# Humanism: Fiction or Fact?

*by Bill Crews*

We must not sleep while any enemy is active. Humanism is alive and well, and many prominent and influential people are humanists. Some have been so foolish as to deny that there are such; they claim to think that religious people, whom they hold in disdain, have simply invented them. I checked the definitions given for the word **"humanism"** in three dictionaries (including *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, 1989 edition published by Portland House) and did not find a single definition to fit that word as it has come to be used most prominently now. I also looked up the word "humanism" in about ten recent or new encyclopedias in our nearest public library and was again let down. It seems that our dictionaries and encyclopedias are only interested in the past and choose to act as if "secular humanism," with all of its organizations and prominent and influential people, does not exist. One of the encyclopedias did mention some early humanists, William James, John Dewey, and F. C. S. Schiller. And one of them mentioned the American Humanist Association. The *Encyclopedia Americana* gave the best information. But I struck pay dirt when I was given a volume called *Encyclopedia of Associations* (29th edition, 1995, three large volumes). Pages 2325 and 2326 list nine organizations that have been formed by humanists. They have anywhere from 400 to 10,000 members, but the American Humanist Association, founded in 1941 and publishers of the newsletter "Free Mind" and the magazine "The Humanist," is by far the most outspoken and influential. Some of them are religious organizations, but their brand of religion is extremely liberal.

Here are some interesting quotations from *The Encyclopedia Americana:* "Scientific humanism aims to supplant religion and make scientific knowledge the instrument of freeing man and enhancing his life." "So-called Christian humanism rejects the traditional concepts of God, the church,

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