

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

November 2014
Edited by Carl Ledendecker

First Sunday Meeting

November 2 Sunday 10:30 - 12:30

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

An examination of Secular Invocations

We will be discussing the Recent Galloway v. Town of Greece, NY, SCOTUS ruling.

Following that there will be an examination of secular invocations, plus examples including an Invocation of July 15, 2014 at the Town Board of Greece by Dan Courtney.

The RET Skeptic Book Club

November 9 Sunday 2:00 – 4:00 pm Note: This is a new time.

Location: Barnes and Noble Booksellers on Kingston Pike.

“The Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap ” by Matt Taibbi - Sunday, November 9, 2:00 pm at Barnes and Noble Booksellers on Kingston Pike.

Over the last two decades, America has been falling deeper and deeper into a statistical mystery:

Poverty goes up. Crime goes down. The prison population doubles.

Fraud by the rich wipes out 40 percent of the world’s wealth. The rich get massively richer. No one goes to jail.

In search of a solution, journalist Matt Taibbi discovered the Divide, the seam in American life where our two most troubling trends—growing wealth inequality and mass incarceration—come together, driven by a dramatic shift in American citizenship: Our basic rights are now determined by our wealth or poverty. The Divide is what allows massively destructive fraud by the hyperwealthy to go

unpunished, while turning poverty itself into a crime—but it's impossible to see until you look at these two alarming trends side by side.

In *The Divide*, Matt Taibbi takes readers on a galvanizing journey through both sides of our new system of justice—the fun-house-mirror worlds of the untouchably wealthy and the criminalized poor. He uncovers the startling looting that preceded the financial collapse; a wild conspiracy of billionaire hedge fund managers to destroy a company through dirty tricks; and the story of a whistleblower who gets in the way of the largest banks in America, only to find herself in the crosshairs. On the other side of the Divide, Taibbi takes us to the front lines of the immigrant dragnet; into the newly punitive welfare system which treats its beneficiaries as thieves; and deep inside the stop-and-frisk world, where standing in front of your own home has become an arrestable offense. As he narrates these incredible stories, he draws out and analyzes their common source: a perverse new standard of justice, based on a radical, disturbing new vision of civil rights.

Through astonishing—and enraging—accounts of the high-stakes capers of the wealthy and nightmare stories of regular people caught in the Divide's punishing logic, Taibbi lays bare one of the greatest challenges we face in contemporary American life: surviving a system that devours the lives of the poor, turns a blind eye to the destructive crimes of the wealthy, and implicates us all. (Amazon Review)

Special Public Lecture

November 15 Saturday 2:00 p.m.

Demography of Unbelief

Tom Flynn of the Center for Inquiry and editor of "Free Inquiry" magazine will discuss the "Demography of Unbelief" - A lavishly-illustrated PowerPoint presentation tracing what pollsters know -- and what they get wrong -- about the record growth in the numbers of Americans claiming no religious affiliation from the 1980s to today.

RET Third Sunday Meeting

November 16 Sunday 0 p.m.

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium

There will be no third Sunday Roundtable this month, owing to the special public meeting on Saturday, November 15.

RET Reflections Meeting

November 30 5th Sunday

1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Schera Chadwick & Ted Lollis

9219 George Williams Road, 37922;

Topic: “Detaching God From Our Government”

Potluck meeting - call 865.690.8742 for directions.

New Book Club List

- | | |
|----------|---|
| November | “The Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap” by Matt Taibbi |
| December | Break, no book club meeting |
| January | “How Jesus became God” by Bart Ehrman |
| February | “Astronaut’s Guide to Life on Earth” by Chris Hadfield |
| March | “Hope after Faith” by Jerry DeWitt |
| April | “A Troublesome Inheritance” by Nicholas Wade |
| May | “Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead” by Sheryl Sandberg |
| June | “Stuff Matters: Exploring the Marvelous Materials That Shape Our Man-Made World” by Mark Miodownik |
| July | “House of Debt: How They (and You) Caused the Great Recession, and How We Can Prevent It from Happening Again” by Atif Mian |
-

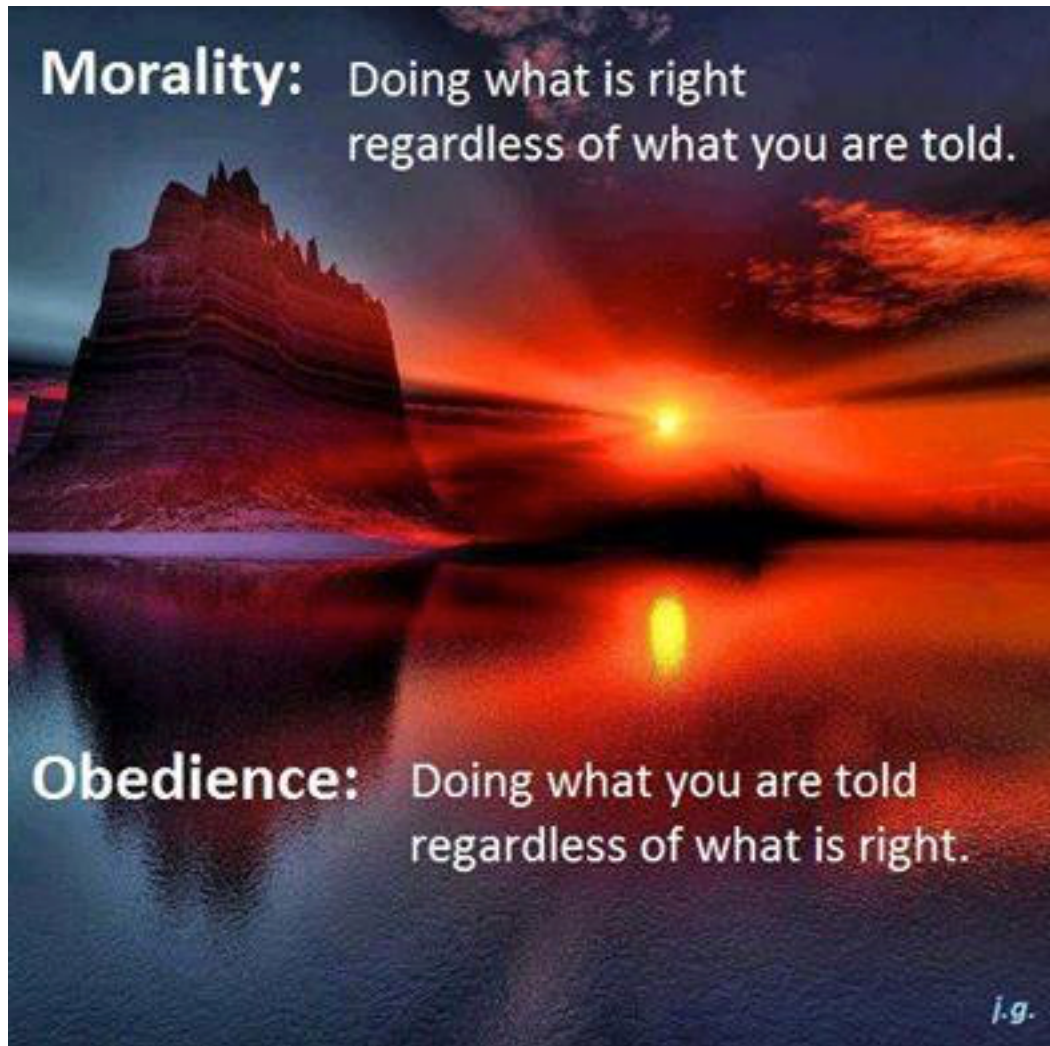
RET/ASK Freethought Forum

Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm

In Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12 Charter Channel 6
Surrounding areas: free streaming on ctvknox.org.

Show topics are subject to change.

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville meet up at Barley's in Knoxville's Old Town. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rhodes at larryr@usit.net or Joe Barnhart at tempolark@hotmail.com



Percentages

A recent **Pew survey on religion in the United States** “found that that the number of people who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith today is 16.1% and that “among Americans ages 18-29, one-in-four say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion.” Also interesting to note is that this year’s **freshman class at Harvard is 36% agnostic/atheist!**”

<http://thehumanist.com/news/religion/forget-blessed-cant-we-all-just-have-a-nice-day>

Quotes from Founding Fathers

“Congress has no power to make any religious establishments.”

~*Founding Father Roger Sherman, Congress, August 19, 1789*

“If I could conceive that the general government might ever be so administered as to render the liberty of conscience insecure, I beg you will be persuaded, that no one would be more zealous than myself to establish effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny, and every species of religious persecution.”

~*Founding Father George Washington, letter to the United Baptist Chamber of Virginia, May 1789*

“We have abundant reason to rejoice that in this Land the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition... In this enlightened Age and in this Land of equal liberty it is our boast, that a man’s religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the Laws, nor deprive him of the right of attaining and holding the highest Offices that are known in the United States.”

~*Founding Father George Washington, letter to the members of the New Church in Baltimore, January 27, 1793*

And my two favorites:

“The United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature; and if men are now sufficiently enlightened to disabuse themselves of artifice, imposture, hypocrisy, and superstition, they will consider this event as an era in their history. Although the detail of the formation of the American governments is at present little known or regarded either in Europe or in America, it may hereafter become an object of curiosity. It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of Heaven, more than those at work upon ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture; it will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses.”

~*John Adams, “A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America” 1787-1788*

“Thirteen governments [of the original states] thus founded on the natural authority of the people alone, without a pretence of miracle or mystery, and which are destined to spread over the northern part of that whole quarter of the globe, are a great point gained in favor of the rights of mankind.”

~*Founding Father John Adams, “A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America” (1787-88)*

From:

<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2013/07/04/35-founding-father-quotes-conservative-christians-will-hate/>

Not in the Constitution

Theists often claim that “the wall of separation of church and state” is not in the Constitution. That is technically correct if one is literal and myopic. It is also true in this sense that “separation of powers” and “system of checks and balances” is also not in the Constitution.

My thanks to Jonathan Engel in the newsletter Pique, Oct 2014 for making this point.

Other Events of Note

Sunday Assemblies Knoxville, Nov. 23 , Charles Towne Landing HOA Club House 11:00 am

American Atheists National convention in Memphis, TN at the Peabody Hotel, April 2-5

American Humanist Association Annual Conference Denver, CO May 7-10 at Grand Hyatt Hotel

Dues and donations can be sent to “RET, P.O. Box 51634, Knoxville, TN 37950”, or via Pay Pal through the link at www.rationalists.org. Direct payment can also be made to RET treasurer, Eliot Specht

Reimbursement

Remember that you can ask for reimbursement for food, supplies, etc. that you provide for RET.

FEEL FREE to Send me information or articles by you.

Anyone who has something to submit for publication in the RET Newsletter please e-mail it to ledendecker@bellsouth.net. The decision to include the submission is at the discretion of the current editor (me), but I am not all that picky.