

FIG LEAVES

Volume 20 Issue 9

September 2011

September FIG Meeting: Tuesday, September 27, 7pm,
Hannaford Suites in Kenwood

Reflections On Fig's First 20 Years And Preview Of The Fig@20 Celebration

For our September Meeting, we will have an opportunity to reflect and share our favorite memories of FIG's First 20 Years. If you have been involved for all 20 years or for a few months, we will offer an opportunity for our members to share their highlights of the group.

FIG has a rich history, including founding Camp Quest, the first secular summer camp. FIG had the Wall of Separation of Church and State on Fountain Square in the 1990's. FIG was active in organizing a protest against the Creation Museum. FIG was part of the CINCOR group that placed the billboard in Cincinnati. Maybe one of these events connected you to the group. Maybe your highlight is a speaker or field trip? Maybe your highlight is finding similar freethinking or rational individuals.

Whatever it was, the hope is that by sharing our reflections of FIG, we will be better able to highlight what makes FIG special at the FIG@20 Celebration.

FIG 20th Anniversary Celebration

To help us pull off this 20th birthday party for FIG, Joe Levee has issued a \$2500 challenge grant, so between now and October donations for the 20th Anniversary Event will be doubled by Joe Levee. Donations can be made by mailing to our PO Box - FIG 20th, P.O. Box 53174, Cincinnati, OH 45253 or online at Paypal. The PayPal link is on our website - www.gofigger.org and on our facebook page - www.facebook.com/gofigger.

Thank You!

A big FIG "thank you" goes out to Bryan Sellers for hosting the annual FIG picnic in August. As always we had great food and conversation and we appreciate all of Bryan's work and hospitality which made this event a success.

Another big "thanks" goes to Randy Gudvangen and Brett Siereveld for suggesting and helping to facilitate the Canoe and Kayak outing last month. Fortunately, we had great weather. The Whitewater River is beautiful and clean. We had great food at the Mexican restaurant when we finished the river trip and the conversation was interesting and lively. We had good fun and got some exercise in for good measure. Thanks to Randy, Brett, and everyone who participated in this event.

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Events

September Meeting

Tues. Sept. 27, at 7:00 PM
The Hannaford Suites Hotel

FIG@20 Celebration

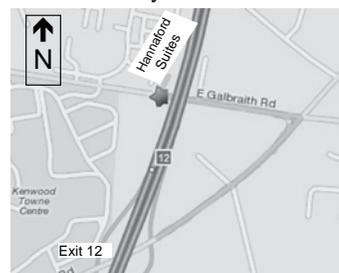
Saturday & Sunday October 15-16
Doubletree Hotel
2826 Terminal Drive; Hebron, KY.

Directions to

The Hannaford Suites Hotel,

5900 East Galbraith Rd.

- 1) Take Exit 12 onto Montgomery Rd.
- 2) From the off Ramp at Exit 12:
From the North - Turn Left **OR**
From the South - Turn Right
- 3) Continue on Montgomery Rd. to East Galbraith Rd. Turn Left.
- 4) After you go under I-71, turn right into the driveway of the Hotel.





Why FIG?

Why do you belong to a free thought organization like FIG (the Free Inquiry Group)?

Ask that question of members and you will receive different answers. The interesting and educational programs that FIG holds attract many of us. These programs feature a variety of topics, including science, sociology, psychology, religion, and history. Comedy has also been an attractive feature. Many FIG members are involved because they are concerned about the issue of state/church separation. Many want to see critical thinking replace superstition in our society. Common goals lead to the activism of individuals and FIG as a group. The most attractive element of FIG for many is community. Participating in our meetings and events is a liberating and enjoyable experience. The freedom to discuss and question any and every topic is a form of expression that we value. We are brought together by our lack of belief in the supernatural, but we are kept together by the common values we view as important, such as curiosity, rationality and free inquiry.

If you get that feeling of satisfaction and community when you leave a FIG event that I do, you will be amazed by the magnification of those feelings that you get by attending a conference such as the upcoming **FIG@20 Anniversary** event. I have been to many conferences attended by anywhere from 100 to 800 people. Every time, I come away invigorated, inspired and hopeful. I am invigorated by the speakers' enthusiasm and drive. I am inspired by their ideas and the conversations I have with like-minded attendees. I am given a feeling of hope from the desire of the people I hear and meet to help improve humanity and the world that we inhabit. These conferences are also a lot of fun! Laughing and joking with people with whom you have a lot in common is always a good way to build community.

The Free Inquiry Group is nationally known and respected. Twenty years of FIG is definitely deserving of celebration. So, I hope you will all **join FIG for our FIG@20 Anniversary Celebration**. Take advantage of the low cost to see, hear and hang out with some of the most respected and talented thinkers and activists in the free thought community. From our local speakers learn the history of free thought in this area and tour the Creation "Museum" without actually going there.

Come and enjoy this historic, first of its kind conference in the Greater Cincinnati area!

Register by filling out and mailing the form on page 11. (pay by check)
Or go to <http://fig20.eventbrite.com/> to register online. (pay using PayPal)

Location: The Doubletree Hotel 2826 Terminal Drive in Hebron, KY.
This is the Hilton Airport hotel.

Dates & Times

Saturday October 15, 2011 - 10:00 AM - 8:30PM
Sunday October 16, 2011 - 9:30 AM - 5 PM



FIG Leaves - Thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons are very welcome. Submit in Electronic format via the internet to figmessage at gofigger dot org; or on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 53174, Cincinnati, OH 45253. Contributions received before the first Friday of the month will be considered for publication that month.

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Memberships run from:

1 January to 31 December.
One year: \$30
Family: \$40
If you join during the year, you receive a \$2 discount for each month that has passed.

We request contributions above membership dues. Contributions are tax deductible.



Planned Program for FIG@20 Celebration

Saturday October 15

10am - 11am Registration

11am - 12:15pm Welcome/Opening Speaker- Greta Christina - “Why Are Atheists So Angry?”

12:15 - 1:15pm Lunch (Grab and go lunches will be available to eat inside or outside the venue and chat with new and old friends.)

1:15 - 2:00 Speaker: Bill Jensen, History of Freethought in Cincinnati.

2:00 - 2:15 Break

2:15 - 3:00 Speaker: Jamila Bey – “We Are Not Unicorns.”

3:00 - 3:15 Break

3:15 - 4:00 Speaker: J.T. Eberhard – “The Primacy of Reason.”

4:00 - 4:15 Break

4:15 - 5:00 Speaker: Dr. Darrel Ray – “Sex And Secularism.”

5:00 - 6:00 Networking Break

6:00 - 8:30 Dinner - Highlighting FIG’s 20 Year History and Impact. Special Remarks from Tom Flynn and Tim Madigan - First Speakers to FIG in 1991.

(lunch and dinner Saturday are included in registration price.)

Sunday, October 16

9:30 - 12:30 Leadership Summit - facilitated by Dr. Darrell Ray. (For Leaders of Freethought Groups Only.)

10:30 - 12:30 Networking Brunch - Hotel Café

12:30 - 1:45 Panel - Reflections on FIG@20 - State of Freethought Today - participating will be David Silverman, Tom Flynn, and a representative from American Humanists Association (TBA) - moderator - Jamila Bey.

1:45 - 2:00 Break

2:00 - 3:15 Speaker #6 - Rabbi Robert Barr – “The Creation Museum: Bad Science and Bad Bible.”

3:15- 3:30 Break

3:30 - 5:00 Final Speaker; Closing - PZ Myers.



August Event

Canoeing/Kayaking the Whitewater River

On the afternoon of Sunday 28th we met at the Green Acres Canoe Livery located where I-275 crosses the Whitewater River. This is fairly downstream not far from where the river enters the Ohio. A total of a dozen people in eight canoes & kayaks put in a few miles further upstream to paddle down the river back to the take out at the livery. All made it, none capsized, or got unintentionally wet. In fact, we had absolutely marvelous weather, with a clear, bright sun burning all exposed skin.

This stretch of the river is broad, shallow, and tame. In fact, although moving downstream, we had to paddle vigorously. The river here feels very much like flat water. Thus we had a satisfying, small workout. Most of the river is shallow, only rarely would paddles be unable to reach ground, and very few places are deep enough to stand submerged. On the contrary, occasionally the canoes scraped bottom. I think this would be an excellent stretch of the river to take youngsters to introduce them to the joys and pains of river roving.

By four o'clock all, sailors and land lubbers, assembled at the *El Mariachi* Restaurant in nearby Harrison. As the name indicates, it is a Mexican venue. We all had a good time after a fine outing.

Let's do it again sometime!

Reported by Wolf Roder
Photographs by Frank Bicknell



The Gang



Aren't Kayaks were for sitting in?



August Science Café

Insects: Darwin's Secret Weapon

Dr. Gene Kritsky is the head of the department of Biology at The College of Mt. St. Joseph and the editor of *American Entomologist Magazine*. Dr. Kritsky has written several books, including *The Quest for The Perfect Hive* and *Instant Origin: A Guide to Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species"*. He has appeared in international media and publications. Among many other honors, he recently received the Patriot Award for his work with U. S. Army entomologists. His talk for the August Science Café was an exploration of the diverse insect evidence for natural selection and the unusual insects that lived in the past.

Dr. Kritsky began by describing Darwin's scientific method. He used a quote from a letter Darwin had written to John Scott, a young student of natural history, who had asked Darwin how to do science. "By no means modify, even in slightest degree, any result. Accuracy is the soul of natural history. It is hard to become accurate. He who modifies a hairs breadth will never be accurate. It is a golden rule which I try to follow to put every fact which is opposed to one's preconceived opinions in the strongest light. Absolute accuracy is the hardest merit to obtain and the highest merit. Any deviation is ruin." Darwin realized that nothing is ever proven. Experiments can only support a particular view. To test a hypothesis, experiment must be used to attempt to disprove it. Natural selection is a robust theory. Not only have attempts to disprove it failed, they have added evidence to support the theory from many scientific disciplines.

In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin made many references to insects. Dr. Kritsky summed up Darwin's thesis using five main points. He expanded on these points by giving insect examples of each one and referring to fossil evidence supporting the evolution of several insects through millions of years. The five points of Darwin's thesis;

1. Individuals will try to produce as many offspring as possible.
2. There are limits to this population potential.
There are only so many mates, so much food, etc.
3. No two individuals look exactly alike and

much of this variation is inherited.

4. This variation, combined with the limits to population growth, results in a "struggle for existence." Those individuals who can compete for mates, food, etc., will be more successful in reproducing offspring and their variations will accumulate in the population. This is called natural selection.
5. Natural selection will force populations to adapt to local conditions producing distinct local populations. If differences accumulate to where the populations can no longer interbreed, then you have the formation of two new species.

Dr. Kritsky showed a number of illustrative slides to demonstrate small differences in species as a result of selective pressure. Geographic variations in ecosystems will produce differences in color, size and other traits that result in the most successful adaptation of that species to its immediate surroundings. If there is enough separation between these variations, it is likely that a new species will emerge. A specific example of selective pressure involved a fruit fly that fed only on apples in 1865. Some individuals started to feed on other fruits that were available at slightly different but overlapping times of the year. Over just 140 years a new species developed that does not eat the same fruit. It only eats cherries. A new species has developed to eat fruits that do not overlap in their ripening times. These flies not only cannot breed with the original species, but since the fly is short-lived, they are not even alive at the same time.

Darwin countered the claims of intelligent design in his time through examples of vestigial structures. An organism retains these adaptations after their utility is gone. An example would be the presence of wings on flightless birds when wings were "designed" for flight. Darwin maintained that if design failed for one organism it fails for all. Scientific evidence must be repeatable. Vestigial structures showed Darwin the origin of organisms and their gradual change by means of natural selection. Dr. Kritsky showed several slides illustrating the variation in insects from various fossil ancestors (including the first known cicada from 100 million years ago) to their descendants of today.

Interesting topics arose during the question and answer session. How are humans affecting the evo- →



lution of insects? When humans use pesticides to rid their environment of insect pests, they also kill off or suppress the natural predators that normally control pest populations. What remains is just the pest, which in most cases evolves to be resistant to toxins used to control them. Climate change is also affecting the life spans and migrations of many insect species.

Another question concerned some people's aversion to bugs and led to this discussion. Our obsession with cleanliness may be affecting our own evolution. During recent times, there has been an explosion of reported cases of autoimmune diseases, cancers and allergies. This trend may be the result of us eliminating parasites from our bodies. The body's immune system evolved to keep parasites in check. When no parasites are present, the body turns on itself. Research to determine if there is a correlation between elimination of parasites and the

rise of these health problems is ongoing. Could it be that we are making ourselves ill by removing ourselves from our evolutionary environment? Dr. Kritsky related an anecdote about a man who allegedly cured his allergies by intentionally contracting whipworms. This is not a suggestion. More research must be done.

I'll leave you with this quote from Dr. Kritsky, "We didn't progress technologically throughout the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages. We denied women the opportunity to participate. We should be three thousand years ahead of ourselves right now."

Join us for the next Science Café on September 20 at Dave and Buster's. Speaking will be Jure Zupan. His topic is the Large Hadron Collider, the largest and most powerful machine ever built by humans.

Reported by John Welte ☞



Become a CFI Secular Celebrant

What is a CFI Secular Celebrant?

Secular Celebrants officiate at marriage and commitment ceremonies, funerals/memorials, and other celebrations of life's milestones. See "Why a CFI Secular Celebrant Program?" How can I become a CFI Secular Celebrant?

You can become a certified CFI Secular Celebrant by attending a training session and meeting other requirements. Read the complete list of requirements at "CFI Secular Celebrant Certification."

When is the next training session?

September 16-17, 2011 in Indianapolis, IN

CFI-Indiana
350 Canal Walk, Suite A
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Friday, September 16, 2011

6.30 p.m. — Dinner and getting to know each other at a local restaurant

Saturday, September 17, 2011

8.30 - 9.30 a.m. — Breakfast at CFI-Indiana
9.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. — Workshop at CFI-Indiana
Lunch will be at a nearby restaurant.
6.30 p.m. — Dinner out and entertainment at a local venue (optional)

Sunday, September 18, 2011 — Out-of-town guests with afternoon flights are invited to join CFI-Indiana's weekly Coffee and Conversation, 10am-noon at CFI-Indiana.

Workshop Fee: \$75.00 per person (does not include meals)

Certification Fee: \$49.00 per year (to be paid later)

Training will be conducted by Reba Boyd Wooden, Co-Director, CFI Secular Celebrant Program.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Courtyard by Marriott Capitol, 320 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46202 which is directly across a pedestrian bridge from CFI-Indiana. These rooms will be held until August 17 at the rate of \$109.00 per night plus 17% tax. Reservations may be made by calling (888) 816-4091 or (317) 684-7733 or online. When calling ask for Center for Inquiry-Indiana. The reservation code is INDCD. Transportation to and from the Indianapolis International (IND) airport and this hotel can be provided by CFI-Indiana volunteers.

Online Registration: · Mail-in Registration

For more information concerning the CFI Secular Celebrant Program and arrangements in Indianapolis, contact Reba Boyd Wooden.



THINGS TO DO....

THINGS TO SEE...



Science Book Club

All the meetings are held at the downtown Cincinnati Library in Meeting Room 3A at 2:30 on the third Sunday of each month with the following exceptions:

Schedule for 2011:

September 18 - *Sacred Geometry* by Stephen Skinner, 2006, 160pp

October 16 - *What Have You Changed Your Mind About? Today's Leading Minds Rethink Everything* by John Brockman, ed, 2009, 387pp

November 20 - *The Denial of Death* by Ernest Becker, Pulitzer Prize, 1973, 314pp

December 18 - *The Dependent Gene: Fallacy of Nature vs. Nurture*, David S. Moore, 2002



More Meetups From Unbelievers Meet-Up Group

Sep 19; 6:30 PM

Monthly Monday Meetup

Washington Platform Saloon

1000 Elm St, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Atheists, Agnostics, Humanists and Freethinkers meet here. Regular monthly gatherings are held on the 3rd Mondays. New people join every month, and we all wear name tags (no quizzes). Check the Message Board for current hot topics.

Oct 06; 7:00 PM

NEW First Thursday @ The Hofbräuhaus

Hofbrauhaus, Newport

200 East 3rd Street, Newport, KY 41071

Atheists, Agnostics, Humanists and Freethinkers meet here. Regular monthly gatherings are held on the 1st Thursday. New people join every month, and we all wear name tags (no quizzes). Check the Message Board for current hot topics.



The Center for Inquiry Institute and CFI—Amherst are proud to host a two-day conference on

Daniel Dennett and the Scientific Study of Religion

A Celebration of the Fifth Anniversary of *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*

December 2-3, 2011

Center for Inquiry—Transnational

1310 Sweet Home Road

Amherst, NY

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Daniel Dennett's 2006 book *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* is a bold vision of religion as an entirely natural phenomenon, amenable to study by the various social, behavioral, and cognitive sciences. The theme of this conference is the further pursuit of the scientific study of religion along the major lines



elaborated by Dennett, together with pioneering research that is presently advancing this important interdisciplinary effort.

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Conference program is scheduled for:

Friday, December 2: 7pm-10pm

Saturday, December 3: 9am-9pm

Registration is \$79 for the public, \$59 for Friends of the Center,

and \$29 for students (valid student ID required).

For more information about the CFI Institute, please visit our web site.

Specific questions? Email a CFI Institute representative or call us at (716) 636-4869 ext. 408

CFI—Transnational is located directly across from the University at Buffalo's North Campus

Free parking is available at the Center



## The Population: Debt Ceilings Are Merely A Distraction.

The real problem is that there are too many of us. The need to limit population on a finite planet was explained in 1798 by the Rev. Robert Thomas Malthus in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Paul Ehrlich's 1968 best seller, *The Population Bomb*, helped motivate the "Green Revolution" and "the Pill." With the famine in Somalia on front pages, the world population reached 7 billion, double that in 1968 when Ehrlich issued his warning. Last week, *Science* magazine devoted a special section to population. Unfortunately, it treated it as a problem of the developing world. It's a mistake to think of overpopulation just in terms of starving masses. It's much more: It's the Hubbert peak, global warming, disappearance of the great ocean fisheries, floating garbage patches in ocean gyres, shortages of fresh water and phosphate rock, perpetual warfare and a faltering green revolution. Every problem the world faces is driven by excess population. Yesterday, The Local Living section of the *Washington Post* featured a positive article about a married couple and their 11 beautiful, healthy kids. Tax exemptions for dependents subsidize profligate fertility, and should be abolished.

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 - *What's New* by Robert Park, 12 August 2011

## Texas Governor Convenes A Christian Revival And Negotiates With God.

Rick Perry led a prayer meeting of 30,000 evangelical Christians in a Houston football stadium last month, calling on Jesus to guide us out of our national travail. It was billed as non-political. I suppose that's possible; under the First Amendment God is not excluded from politics, but if Perry wants to be President he's got to be able to negotiate at every level. The big question then is, how did God respond? It didn't take long to get an answer. The crowd had scarcely left the stadium when God set Texas on fire. It's still burning. In fact, when

God sent Tropical Storm Lee ashore he had it dump record rains on the other Gulf states, while leaving Texas parched. This is not a good sign.

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 - *What's New* by Robert Park, 2 September 2011

## Earthquakes: It's Time To Stop Behaving Like Animals.

At the urging of a 5.8-magnitude earthquake centered in Northern Virginia, thousands of books in the University of Maryland Library sought a lower energy configuration, moving from the bookshelves to the floor. Meanwhile, according to the *Washington Post*, *ABC*, and *NBC*, high-strung inmates at the National Zoo like orangutans began to screech and scramble to higher perches "minutes

before" seismographs sensed anything. Like maybe they had some special sense that humans don't? Or so the media reported. Were reporters already at the zoo waiting for a quake? Zoos are always in turmoil. Inmates chase each other, fornicate and have food fights, except the laid-back types like pandas that just sit on their ass through it all munching bamboo.

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 - *What's New* by Robert Park, 2 September 2011

## FIG Accepting Credit Card/PayPal Donations

FIG now can accept donations online through PayPal - pay with your credit card or PayPal account. All donations will support the FIG 20th Anniversary Conference in October and are currently being doubled due to a challenge grant provided by Joe Levee. PayPal donation information will be available soon on [www.gofigger.org](http://www.gofigger.org) soon. You can also donate online by using this web address - <http://tinyurl.com/3dtvpp4> or also find the information on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/gofigger](http://www.facebook.com/gofigger).

## Sometimes You Just Need A Labor Union.

When school bus driver George Daw was called to his supervisor's office after Daw rescued three people from a storm, he thought he might be getting a commendation. Instead, he was fired. "Employee endangered welfare of student he was transporting when he picked up three unauthorized passengers," the termination notice said. The three men he picked up were stranded, their car destroyed by flooding. Daw, who was driving an SUV-style vehicle, had only one child aboard. Maybe the men were "undesirables"? Probably not in most people's opinion: they were police officers. After a hearing on the union grievance he filed—and a public protest over this outrage, Daw was re-hired. "I think it's a victory for America," he said after being reinstated. "I don't think anyone should have to second-guess helping first responders."  
 (WCBS-TV)



## A Conservative Christian Engaged In A Christian War

by Herb Silverman, *The Washington Post*, 27 July 2011

Silverman is Founder and President of the Secular Coalition for America, and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the College of Charleston.

*Q. Calling himself an anti-Muslim 'crusader' for 'Christianity,' Anders Behring Breivik killed 76 people in Norway last week. Should Breivik be called a 'Christian terrorist'?*

I need to confess that I have a somewhat loose connection to Anders Behring Breivik, who recently killed 76 people in Norway. You see, he lifted words for his manifesto from the manifesto of "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski. I never met Ted, but he and I were in the same research field of geometric function theory, and I published some joint papers with Kaczynski's dissertation advisor.

When Kaczynski was caught, a slightly paranoid math colleague of mine became unnecessarily concerned that there might be an anti-mathematician backlash. It helped that nobody could think of other mathematicians who were guilty of anything more than eccentric behavior. History showed that violence was more likely to be committed against, rather than by, mathematicians. Hypatia of Alexandria had an illustrious math career until she was burned alive in 415 by a mob of Christian monks. And St. Augustine said, "The good Christian should beware of mathematicians, and all those who make empty prophecies. The danger already exists that the mathematicians have made a covenant with the devil to darken the spirit and to confine man in the bonds of Hell."

While Kaczynski never made any connections between his mathematics and his violent acts, Breivik indicated in his manifesto that he was a conservative Christian engaged in a Christian war to defend Europe against the threat of Muslim domination. His acts are consistent with both biblical Christian theology and Christian behavior. The Bible and other holy books have passages encouraging the murder of infidels. They also have passages about loving your neighbor. I think we can tell more about individuals by which parts of their contradictory holy books they emphasize than by which religion they have in common.

Here's what I don't accept: the claim that Breivik is not a "true" Christian because of what he did. Yes he is. You might not like the kind of Christian he is, but he is what he says he is. So is "God hates fags" Christian Pastor Fred Phelps. Similarly, Osama bin Laden was a true Muslim. The Crusaders were true Christians, as were those who murdered abortion doctors, as were most Nazis.

Despite Ted Kaczynski's terrorist acts, he is a true mathematician. I wish my math publications were nearly as impressive. But math and morality don't always go together, and neither do religion and morality. I leave for others to opine whether there are positive or negative correlations. I will say that compared to the general population, there are far smaller percentages of mathematicians than Christians in prison for violent crimes. Also, a much smaller percentage of atheists.



### Pearls of Wisdom

- 1) "Sometimes I think war is God's way of teaching us geography."  
– Paul Rodriguez.
- 2) "Our bombs are smarter than the average high school student. At least they can find Afghanistan." – A. Whitney Brown.
- 3) "Why does Sea World have a seafood restaurant? I'm halfway through my fish burger and I realize, 'Oh my God... I could be eating a slow learner'." – Lynda Montgomery.
- 4) "My parents didn't want to move to Florida, but they turned sixty and that's the law." – Jerry Seinfeld.
- 5) "Relationships are hard. It's like having full time job, and we should treat it like one. If your boyfriend or girlfriend wants to leave you, they should give you two weeks notice. There should be severance pay; and the day before they leave you, they should have to find you a temp." – Bob Ettinger.





*Unprotected Texts: The Bible's Surprising Contradictions About Sex and Desire*  
 by Jennifer Wright Knust  
 (New York: HarperCollins Pub. 2011)

The author of this critical examination of the Bible is a professor of religion specializing in the New Testament, biblical studies, and early Christian history. Far from an unbeliever, she is an ordained minister of the, – relatively liberal, – American Baptist denomination. She clearly has not lost her faith in god or the Bible, or the god of the Bible. Yet she discusses the book as written by many human writers, over long periods of time, with different aims. She not only highlights the disagreements and contradictions among authors, but makes efforts to explain the aims and theological points the authors were intending to make, and how these fit into the beliefs of their time. Much of *Unprotected Texts* is about marriage, what it is or was at different times, who can marry and who should not, but most of all there is no consistent rule. “The Bible fails to offer girls – or anyone – a consistent message regarding sexual morals and God’s priorities.”(p. 5)

Knust begins by discussing the “Joy of Sex” in the Bible, specifically that hot love poem, the “Song of Songs.” Although it does not mention specific sex acts, the poem does allow explicit interpretations, it speaks of large breasts, flowing locks, kissable lips, and sexual fulfillment. And it is not the only description of extramarital sex and love. There is the seduction of a neighbor’s wife between David and Bathsheba. In another tale, foreigner Ruth seduces Boaz, “uncovering his feet,” to get him to accept her into his harem. Yet, other parts of the Bible strictly forbid marrying foreign women.

Marriage in the Hebrew Scriptures clearly is not between one man and one woman for life; rather it is between a free Israelite man and as many women and slaves as he can gain and support. It lasts until he divorces the Israelite women, or sells or sends away the slaves. Women and slaves are available for exchange, not free people who may live and love as they wish.

In the New Testament Paul has different ideas. While sex is to be confined within marriage, he is really against marriage at all, it is merely a means to guard against sin. Even within marriage men were expected to maintain self control, and keep a strong rule over their wives and children. The sexual act is to be confined to propagation and the union is intended to produce children.

What the Bible has to say about homosexuality is confusing rather than forbidding. First off, the story of Sodom (Gomorrah does not really appear) has to do with the rules of accepting strangers as guests. It has nothing to do with homosexuality, angels have no gender! Turning the Sodom tale into a story of anal sex started with Latin sermons in the Middle Ages, and became fixed in English Bible translations. Knust informs us that many of the vices translated as “sodomy” in the New Testament simply don’t mean that, or are unclear in the original *koine* Greek. The great sin in the Hebrew Scriptures is intermarriage, spilling the “holy seed of Israel” in foreign women, menstruating women, or with other men, with animals, even in the wife of another. Seed is to produce legitimate Israeli offspring to assure the continuing life after death through male children. The precious semen must not be wasted. Towards the end of the last chapter, Knust returns to the confusing and time bound nature of the Bible:

Such stunning diversity of approaches to circumcision, semen, and menses, perhaps more than any other topic covered in this book, contradicts the notion that God’s Word speaks with one voice about anything, especially the human body, genitalia, and sex. Biblical teachings regarding bodies and their fluids invite the frank admission that biblical principles cannot be – and have not been – applied to contemporary life in anything like a straightforward way. (p. 234)

In the end Knust does not give us any definitive interpretation. She encourages us to be active interpreters of the Bible, and suggests that we need to admit we have wishes about what we want the Bible to say. And that our wishes can lead us to finding an honest and faithful interpretation, to make the Bible say whatever we wish it to say. I am rather doubtful of that assertion.

Nevertheless, *Unprotected Texts* is a valuable, scholarly examination of the Bible, by a competent scholar. It is very much worth reading.

– Wolf Roder



# FIG LEAVES



## FIG@20: The 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Free Inquiry Group of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.

### Registration Form

**Alternately: register on line at** <http://fig20.eventbrite.com/>  
And pay by PayPal

October 15-16, 2011  
Doubletree Hotel at the Cincinnati Airport

|                        |  |
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| Registration Options<br>(Please list quantity of each): |      | * | Quantity | = | Subtotal \$ |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------|---|----------|---|-------------|
| FIG Member                                              | \$50 | * |          | = |             |
| Non-FIG Member                                          | \$70 | * |          | = |             |
| Student                                                 | \$25 | * |          | = |             |
| Mini-Camp Quest (ages 7-16)                             | \$25 | * |          | = |             |
|                                                         |      |   |          |   |             |
| <b>Total Amount:</b> _____                              |      |   |          |   |             |

Make your check payable to FIG.  
Fill out this form and mail it to:

FIG  
c/o FIG@20  
P.O. Box 53174  
Cincinnati, OH 45253





**FIG@20 Celebration**  
 Saturday & Sunday October 15-16  
 Doubletree Hotel  
 2826 Terminal Drive; Hebron, KY.



**FIG Meeting**  
 Tuesday Sept. 27 at 7 PM  
 Hannaford Suites Hotel



**FIG Is On Facebook**  
 If you have a Facebook account, become a Fan of FIG. To join you can type in this long weblink: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Cincinnati-OH/FIG-Free-Inquiry-Group-of-Cincinnati-and-Northern-Kentucky/306015475868> or it is much easier to search for "Free Inquiry Group" and find it the first option on the search page.  
 By being a Fan you can receive FIG updates and meeting notices and RSVP for events such as the monthly FIG Community Dinners.

**FIG Leaves**  
 P.O. Box 53174  
 Cincinnati, OH 45253

# FIG

## Our Purpose

The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. (FIG) 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.

Though most of our members are secular humanists, 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 - [figmessage at gofigger dot org](mailto:figmessage@gofigger.org), or visit our web site at [gofigger.org](http://gofigger.org) or [freeinquirygroup.org](http://freeinquirygroup.org).