

No Meeting in April Due to Pandemic

You may have noticed that this month's edition of the *Atlanta Freethought News* is shorter and if you have subscribed to a hard copy through the mail, it is not printed in the same way it usually is. Due to the global coronavirus pandemic and the need to shelter at home, I, your trusty editor and president **Laura Ross**, have printed the newsletter on my trusty home printer.



I have also removed the page about secular meetups because obviously nobody is meeting face to face. HOWEVER...

If the quarantine continues much longer, we probably need to find out a way to get in touch with each other and have a social hour. Connecting with each other is an important way to feel like a part of the community and enjoy each other's company. Several of us have been meeting with each other via Zoom. There are some security concerns with that approach though, so we will need to look into that. Other popular video conferencing services are Google Hangouts, Apple FaceTime, Google Duo, Facebook Messenger, Jitsi, Skype, Houseparty. Once we figure this out and we have more of an idea about what's in store for May, we may just indeed have our May meeting online!

However our friends at Sunday Assembly Atlanta are using Zoom with some luck for such programs as Virtual Mindful Meditation and getting together for virtual coffee on Sunday Apr 12 at 10 am. Gwinnett's GUST is having Virtual Social Connection as well on Monday, Apr 13 at 7:00 pm. Others are having game nights using a combination of

Zoom and Steam. Peachtree City Humanists will meet on Saturday, Apr 11 at 10 am. Black Nonbelievers is having an open discussion about religious freedom in difficult times on Tuesday, Apr 7 at 3:00 pm. Some people are taking aerobics classes, yoga, performing in concerts, doing cooking or mask-making demonstrations, hosting late night TV shows for major TV networks, or having book club meetings from the safety of their own homes and keyboards.

Meetup has temporarily updated their in-person event policy to permit groups to host virtual meetings. So go to Meetup.com and sign up for a session if your group is meeting.

In the meantime, go wash your hands, cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow, stay six feet apart, clean surfaces in your home, and stay home!

Also thank you to all the heroes at this time: First Responders. Doctors. Nurses. Truck drivers. Train engineers. Custodians. Cooks. Clerks. Cleaning crews.

Electrical workers. People who put groceries out on shelves. Plumbers. Scientists. Maintenance and repair workers. Caregivers. Bus drivers. Teachers. Veterinarians. Animal shelter staff. Mechanics. Secretaries. Cashiers. Warehouse workers. Delivery drivers. Military service people. Pharmacists. Sanitation workers. Mail carriers. Construction workers. Corrections officers. Power company employees. Road and highway crews. Government workers who assist the disabled and the unemployed and who help to maintain all the necessary services in every block of every city. Police and firefighters. Internet service providers. Volunteers. Caregivers. Farmers and farm workers. People making homemade masks. And any I've forgotten to mention.

Calendar

Apr 12 No meeting! Stay home!
May 10 To be determined

All events are at AF Hall unless noted and are subject to change.

For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!
[meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society](https://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society)

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.



Apr 12: Stay in your home!

May 10: Richard Dien Winfield (?)

June 14: TBA

July 12: TBA

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to AFSForum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. The AFS Facebook page is at facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the **Meetup group**. The AFS website is www.atlantafreethought.org.

To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists.

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

We define freethought as “the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.”

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other’s company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

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Atlanta Freethought News

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Steve Yothment



William King, a longtime and valued member, sent a copy of a letter to the editor to our Facebook page on April 2nd. With his permission, we are re-printing it here:

Last week in my local paper a dude from South Carolina's letter was published. I post herein his letter, as well as my own response to that letter, which was in today's edition of the *Toccoa Record*. Enjoy!

 From The Toccoa Record, Thursday, March 26, 2020

Don't ask dumb questions about God

People sure do ask some ridiculous questions sometimes. Here's one of them.

I have heard the question 'who created God?' many times to begin with, that's one of the dumbest questions I've ever heard. It's like asking, who is the bachelor's wife?

He has no wife, obviously. God then has no creator. He is described in the Bible as from everlasting to everlasting. Isaiah 43:13. No beginning and no end—like a circle.

The truth is another good example of God.

The truth always has been and will exist for eternity.

No one created the truth. It just is and always has been. Before time began in the universe, it existed and long after it ends, the truth will still exist.

Truth, like God is real and eternal.

The lie is a fantasy that has to be created unlike the truth which is already in existence and will not die like the lie.

The truth destroys a lie as God will destroy the non believers.

They are given every chance to repent and go to heaven at death. God is not unmerciful—willing and able to forgive those who will ask. Read John 3:16.

Don't believe, keep asking foolish questions like who created God and you go the way of the world. Hell. It's that simple.

No one created God so stop asking dumb questions and ask what must I do to be saved? Acts 16:30-31, Acts 4:12, Ephesians 2:8-9.

Eddie Boggs
 Westminster, S.C.

My response:

From The Toccoa Record, Thursday April 2, 2020

Neither Christianity or science has all the answers

It is very apparent that Mr. Eddie Boggs letter (Don't ask dumb questions about God, The Toccoa Record March 26) is aimed directly at an atheist audience.

Since that particular barb was aimed directly at me and my people, it is my duty to defend against it.

Oh, those pesky questions!

There can be no doubt that what Mr. Boggs is suffering from is a severe case of uncomfortableness with any questioning of his deity, his faith, and his religion.

According to him, no one should ever question, never have any curiosity, never find any answers to any doubts concerning Christianity.

After all, Christianity has all the answers right? So no need to question, right? To that I have to say a definite, WRONG.

Christianity does not have all the answers. Neither does science.

Yet what distinguishes the two pursuits is one of importance.

Religion says you must believe anything that sacred books and the priesthood tells you.

Science, on the other hand, asks questions and has a method for finding answers to those questions, even if those answers happen to be unsettling or uncomfortable.

Not asking questions is mindless. It is not using your brain, even if you happen to believe that your god made you with one (though there really is no evidence that such has occurred).

The only dumb question is the one that remains unasked.

Many monotheists refer to their deity as "He." That implies that the Judeo-Christian-Muslim god has the quality of gender.

So, if that which is referred to as "God" is a male, of necessity that deity must have male genitalia.

So, if a god is a male, then does that not necessitate that there is a female deity running around somewhere? Mr. Boggs and those that agree with his letter shouldn't really get angry at that question.

It is only natural of humans, who are searchers, explorers and questioners by nature, to ask. It makes me wonder if Boggs and his ilk ever get angry at themselves for not asking important tax questions which would save them money for a rainy day.

Oh yes, back to the "Does God have a wife" question. He apparently once did, for if you ask an expert in ancient Middle Eastern studies, particularly one well versed in ancient Canaanite religion, he or she will tell you that



William King

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Solomonic Judaism evolved out of ancient Canaanite religion.

And the reason they will tell you that is because there was once worshipped a goddess named Asherah. She was the consort of El (sound familiar to those of you who read the Bible? It should: El-Shaddai, Elohim, El-Rehobath, etc.) in the city of Ugarit, AND, the consort of Yahweh, the god of the Israelites.

Scholars say so because of reasons of what has been gleaned from their research of the archaeological record and a critical study of the Jewish Torah (the Old Testament), of which there is not enough space to explain here.

As far as what Truth is, there is a whole field of philosophical study and discussion about such a deep subject, from **Socrates and Aristotle to Voltaire, to Kant and Kierkegaard.**

Suffice it to say that if Truth is based on objective observation and facts, you probably won't fail to any great degree, but if you are basing "Truth" on subjective opinion with no fact in sight, then that is indeed a horse of another color.

For myself, I don't think the Bible has much truth. There are so many contradictions in it that it is definitely unreliable for finding much truth.

If the Bible had a mouth it would talk out of both sides. So I am not very impressed with quotes

from any sacred books if one is trying to convince me to "see the light."

Mr. Boggs is so upset about being asked the question "Who created God?" for the simple reason that he misses the whole point of the question.

Simple scientific minded observation shows us that there are causes and effects, and effects often cause other effects. If God is such a "Cause," then why would "he" not have been an effect of another cause? And that becomes a problem for the religious, a very uncomfortable one at that.

I have another question for Boggs and others like him. If it exists, how can a supposed spirit/soul separated from its body feel anything in a heaven or a hell?

The body is there with its brain and nervous system, and the soul is in another place. All the feelings of joy and pain are left behind in the body. It would not be possible for a "soul" to feel anything.

The only thing that Boggs has proved is that questions, which make people think, causes fear within him, and his attempt of bringing us non-believers into a mythical place through fear will not work.

So no Mr. Boggs, I am never going to stop asking questions, even if you think they are dumb, which they are not.

We know that religion stops a brain from thinking, which is why it is so useful for exerting power and control over those who are willing to be sheep.

Christians would better serve themselves by living the principles of their faith instead of using it as a weapon in unwelcome attempts to brow beat the rest of us into their religion.

Go live your life and leave the rest of us alone. Otherwise, you are just asking for a fight.

William King
Toccoa

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Ben Burgis's *Give Them an Argument: Logic for the Left*

zer0 Books/John Hunt Publishing, Ltd. 2019; 111 pp.

A Review by Ed Buckner

Two of Atlanta Freethought Society's best recent programs were given by philosophy professor **Dr. Ben Burgis**. After the last one **Ed Buckner** bought the only copy Burgis had with him of his latest book—and Ed therefore thought it only fair to fill AFNews readers in on the book. If you'd be willing to write a review of a book you've read recently (whether you hated it or loved it), please tell either Ed or AFNews editor **Laura Ross**.

Ben Burgis's *Give Them an Argument: Logic for the Left* is most appealing, though not without some flaws (at least for picky, undereducated readers like me). It's clearly written, it has an appealing look and unthreatening size, and has other strong virtues that I'll get to. But first to dish some dirt:

1. He uses some symbolic logic (which, as AFNews readers know, I don't cope with all that well).
2. The book has no index. So, as I try to remember if Burgis really did write that **Sanders** would certainly have beaten **Trump** in 2016 if Sanders had been the nominee, I can only find out by speedreading the whole book again. Too much trouble.
3. There's no bibliography, so: When was **Henwood's** book *My Turn* published? Or who published **Sciabarra's** book on **Ayn Rand**? Or what was the title and date of **Edwin Mares'** book on "relevance logic"? There's just no way to know.
4. There are no footnotes or parenthetical references, so how can we have confidence that this book is scholarly and properly ponderous?
5. Burgis seems to be awfully hard on **Ben Shapiro**, famous for being a formidable logical "gladiator" and a "destroyer of weak arguments."



Ben Burgis

Reached for comment on these objections, Burgis offered these arguments:

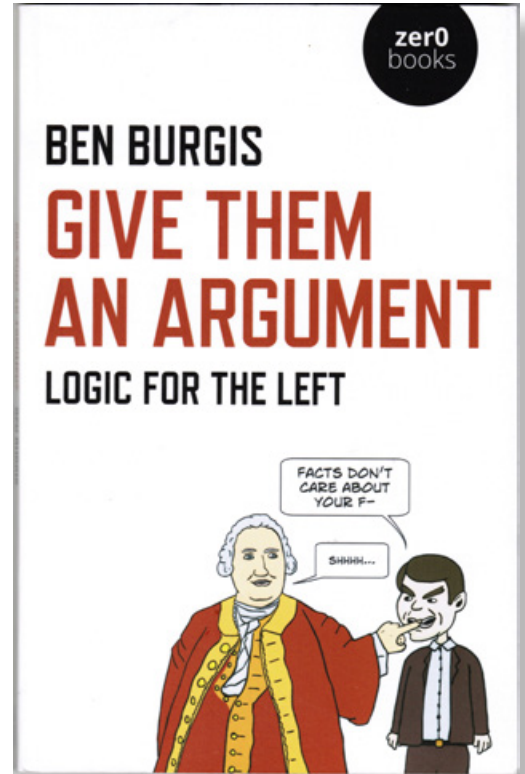
1. The symbolic logic is used quite sparingly and explained briefly but well, so get over it, Ed.
2. So, speedread—what else do you have to do? It's only a bit over 100 pages. If you want to be able to quickly find bits without speedreading, spring for a Kindle edition and search with ease.
3. You can find the answer to every one of those weighty questions in 5 minutes on Ye Olde Internet: 2015 (hard cover edition); Penn State University Press, 1995; and *Relevant Logic: A Philosophical Interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, 2004. But why do you even need or want to know?
4. You enjoy reading footnotes and such? Read my dissertation. This book is for "regular" people, not pedants like you, Ed (and no, that's not an ad hominem argument—it's just an insult, apparently a deserved one).
5. Shapiro is full of shit and I show why quite plainly.

Oh, OK, Burgis hasn't read my review nor answered my objections at all. But—obviously—he taught me how to argue well, yes? His writing is indeed clear, he really does range widely but easily across his subject and related matters, and he writes with verve and irreverent wit. The sentence, "He doesn't suffer fools gladly" was probably invented to describe Burgis, and he walks the line between needless incivility and appropriate/witty disdain quite well.

People—especially but not exclusively leftists—will learn better how to argue and why it matters. Even "logic bros" of the doctrinaire libertarian variety can learn a thing or two.

In *Give Them an Argument*, Ben Burgis teaches us when and how to argue and how to recognize bullshit posing as arguments or fallacies.

Ben Burgis's new book is well worth your money and your time.

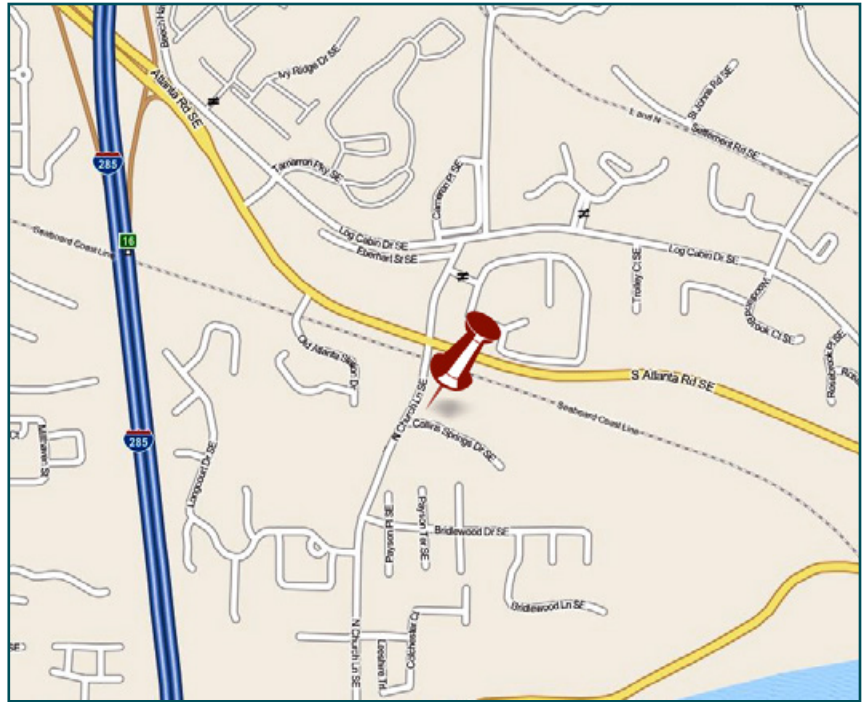


*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

**No meeting in
April!
Shelter in place!**



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