

FIG Leaves

Volume 12 Issue 10

November 2003

November Meeting :

Tuesday, 11 November (note date!)

On Robert G. Ingersoll. Tom Flynn, editor Free Inquiry

The son of a preacher, Ingersoll (1833-1899) was inspired by Thomas Paine's struggle for political and religious freedom. He admired and followed Paine's major work, *Age of Reason* which laid out the basic thought for unbelief and doubting the Bible. Ingersoll became a lawyer and famous agnostic. Despite denying the tenets of Christianity he became a well known and admired lecturer and orator, who keynoted the 1876 Democratic convention. His birthplace in Dresden, New York, is a museum and memorial.

Tuesday, 16 December, Ed Kagin and Joe Levee - (Note: 3rd Tuesday)

FIG Presents: Brights—Good or Bad Idea?

What is a Bright?

See: <<http://www.the-brights.net/>> to find out.

On December 16, at 7:00 PM at the Vernon Room of the Vernon Manor, 400 Oak Street, Cincinnati, FIG will conduct a forum on the newly created term Brights. Under discussion will be a history of the term Bright, how it is used, why it is used, and the far from settled question of should it be used at all, and whether it should be used by individuals and groups to define themselves.

What is a Bright? The creators of the term say: "A bright is a person who has a naturalistic world view. A bright's world view is free of supernatural and mystical elements. The ethics and actions of a bright are based on a naturalistic world view."

Why use this word rather than Atheist, Agnostic, Humanist, Secular Humanist, etc.? Maybe we shouldn't. Come to the FIG meeting and participate in the discussion.

Leading the forum will be FIG members Edwin Kagin and Joe Levee. Edwin will present arguments for the use of the term and Joe will present arguments for why it should not be adopted. It is hoped the audience will participate fully with questions and comments in this friendly debate. So be sure to attend for an evening of information, fellowship, and fun.

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November Meeting

(Note change of date:)

Tuesday, 11 November

7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor

400 Oak Street, Cincinnati

November Potluck

Tuesday, 18 November

6:30 PM at the home of

December Potluck

Tuesday, 9 December

6:30 PM at the home of

December Meeting

Tuesday, 16 December

7:00 PM at the Vernon Manor

400 Oak Street, Cincinnati

Blessed is he who has learned how to engage in inquiry, with no impulse to harm his countrymen or to pursue wrongful actions, but perceives the order of immortal and ageless nature, how it is structured.

-- Euripides (480-406 BCE)

October Meeting

Was Einstein a Humanist?

Speaker: Bill Jensen, Department of Chemistry, University of Cincinnati



Bill Jensen started off by relating how this subject came up. He, as well as our Program Director, Joe Levee and others attend a weekly discussion luncheon at the University of Cincinnati. During these discussions Albert Einstein's name has come up a number of times.

About a year ago, he read a book titled, Einstein and Religion, by Max Jammer, Professor Emeritus of Physics at Bar Ilan University in Israel. When he brought this up before the luncheon group, Joe Levee suggested that instead of discussing it there to save it for a talk for a future Fig Meeting. Thus originated this evening's topic.

Max Jammer is eminently qualified to write this book. Being a physicist, he is well acquainted with Einstein's Theory of Relativity and with the philosophy of science. He also shares the same German Jewish cultural antecedents as Einstein. The book he has written is fairly straight forward. In his research for the book he first examined all he could glean from Einstein's own sources. During his lifetime, Einstein wrote a number of essays and gave interviews discussing his own philosophical and religious views and he also wrote autobiographical information. Jammer also examined literature from anyone that had had contact with Einstein and had written about the experience.

Although the book runs to 279 pages, it has only three chapters, entitled: I Einstein's Religiosity and the role of religion in his private life (which is another way of saying Einstein's religious background); II Einstein's Philosophy of Religion and III Einstein's Physics, dealing with his theory of Relativity and the way various people have used it to support various theological agendas.

Bill then explained that he would deal with the first two chapters and dispense with the Third which deals with a lot of metaphysical detail which he feels is beyond the interest of most of this audience. He will also add on two topics of his own devising: 1) Are Einstein's beliefs consistent with Humanism? 2) The Scientist as Priest.

As to Einstein's religious background: He was born in 1879 (the same

year as Winston Churchill) in Ulm, Germany; his family on both sides was German Jewish and had resided in Southern Germany since the middle of the 18th century. His father was a liberal who rejected Jewish practice and dietary restrictions as superstitious ritual. In 1885, Albert began his education in a public school of Munich where the family had moved in 1880. Since Bavaria was predominantly Catholic and religion was taught in the public schools young Albert was exposed to Roman Catholicism. Despite his father's liberal views, he hired a private tutor to teach Albert the principles of Jewish culture. This double exposure continued when he entered the Luitpold Gymnasium in 1888. As a result of this religious training, he became insistent on following Jewish tradition including the dietary laws despite the non-observant practices of his parents. However, in 1891 he came under the influence of Max Talmey, a Polish medical student, who spent some time at his parents' lodgings. Max lent the young Albert numerous books dealing with science, philosophy and mathematics. As a result of this wider exposure Albert experienced what might be termed a "deconversion." He thereupon refused to be bar mitzvah and dropped all religious practice. This deconversion seems to be a rejection of authority in general that would eventually extend to his views on politics, on academia,

Continued on page 4...



FIG Leaves - Editors welcome thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons.

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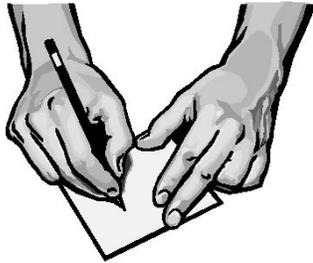
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Letters To The



The following letter appeared in the 2 November 2003, Charleston Post and Courier. http://www.charleston.net/stories/110203/let_02letters.shtml

Not a Christian nation

In his October 21 op-ed, Cal Thomas defended Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin, deputy undersecretary of Defense, for saying that Muslims worship an "idol" and not "a real God." Lt. Gen. Boykin also referred to the United States as a Christian nation doing battle against Satan. We are not and never were a "Christian nation." Our founders understood the devastating nature of holy wars and wisely established a secular state ruled by "We the People" through a godless document known as the United States Constitution. Our freedom of conscience to practice any religion or none has served us well for over two centuries. Though we have not been spared the horrors of war, we at least have managed to avoid sending American troops overseas as part of a religious crusade.

For some of our leaders involved in the "War on Terrorism," their self-interpreted mission goes beyond preserving American security. They are in a battle between good and evil, between those who side with a Christian God and those who side with a Muslim Satan. I expect more from our leaders than their use of the same rhetoric as Osama bin Laden in proclaiming as an argument for war that we have the real god and our opponents have a false god.

Private citizens certainly have the freedom to express such views, but I fear for this country if it becomes official government policy. There may sometimes be a reason to reluctantly send our brave young men and women into battle, but we must never do so to show that our God can beat up someone else's God.

HERB SILVERMAN

It's very characteristic of George W. Bush that he defines religious liberty as "the right to serve and honor God." That means, of course, that the freedom not to serve a god -- and probably the freedom to serve more than one -- aren't covered by religious liberty.

The selective view of religious liberty has been put many ways. George's father put it the most nakedly, when he said he didn't think atheists should be considered citizens. We also hear it as "Freedom of religion doesn't mean freedom from religion." In all its guises, it means "freedom to agree with me."

-- Posted on the web by Gary McGath on 8 November 2003

FIG is now affiliated with American Atheists.

I am personally delighted to announce that the Free Inquiry Group, Inc. (FIG) of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, which I helped organize over ten years ago, has now become officially affiliated with American Atheists. This means I can, and will, run FIG's announcements and other news. FIG is one of the more active groups in the country. In 1996, it was the founding organization for Camp Quest. You will hear quite a bit about Camp Quest later.

Here is FIG's web site: <http://www.gofigger.org/>

I resigned as Vice President, and from the board of directors of FIG, to accept the position of Kentucky State Director for American Atheists. So it is with the greatest pleasure that we welcome this fine organization.

As we once again celebrate past wars on 11 November, a poem by Wilfrid Owen may be appropriate. He was killed on 4 November 1918 just one week before the day.

Dulce et decorum est

by Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Sept. Meeting from page 4

and even to his dress and lifestyle. Quoting Jammer: "Throughout the rest of his life (he) never attended religious services nor ever prayed in a synagogue or other place of worship. His last wish was not to be buried in the Jewish tradition but to be cremated, indicating that he disregarded religious rituals until his death on the 18th of April 1955.

In 1911, Einstein discovered the writings of Baruch Spinoza. The latter's religious views were detailed in his posthumously published *Ethics*. The reaction to Spinoza's views, which had become known before publication, was so violent that publication was held up until after his death in 1677. Even so he was excommunicated from the Jewish community of Amsterdam. His philosophical writings were presented in a quasi-mathematical format and based on three major assumptions: 1) god and nature are one; 2) god is totally impersonal; 3) the universe and its laws are deterministic. Einstein was intoxicated by Spinoza even to the extent of writing a poem praising him.

What did Einstein believe in the light of these early influences upon him. The first thesis is that Einstein was an atheist and that he couched his atheism in religious metaphors to deflect public criticism and to protect his privacy when it came to those views. This particular view of Einstein is found in a number of sources but most notable in a book by Chapman Cohen, President of the Secular Society, titled *God and the Universe*, where he comments on a telegram Einstein sent to a rabbi in response to one the rabbi had sent to him asking him directly if he believed in god. Einstein responded that he believed in Spinoza's god who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists not in a god who concerns himself in the fate and actions of human beings. From this Cohen drew the conclusion that Einstein was an atheist.

There is ample evidence that this interpretation is not true. Rather

than keep his real beliefs vis-à-vis religion hidden, he responded to questions from many liberal theologians openly. He also explicitly stated many times; "I am not an atheist." He also denied being a free-thinker.

The second thesis was that Einstein was a pantheist. This notion was derived from his response that the god he believed in was Spinoza's god. There is no doubt that Spinoza's god was pantheistic. Further support for the pantheism interpretation can be found in the surmise that Einstein's god was the laws of physics. The problem with this view is philosophical consistency. If god and nature are one and the same thing, and science has explained nature naturally and mechanically why continue to use outdated religious terminology to describe this process? This point was made 150 years before Einstein by Arthur Schopenhauer when he said, "Pantheism is atheism in a silk hat."

The third thesis is that Einstein is what might be termed an "attenuated" deist. This is an approach that is equated with the rationalism of the 18th Century Enlightenment. Many of our Founding Fathers were deists rather than Christians, what the right wing fundamentalists say to the contrary notwithstanding. Certainly Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, possibly George Washington and certainly Thomas Paine were deists. A good definition of deism can be found in a book by Shakian and Shakian, *Ideas of the Great Philosophers*:

"According to deists, god having created the universe so that it functions thereafter as a machine, governed by natural laws, divorced himself from the world and merely contemplates it from beyond as a disinterested bystander or absentee deity who neither heeds prayer nor chooses to perform miracles; god did all he planned, rendered the universe

capable of self-perpetuation according to natural law, gave man the intelligence to understand and control nature and to detect in nature the creative activity of divine power."

This sounds pretty much like some of Einstein's quotes. There are some fundamental differences between the 18th century deism and Einstein's. The 18th century deist still viewed god as anthropomorphic whereas Einstein does not. The 18th century deist's god is more akin to an omnipotent watchmaker; while Einstein's is more akin to a disembodied mathematician.

This comes down to the point of this talk, are Einstein's views consistent with Humanism? In Einstein's view everything is deterministic. This applies not only to the laws of physics but also to ethics. When asked after World War II whether he did not hate the Germans; he responded that he didn't because they were only acting out their nature. Now one of the cardinal assumptions of Humanism is that mankind has freedom of choice to take responsibility for their own destiny and for their own quality of life. From this standpoint it does not appear that Einstein's views are compatible with Humanism.

The final point is the scientist as priest. There are two conflicting views of scientists in our culture. On one side is the "mad" scientist of technology run amok. The opposite view is the scientist as priest. Einstein was probably the first scientist to whom this can be applied to. In his day the public was not intimidated by the fact that he was more intelligent than they; it rather caused them to view him in awe. This view was probably enhanced by his practice of using the terminology of religion in his communication with the public. The person who has probably inherited this position is Stephen Hawking who sometimes indulges in similar terminology.

— George Maurer

Founders had it right: We're secular

By John Kanelis

Providence, R.I. - The United States of America is among the most religious countries on the planet, even without a state-sanctioned religion. And no amount of posturing from those who profess to call this a "Christian nation" is going to change the historical record that America's founders were quite specific in their intent to create a secular state. Why, after all, did their forebears come to these shores in the first place? To get away from tyrants who tried to force them to believe in a certain deity, to pray certain prayers and to adhere to a certain faith.

All this came from a panel of scholars assembled at the National Conference of Editorial Writers annual gathering in a place founded by one Roger Williams, who splashed ashore in 1631 at the Massachusetts Bay Colony specifically because he disagreed with the Church of England's official religious policies. It seems that Williams faced persecution in his native England because of his disagreements with the church. So, he fled to the New World to practice his own brand of religious non-conformity.

Those of us out here in the heartland have to deal frequently with the belief among our readers that since many of our founders indeed were Christian, that they intended this to be a Christian nation. One of my colleagues posed this admittedly paraphrased question to the scholarly panelists: How can I persuade the readers who call me and insist that we are a Christian nation that we are no such thing? And I thought I was the only one who had to grapple with that one.

The panel gathered to discuss what the "Founding Fathers really meant." Gordon Wood, a professor of history at Brown University, just a few blocks from our meeting place, answered first. The nation, he said, was

a "Christian nation at the time of the revolution, but the founders weren't necessarily religious."

Pauline Maier, a constitutional scholar and professor of American history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said, "One of the greatest gifts of the Revolution was that it at least began to get the state out of the religion business. If you believe in religion, don't fool with the system. Religion in America has thrived without the sponsorship of the state."

Previous to Maier's assertion, Catherine Kelleher, a professor of strategic research at the Naval War College in nearby Newport, told a gathering of editorialists that the "United States is a secular state that takes religion very seriously. Europeans have state religions and couldn't care less."

This is the utter beauty of our founders' logic. They knew when they wrote the words of the First Amendment - that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." - that Americans would place priceless value on their religious freedom.

An overwhelming majority of us in the Texas Panhandle demonstrate our faith daily. We pray. We attend worship services of all types - Christian and non-Christian alike. We do so freely and without reservation. How can that be? Because the government isn't forcing us to do it.

This discussion topic rings with particular resonance in this day and time. A state judge in Alabama recently got himself into a jam over whether a monument displaying the Ten Commandments in a public square is constitutional. Personally, I have no problem with the monument. I do have a problem, however, with a judge who is sworn to uphold the law who then violates the law by defying a legal court order to remove the Ten Commandments monument.

The government can make no law that requires us to practice a

certain religion, or any religion. That's as it should be. As to whether we're a Christian nation, perhaps we are, but only if you consider that most Americans say they believe in God and attend a Christian church regularly.

Is it written in law that this is a Christian nation? No. Quite the contrary. It is written into the Constitution that we are a secular nation that gives its citizens the absolute right to believe in whatever deity they choose. Or, they can choose to believe in nothing at all. To which I say, simply, "Amen."

John Kanelis is editorial page editor for the Amarillo Globe-News. He can be contacted at the Globe News, P.O. Box 2091, Amarillo, TX 79166, or via e-mail at <jkanelis@amarillonet.com>.

Quote

The Uncertain Speed of Light

Based on relativity concepts, a number of physicists — most notably Dr. Russell Humphreys of the Institute for Creation Research — have argued from Einstein's relativity theories that, at great distances, six literal days on Earth could correspond to billions of years in distant space. The problem is that one would almost have to be a Ph.D. in theoretical physics even to comprehend the physics and mathematics involved in this argument. That raises the question: would God expect ordinary people to depend on theoretical physics to determine whether or not they could believe the Bible?

Henry D. Morris in Back to Genesis

. Unquote:

Atheists say they're all right without religion

By Andy Goldblatt, 15 and Alicia Strong, 16 Y-Press, 9 November 2003

Summer camp usually includes swimming, horse-back riding, canoeing and other physical activities. But Camp Quest, a "secular humanist" camp for atheist youths in Overpeck, Ohio, just north of Cincinnati, offers something more. Every year, Camp Quest's director issues a challenge to campers: Find the unicorns. He tells campers "unicorns" are invisible. They are silent, leave no tracks or traces, and you can walk right through them. If you can prove they exist, you win \$100. This longstanding Camp Quest challenge is also used as a metaphor for God: If you can't see, touch, taste, feel or hear something, its existence or nonexistence can't be proved.

Recently Y-Press interviewed camper Sophia Riehemann, 13, Bellevue, Ky., and two other atheists: Danielle Darby, 14, Montgomery, Ala., and Emily Clayton, 23, Lake Station. Sofia and Danielle were raised as nonbelievers; Emily joined their ranks as a teenager.

"I started getting in a lot of trouble with my parents and everything, and I ended up moving out of the house when I was 15. I quit going to church. A lot of things, you know, happened to me, bad things that happen to teenagers," Emily said. "I just kind of started looking at life differently."

Danielle and Sophia are second-generation atheists. Danielle's dad is Larry Darby, former Alabama state director of American Atheists, who led the protest to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the state judicial building in Montgomery. Sophia's parents have been nonbelievers as long as she can remember. "We are all free thinkers," Sophia said.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines an atheist as "a person who believes that there is no God." "I hear a lot of people giving out many different definitions," said Emily. "I just don't believe in God. I'm not going to completely disregard the fact that there might be some sort of higher being or creator, but as far as the main religions of the world, especially Christianity, I can say 100 percent that God does not exist."

According to The New York Times 2003 Almanac, 15 percent of the world's population professes no religion or falls under the category of atheism. In most organized religions, people use sacred texts to help determine right from wrong. Atheists prefer critical judgment and common sense. All three said people don't need religion to determine right from wrong.

"I think you should always do the right thing," said Sophia. "I am honest, and I'm good, and I care about stuff. So

I think it's not fair to just assume that we don't care or aren't honest just because we don't believe in God." Emily agrees. "I think for people to just assume that atheists are going to be more prone to go out and steal and lie and cheat and kill and everything (is) absurd." The lack of religious belief doesn't affect their sense of truth and morals. "You should know what's right from wrong from your parents," Danielle said.

All three concur that believing in God doesn't automatically make you a good person. "In all religions, you have your good people who live great lives, and then you have your not-so-good people who murder and do all this other stuff. That goes for everybody. It's not just the Christians. It's not just the Muslims. It's not just the atheists," Emily said. "Having religion teaches prejudice against those who do not believe exactly the way you believe."

While none of the youths has been ostracized by friends, many of whom are religious, they agree some misconceptions about atheists need to be cleared up. "We're not baby killers. A lot of people think that atheists have no morals, and they have no respect for other people, that we are in fact barbaric and we go around murdering and killing and raping and all this stuff. That is so untrue," said Emily. "We won't go to hell," Sophia said. "Some people say that atheists are evil, and we're not."

Atheists even observe some holidays. Emily and Sophia enjoy Easter egg hunts, while Danielle and her family usually attend the atheists' convention on Easter. "They have a lot of lectures, and sometimes it's really boring, but some of them are really funny," she said, adding that last year, there was "this guy who dressed up as the devil." Emily also enjoys the secular side of Christmas with her children. "We do Santa Claus. A lot of people get mad at me because, you know, a lot of atheists believe that one lie is just as bad as any other lie. But I think it's ridiculous to take away Santa Claus from children. They need that. . . . It helps them grow." Danielle's family has a small celebration marking winter solstice on Christmas Day, and Sophia's family celebrates Isaac Newton's birthday. "Mama has a giant tree that we decorate with animals, and we call it our peace tree, and we drop little decorated apples on an Isaac Newton doll's head every year. It's lots of fun, and we get lots of gifts," she said.

All agree people must decide their religious beliefs for themselves. As the mother of two, Emily thinks her children should be exposed to different religions so they can make their own decisions when they are older. "I've got a 5-year-old daughter, and she knows all about Christianity. She actually goes to church with my parents during the summer when she goes to visit them. The older she gets, the more we'll teach her about Muslims and Buddhists and all that," said Emily, who also has a newborn. Danielle and



BOOK REVIEW

The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Juda- ism, Jesus, and Christianity

by James VanderKam and Peter Flint
(New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002)

The authors have endeavored to write a neutral, consensus assessment of all the scrolls found in the Judean Desert. They thus seem to mention every interpretation of each scholar who has ever worked on the task of securing, sorting, translating, and interpreting this material. The book then reads more like a reference that can be entered in at various places than a continuing narrative. We can dip into the volume to learn about the history of discovery and dating of the material. We can examine the knowledge of the relationships of the scrolls to Hebrew Scripture, of the message from the non-biblical scrolls, or what might be the impact on the New Testament. We can examine the controversies about various parts of the material, or indeed delve into the "Scroll Wars." On the whole, and with only cursory reading, I think the authors have succeeded in their mission of writing a widely acceptable, comprehensive, and thorough work.

The manuscripts represent writing in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. To understand the magnitude of the task, Emanuel Tov, the Editor-in-Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Project, estimates there exist about 931 pieces of material found in the caves near Qumran. A very few of these are long and complete, such as the large Isaiah scroll from Cave One. Many are mere scraps of leather with a few words. Some are short one piece compositions, and others are duplicates of the same manuscript. "If the multiple copies are deducted from the overall number of manuscripts, we are left with 445 items, including 175 unidentified fragments" (p. x). The final estimate is that the caves yielded some 350 independent compositions, which demand assessment.

Dating of the scrolls has to rely on archaeological and paleographic methods. Carbon 14 and accelerator mass spectrometry dating, generally considered more definite, is not precise enough to make the major distinction between pre- and post-Christian material. There is general agreement among

all dating methods that all scrolls fall between 250 BCE and 68 CE. No manuscript can be younger than 68 CE, because that year the Qumran settlement was destroyed by Roman soldiers in the course of the War against the Jews. VanderKam and Flint discuss the careful examination and comparison that have been made between the new found scrolls and the extant sources of the Old Testament, which comprise the Masoretic Text (oldest from 1008 CE), the Greek translation called the Septuagint (oldest manuscript from fourth century CE), and Samaritan Pentateuch, which is older than these but it is not known just how old. No eye opening new insights have come to light. Among the scrolls "significant ancient readings are occasionally preserved, However, the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint remain our most significant witnesses to the biblical text or texts of antiquity (p. 102)."

No Christian manuscript can be expected before 68 CE, and none was found. There is still a small minority of scholars who claim to find references to Jesus in the Qumran texts and information about his life. The majority find no mention of any Christian individuals by name, and do not consider any of the writers related to Christianity. There is some indirect relevance to Jesus and early Christianity as the writings "illuminate many aspects of Jesus' life and teaching and many events and doctrines of the New Testament" (p. 321). Specifically, the Qumran texts provide insight about Jewish society of the time. They make it clear that some ideas in the Gospels are indebted to the mother religion; while others sharply outline the difference between Jesus and Judaism of the time. Some of the new texts anticipate Jesus' teaching with wording similar to some Gospel passages.

VanderKamp and Flint discuss several sensationalist and New Age interpretations of Christian searches, which must be regarded as wrongheaded. They do emphasize several similarities between specific New Testament stories and the Essene community at Qumran. "... there are some intriguing similarities between the first Christian community in Jerusalem as described in Acts and the Essene Fellowship as pictured in the Qumran scrolls" (p. 346). Clearly, this book is a gold mine for anyone interested in the world of first century Palestine. — Wolf Roder



November Potluck: Tuesday 18th 6:30 PM
December Potluck: Tuesday 9th 6:30 PM

November Meeting: Tuesday 11th 7 PM
December Meeting: Tuesday 16th 7 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 and an affiliate of the American Humanist Association. We have applied to be also affiliated with the American Atheists. 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