

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will involve the story of the atheist Antony Flew. Like many other atheists he changed his mind and came to believe in God. Flew was a philosopher of the analytic and evidentialist schools of thought. He was born Feb. 11, 1923 and died April 8, 2010. During his career he taught at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele and Reading, and the New York University in Toronto. He is most notable for his work related to the philosophy of religion.

For much of his career Flew was a strong advocate of atheism. His widely reprinted article "*Theology and Falsification*" argued that claims about God were vacuous. In 1966 he wrote *God and Philosophy*, and in 1976 *The Presumption of Atheism*. Flew argued that one should presuppose atheism until evidence of a God surfaces. In 1998, he debated Christian philosopher William Lane Craig over the existence of God. He was also one of the signers of the Humanist Manifesto. For the last half of the twentieth century he was the world's most famous atheist. Long before Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris, Flew was the preeminent spokesman for unbelief.

Due to his life long commitment to go where the evidence leads, however, he came to believe in the existence of God. The book recounting his change of mind is titled: "*There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*". The book was published in 2007 but critics suggested that someone had taken advantage of the aging philosopher and put words into his mouth. Flew emphatically denied this and stated categorically that he would never allow his name to be put on a book if he did not agree 100% with everything in it.

A couple of months before the book was released, Flew granted an interview with Dr. Benjamin Wiker. In that interview Flew stated that two things in particular influenced his thinking about God. First was his empathy with Einstein and other scientists who concluded that there had to be Intelligence behind the integrated complexity of the physical Universe. The second was his own insight that the integrated complexity of life itself. Flew reasoned that life is far more complex than the physical Universe, and concluded that it can only be explained in terms of an Intelligent Source. He lamented that Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion*, attributed the first life in our universe to a "lucky chance". Flew felt that if this is the best explanation atheism has for the origin of life, then the game is over.

Flew also noted that two famous philosophers, Anthony Kenny (an agnostic) and Thomas Nagel (an atheist) criticized Dawkins for failing to address three fundamental issues: (1) The laws of nature . (2) Life with it's teleological organization. (3) The existence of the universe itself. It was examining these three that ultimately led Flew to believe in God.

Flew wanted to make it clear that he was a deist. While he did not accept any claim of divine revelation, he said he was happy to study any such claim. He specifically said he would do so in the case of Christianity. He died April 8, 2010 and only God knows for certain what he concluded.