

World-renowned atheist now accepts God — sort of

BY RICHARD N. OSTLING

The Associated Press

The Bible never presents arguments for God's existence and simply assumes it from the very first words ("In the beginning God created ...").

Scripture's attitude is, "The fool says in his heart, 'there is no God'" (Psalm 14:1).

But numerous modern philosophers have assailed belief, among them Britain's Antony Flew. He promoted atheism for a half century as a professor at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele and Reading universities, in North American lectures and

in books and articles.

But now, somewhat like British physicist Sir Fred Hoyle did, Flew at age 82 is candidly acknowledging second thoughts.

In a video *Has Science Discovered God?* from Roy Abraham Varghese's Institute for Metascientific Research in Garland, Texas, Flew says biologists' findings on the incredible complexity of the DNA encoded in each cell show "intelligence must have been involved" in producing life as we know it.

The philosopher explains his semi-conversion in a new introduction to his 1966 book

God & Philosophy reissued by Prometheus Books, which specializes in atheistic thinkers.

He'll discuss matters with Christians July 29 at Oxford, England, during a C.S. Lewis Foundation seminar.

The book rebutted classical arguments believers offer for God. He now looks back on that atheistic argument as a "historical relic" due to scientific research since 1966.

Flew now believes philosophers must contemplate the "argument from the order of nature to God as its Intelligent Orderer."

He says this approach "becomes progressively more powerful with every advance in humankind's knowledge of the integrated complexity" of nature.

He also says science has undergirded "the fine tuning argument" for such an intelligence: If the constants of physics were "to the very slightest degree different, then no planet capable of permitting the evolution of human life could have evolved."

Flew considers it "reasonable" for followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam "to see the fine tuning argument as providing substantial confirmation of" their belief in God — though he doesn't embrace those religions himself.

He says a related question — which stumped Charles Darwin — is how a strictly naturalistic (that is, godless) standpoint can possibly explain "the development of living things from non-living matter" that have the ability "to reproduce themselves genetically."

Flew also praises the case for the Christian deity offered by Anglican philosopher Richard Swinburne of Oxford University in *Is There a God?* (Oxford University Press, 1996). Swinburne contends that the God concept explains everything secular science has been forced to ignore as facts that simply can't be explained.

Swinburne's theory "cannot in principle be verified or falsified by any experience" nor meet the strictest scientific standards for evidence, Flew says. Yet he thinks people who find good reasons to believe in God "may very reasonably see as further and very strong confirmation" the arguments Swinburne presents.

He's impressed by scientific material presented by Varghese (an Eastern Rite Catholic) in *The Wonder of the World* (Tyr, 2004) and physicist Gerald Schroeder (an Orthodox Jew) in *The Hidden Face of God* (Touchstone, 2001). Conversations among these

three and others are excerpted in Varghese's recent video.

Flew's ideas resemble claims from the "intelligent design" movement, which is angling for mention alongside naturalistic evolution in U.S. public schools, much to the distress of educational and scientific lobbies.

However, as he previously told The Associated Press, Flew's "intelligence" is not the well-defined, personal God of the Bible but a vague, remote entity that's uninvolved in everyday life. Nor does he believe in an after-life.

Flew has two main objections to common definitions of monotheism. He cannot accept God's total goodness because of "all the evils of this world that cannot be shown to be the consequences of human sins."

And he spurns any concept of everlasting punishment, which to him makes God into an "Oriental despot."

On the Net:

Flew's older atheism:

www.infidels.org/library/modern/antony-flew

Varghese video, book:

www.thewonderoftheworld.com

Loving, Growing, Reaching

Bay Pointe
Community Church

Sundays - 9 & 11 AM
At TC Central High School Auditorium
(off Milliken Drive, call 922-9882)

Check-out our
website! → www.bponline.org

Sr. Pastor Nick Twomey - Childcare & Children's Programs

Not Sponsored by TCAPS

6-11.ff.802527

Grace Episcopal Church



Looking for a
deeper reality
than reality
shows?

You mean more here.
The Episcopal Church



341 Washington St.

Your Table will be
ready soon!

6/11.802541.ff

Connect with a community of spiritual seekers!

spirituality.com
inspired by the ideas in



Find spiritual resources at the
Christian Science Reading Room
118 South Union Street
Traverse City
Mon.-Fri. 9to5 Sat. 10to2

First Church of Christ, Scientist
330 Sixth Street
Traverse City
Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Service 7:30 p.m.

6-11.ff.802524

Blaine Christian Church



Corner of Joyfield and
Putney Rds
Arcadia
352-9148

Summer Schedule:
8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m.
services
Rev. Robert Larimer

Come worship with us!

6-11.ff.802526