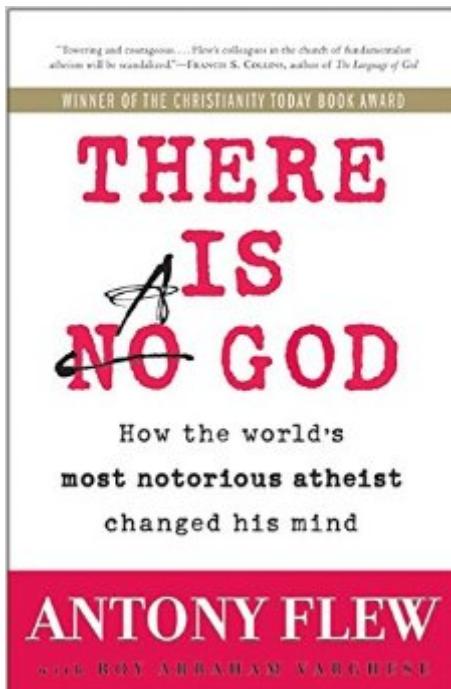


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There Is A God: How The World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind



Synopsis

In *There Is a God*, one of the world's preeminent atheists discloses how his commitment to "follow the argument wherever it leads" led him to a belief in God as Creator. This is a compelling and refreshingly open-minded argument that will forever change the atheism debate.

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Customer Reviews

Several years ago I read Antony Flew's book, "Thinking about Thinking" in its American incarnation (titled "How to Think Straight"). I immediately discerned three things. Flew was (1) a profound thinker, (2) an atheist, and (3) a decent human being. I was so impressed by his intellect that when I reached the last page, I turned back to page one and immediately read the book again. I have since bought "God and Science" and "Merely Mortal". In "God and Science", Flew weighed the case for the Christian God and found it wanting, and in "Merely Mortal" he decided that there was no life after death. As I understand "There is a God", Flew sticks to both those positions. Flew has found God, but he has found Aristotle's god, the impersonal Unmoved Mover which, like God in Hobbes' "Leviathan" was the first cause of every subsequent effect. Aristotle's god is so ungodly that I have always considered him (Aristotle) the functional equivalent of an atheist. Flew's take on the Christian view of God seems to be as follows: God hasn't been proven to be like that, but it would be nice if he were. I can't say for sure, but I don't think Flew's assessment of the Christian God was any different before he renounced atheism. Flew has always been somewhat of an anomaly among atheists--an atheist who was polite to theists. A wit once said that an evangelical Christian was a fundamentalist with good manners. Flew was an atheist with good manners. I've read a lot of atheist

polemic, and I'm turned off by the ad hominem character of most of their arguments. It puts me in mind of Cicero's old dictum, "When you have no case, abuse the plaintiff". I've also read a lot of fundamentalist polemic which turns me off for the same reason. When an argument generates more heat than light, you have cause to suspect the bona fides of the person making the argument. A New York Times article maligned Flew's book as the pseudo-scientific product of a "senescent scholar". Flew never claims that his book is science. He says it is philosophy which has been guided by scientific discovery made after he announced his atheism in 1950. I will admit that I had to look "senescent" up in the dictionary. It means "old". Okay. Are we to presume that all Social Security recipients are too dumb to be listened to? The terms "pseudo-science" and "senescent" are examples of subtle ad hominem arguments, designed to appeal to emotion rather than logic. The article engages in several other ad hominem arguments under the guise of factual reporting. I'll mention only one other. The article suggests that a friend of Flew's, Ray Varghese, is a Christian "autodidact" who exploited poor old senescent Flew in the writing of the book. (I looked up "autodidact". It's a self-educated person. Shame on Varghese for teaching himself). It says on the cover of the book that the two collaborated. How did Varghese exploit Flew? By writing too much of the book? Varghese rebutted the article by admitting that he was responsible for the colorful anecdotes and witty section headings, but maintained that the core thought was through-and-through Flew. I found this book yesterday afternoon and read it yesterday evening, blissfully ignorant of the controversy. These are the impressions I formed before I became aware of the controversy (I haven't changed them after reading about the controversy): 1. The work is not as rigorously reasoned as previous work by Flew. This was both good and bad. It was easier to read, but not as challenging. 2. The work repeated some recent arguments made by theists (such as the "fine tuning" argument) without subjecting them to the searching inquiry characteristic of Flew's earlier work. 3. The heart and soul of the book is Flew, and it is not that different from the Flew who was an atheist. Flew was always willing to change his mind if someone could show him through rational argument that there was a God. Someone did, and he changed his mind--but not much. Most people come to God through faith, not reason. Flew has taken the road less traveled by, and that has made quite a difference. He has only approached Theism. You might say that he has come to the strait gate, but he has yet to enter thereby. I respected Flew from my first encounter with him, and this book has increased my respect.

Call me old-fashioned, but I thought the POINT of reviewing books--even books on --was to review the actual book that one has actually READ. It seems now that it has become a place to "spike"

books that you haven't read, and don't want others to read. Unlike other pseudo-reviewers, I've actually read Flew's *There is a God* (and interviewed Flew as well). Anyone who has actually read it--and I wonder if Mark Oppenheimer did, given the inattention to the substance of the book in his infamous NYT piece--understands that it is a terse description of Flew's long, drawn out intellectual journey toward God--a journey of two decades. Twenty years; not twenty minutes or twenty days. Flew wasn't struck by God on his way to Damascus like St. Paul; he was slowly, ever so slowly brought to intellectual assent to a Deism (about the thinnest belief in God one can have). Thus, the entire focus of a reader of Flew's *There is a God* SHOULD be on the list of books Flew cites as definitive in the slow changing of his mind, not on niggling debates about the slowness of Flew's mind at this precise point. Roy Varghese (his co-author) has been with him for a good part of that journey (as have other believers), and was instrumental in helping Flew gather together his twenty year sojourn to God. IF there were some kind of a Christian conspiracy to use Flew as a mouthpiece, certainly Varghese et al would have made Flew's "conversion" far more exciting, and even more, would have him become a card-carrying Christian rather than, as he adamantly maintains, a Deist (not even a Theist!--Flew corrected me on this point in an interview with him). To read Varghese's full response to Oppenheimer, see [...] In regard to Varghese's *The Wonder of the World* (one of the books that helped convince Flew of the scientific case for an intelligent Creator God), Oppenheimer characterizes it as scientific hack work. Interesting! Why does it also come recommended by TWO Nobel Prize Winners (Charles Townes, inventor of the laser; and Arno Penzias, who co-discovered Cosmic Microwave Bacground Radiation), and also physicist (and non-believer) Robert Jastrow? Are they also senile? Come on, folks! As even Oppenheimer admits, the kind of arguments that Flew cites as demonstrating that the latest science leads (at least) to Deism, are those used by a whole host of other eminent scientists and philosophers. Is Paul Davies senile? The simple truth is that there are all too many who don't want the scientific and philosophic arguments that convinced Flew of God's existence to receive any recognition. They will do anything to stop others from reading Flew's book. Perhaps they should read it themselves?

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