

# Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

August 2015  
Edited by Carl Ledendecker

## First Sunday Meeting

**August 2    Sunday    10:30 - 12:30**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex**

**A celebration of Robert Green Ingersoll**

**Presented by RET member Lee Erickson (audience invited to contribute)**

A celebration of Robert Green Ingersoll to commemorate his birthday, August 11. Readings from Ingersoll's works and some history related to Ingersoll.

## The RET Skeptic Book Club

**August 9    Sunday    2:00 – 4:00 pm**

**Location: Books-A-Million at 8513 Kingston Pike, Knoxville.**

**List of new book schedule:**

**September**

*Culture Wars: The Threat To Your Family And Your Freedom* by Marie Alena Castle

**October**

*Hardwiring Happiness: The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm, and Confidence* by Rick Hanson

**November**

*Consciousness Explained* by Daniel Dennett

**December**

*Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East* by Scott Anderson

**January**

*Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* by Karen Armstrong

**February**

*One Nation Under God: How Corporate American Invented Christian America* by Kevin Kruse

**March**

*The Second Amendment: A Biography* by Michael Waldma

## **RET Third Sunday Meeting**

**August 16 Sunday 10:30 a.m.**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium**

**“Cultural history, European settlement of the United States”**

**Presented by RET member Michael Lance**

A talk based on the book "Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America", by David Hatcher Fischer.

This cultural history explains the European settlement of the United States as voluntary migrations from four English cultural centers. Families of zealous, literate Puritan yeomen and artisans from urbanized East Anglia established a religious community in Massachusetts (1629-40); royalist cavaliers headed by Sir William Berkeley and young, male indentured servants from the south and west of England built a highly stratified agrarian way of life in Virginia (1640-70); egalitarian Quakers of modest social standing from the North Midlands resettled in the Delaware Valley and promoted a social pluralism (1675-1715); and, in by far the largest migration (1717-75), poor borderland families of English, Scots, and Irish fled a violent environment to seek a better life in a similarly uncertain American back country. These four cultures, reflected in regional patterns of language, architecture, literacy, dress, sport, social structure, religious beliefs, and familial ways, persisted in the American settlements having significance for these regional cultures for American history up to the present.

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## RET Reflections Meeting

**August 23 Sunday 1:00 p.m.**

**Reflections, August 2015      This is an off month - NO REFLECTIONS this month.**

**Sept. 27th**

**Since Ted and Schera will be out of the country we need a host for the Sept. 27th.  
Please contact Schera Chadwick at 865.690.8742 and Carl Ledendecker at 982-8687 if you are interested.**

## RET/ASK Freethought Forum TV

**Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm**

Freethought Forum TV is looking for people to be on the show. Contact Larry Rhodes or Lee Erickson if you are interested.

In Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12    Charter Channel 6    Free streaming on [ctvknox.org](http://ctvknox.org).

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville Meet-up at Barley's on Jackson Avenue in Knoxville's Old City. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rhodes at [larryr@usit.net](mailto:larryr@usit.net) or Lee Erickson at [forresterickson@comcast.net](mailto:forresterickson@comcast.net).

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## Other Events of Note

### Atheist Society of Knoxville

[meetup.com](http://meetup.com) Then Click "Find a Meetup group" and type in ASK or Atheist Society of Knoxville

Regular activity: Brews at Barley's every Tuesday around 5:30 PM

## Sunday Assembly Knoxville Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More

August 23 - This month's theme is "Radical Inclusivity." Charles Towne Landing HOA Club House 11:00 am.

For other SA activities go to <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com> and click on "Calendar."

Email: [saknoxville@gmail.com](mailto:saknoxville@gmail.com)

Website: <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/595906073848559>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/>

**Freedom From Religion Foundation** convention in Madison Wisconsin on October 9 - 11

**Atheist Alliance of America** conference in Atlanta on October 15 -18

### Who was the "good" guy? Genesis

"God creates the man and the woman and tells them to keep their hands off one particular tree in the Garden they live in (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:2). He warns them it is deadly poison: If they make the mistake of eating it, they will drop dead the same day. They assume this is true until the snake comes along and tells them God is lying to them: The fruit of the tree is in fact not poisonous. Why then would God say it was? Because the fruit will give them what he has: knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:4—5). And God wants to keep all knowledge to himself. As we read the story up to this point, we ask, "Who is telling the truth? God or the serpent?" Most readers just cannot imagine the story would show God as a liar. But the only way to answer the question is to keep reading. What actually happens once they eat the fruit? Number one: They don't die. Number two: Their eyes are opened (Genesis 3:7) and they gain the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:22). Who would you say told the truth? God?"

"God has knowledge, but he seems not to know everything, because he only gradually pieces together what happened (Genesis 3:8 - 11). Once he realizes the humans have outwitted him, he condemns them to forfeit eternal life (though they do not die at once; he only exiles them from Eden), and he makes life as difficult for them as he can: hard labor, painful childbirth, and alienation from nature. He rushes them out of Eden as soon as he can so they will not eat of the Tree of Life. If they do this, if they get hold of the secret of immortality, Adam and Eve will have pretty much become gods. God is already not the only god (he speaks to the others at the end of the story, Genesis 3:22), and he doesn't want even more competition. So out they go! Who is the villain in this story? Isn't it God? After all, he is the one who lies and wants to keep the man and the woman in the dark. Who is the hero? Isn't it the snake? God cuts off his limbs and forces him and all future snakes to crawl (Genesis 3:14). The poor snake seems to be the helper of the human race, and he heroically pays a high price for helping us. God is like a slave master who is kind enough until his slaves decide they don't want to be slaves any more.

Does the story say anything about human beings becoming evil or sinful? Or isn't it about our heroic struggle to gain knowledge and to think for ourselves about good and evil?"

Excerpts from "The Garden of Good and Evil" Robert Price, the American Rationalists, May/June 2015

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## Prostituting Reason

From [http://www.jesuscult.com/Luther\\_Anti-Reason.htm](http://www.jesuscult.com/Luther_Anti-Reason.htm)

"Reason is the Devil's greatest whore; by nature and manner of being she is a noxious whore; she is a prostitute, the Devil's appointed whore; whore eaten by scab and leprosy who ought to be trodden under foot and destroyed, she and her wisdom ... Throw dung in her face to make her ugly. She is and she ought to be drowned in baptism... She would deserve, the wretch, to be banished to the filthiest place in the house, to the closets."

Martin Luther, Erlangen Edition v. 16, pp. 142-148

"Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but -- more frequently than not -- struggles against the divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God."

"Reason must be deluded, blinded, and destroyed. Faith must trample underfoot all reason, sense, and understanding, and whatever it sees must be put out of sight and ... know nothing but the word of God."

"There is on earth among all dangers no more dangerous thing than a richly endowed and adroit reason... Reason must be deluded, blinded, and destroyed."

Martin Luther, quoted by Walter Kaufmann, *The Faith of a Heretic*, (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1963), p. 75

"Reason should be destroyed in all Christians."

"Whoever wants to be a Christian should tear the eyes out of his Reason."

*Editor's note: Putting this position into practice we have:*

"People gave ear to an upstart astrologer [Copernicus] who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system, which of all systems is of course the very best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred scripture tells us [Joshua 10:13] that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth."

Martin Luther, "Works," Volume 22, c. 1543