

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

October 2014
Edited by Carl Ledendecker

Trash Pick-up “Adopt a Highway”

October 4 3:00 pm

Location: Meet at Lovell Road Burger King.

Wear appropriate clothing, bug spray (recommended), gloves and hat. A pickup tool is very useful.

The more we have the faster, funner and easier it is.

Rain date October 25

First Sunday Meeting

October 5 Sunday 10:30 - 12:30

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

Presentation of a Plaque of appreciation to Steve Kelley for his stand against the Roane County Commision’s effort to post the Ten Commandments.

A Brief Course on Living Well

In this meeting we will be viewing and discussing Tim Minchi’s address to his alma mater on how to live.

“Listen to these words of wisdom, and you might just get through life perfectly...Or at least, kind of unscathed.” Tim Minchin

We will also view a video on humanism by the British Humanist Association and discuss “The Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles” by Paul Kurtz

The RET Skeptic Book Club

October 12 Sunday 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Note: This is a new time.

Location: Barnes and Noble Booksellers on Kingston Pike.

"Nonbeliever Nation" by David Niose

Today, one in five Americans are nonbelievers—a rapidly growing group at a time when traditional Christian churches are dwindling in numbers. Still we see almost none of them openly serving in elected office, while Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum, and many others continue to loudly proclaim the falsehood of America as a Christian nation. In *Nonbeliever Nation*, leading secular advocate David Niose calls for nonreligious Americans from all backgrounds to step out of the shadows and signal their opposition to the long-dominant Religious Right. Exploring all the hot-button issues that divide the country—from gay marriage to education policy to contentious church-state battles—he shows how Secular Americans—a group comprised not just of atheists and agnostics, but lapsed Catholics, secular Jews, and millions of others who have walked away from organized religion—are mobilizing and forming groups all over the country (even atheist clubs in Bible-belt high schools) to challenge the exaltation of religion in American politics and public life. This is a timely and important look at a growing demographic that is flexing its muscles for the first time. (Amazon Review).

Easy Hike

October 22 Wednesday 10:00 am .

Tremont Fall stroll in the Smokies - Middle Prong Trail

This “hike” can be one mile or eight miles round trip. Some can go the short distance and others may want to go farther. The trail is 80% smooth and has a very gentle grade along lovely Middle Prong River. The first really great water feature is just a half a mile into the hike.

Bring lunch and we can have a picnic at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont.

Directions: From Alcoa Highway (129) take the split into Maryville towards the Mountains (N. Hall Road Hwy 35). Proceed to Townsend via Hwy. 321/73. Enter the

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

Science and Religion: A different angle

Are science and religion doomed to eternal “warfare,” or can they just get along? Philosophers, theologians, scientists, and atheists debate this subject endlessly (and often, angrily). We hear a lot less from economists on the matter, however. But in a recent paper, Princeton economist Roland Bénabou and two colleagues unveiled a surprising finding that would at least appear to bolster the “conflict” camp: Both across countries and also across US states, higher levels of religiosity are related to lower levels of scientific innovation. “Places with higher levels of religiosity have lower rates of scientific and technical innovation, as measured by patents per capita,” comments Bénabou. He adds that the pattern persists “when controlling for differences in income per capita, population, and rates of higher education.” That’s the most salient finding from the paper by Bénabou and his colleagues, which uses an economic model to explore how scientific innovation, religiosity, and the power of the state interact to form different “regimes.”

<https://-science-and-religion-really-are-enemies-after-all/>

Quotes

Seen at the recent Sunday Assemblies meeting:

Atheism is not a religion. It is a personal relationship with reality.

How the New Cosmos Did It

The New Cosmos with Neil deGrasse Tyson was amazingly clear about science verses superstition, evolution and even went after religion in several instances. How did this unusual level of integrity make it into the mass media?

In an interview the Center for Inquiry’s podcast “Point of Inquiry” Ann Druyan relates how she spent three years being rejected by various networks because she required complete creative control of the series.

Eventually Neil deGrasse Tyson introduced her to Seth McFarlane who had the clout to get Fox (and National Geographic) to agree.

She states, “Fox gave me the freedom I needed to protect our legacy and to take on the scientific issues that have been pretty much ignored on primetime commercial broadcast TV.”

A summary of this interview can be found in the Sept./Oct 2014 issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*.

Internal Exile?

Some religious leaders are considering “exile” to escape the wickedness of American society. They are apparently feeling alienated and persecuted in a society they once claimed as theirs. In the journal “First Things” (a conservative Catholic publication) Professor Carl Trueman commented, “[T]he Western public square is no longer a place where Christians feel they belong with any degree of comfort.” He said that “internal exile” via Reformed Protestantism was the correct system to save Christianity. (He happens to be a member of that sect.)

Quickly other Christian sects claimed that their groups were superior and better able to withstand “internal exile.” By the way, “internal exile” is sheltering one’s self until the “excesses” of the modern age pass.

Dark Ages anyone?

A summary from “Angry Religious Right Leaders Ponder A Form of ‘Internal Exile’ in *Church & State*, Oct. 2014, page 15

Other Events of Note

Sunday Assemblies Knoxville, Oct. 26, 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.