

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”. Bible, Jeremiah Ch. 29v13

ANTONY FLEW’S QUESTIONS ABOUT DIVINE REVELATION



Antony Garrard Newton Flew (11 February 1923 – 8 April 2010) was an English philosopher. Belonging to the analytic and evidentialist schools of thought, Flew was most notable for his work related to the philosophy of religion. During the course of his career he taught at the universities of Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele and Reading, and at York University in Toronto. For much of his career Flew was known as a strong advocate of atheism, arguing that one should presuppose atheism until empirical evidence of a God surfaces. He also criticised the idea of life after death, the free will defence to the problem of evil, and the meaningfulness of the concept of God. In 2003 he was one of the signers of the Humanist Manifesto. However, in 2004 he stated an allegiance to deism, more specifically a belief in the Aristotelian God. He stated that in keeping his lifelong commitment to go where the evidence leads, he now believed in the existence of a god. The following excerpt is taken from a book outlining his reasons for changing his position, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*.

“I think the Christian religion is the one religion that most clearly deserves to be honoured and respected whether or not its claim to be a divine revelation is true. There is nothing like the combination of a

charismatic figure like Jesus and a first-class intellectual like St. Paul. Virtually all the argument about the content of the religion was produced by St. Paul, who had a brilliant philosophical mind and could both speak and write in all the relevant languages. If you're wanting Omnipotence to set up a religion, this is the one to beat. [...] Today, I would say the claim concerning the resurrection is more impressive than any by the religious competition. I still believe that when historians professionally are looking at the evidence, they surely need much more than what is available. They need evidence of a different kind. I think the claim that God was incarnate in Jesus Christ is unique. It is difficult, I think, to realize how you are going to judge this other than by believing or not believing. I cannot quite see that there are general principles to guide you in this”.

Flew, A. (2007), *“There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His”*. Mind. HarperOne. USA. Pp.185-7

[Bereoa.org]: In the context of his new perspective, Professor Flew had engaged in a dialogue on Jesus with a well-known contemporary expounder of historical Christianity. Before coming to believe that *There is a God*, he raised the following crucial issues in his writings:

- How do we know that Jesus existed?
- What grounds are there for claiming, from the Texts, that Jesus is God incarnate?
- What evidence is there for the resurrection of Christ?

The Telegraph wrote:

“Professor Antony Flew, the rationalist philosopher who died on April 8 aged 87, spent much of his life denying the existence of God until, in 2004, he dramatically changed his mind”.

According to the Newspaper, Flew always described himself as a “negative atheist”, asserting that “theological propositions can neither

be verified nor falsified by experience”, a position he expounded in his classic paper *Theology and Falsification* (1950), reputedly the most frequently-quoted philosophical publication of the second half of the 20th century. He argued that any philosophical debate about the Almighty must begin by presuming atheism, placing the burden of proof on those who believe that God exists. “We reject all transcendent supernatural systems, not because we've examined or could have examined each in turn, but because it does not seem to us that there is any good evidence in reason to postulate anything behind or beyond this natural universe,” he proclaimed. A key principle of his philosophy was the Socratean concept of “follow the evidence, wherever it leads”.

When Flew revealed that he had come to the conclusion that there might be a God after all, it came as a shock to his fellow atheists, who had long regarded him as one of their foremost champions. Worse, he seemed to have deserted Plato for Aristotle, since it was two of Aquinas's famous five proofs for the existence of God – the arguments from design and for a prime mover – that had apparently clinched the matter. After months of soul-searching, Flew concluded that research into DNA had “shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved”. Moreover, though he accepted Darwinian evolution, he felt that it could not explain the beginnings of life. “I have been persuaded that it is simply out of the question that the first living matter evolved out of dead matter and then developed into an extraordinarily complicated creature,” he said. Flew went on to make a video of his conversion entitled *Has Science Discovered God?* and seemed to want to atone for past errors: “As people have certainly been influenced by me, I want to try and correct the enormous damage I may have done,” he said. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/books-obituaries/7586929/Professor-Antony-Flew.html>