against Conformity in Freiburg, Germany. Forthcoming issues will supply information on Dr. Marvin F. Zayed’s International Archive of the Islamic Inquisition — an ambitious and comprehensive project to collect and disseminate facts on the repression of intellectuals and freethinkers in the Muslim world. Another initiative, an International Committee for the Protection of Freethinkers, has been launched by Jaya Gopal of the Atheist Society of India, and the results of this solidarity effort will appear in various issues.

In addition, FH will carry book reviews, profiles, interviews, plus news and notes literally from all over the United States and abroad. FH remains the only publication devoted to the history of freethought and to atheist movements.

The price of a subscription to any place in the world is still only \$ 10. Please enclose \$ 10 and send to Freethought History, PO



The Poetry of al-Ma'arri

Abu al-Ala Ahmad ibn Abd al-Ma'arri (973-1057), sometimes known as the eastern Lucretius, is the third of the great zindiqs (freethinker or heretic) of Islam. No true Muslim feels comfortable in his poetic presence because of his skepticism toward positive religion in general and Islam in particular. (From ISIS, Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Society web-site and from Encyclopedia of Literature)

So, too, the creeds of man: the one prevails
Until the other comes; and this one fails
When that one triumphs; ay, the lonesome world
Will always want the latest fairytales.

Here he refers to religions as "noxious weeds":
Among the crumbling ruins of the creeds
The Scout upon his camel played his reeds
And called out to his people -- "Let us hence!
The pasture here is full of noxious weeds."

He clearly puts Islam on the same level as other creeds, and does not believe any of them:

Hanifs [= Muslims] are stumbling, Christians all astray
Jews bewildered, Magians far on error's way.
We mortals are composed of two great schools
Enlightened knaves or else religious fools.

What is religion? A maid kept close that no eye may view her;
The price of her wedding gifts and dowry baffles the wooer.
Of all the goodly doctrine that I from the pulpit heard
My heart has never accepted so much as a single word.

The Prophets, too, among us come to teach,
Are one with those who from the pulpit preach;
They pray, and slay, and pass away, and yet
Our ills are as the pebbles on the beach.

Islam does not have a monopoly on truth:
Mohammed or Messiah! Hear thou me,
The truth entire nor here nor there can be;
How should our God who made the sun and the moon
Give all his light to One, I cannot see.

Contempt for the ulama, the Muslim "clergy" or divines:
I take God to witness that the souls of men are without
intelligence, like the souls of moths.
They said, "A divine!" but the divine is an untruthful
disputatious person, and words are wounds.

For his own sordid ends
The pulpit he ascends
And though he disbelieves in resurrection,
Makes all his hearers quail
Whilst he unfolds a tale
Of Last Day scenes that stun the recollection.

They recite their sacred books, although the fact informs me
that these are a fiction from first to last.
Oh Reason, thou (alone) speakest the truth.
Then perish the fools who forged the religious traditions or interpreted them!

Al-Ma'arri was a rationalist who always asserted "the rights of reason against the claims of custom, tradition and authority."
Oh, cleave ye to Reason's path that rightly ye may be led
Let none set his hopes except upon the Preserver!
And quench not the Almighty's beams, for lo, He hath given to all
A lamp of intelligence for use and enjoying.
I see humankind are lost in ignorance: even those
Of ripe age at random guess, like boys playing mora [a child's guessing game].

Traditions come from the past, of high import if they be true;
Ay, but weak is the chain of those who warrant their truth.
Consult thy reason and let perdition take others all:
Of all the conference Reason best will counsel and guide.

By fearing whom I trust I find my way
To truth; by trusting wholly I betray
The trust of wisdom; better far is doubt
Which brings the false into the light of day.
(The thoughts in this quatrain may be compared to Tennyson's
"There is more truth in honest doubt,/ Believe me, than in all the creeds.")

Al-Ma'arri attacks many of the dogmas of Islam, particularly the Pilgrimage, which he calls "a heathen's journey." Al-Ma'arri... regards Islam, and positive religion generally, as a human institution. As such, it is false and rotten to the core. Its founders sought to procure wealth and power for themselves, its dignitaries pursue worldly ends, its defenders rely on spurious documents which they ascribe to divinely inspired apostles, and its adherents accept mechanically whatever they are told to believe."

O fools, awake! The rites ye sacred hold
Are but a cheat contrived by men of old
Who lusted after wealth and gained their lust
And died in baseness-and their law is dust.

Praise God and pray
Walk seventy times, not seven, the Temple round
And impious remain!
Devout is he alone who, when he may
Feast his desires, is found
With courage to abstain

Tis strange that Kurash and his people wash
Their faces in the staling of the kine;
And that the Christians say, Almighty God
Was tortured, mocked, and crucified in fine:





And that the Jews should picture Him as one
 Who loves the odor of a roasting chine;
 And stranger still that Muslims travel far
 To kiss a black stone said to be divine:
 Almighty God! will all the human race
 Stray blindly from the Truth's most sacred shrine?

If a man of sound judgment appeals to his intelligence,
 he will hold cheap the various creeds and despise them.
 Do thou take thereof so much as Reason delivered (to thee),
 and let not ignorance plunge thee in their stagnant pool!

Had they been left alone with Reason, they would not have
 accepted
 a spoken lie; but the whips were raised (to strike them).
 Traditions were brought to them, and they were bidden say,
 "We have been told the truth"; and if they refused, the sword
 was
 drenched (in their blood).
 They were terrified by scabbards full of calamities, and tempted
 by
 great bowls brimming over with food for largesse.

Falsehood hath so corrupted all the world,
 Ne'er deal as true friends they whom sects divide;

Another Great Awakening?

From: Barna Research Group (1 March 2004)

A survey company that specializes in fundamentalist religion

National measurements of religious activity tend to remain pretty stable from year to year. However, the Barna annual religious tracking survey for 2004 reveals that there is noteworthy growth in religious activity occurring in the West.

The final area of growth concerned prayer. While Barna studies did not track personal prayer in 1994, the 1999 statistic was 77%, compared to the current measurement of 83% who prayed to God during the past week. The biggest increases in prayer activity were seen among residents of the Northeast (71% in 1999, 80% in 2004) and those who call themselves atheist or agnostic (doubled from 20% in 1999 to 39% in 2004).

Is This the Start of A Spiritual Revival?

The geography of behavioral change led the study director, George Barna, to raise an intriguing possibility. "If you study how behavioral trends evolve in America, they usually start in the west, take hold in the northeast, then infiltrate the interior of the nation. The fact that we are witnessing slow but steady development of more traditional religious behavior in the western states raises the possibility that over the coming decade we will see commitment to such behavior take root in the heartland, as well."

Barna also mentioned additional data that will soon be released from the survey. Looking ahead at some of the other findings now being analyzed from our annual tracking survey, we find that in spite of increased religious behavior on several fronts, there is no concurrent rise in the percentage of adults who have embraced Jesus Christ as their savior – that is, no parallel rise in the proportion who are "born again." Churches face an imposing challenge: not to allow people to substitute religious busyness for genuine spiritual transformation.

One interesting facet related to the behaviors growing in popularity, according to Barna, was their non-church nature. "Notice that the growth activities – Bible reading, prayer, small groups – are those that do not take place at a church. The church-oriented endeavors – attending services, volunteering in church programs, Sunday school participation – showed no

Nominations & Elections to the FIG Board of Directors

At the meeting in June, the FIG Board of Directors will present a slate of Director candidates and will also accept nominations from among the members of FIG.

At the meeting in July, FIG members will elect the number of Directors required to fill the expiring terms and other vacan-



Quote

- We have degenerated from a General Motors economy
- to a Wal-Mart economy. Fifty years later, if what is good
- for Wal-Mart is good for the country — Good Luck,
- America!

Unquote



BOOK REVIEW

Secret Origins of the Bible

by Tim Callahan

(Altadena, CA: Millenium Press, 2002)

There is really nothing secret about the origins of the Bible, once we accept that these books are mythology written by human authors comparable to the myths of King Arthur's round table or of the Nibelungen. The biblical books represent an early historical past of pre-industrial societies.

There are great mythic themes in the Bible and majestic moments, as when God descends upon Mt. Sinai in fire and smoke. It is a myth to be awed by. Many who are not sympathetic to religion would trivialize the Bible and in so doing discard such epiphanies. We do this at our peril. Failure to understand the power of these myths and their hold on people leads to nothing more than further division. ... such myths endure, at least in part, because they resonate with deep psychological needs. (P. 442)

Callahan bases his examination of the sources of the Bible on sound historical scholarship, authors such as R. E. Friedman, E. Pagels, or R. H. Eisenman. For the layman he tries to sort out where a particular myth may have started, why it grew, and what it means to the scribes who recorded it in the sacred scriptures. In this process he draws on considerable history laid bare by archaeology. Much insight depends on writings inscribed on clay tablets in dead and little known languages. Repeatedly he has to make clear that materials recorded on papyrus are lost to us, except in so far as they were copied and re-copied down the centuries. Copying of course involved errors of transcription as well as deliberate emendations of the text for reasons of the copyist. Clay tablets, as well as monument inscriptions represent the original words of the writers and their times. He thus needs to consider alternate readings and meanings which have survived into modern times.

Here is a long quote from Callahan (p. 395) to give an understanding how far afield his thought has gone, and just how remote some interpretations of the Biblical myths are from the standard Christian

interpretation:

In the holy books of the Mandaeans we have a sense of some level of animosity on the part at least of some of John's followers toward Jesus. The Mandaeans, whose name derives from manda, an Aramaic word roughly equivalent to the Greek gnosis, are perhaps a survival of one of the earliest of the gnostic religions. Their scriptures are in Aramaic and record that they were originally from Palestine, but that they emigrated to Haran in northern Mesopotamia because of disputes with the Jews. Certain place names and other evidence in their scriptures indicate that the story of Palestinian origins is probably true, though some scholars believe that their origins are Mesopotamian.

At present they number probably less than 10,000 and are located mainly in southern Iraq. Baptism figures prominently in Mandaean worship, and their sacred texts honor John the Baptist. However, there is little else in their worship that connects them to the Jews, towards whom their writings direct considerable animosity. Another target of their animosity is Jesus, whom they call a "lying messiah" who perverted the light. According to their sacred texts, Jesus begged John to baptize him, though the Baptist was reluctant to do so. They also claim that their messiah, Anosh-Uthra, exposed Jesus as a false prophet, brought about his death, and also caused the destruction of Jerusalem in CE 70.

Callahan's interpretations are many, and his sorting out of probable mythic ancestor stories and comparisons are encyclopedic. The book is best thought of as a reference to its subject matter, which can be consulted on specific verses. He concludes: "When myths are distorted as literal truth they will almost surely be used by agents of repression, burdening society with unreasonable limitations and irrational directives, and

Quote
• The irony of the right's attitude toward the Clinton
• marriage (and that one is truly mysterious) is that she
• was lambasted for staying with him. Aren't those the
• same people who want to spend more than a billion
• dollars to teach folks to make marriage stick?
• — Anna Quindlen, Newsweek (9 Feb. 2004) p. 78
•
• *Unquote* •



May Meeting: Sunday 23th 7 PM

June Potluck: Tuesday 8th 6:30 PM



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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 as well as an affiliate of the American Humanist Association and of the American Atheists. Our members are mostly secular humanists. However, we welcome to our meetings anyone interested in learning about or furthering our

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