

A Tale of Two Atheists: A Historical Inquiry into the Lives of C.S. Lewis & Antony Flew

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**Abstract**

C.S. Lewis and Antony Flew are two of the foremost philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lewis and Flew both left Christian backgrounds to become atheists during their early years of study. Later, both changed their minds accepted the existence of God. Lewis died a Christian whereas Flew died a deist. Lewis and Flew share many things in common including being accomplished academics, having multiple major worldview shifts, and changing parts of their worldviews as a result of the World Wars. Lewis and Flew both had a major influence in the development of 21st-century philosophy through a variety of works they published.

### **A Tale of Two Atheists: A Historical Inquiry into the Lives of C.S. Lewis & Antony Flew**

One of the greatest virtues for any person is to follow the evidence wherever it leads. The lives of C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) and Antony Flew (1923-2010) show the journeys of two intellectual giants who through their lives showed virtue by changing their views to follow the evidence wherever they believed it led. Lewis is known as the foremost Christian apologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whose ideas flourished during a time when the theory of logical positivism dominated philosophy. Flew was one of the founders of the new atheist movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only to change his mind and become a Deist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The lives of these two philosophers share much in common, and this thesis shares their histories along with comparing the lives of Lewis and Flew. Their lives show the beauty of reason and the power of being willing to change your mind.

#### **The Life of C.S. Lewis**

Lewis is one of the most studied thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and among the leading secondary sources on his life are Marie Conn's *C.S. Lewis and Human Suffering*, A. N. Wilson's *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*, and Alister McGrath's *C.S. Lewis a Life*. Conn's book explores Lewis' faith journey and his answers to the problem of suffering. McGrath's book documents his journey from atheism to theism to Christianity, along with examining the rest of Lewis' life. Finally, Wilson's biography explores his entire life. Lewis' ideas have been analyzed in countless articles in fields such as theology, philosophy, and English. Furthermore, Lewis published dozens of books containing his life's works along with *Surprised by Joy*, which serves as a memoir in which he explains his life's journey to the moment of his conversion to Christianity. Conn's work and Lewis' memoir offer the most in-depth studies of the life of Lewis and his journey from Christianity to atheism to Christianity again.

## Becoming an Atheist

Lewis identified with Christianity early in his life, but by his teenage years, Lewis abandoned his childhood faith. According to one Lewis biographer, “The complex combination of Lewis’ loss of his mother, his unfortunate school experiences, and his experience of war had left him a self-described atheist, with no use at all for organized religion. He distinguished religion from morality, which, in his view, was an innate human obligation.”<sup>1</sup> Conn notes that Lewis’ life can be seen in three stages: Lewis the atheist, Lewis the Christian apologist, and Lewis the widower.<sup>2</sup> His journey to a belief in God is a multi-faceted journey of a wanderer in search of truth who encountered many obstacles along the way.

Lewis was born on November 29, 1898, into a family that he described as “true Welshman.”<sup>3</sup> His mother was a mathematician, and his father a solicitor.<sup>4</sup> Lewis saw his family as a blessing and was thankful for, “good parents, good food, and a garden.”<sup>5</sup> He grew up in the Christian tradition, but he never developed a deep interest in the faith in his early years. “I naturally accepted what I was told,” Lewis recalled, “but I cannot remember feeling much interest in it.”<sup>6</sup> Lewis also saw Christianity as silly because of his grandfather’s emotional

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<sup>1</sup> Marie Conn, *C.S. Lewis and Human Suffering: Light Among the Shadows* (Mahwah: Hidden Springs), 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy; the Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1957), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

preaching.<sup>7</sup> He spent his early life in love with books.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Lewis' early life was one of much solitude. His family moved into a new house when he was seven, which he saw as a major character in his story.<sup>9</sup> Lewis' life was "One of solitude."<sup>10</sup> As Conn notes, "Lewis seems to have been more comfortable with feelings in literature than life."<sup>11</sup>

In addition, Lewis' early life was one filled with tragedy. His mother passed away from cancer when he was only nine years old, causing deep pessimism and depression.<sup>12</sup> This pessimism about the world is something that Lewis carried with him through the years in which he was skeptical about God. Lewis faced the horrific venture of watching his mother slowly fade away. Describing his mother's death, he wrote, "We lost her gradually as she was gradually withdrawn from our life into the hands of nurses and delirium and morphia, and our whole existence changed into something alien and menacing, as the house became full of strange smells and midnight noises and sinister whispered conversations."<sup>13</sup>

His mother's death was the beginning of the unwinding of his fragilely bound together faith. He believed that through prayer his mother would be healed, so this unanswered prayer

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<sup>7</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 19.

challenged Lewis' ideas about God.<sup>14</sup> Lewis' picture of God in his early life was of a distant being who could intervene when needed. Describing his picture of God during his childhood, he wrote, "I had approached God, or my idea of God, without love, without awe, even without fear. He was, in my mental picture of this miracle, to appear neither as Saviour nor as Judge, but merely as a magician."<sup>15</sup> His mother's death brought an end to his happiness. He described the death of his mother as, "The sight of adult misery and adult terror has an effect on children which is merely paralyzing and alienating."<sup>16</sup>

After the death of Lewis' mother, his father sent him from school to school. In 1908, he was sent to Wynard school, which Lewis described as a place of torture.<sup>17</sup> Here, Lewis first heard about religion in "An entirely healthy and profitable way."<sup>18</sup> In 1910, Lewis was enrolled at Campbell College, until he withdrew due to health issues.<sup>19</sup> During this time, Lewis also further developed his pessimism about the nature of reality. Reflecting on this time he wrote, "I had very definitely formed the opinion that the universe was, in the main, a rather regrettable institution."<sup>20</sup> In 1911, Lewis went to Cherbourg House, where he remained until 1913. It was here that Lewis renounced the Christian upbringing of his childhood.

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<sup>14</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> "The Life of C.S. Lewis Timeline," C.S. Lewis Foundation, accessed August 24, 2021, <http://www.cslewis.org/resource/chronocsl/>

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 63.

The deconversion of Lewis is multi-faceted. He in part attributed the demise of his religious beliefs to being “desperately anxious to get rid of my religion.”<sup>21</sup> Lewis attributed his denial of the Christian faith at this period of his life to many reasons. These included issues with the idea of prayer, the wide array of religious ideas, and deep pessimism.<sup>22</sup> He also found the ancient philosopher Lucretius’ defense of atheism to be the strongest.<sup>23</sup> For Lewis, the loss of his faith was the tipping point in a life filled with struggle and doubt. He found no satisfactory answers to his doubts and his pessimistic nature led to him losing his faith in God. Lewis wrote that he, “became an apostate, dropping my faith with no sense of loss but with the greatest relief.”<sup>24</sup> “I maintained,” Lewis insisted, “that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world.”<sup>25</sup> While Lewis lost his faith, it would not be the end of his journey, but merely the beginning, writing, “Meanwhile, side by side with my loss of faith, of virtue, and of simplicity, something quite different was going on.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1914 Lewis met W.T. Kirkpatrick “Kirk” in Great Bookham, Surrey. Kirk was a former Christian Presbyterian but by 1914 was an atheist, along with being a friend and tutor to Lewis. Kirk was a retired school headmaster, who took on private students including Lewis’

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<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.



brother Warnie.<sup>27</sup> Lewis remembered Kirk for making him, “Read nothing but Homer.”<sup>28</sup> Kirk taught him about dialectics and humor. Kirk was a staunch rationalist and responsible for strengthening Lewis’ atheism and enhancing his appreciation of the value of critical thinking.<sup>29</sup> Lewis’ private studies with Kirk had a significant impact on his life, and he described Kirk as one of the greatest teachers he ever had.<sup>30</sup> Alister McGrath described Kirk’s impact on Lewis by writing, “Lewis was clear that his atheism was ‘fully formed’ before he went to Bookham; Kirkpatrick’s contribution was to provide him with additional arguments for his position.”<sup>31</sup> From Kirk, Lewis learned many lessons including, “Fresh ammunition for the defense of a position already chosen.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Lewis wrote, “Kirk's rationalism taught me to see it, gratified my wishes. It might be grim and deadly but at least it was free from the Christian God.”<sup>33</sup>

From 1914-1918, the First World War waged throughout Europe, becoming the bloodiest conflict known to Europe at the time. “The First World War was a horror of gas, industrialised slaughter, fear, and appalling human suffering,”<sup>34</sup> according to journalist Nick Hardaway.

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis Institute, “Timeline.”

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 144.

<sup>29</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 148.

<sup>31</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *C.S. Lewis: A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 41.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 140.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>34</sup> Nick Hardaway, “On Poppy Burning,” *Huffington Post*, December 11, 2012, [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/nick-harkaway/poppy-burning\\_b\\_2116037.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/nick-harkaway/poppy-burning_b_2116037.html).

One soldier described the war as, “Everywhere the same hard, grim, pitiless sign of battle and war. I have had a belly full of it.”<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, then, the war exposed the worst of humanity through horrific human suffering. These horrors had an impact on Lewis and his development in thought.

In 1917, Lewis enlisted in the British Army and soon after became an officer. Lewis reached the front in Somme, which was one of the bloodiest areas of the war.<sup>36</sup> His brother also served in France from 1914-1916.<sup>37</sup> During the war, one of Lewis’ best friends, Paddy More was killed in France.<sup>38</sup> During his service during the war, Lewis read for the first time G.K. Chesterton’s essays and also interacted with Quakers, Catholics, and more.<sup>39</sup> His time on the front was a period of interacting with people from all walks of life. One friend of Lewis’ named Johnson who died in the war, made a major impact on Lewis’ thoughts. “He was moving towards Theism,” Lewis wrote, “and we had endless arguments on that and every other topic whenever we were out of the line. But it was not this that mattered. The important thing was that he was a man of conscience.”<sup>40</sup> Lewis himself left the war in 1918 after being wounded.<sup>41</sup> However, he described the war as having little relevance to the nature of his future conversion to Christianity.

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Hart, *Fire and Movement: The British Expeditionary Force and the Campaign of 1914*,” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 198.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis Institute, “Timeline.”

<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 149.

<sup>38</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 193.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>41</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 2.

Yet the war destroyed Lewis' common assumptions about the nature of the world. The war challenged the view of the world he had through literature and led to him seeing a division between the material world and the spiritual world.<sup>42</sup> In January of 1919, Lewis went to Oxford where the next portion of his story began.

### **Becoming a Theist**

Lewis' conversion to Christianity was a gradual process. In the early 1920s, he moved to Oxford where his beliefs began to evolve.<sup>43</sup> During this period of his life, Lewis interacted with brilliant thinkers such as A. K. Hamilton Jenkin and Owen Barfield, both of whom he described as “types of every man's First Friend and Second Friend.” Finally, throughout the 1920s, the atheist Lewis became more under the influences of the Idealist thinkers of the time. An Idealist believes that everything that exists is either a mind or the product of a mind, so from an Idealists' perspective, the universe wholly exists within consciousness. This line of thought came to have an important influence on Lewis in his move towards theism.

Furthermore, Lewis was influenced by philosopher Henri Bergson about the idea of necessary existence. Something that exists necessarily is something that exists without any sort of cause for its existence. In other words, it is the foundation for all of reality. The atheist Lewis first believed that the universe was necessary. “Stoical Monism”<sup>44</sup> was how he described this view. However, as time progressed Lewis realized that this necessarily existing foundation of reality was probably a mind. “Bergson had showed me necessary existence;” Lewis wrote, “and

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<sup>42</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis Institute, “Timeline.”

<sup>44</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 205.

from Idealism I had come one step nearer to understanding the words, 'We give thanks to thee for thy great glory.' The Norse gods had given me the first hint of it; but then I didn't believe in them, and I did believe (so far as one can believe an *Undying*) in the Absolute."<sup>45</sup> While in the early 1920s, Lewis made the move to idealism, he was not a theist yet. "A religion that cost nothing," was how he described his idealism as, "We could talk religiously about the Absolute: but there was no danger of Its doing anything about us."<sup>46</sup> Yet later, Lewis realized that "God was Reason itself."<sup>47</sup>

On May 20, 1925, Lewis became a Fellow at Oxford in English Language and Literature.<sup>48</sup> While he was still not a theist in 1925, his worldview was coming closer and closer to a traditional theistic belief. A theist is a person who believes in a god or gods. Lewis found a friend in Nevill Coghill who Lewis viewed as one of the most intelligent persons he knew, along with being a Christian.<sup>49</sup> "All the books were beginning to turn against me,"<sup>50</sup> Lewis wrote as he saw the evidence stacking up in favor of the existence of God. He saw his move to theism consisting of moves including reading the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, recognizing innate human desire, linking his desire for joy with idealistic philosophy, and distinguishing the philosophical god from the God of religion. These moves helped Lewis make progress towards theism, leading

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<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 211.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>48</sup> Lewis Institute, "Timeline."

<sup>49</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 212.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

to a revelation of the greatness of God.<sup>51</sup> Finally, in 1929, Lewis professed his faith in God. He wrote, “In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Becoming a Christian**

In 1929, Lewis was a theist, but his journey to Christianity took many more years. By 1929, he accepted God’s existence but still rejected any form of an afterlife.<sup>53</sup> However, Lewis was challenged by a friend, T.D. Weldon, to examine the evidence supporting the historicity of the Gospels.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, after Lewis’ conversion to theism, he began to attend church once again. He claimed that the reason for this action was not because of a belief in Christianity but because “I thought one ought to ‘fly one's flag’ by some unmistakable overt sign.”<sup>55</sup> One of Lewis’ major objections to Christianity that continued to hold him back from organized religion since the time he was an atheist was the wide number of religions in the world. However, once he became a theist, he started to see the role of the Christian view of the Incarnation as a valuable view worth considering. “Here only in all time the myth must have become fact;” Lewis insisted, “the Word, flesh; God, Man. This is not ‘a religion’, nor ‘a philosophy’. It is the summing up and

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<sup>51</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 227.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-229.

<sup>53</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 31.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 232.

actuality of them all.”<sup>56</sup> For Lewis, understanding God taking the Flesh in the Incarnation drove him closer to the Cross.

Lewis’ journey towards faith had a gap between 1926 and 1931, a period of transition where he progressed from theism to Christian Theism. This five-year period allowed Lewis to develop in his intellectual journey. Marie Conn notes that the gap allowed him to develop into a more mature Christian and without it, Lewis would have lacked “Imaginative sympathy and understanding.”<sup>57</sup> He saw this period as a time he would “play at philosophy.”<sup>58</sup> A pivotal moment for Lewis and his future conversion to Christianity occurred on September 19, 1931. While talking with J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson, he realized that Christianity was not one of many myths, but the sum of all of them, as each myth pointed to the truth of Christianity.<sup>59</sup> Conn describes this conversation as, “Tolkien went on to say that the Christian myth was invented by God, a God whose dying could transform Jack.”<sup>60</sup> On September 22, 1931, on the sidecar of a motorcycle on the way to a Zoo, Lewis decided to “loosen the rein,”<sup>61</sup> and become a Christian once and for all.<sup>62</sup> Lewis wrote, “The choice appeared to be momentous but it was also strangely unemotional. I was moved by no desires or fears. In a sense I was not moved by anything. I

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<sup>56</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 236.

<sup>57</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 227.

<sup>59</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 32.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>61</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 224.

<sup>62</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 33.

chose to open, to unbuckle, to loosen the rein. I say, ‘I chose,’ yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite.”<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, Lewis’ letters to his friend Arthur Greeves in October of 1931 showed that Lewis had intellectually reached Christianity, but still had questions about Christian belief in many theological areas, including the atonement.<sup>64</sup> Despite the many questions which surrounded him, Lewis fell in love with the Christian faith and from this point set his efforts on trying to convince others of the superiority of the Christian faith. October of 1931 was the beginning of Lewis’ work as a Christian apologist. “The Christian myth was real and true,”<sup>65</sup> was the conclusion of his investigation into God and Christianity, and the beginning of his transformed life.

One way this transformation occurred was through the realization that his desire for joy was an effort to find happiness apart from a union from God.<sup>66</sup> Throughout Lewis’ work, an emphasis on discovering joy was an important theme. Reflecting on his desires, Lewis wrote, “Joy is not a substitute for sex; sex is very often a substitute for Joy. I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for Joy.”<sup>67</sup> John Froula notes the important emphasis of joy in the work of Lewis. Froula writes, “From Lewis’ writings we can see that, more than an innate desire, joy is a kind of perceptive resonance with something not present to ordinary

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<sup>63</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 224.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 34.

<sup>67</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 170.

physical sense and intellection.”<sup>68</sup> Lewis’ rhetorical genius and mind which was always asking questions led to him becoming a natural Christian apologist. George Harold Trudeau writes, “C.S. Lewis is an Apostle to the skeptics because of his ability to take general revelation and lead into conversations regarding special revelation.”<sup>69</sup>

Lewis had a niche for transforming apologetics into a wholistic worldview, including using his science fiction books as part of his apologetics.<sup>70</sup> “Looking back on my life now,” Lewis reflected, “I am astonished that I did not progress into the opposite orthodoxy--did not become a Leftist, Atheist, satiric Intellectual of the type we all know so well.”<sup>71</sup> Lewis’ apologetic was seen through the desire for clear answers to questions, and to bring forth the realization that Christianity brought the utmost joy.<sup>72</sup> Reflecting on his journey, Lewis wrote, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”<sup>73</sup>

When Lewis was an atheist, one of the main reasons for his atheism was the problem of evil. How could a Perfect God allow an imperfect world? Over time, Lewis began to have a deeper understanding of the problem of evil which allowed him to see God’s potential purposes

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<sup>68</sup> John Froula, “Joy as Spiritual Perception in C.S. Lewis,” *The Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 1 (Jan. 2017), 56.

<sup>69</sup> George Harold Trudeau, “C.S. Lewis’s Post-Edenic Wanderings: Uncovering the Object of Longing,” *The Heythrop Journal* 61, no. 4 (Sept. 2019), 646.

<sup>70</sup> McGrath, *Lewis*, 235.

<sup>71</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 173.

<sup>72</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 37.

<sup>73</sup> “Christianity Makes Sense of the World,” C.S. Lewis Institute, October 26, 2013, [https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Christianity\\_Makes\\_Sense\\_of\\_the\\_World](https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Christianity_Makes_Sense_of_the_World)



for allowing evil. Lewis believed that evil allowed for moral growth and that the goal of the Christian faith was not happiness but moral perfection as an imitation of Jesus Christ.<sup>74</sup> Lewis also made sense of evils and the existence of hell through his understanding of human freedom as seen in *The Great Divorce*. Lewis had the challenge of facing suffering and death from a young age, but his thought about the purposes of evil evolved through his study and experiences.

### **The Life of Antony Flew**

In his career, Antony Flew wrote many published works including *God and Philosophy*, *There is a God*, and his dialogue with Gary Habermas in *Philosophia Christi* which offer valuable information about Flew's life. Furthermore, many news articles and blogs document his transition from atheism to deism from 2001 to his death in 2010. Writers such as Richard Carrier, Mark Oppenheimer, and Benjamin Wiker help to document Flew's intellectual journey. Yet there are few published secondary sources addressing his life. The last ten years of Flew's life are an enigma that is slowly being crafted together.

### **Becoming an Atheist**

In 1950, a young philosophy student named Antony Flew presented a paper titled "Theology and Falsification" at the Socratic Club which was chaired by C.S. Lewis. The Socratic Club was the hub for debate between Christians and atheists at Oxford. In the paper, Flew argued that the concept of God is meaningless since there is no way to falsify the claim. Mark Oppenheimer described the paper as "A heroic tract for committed atheists."<sup>75</sup> In a 1972

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<sup>74</sup> Conn, *Lewis*, 41.

<sup>75</sup> Mark Oppenheimer, "The Turning of an Atheist," *New York Times Magazine*, November 4, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/04/magazine/04Flew-t.html>.

paper, Flew further developed his famous idea of the presumption of atheism. He argued, “It must be up to them: first, to give whatever sense they choose to the word 'God', meeting any objection that so defined it would relate only to an incoherent pseudoconcept; and, second, to bring forward sufficient reasons to warrant their claim that, in their present sense of the word 'God', there is a God.”<sup>76</sup> Flew’s idea of the presumption of atheism has greatly influenced the philosophy of religion, yet this committed atheist was first the son of a minister.

Flew was born on February 11, 1923 in London, England. Flew was born the son of a Methodist minister, Robert Newton Flew, and became an atheist during his teenage years.<sup>77</sup> At the age of thirteen, Flew was enrolled in Kingswood, a Methodist school founded by John Wesley.<sup>78</sup> Flew’s father often took him to religious conferences which played an important role in helping him to recognize the importance of critical thinking.<sup>79</sup> According to Flew, this was one of the major reasons that he was an atheist. In the early 1930s, Flew witnessed the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany before the outbreak of World War II, which helped to develop his thoughts on the problem of evil.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Antony Flew, “The Presumption of Atheism, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (Sept. 1972), 38.

<sup>77</sup> William Grimes, “Antony Flew, Philosopher and Ex-Atheist, Dies at 87,” *The New York Times*, April 16, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/17/arts/17flew.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Bernard J. Verkamp, “Antony Flew (1923-),” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophers of Religion* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2009), accessed September 1, 2021, [http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/mcfphil/flew\\_antony\\_1923/0?institutionId=5072](http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/mcfphil/flew_antony_1923/0?institutionId=5072).

<sup>79</sup> Antony Flew and Roy Abraham Varghese, *There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 12.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Flew hid his deconversion from his parents until January of 1946 when he was 23.<sup>81</sup> However, his interest in the conversation between theism and atheism was just beginning, as after World War II, Flew enrolled in Oxford where his philosophical career began. At Lewis' Socratic Club, he was a regular participant, especially during a famous debate between Lewis and Elizabeth Anscombe on the argument from miracles, which led to Lewis revising one of his arguments.<sup>82</sup> It was here that Flew presented his paper, "Theology and Falsification" in 1950. Flew spent most of his life in academia as an atheist. His philosophical career led to him being a professor in Aberdeen, North Staffordshire, Calgary, and Reading.<sup>83</sup>

Flew also participated in debates with people such as Thomas Warren, Gary Habermas, William Lane Craig, Richard Swinburne, and more on questions such as the existence of God and the resurrection of Jesus. One of Flew's most famous debates was his 1998 debate with William Lane Craig on God's existence.<sup>84</sup> Flew also had his third debate with Gary Habermas in 2003 on the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>85</sup> His debate with Habermas occurred shortly before one of his most important decisions.

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<sup>81</sup> Flew and Varghese, *God*, 16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> ReasonableFaithOrg, "William Lane Craig vs Antony Flew | 'Does God Exist?'" April 25, 2012, video, <https://youtu.be/NDSaJrbFOuk>.

<sup>85</sup> The Veritas Forum, "Jesus' Resurrection: Atheist, Antony Flew, and Theist, Gary Habermas, Dialogue," April 7, 2012, video, <https://youtu.be/BVb3Xvny8-k>.

Flew published many different important works defending his atheistic worldview including *God and Philosophy* (1966) and *The Presumption of Atheism & Other Essays* (1976).<sup>86</sup> *God and Philosophy* served as an introduction to the philosophy of religion from Flew's atheistic perspective. *The Presumption of Atheism & Other Essays* expanded Flew's work on the necessity of starting with atheism when considering religious claims. While Flew spent the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as one of the champions of atheism, the turn of the millennia brought a new beginning.

### **Becoming a Deist**

On August 31, 2001, on the Secular Web (a popular non-theistic blog), Flew addressed the rumors that he had become a Christian. "I remain still what I have been for over fifty years, a negative atheist,"<sup>87</sup> Flew claimed in response to these rumors. Furthermore, he wished that he, "Could demonstrate their falsity."<sup>88</sup> Flew acknowledged however that, "Developments in physics coming on the last twenty or thirty years can reasonably be seen as in some degree confirmatory of a previously faith-based belief in god, even though they still provide no sufficient reason for unbelievers to change their minds."<sup>89</sup> Flew's response in 2001 dispelled the rumors for a few years.

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<sup>86</sup> More of Flew's Books: *Hume's Philosophy of Belief* (1961), *An Introduction to Western Philosophy* (1971), *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (1979), *Darwinian Evolution* (1984), *Atheistic Humanism* (1993), and *How to Think Straight* (1998).

<sup>87</sup> Antony Flew, "Sorry to Disappoint, but I'm Still an Atheist!," *The Secular Web*, August 31, 2001, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050830092752/http://www.secweb.org/asset.asp?AssetID=138>.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

On October 10, 2004, the rumors that Flew had become a theist popped up once again online. In response, atheist Richard Carrier reported that the rumors seemed to be true that Flew was considering theism, or more accurately Deism. Carrier expressed that an upcoming interview of Flew by Christian Gary Habermas would provide more accurate information, though Carrier was skeptical of his conversion. Carrier wrote, “The fact of the matter is: Flew hasn't really decided what to believe.”<sup>90</sup> Later in 2004, Flew wrote to Carrier about the news of his ‘conversion.’ Flew wrote that the god he was considering was the “God of Aristotle or Spinoza,”<sup>91</sup> not the God of any revealed religion. Carrier also quoted Flew’s letter where he claimed that the only piece of evidence that convinced him was, “The apparent impossibility of providing a naturalistic theory of the origin from DNA of the first reproducing species.”<sup>92</sup> By 2004, the tides had turned, and it seemed as if Flew was seriously considering the existence of god.

The final confirmation signaling Flew’s transition from an atheist to a theist came in a 2004 *Philosophia Christi* article which was a dialogue between Flew and Gary Habermas. He and Habermas first met in 1985 when they debated the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>93</sup> The two became friends, and after a debate in 2003, Flew told Habermas about his concerns with naturalism, and

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<sup>90</sup> Richard Carrier, “Antony Flew Considers God...Sort Of,” *Infidels*, accessed August 25, 2021, <https://infidels.org/kiosk/article/antony-flew-considers-godsort-of-369.html>

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Antony Flew and Gary Habermas, “My Pilgrimage from Atheism to Theism,” *Philosophia Christi* 6, no. 2 (2004): 197.

by January 2004 Flew told Habermas he was a theist.<sup>94</sup> Despite this switch, Flew affirmed that he did not believe in the god of any religion, though he remained open to the possibility, but Flew expressed a belief in the god of Aristotle.<sup>95</sup> In *God and Philosophy*, he emphasized the significant difference between his god and the traditional God by writing, “Had Aristotle offered a popular definition of God it would surely have been different from that of Richard Swinburne.”<sup>96</sup> “The most impressive arguments for God's existence,” according to Flew, “are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries.”<sup>97</sup> However, in this article, Flew reaffirmed that he believed the problem of evil was still a serious strike against Christianity.

Furthermore, in a 2004 article, Flew affirmed his past arguments for the presumption of atheism but because of the evidence, continued in his affirmation in a deistic god.<sup>98</sup> Many from the atheist community levied intense criticism of Flew, including Carrier. Responding to the critics in a 2004 interview, Flew claimed, “‘I have been denounced by my fellow unbelievers for stupidity, betrayal, senility and everything you could think of,’ he says, his voice rising with emotion. ‘And none of them have read a word that I have ever written.’”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Flew and Habermas, *Pilgrimage*, 198.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>96</sup> Antony Flew, *God and Philosophy* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2005), 13.

<sup>97</sup> Flew and Habermas, *Pilgrimage*, 200.

<sup>98</sup> Duncan Crary, “No longer atheist, Flew stands by ‘Presumption of Atheism,’” *Humanist News Network*, December 22, 2004, <https://archive.vn/20070719031527/http://humaniststudies.org/enews/index.html?id=172&article=0>.

<sup>99</sup> Stuart Wavell, “In the beginning there was something,” *The Times*, December 19, 2004, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/in-the-beginning-there-was-something-2skcb3z8nfz>.

In his letter to Carrier, Flew emphasized the difference between the Christian God and the god of Aristotle.<sup>100</sup> “Fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design,”<sup>101</sup> was Flew’s explanation for his move towards deism. However, Flew still showed no signal of attachment to an organized religion due in part to the problem of evil. Furthermore, in a 2005 article, Flew wrote about the developments that led to his move from atheism to deism, including the fine-tuning argument and the inductive strength of an argument for a general ordering of the universe.<sup>102</sup> While Flew had left his decades of atheism in the past to become a deist, his journey was far from over.

Flew’s conversion led to a wide array of responses from the atheist community. Atheist advocate and speaker Carrier was very critical of Flew when he came out as a theist. From August 31, 2001, to Flew’s death, Carrier wrote a continuously updated blog post informing readers about the details of Flew’s conversion and Carrier’s commentary on the topic. In October of 2004, Carrier described Flew’s conversion as tentative. In 2005, Carrier claimed that Flew “Won’t investigate the evidence because it’s too hard.”<sup>103</sup> Flew’s “Memory is in shambles,” according to a 2007 blog update by Carrier.<sup>104</sup> In addition, Carrier claimed that evangelicals such as Gary Habermas and Alvin Plantinga used Flew’s conversion as a springboard to launch a broader apologetic. Reflecting on Flew’s conversion, the Encyclopedia of Philosophers of

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<sup>100</sup> Carrier, “Flew.”

<sup>101</sup> Flew and Habermas, *Pilgrimage*, 200.

<sup>102</sup> Antony Flew, “My ‘Conversion,’” *Think: philosophy for everyone* 4, no. 11 (2005): 79.

<sup>103</sup> Carrier, “Flew.”

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

Religion attributed Flew's conversion to, "the light of new scientific conclusions about the origin and integrated complexity of the universe and living organisms."<sup>105</sup>

### **Remaining a Deist**

One of Flew's biggest barriers to accepting any form of organized religion was the problem of evil. How could an all-loving God allow so much suffering and pain in the world? Tsunamis, cancers, and destruction seen throughout the fossil record led to serious questions about how an all-loving God could be behind this universe. Flew saw deism as an acceptance of the evidence for theism but escaping the issues surrounding the problem of evil. "The problem of evil is a problem only for Christians,"<sup>106</sup> Flew wrote in his dialogue with Gary Habermas. From first witnessing the Nazi horrors in Germany to the end of his life, the issue of evil was a major barrier between Flew and a Christian faith that made Flew's conversion to Christianity "very unlikely."<sup>107</sup> Though he had many objections to Christianity, Flew saw the Christian Bible as, "An eminently readable book."<sup>108</sup> He also believed that Methodism helped to stop the movement of Communism in Britain.<sup>109</sup>

While Flew saw the problem of evil as the biggest problem facing Christianity, he saw bigger holes in other traditional religions such as Islam. In his interview with Habermas, Flew criticized Muhammad for being, "Doubtfully literate and certainly ill-informed about the

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<sup>105</sup> Verkamp, "Flew."

<sup>106</sup> Flew and Habermas, *Pilgrimage*, 203.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.



contents of the Old Testament and about several matters of which God, if not even the least informed of the Prophet's contemporaries, must have been cognizant.”<sup>110</sup> Flew also claimed that reading the Qur’an was “A penance rather than a pleasure.”<sup>111</sup> While he was open but skeptical of the Christian religion, he had many sharp criticisms of Islam.

On November 4, 2008, Flew published *There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*. This book shared the story of Flew and how he moved from atheism to deism. The book described itself as, “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.”<sup>112</sup> In an interview with Benjamin Wiker, he said that the book was his “last will and testament.”<sup>113</sup> Furthermore in the interview, Flew reinforced the ideas of the complexity of the universe and the complexity of biological design as central ideas which drove his change of mind.<sup>114</sup> The book was endorsed by giants in theistic circles such as John Polkinghorne, Francis Collins, and John Hick. Flew’s book claimed to be a groundbreaking work that would influence theism/atheism debate for years to come. Yet the book did not come without a wide array of controversy.

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<sup>110</sup> Flew and Habermas, *Pilgrimage*, 208.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> “There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind,” Amazon, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://www.amazon.com/There-God-Notorious-Atheist-Changed/dp/0061335304>.

<sup>113</sup> Benjamin Wiker, “Exclusive Flew Interview,” *To the Source*, October 30, 2007, [https://web.archive.org/web/20120211132936/http://www.tothesource.org/10\\_30\\_2007/10\\_30\\_2007.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20120211132936/http://www.tothesource.org/10_30_2007/10_30_2007.htm).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

Many in the atheist community believed that Flew did not write this book and that it is not a reliable source for information on Flew's views on the God debate. "Varghese and Hostetler already confessed to having written *all* the book's content," according to Carrier and, "not just 'some' of the 'anecdotes.' What they really claim is that they drew upon things Flew had written elsewhere, and (supposedly) things he said to them."<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, Carrier claimed, "Flew appears to have simply trusted a couple of Christians to write on his behalf, without any need to check what they wrote. Its actual author turns out to be an evangelical preacher named Bob Hostetler, with considerable assistance from the book's co-author, evangelical promoter and businessman Roy Abraham Varghese."<sup>116</sup>

In Carrier's mind, *There is a God* was the product of a couple of Christian apologists who took advantage of an old man. "They drew upon things Flew had written elsewhere," Carrier, claimed, "and (supposedly) things he said to them, and merely sought Flew's approval of the resulting text through many revisions."<sup>117</sup> In Carrier's mind, the book was nothing more than apologetic propaganda, but many others expressed concern about the authenticity of Flew's final testament.

The controversy over the authorship of this book did not just sit with Carrier but also others such as reporter Anthony Gottlieb. Gottlieb went further than Carrier by writing about the American words used in the book and the changes in Flew's argumentation. Regarding Flew's authorship of the book, Gottlieb wrote:

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<sup>115</sup> Carrier, "Flew."

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Oddly, Flew seems to have turned into an American as well as a believer. His intellectual autobiography is written in the language of an Englishman of his generation and class; yet when he starts to lay out his case for God, he uses Americanisms like “beverages,” “vacation” and “candy. . . . But it is striking how much of Flew’s method of argument, too, has changed from that in his earlier works, and how similar it now is to the abysmal intellectual standards displayed in Varghese’s appendix. In fact, Flew told *The New York Times Magazine* last month that the book “is really Roy’s doing.”<sup>118</sup>

With regards to Flew, Gottlieb concluded, “It seems that this lost sheep remains lost.”<sup>119</sup>

The co-author of the book Roy Abraham Varghese is the person whom there is much speculation with regards to the book’s origin. Flew and Varghese had been friends for over 20 years before the publication.<sup>120</sup> *New York Times* reporter Mark Oppenheimer visited Flew in 2007 to investigate his conversion and the authorship of the book. Oppenheimer brought numerous concerns regarding the authorship of the book. He reported:

In “There Is a God,” Flew quotes extensively from a conversation he had with Leftow, a professor at Oxford. So I asked Flew, “Do you know Brian Leftow?”

“No,” he said. “I don’t think I do.”

“Do you know the work of the philosopher John Leslie?” Leslie is discussed extensively in the book. Flew paused, seeming unsure. “I think he’s quite good.” But he said he did not remember the specifics of Leslie’s work.

“Have you ever run across the philosopher Paul Davies?” In his book, Flew calls Paul Davies “arguably the most influential contemporary expositor of modern science.”

“I’m afraid this is a spectacle of my not remembering!”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Anthony Gottlieb, “I’m a Believer,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/23/books/review/Gottlieb-t.html>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Oppenheimer, “Atheist.”

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Oppenheimer's interview of Flew gave forth more revelation on the nature of Flew's allegedly final testament on the question of God's existence. In the interview, Flew revealed to Oppenheimer that he struggled to remember names, but Oppenheimer also stated, "He didn't remember talking with Paul Kurtz about his introduction to 'God and Philosophy' just two years ago. There were words in his book, like; abiogenesis,' that now he could not define."<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, Flew explained that the book was "really Roy's doing,"<sup>123</sup> referring to Roy Abraham Varghese. Varghese freely admitted that he did much of the work for the book, even collaborating with pastor Bob Hostetler. Flew trusted Varghese as they had been friends for 20 years, but it seems as if Flew did not write the book ascribed to him. His failure to remember the authors whom he quotes from in the book suggests that Flew's mind may have had little to do with the book.

On April 8, 2010, Flew passed away after a battle with dementia. By 2010, it had been known that for a few years Flew's mental capabilities had been declining. When he passed away in 2010, the evidence suggests that he was still a deist with no belief in an afterlife. Flew is famous for his commitment to following the evidence wherever he saw it leading. From London to Oxford to North America to Reading, Flew's dedication to searching for truth never ended. His ideas have been engaged with by thinkers such as atheist Graham Oppy<sup>124</sup> and theist Kai-

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<sup>122</sup> Oppenheimer, "Atheist."

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Graham Oppy, *Arguing About Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 315.

Man Kwan.<sup>125</sup> While what occurred in the last ten years of Flew's life remains a mystery, his commitment to intellectual honesty and integrity is inspiring the next generation of great thinkers.

### **Lewis and Flew's Interaction**

The Socratic Club was a student club in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in Oxford that allowed for debates on philosophy and Christianity. The club was chaired by C.S. Lewis who guided the club from its origins in 1942 to 1954. One member of the Socratic Club during Lewis' tenure was Antony Flew. Flew described Lewis as, "by far the most powerful of Christian apologists for the sixty or more years following his founding of that club."<sup>126</sup> Flew was only 27 years old when he presented, 'Theology and Falsification' at a salon in Oxford. This tract also helped to bring birth to analytic philosophy which helped end the age of the domination of the logical positivists in the philosophy of religion. Flew argued that the conception of God was too incoherent to be claimed to be a meaningful statement. If God was immaterial and inscrutable, how could His existence ever be proved or disproved? While Lewis merely presided over this meeting in 1950, Flew's paper had an important impact on the direction of atheism for the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Socratic Club gave Flew a chance to craft his philosophy with some of the greatest minds in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>125</sup> Kai-Man Kwan, "The Argument from Religious Experience," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, eds. William Lane Craig and James Porter Moreland (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 501.

<sup>126</sup> Flew and Habermas, *Pilgrimage*, 200.

### Similarities and Differences

What can be made between the similarities and differences of the histories of Flew and Lewis? One of the most striking similarities is their backgrounds. Lewis was raised a believer in God before becoming an atheist at a young age after being moved in part due to the problem of evil. Flew was also raised a Christian as the son of a minister before becoming an atheist in part due to the problem of evil.

Furthermore, the impact of the World Wars can be seen in both Lewis and Flew. Lewis was a soldier during the First World War. Growing up engulfed in literature, World War I had an important influence on Lewis' life. Lewis wrote the "Great War was one of the turning points of my life."<sup>127</sup> McGrath reflects that "Lewis's scant references to the horrors of trench warfare confirm both its objective realities... and his own subjective distancing of himself from this experience."<sup>128</sup> For Flew, witnessing the horrors of the Nazi persecution of the Jews before the Second World War furthered Flew's questions about the reality of a personal and loving God amidst tremendous suffering. Flew's memoir records, "I was greatly influenced by these early travels abroad during the years before World War II. I vividly recall the banners and signs outside small towns proclaiming, 'Jews not wanted here.'"<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, "Such experiences sketched the background," Flew recalled, "of my youthful life and for me, as for many others, presented an inescapable challenge to the existence of an all-powerful God of love."<sup>130</sup> For both

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<sup>127</sup> Lewis, *Joy*, 207.

<sup>128</sup> McGrath, *Lewis*, 69.

<sup>129</sup> Flew and Varghese, *God*, 13.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Lewis and Flew, the World Wars served as events in which they looked at the world in a new way.

Flew and Lewis both share the honor of becoming accomplished academics. Lewis was a brilliant literary critic alongside being a Christian apologist who published works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Mere Christianity*, and *The Problem of Pain*. Flew published works such as *God and Philosophy* and *Body, Mind, and Death*. However, Lewis' publications came after his conversion to Christianity and are filled with Christian ideas, whereas Flew's work comes mostly from his time as an atheist except for his last few works. Lewis's books have sold over 200 million copies,<sup>131</sup> and Flew's ideas have been engaged with through philosophers such as Oppy and Kwan. Through Lewis' apologetic efforts and Flew's arguments for the presumption of atheism, both have contributed valuable works which continue to influence 21st-century philosophy.

One difference between Flew and Lewis is the time of life when each of them switched from atheists to believers. Lewis became a theist in 1929 when Lewis was around 31 years old, whereas Flew did not announce his belief in god until around 2004 when he was about 81 years old. There is a remarkable 50-year age difference in the timing of their conversions.

Furthermore, Lewis spent most of his life arguing for the veracity and the truth of the Christian message whereas Flew spent most of his life arguing that Christianity was probably false. It seems like no philosophical argument convinced Flew that God exists, but his conversion was

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<sup>131</sup> Scott S. Smith, "C.S. Lewis Wrote Christian Novels That Became Global Best-Sellers," *Investor's Business Daily*, March 31, 2016, <https://www.investors.com/news/management/leaders-and-success/c-s-lewis-wrote-christian-novels-that-became-global-best-sellers/>.

due to advancements in science. This contrasts with Lewis' conversion based on studying myths, desires, and more.

Another major difference between Lewis and Flew is what happened after they believed in God. For Lewis, his conversion to theism ultimately led to his conversion to Christian theism after more research and conversations. Whereas for Flew, he remained a deist and rejected any organized religion or prospect of an afterlife. Both had Christian friends but seeing Christianity as a solution to the problem of evil, Lewis became a Christian, whereas Flew saw the problem of evil as a defeater for a God who interacts in the world.

### **Impact on Philosophy**

A major difference between Flew and Lewis is their legacies. Lewis is remembered as a brilliant writer and Christian apologist who defended the faith and presented many different arguments for God's existence. Lewis provided numerous arguments for God's existence including the argument from reason,<sup>132</sup> the moral argument,<sup>133</sup> and engaged with the problem of evil.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, Lewis brought forth the famous Lord, Liar, or Lunatic trilemma in argumentation for the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>135</sup> Lewis's works have been built upon by Victor Reppert, Mark Linville, Stewart Goetz, and more.

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<sup>132</sup> Victor Reppert, "The Argument from Reason," in Craig and Moreland, 347.

<sup>133</sup> Mark D. Linville, "The Moral Argument," in Craig and Moreland, 395.

<sup>134</sup> Stewart Goetz, "The Argument from Evil," in Craig and Moreland, 449.

<sup>135</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Amplified Edition, with a New Introduction, of the Three Books, Broadcast Talks, Christian Behavior, and Beyond Personality* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2009), 52.



Flew is remembered as a long-time atheist who in his last years switched to deism. Flew helped bring forth the idea of the presumption of atheism, which argued it was the theist's burden to provide strong evidence for God's existence. This style of argumentation helped to bring forth the New Atheist movement of Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and Matt Dillahunty. Atheists such as Carrier remember Flew as a champion who then left their views in his last years for mechanistic deism. The impact of Flew and Lewis can still be seen well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Anytime someone talks about arguments from reason, morality, the resurrection of Jesus, or the presumption of atheism, the names of Lewis and Flew must be remembered as torchbearers in the discussion.

### **Conclusion**

The lives of C.S. Lewis and Antony Flew are the tales of two of the most brilliant minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both men were committed to following the evidence wherever it led, and both took part in a similar path from coming from a Christian background to becoming an atheist to accepting the existence of God. From their lives, it is clear how people can come to similar conclusions through different methods and the importance of following the truth wherever it leads. Further research can still be done on Flew's life. Flew's life in the 1980s and 1990s leading up to his conversion to deism is still not well-documented. In addition, Lewis' life is well studied, but there is little information on how his experience contributed to his Christian apologetic.

Flew and Lewis are still remembered and talked about today by many scholars, and many of their arguments for and against God are still talked about today. From these two men, we can see two profound stories about how they came to two similar unique but similar conclusions. Both men embody the Socratic principle to follow the argument wherever it leads.

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