

MEDIA RELEASE

The world's most notorious atheist has changed his mind!

Antony Flew is the son of a Methodist biblical scholar. He is now in his eighties and is an outstanding philosopher and academic. He is viewed as the world's leading atheist. Together with a fellow philosopher he formulated the following parable that is meant to show, once and for all, that claims about there being a God are too vague to be sensible and offer no real evidence in support:

Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, "Some gardener must tend this plot." The other disagrees, "There is no gardener." So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. "But perhaps he is an invisible gardener." So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. "But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves." At last the Sceptic despairs, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?"

This parable summed up the thoughts of many sincere doubters and sceptics. God talk is meaningless, there is no evidence for a "gardener".

Well, Flew has changed his mind. It's not flippant to say that in our world it's like the pope or Billy Graham "converting" to atheism. What is the evidence that has brought this shift in his ideas? It's all set out in a very readable style in Flew's remarkable new book, *There is a God: How the world's most notorious atheist changed his mind* (Harper One). Antony Flew, unlike some French philosophers, was never an "angry" atheist. It was simply for him a matter of conviction based on what we knew about the world. For Flew, we now know that DNA is so complex that there must be a Mind behind it, and cosmology now affirms the universe did have a beginning – there must be a first cause. And much, much more he reveals. There is strong evidence for a "gardener".

Flew has not embraced any personal God yet. But he finishes his extraordinary tome with: "The discovery of phenomena like the laws of nature... has led some scientists, philosophers and others to accept the existence of an infinitely intelligent Mind. Some claim to have made contact with this Mind. I have not – yet. But who knows what could happen next? Someday I might hear a Voice that says, 'Can you hear me now?'"

Let's pray he does hear the voice of the one true "gardener", in Jesus God became flesh. The "gardener" is truly revealed.

By the way, Flew concludes his book with an appendix which is a dialogue with Bishop N.T. Wright, which sets out Wright's case for the resurrection of Jesus. It is super! Wright points out that women alone are the witnesses of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in the Gospels and women in the ancient world were not credible witnesses in a court of law. This is a ring of truth as you wouldn't fabricate a story that relied heavily on a woman's testimony. Also burial in those days wasn't in the ground, the bones were placed in an ossuary, a bone box, which was stored in some convenient place. The point being if the disciples were just "hallucinating" etc, when they came to their senses the bones would still be there. They weren't – He is risen! Flew is still uncertain, but concludes:

"I am very much impressed with Bishop Wright's approach, which is absolutely fresh. He presents the case for Christianity as something new for the first time. This is enormously important, especially in the United Kingdom, where the Christian religion has virtually disappeared. It is absolutely wonderful, absolutely radical, and very powerful."

Wow!

This is not a secular country or world. Our institutions maybe, but not the people. It's time for the church to rise up and engage the sincere searchers of our day.