

**From:** Rationalists of East Tennessee admin@rationalists.org  
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**To:** Carl Ledendecker ledendecker@me.com

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RET News April 2016 CE



Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

April 2016

The Bible as the Official Tennessee State Book will be voted on in the State Senate soon! Please contact your State Senator now.

### **First Sunday Meeting**

**April 3    Sunday    10:30 - 12:30**

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

## **Economics from the Anthropological Perspective**

Lectures by Professor Edward Fisher, Vanderbilt University

(Great Courses by the Teaching Company)

This Sunday we will listen to and discuss three taped lectures on economics from an Anthropologist's point of view.

Lecture titles will be:

"Cultures of Capitalism", "Is Economics Rational?" and "Late Capitalism Ford to Disney". (If time allows we may also listen to "The Janus Face of Globalization.")

[Get Directions](#)

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### **The RET Skeptic Book Club**

**April 10    Sunday    2:00 – 4:00 pm**

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

## **“Ten Decisions I Could Have Made Better Than God: And Other Audacious Atheist Articles”**

**by Jon Webster**

What if someone told you that they had come up with ten alternatives to some of God's decisions that were more efficient, caused less harm, and in general, were more loving than the ten decisions God had supposedly made? What if you were told that you could too? In this book, that topic is covered as the author provides entertaining analysis, satire, and criticism of a so-called perfect book while making fun of religion in a way that would make even the most fervent religious zealot laugh. As far as the content is concerned, this book has everything: atheist satire (one of which is entitled Joel Osteen Hospitalized After Smiling So Big He Broke His Face), atheist poetry (including a tribute to Christopher Hitchens entitled Tonight I Drink Johnnie Walker Black), critiques of Christian films such as God's Not Dead, Left Behind, Persecuted, and Kirk Cameron's Saving Christmas. Included in this work are four passages that each won first place in an atheist quote submission contest. There were around 60 competing entries total in each competition. In this book you will find interviews with prominent atheists such as Camels with Hammers' Philosopher Dr. Daniel Fincke and the founder of Global Secular Humanist Movement, Faisal Saeed Al Mutar as well as a song about the ineptitude of Ray Comfort entitled "Google that Shit!" What

more could you ask for?

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### **RET Third Sunday Meeting**

**April 17 Sunday 10:30 a.m.**

#### **Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium**

RET member Dr. Ray Garrett will present a talk titled

“Man-His-Gods - The-Universe and The Problem of Scale”.

[Get Directions](#)

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### **RET Reflections Meeting**

**April 24 Sunday 1:00 p.m.**

**At Ted and Schera's 9219 George Williams Road, Knoxville 37922**

Many of us had childhood or family influences which tried to perpetuate specific religious beliefs upon our young developing minds. And many of us found alternatives like humanism, agnosticism, or atheism which appealed to us in totally different ways.

Today's meeting will allow each of us to reflect on our individual personal pasts to recall the following:

- List three specific beliefs/teachings from your previous religious indoctrination(s) which you found questionable, suspicious or incredulous which most affected your decision to abandon that religion.
- List three specific tenants of atheism, secular humanism, or rationalism which most appealed to you and have helped to shape your core values by which you live today.

This may seem like a tough assignment to some of you but just think back over your religious indoctrination, try to remember the parts you liked the least or found the most objectionable and why. It may be difficult to come up with three, but I think most of have at least one big one which was our last straw in deciding to no longer affiliate with that (or any other) religion.

If each of us comes up with only one example from the two categories above, it should still prove to be an interesting group dialogue. (Schera Chadwick)

Directions: 865 690-8742

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### **Adopt a Highway Trash Pickup**

**April 23 Saturday 1:00 p.m.**

We will meet at the Lovell Road Burger King and assign sections to clean.

Gloves, sunscreen, good shoes and a "picker upper" recommended.

The rain date is 4/30/16.

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### **RET Skeptics Book Club - New Books List**

**April 10, 2016 - 10 Decisions I Could Have Made Better Than God: And Other Audacious Atheist Articles by Jon Webster -**

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**May 8, 2016 - Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam by Robert Dreyfuss**

**June 12, 2016 - Unfinished business : women, men, work, family by Anne-Marie Slaughter -**

**July 10, 2016 - Sapiens: A brief history of humankind by Yuval Noah Harari**

**August 14, 2016 - Galileo's Middle Finger by Alice Dreger -**

**September 11, 2016 - The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government by David Talbot**

**October 9, 2016 - The Right Way to Lose a War: America in an Age of Unwinnable Conflicts by Dominic Tierney -**

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### **Other Activities in the area**

### **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.

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

**April - Mother Earth (Dress like a hippy if you like.)**

Location: The International at 940 Blackstock Ave., Knoxville, TN

Time: 10:30 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/>

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### **Future Activities**

#### **RET Day of Reason Picnic**

**May 5, 2016 at Tyson Park Pavilion 1: Opens at 4:00 PM with Pot Luck and grilling beginning later.**

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#### **Former Pentecostal Preacher Jerry DeWitt**

will be speaking at the Annual RET Public Lecture on May 15 at 2:00 PM Pellissippi State College at Hardin Vally Road.

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#### **American Humanist 75th Anniversary Conference**

**Reason Rally 2 Washington DC June 4, 2016**

**Anyone interested in riding a chartered bus to the Reason Rally? If so contact ([carl\\_ledendecker@yahoo.com](mailto:carl_ledendecker@yahoo.com))**

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Often April Fools the Weatherman and April May be like June.

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*Please add your name to the RET Directory so friends can contact you.*

**RET's New Web Site and Wild Apricot**

How to set up your new password and log in. Don't forget to enter your information into the RET Directory (viewable by members only and customizable by you so people see only what you want them to).

**TO LOG IN**

Go to Rationalists.org. There, just above The Thinkers head, you will see a "Login" button. That's right, click on it. Use the email address that is already associated with RET contacts and mailings and click on "Forgot Password". There you will enter the email address and Captcha code. From there follow the directions.

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**A letter to the editor by RET member Logan Mulford that appeared in the News Sentinel**

A recent letter writer advocated the inclusion of "the opposite viewpoint" in the celebration of Darwin Day. He says, "I do not believe in macroevolution, and I don't believe I am stupid." There is not enough data in the letter to support or deny this assertion, but there is adequate evidence of the writer's ignorance of the science involved.

He begins with the claim that we should doubt evolution because "50 percent of your readers do not believe in ... evolution." This proves nothing. There was a time when everybody believed the Earth was flat. They were wrong. He then lists a number of questions he believes are problems for the theory of evolution. I don't have room here to answer them individually, but the first three were related to the origin of life. The theory of evolution is an explanation for the diversity of life. It does not address the origin of life.

His next three questions are just iterations of Michael Bebe's irreducible complexity hypothesis, an idea popular in the 1990s. It has been repeatedly refuted.

His last question refers to the Cambrian explosion. There is ongoing research involving the rapid development of species in this period and there are questions about how, but not whether, evolution functioned in the period. He then makes the claim again for equal treatment of unsupported creationist viewpoints. I guess we should also teach the stork theory of reproduction. It is at least as valid.

His final claim is that Darwinism has somehow led to atheism, which, according to him, says that "without God, all things are permissible." To put this another way, he is saying that the fear of God is the only thing stopping religious people from being rapists and murderers. I like to think religious people, as a whole, are better than that.

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**Young Mississippi woman's take on her family's response to telling her grandmother that she is an atheist.**

**"Six Foolproof And Effective Things To Do To Bring Back Atheists Back To The Lord" by Natalie DeGraffried**

Nathan DeGardner

<http://verysmartbrothas.com/six-foolproof-and-effective-things-to-do-to-bring-atheists-back-to-the-lord/>

Insightful and entertaining. Worth reading the entire post.

Here is a summary of of the "Things to DO":

Say "You'll Turn To God When You're Down On Your Luck"

Ask "What Made You Stop Believing In God?"

Ask Them A Bunch of Probing Questions, And Ignore Their Answers

Say the Same Things Over and Over and Over and Over and Over Again

Here is an excerpt to tempt you:

"If you're a Christian who doesn't actually read the Bible — which, if my experience in these conversations tells me anything, should not stop you from trying to argue about it with other people — you have the best ammo. Bible verse aside, all you need to do is repeat yourself over, and over, and over, and over again—this could even provide the trauma that the atheist will need to call upon God to escape your repetitive wrath. Here's all you really need to know:

Because God said so. Because it's in the Bible. Because the Bible is the word of the Lord. Because you have to have faith in the Bible. Because the Bible is the word of God. Because you must have faith in God. Because the Bible says so."

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## Trump and Religion

He many be a questionable Christian but!

"Trump went to the nation's largest Christian university, [Liberty University](http://www.liberty.edu/), in January to pledge, "I'm going to protect Christians," who, he said, are losing their power in American society."

<http://www.religionnews.com/2016/01/31/donald-trump-religion-bible-evangelicals/>

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### **A Republican's Straight Talk About Donald Trump**

**Kathleen Parker is a Moderate Republican Columnist for the Washington Post.**

In a recent Oped in the Maryville Daily Times she pulls no punches discussing Trump. She refers to the Sinclair Lewis classic "It Can't Happen Here" and talks about fascism and Trump.

Here is a key excerpt.

"That is the question of the moment, isn't it? This is what we ask our-selves about the industrialists and "good Germans" who supported Hitler. This is what we ask our Southern grandparents about the time when blacks were being lynched. What we ask the World War II generation about rounding up Japanese-Americans. And while we're at it, what was your vote on Vietnam, Iraq? There's a price to pay for silence. That so few have shown the courage to deny Trump tells us how difficult it is to be brave — and how rare character is. But one can only pretend for so long not to hear the dog whistles of history, a skill at which Republicans have become too well practiced over the decades. Perhaps they're no longer listening. Or they're deluding themselves that Trump's words don't really mean what, you know, they mean.

'He won't be that bad.'

No, he's worse."

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Edited by Carl Ledendecker

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