

TOPIC 2.1

GOD'S EXISTENCE CAN BE PROVEN. FACT OR FICTION?



Conversation Points

- ★ Someone's religious beliefs should be a private matter.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ Governments should not legislate morality.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ No-one knows what happens to any person after they die.
AGREE or DISAGREE?

Reflection

William Hayden AC ('Companion of Australia') was born in Brisbane, Queensland in 1933. His parents, Violet and George, married two few weeks after he was born. His working-class dad had an unusual dislike for religion - particularly Christianity. "My father was a very bitter anti-religionist. I think that got to me" he told the ABC's 7.30 Report. After William finished High School he joined the Police Force, but continued to study part-time at university to earn a degree in economics. This would prove to be handy later in his life when he was made Treasurer of Australia. In 1960 he married Dallas and would go on to have three daughters and a son. In 1961 he stood for federal Parliament as a member of the Labor Party and was elected to the House of Representatives. Tragedy struck in 1966 when their 5-year old daughter, Michaela, was struck by a car and killed. This event had a deep and negative effect upon William and added to theseeds of hatred for God that his dad sown into him. In 1972 the Labor Party won the Federal election and in 1975 William ("Bill") was appointed as Treasurer. After Labor's defeat in the 1977 election, Bill was elected as the Opposition Leader in the Federal Parliament and narrowly lost the next election and was then replaced as leader by Bob Hawke. From 1983 he served in the Hawke Government as the Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister. Throughout his public life in politics he was an ardent and very vocal atheist, mocking Christianity. His political career ended with his retirement in 1988.

Bill was appointed as Governor General of Australia in 1989. The ABC reported that he was “the first Governor-General to make an *affirmation*, rather than an *oath on the Bible*” at his swearing in. The next Australian Prime Minister, John Howard said appointing Mr Hayden as Governor-General was “*a bit like appointing an atheist as Archbishop of Canterbury.*” This position also came with an appointment as “Chief Scout of Australia” - a position he declined *because* he was an atheist and this was “*incompatible with the scout promise*”. In 1996 he was recognised as “*Humanist of the Year*” by the *Council of Australian Humanist Societies*.

Yet in the background of when “*Mr Hayden used to be ‘straight out opposed to religion’*”, something, or, *someone*, was privately deeply challenging Bill Hayden’s atheism. Back in 1973, Bill was instrumental in the introduction of the Whitlam Government’s *Medicare Bill*. The promotion of this Bill led him to visit various hospitals. This was when he met Sister Angela Mary Doyle, a Brisbane nun and the administrator of the *Mater Hospital* in Brisbane where she had served for 23 years. Sister Angela maintained their friendship over the decades. Years later he heard that Sister Angela had had a heart attack and Bill went to visit her in hospital. “*The next morning I woke with the strong sense that I had been in the presence of a holy woman,*” Mr Hayden told *The Catholic Leader* newspaper.

This journey from atheism to belief in the God of the Bible was a long one for Bill Hayden but then in 2014 he suffered a stroke and had seven months to contemplate things as he recuperated. “*There’s been a gnawing pain in my heart and soul about what is the meaning of life. What’s my role in it?*” he told reporter Greg Sheridan. “*So after dwelling on those things I found my way back to the core of those beliefs — the church.*”



Bill Hayden broke his shoulder as he was preparing to be baptised, and was wheeled into his baptism in a wheelchair.

In 2018, at the age of 85, he publicly announced that he had abandoned atheism and had now embraced Catholic Christianity. “*There’s been a gnawing pain in my heart and soul about what is the meaning of life*” he also wrote in a letter to friends. “*This took too long, and now I am going to be devoted. From this day forward I’m going to vouch for God*” he said.

At the time of his daughter’s death, many Christians wrote to Bill telling him that *God must have thought this was for the best*.
When someone is processing tragedy, how does what we say and do impact their understanding of God? Discuss.

54. Dr. Andrew Corbett
11 March 2023 at 4:30:36 am
proof

55. Dr. Andrew Corbett
11 March 2023 at 11:54:29 am
evidence

56. Dr. Andrew Corbett
11 March 2023 at 11:55:26 am
truthfulness

57. Dr. Andrew Corbett
11 March 2023 at 11:58:11 am
correspond

58. Dr. Andrew Corbett
12 March 2023 at 8:53:02 am
Genesis 1:1

59. Dr. Andrew Corbett
12 March 2023 at 8:53:37 am
Every action requires a cause which means that the Universe must have been created by an "uncaused First Cause" which demands that this uncaused First Cause must be eternal since He is the cause of time.

The Unseen Influence of a Believer's Life on an Atheist

Bill Hayden was deeply hurt and a man 'angry-at-God' after the tragic death of his oldest child who was just 5-years old when she was killed, so he threw himself into public service so that he could help as many people as possible - especially since *God* wasn't any help to them! But it was the patient, prayerful, persistent friendship of Sister Angela Mary that challenged Bill's concept of Christianity and opened his heart to accept God. As Bill prepared to be baptised, he wrote to friends, "*I still have questions*" but he came to the point where Christianity and evidence for God was enough for him to convert.

The authentic life of a genuine believer can have a profound impact on an atheist. In Bill Hayden's story it was when he saw how Sister Angela handled life when she was confronted with potential death (her heart attack). It seems that God allows His people to sometimes go through hardship, difficulties, pain, or even tragedy, to show the world the difference between how the world deals with such things compared with how a believer who trusts in God handles them.

While for many unbelievers it is the opportunity to get to know a believer and observe their life, particularly when they observe the believer under pressure, that becomes a **p_____** of God's existence to them, for other unbelievers this is not enough. **What do you think it *also* takes for some other unbelievers to accept that the truthfulness of the God of the Bible?**

54

Faith, Proofs, Evidence, Belief, Truth

Faith is sometimes presented as "believing something where there is no supporting evidence". But this is not what *we* mean by the term *faith*. Rather, *faith* is trusting the **e_____e** for the **t_____s** of a claim.

55 56

57

A *proof* must **c_____d** to the claim being made. A mathematical proof is a different kind of proof to a historical proof which is different to the proof that a new world and Olympic record had just been set for the 100-metre sprint. Thus, proofs for the existence of God can reasonably be both *personal* (subjective), and *verifiable* (objective). These include:

58 59

1. The universe **had a beginning** that must have had **an uncaused first cause**.
2. The universe displays exquisite design pointing to a designer with a mind.
3. All people universally have an awareness of the 'moral law'.
4. God sent His only eternal Son into the world who died for sins and was *then physically resurrected*.
5. The claims of Christ about 'new birth', 'spiritual cleansing', 'forgiveness of sins', 'peace', can be personally tested and experienced.

60. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 1:13:23 pm
Psa. 8:3 ¶ When I look at
your heavens, the work of your
fingers,
the moon and the
stars, which you have set in
place,

61. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 1:13:42 pm
Psa. 19:1 ¶ The heavens
declare the glory of God,
and the sky
above proclaims his handiwork.

62. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 1:25:45 pm
Rom. 1:19 For what can be
known about God is plain to
them, because God has shown it
to them.
Rom. 1:20 For his invisible
attributes, namely, his eternal
power and divine nature, have
been clearly perceived, ever
since the creation of the world, in
the things that have been made.
So they are without excuse.

63. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 1:29:52 pm
Both the Psalmist and the
Apostle Paul both claim that
people can see evidence for God
as the Creator by looking at the
world around us.

64. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 1:40:06 pm
Rom. 2:15 They show that the
work of the law is written on their
hearts, while their conscience
also bears witness, and their
conflicting thoughts accuse or
even excuse them
Rom. 2:16 on that day when,
according to my gospel, God
judges the secrets of men by
Christ Jesus.

65. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 1:40:22 pm
The Moral Law is “written on their
hearts”

66. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 1:59:58 pm
John 20:1 ¶ Now on the first day
of the week Mary Magdalene
came to the tomb early, while it
was still dark, and saw that the
stone had been taken away from
the tomb.
John 20:2 So she ran and went to
Simon Peter and the other
disciple, the one whom Jesus
loved, and said to them, “They
have taken the Lord out of the
tomb, and we do not know where
they have laid him.”
John 20:3 So Peter went out with
the other disciple, and they were
going toward the tomb.
John 20:4 Both of them were
running together, but the other
disciple outran Peter and reached
the tomb first.
John 20:5 And stooping to look

*Has there been some new discovery that disproves the
existence of a deity? Have the claims of the
supernatural been conclusively refuted to the point
that we can now deduce that there is a no God?
To the contrary, the evidence for God is growing day
by day as thinking people—including scientists,
historians, archeologists, philosophers, and others,
many of whom were former skeptics—find more and
more support for the existence of God and for the
claims of Christianity in particular.*

MARK MITTELBERG

The Reason Why Faith Makes Sense, p.8

From the Bible

1. What does the Psalmist say people should consider as evidence for God? (Psalm 8:3; 19:1). How does compare with what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:19-20?
60 61
62
63
2. One of the proofs for God’s existence is ‘a law’ referred to Romans 2:15. Which law is referred to?
64
65
3. In what way is what is described in John 20:1-18 the greatest proof for God?
66
67
4. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus gave anyone who would follow Him a promise. The Apostle Peter rewroded this testable promise in First Peter 5:6-7. What is this testable promise?
68
69
70

Additional References

Mittelberg, Mark. 2011. *The Reason Why. Faith Makes Sense*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.
John 20:6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there,
John 20:7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.
John 20:8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;
John 20:9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.
John 20:10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

John 20:11 ¶ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.
John 20:12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.
John 20:13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."
John 20:14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.
John 20:15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."
John 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).
John 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"
John 20:18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" —and that he had said these things to her.

67. Dr. Andrew Corbett

11 March 2023 at 2:00:17 pm
The proof for the physical resurrection of Christ is extremely compelling.

68. Dr. Andrew Corbett

12 March 2023 at 10:48:30 am
Matt. 11:28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Matt. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you

will find rest for your souls.
Matt. 11:30 For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light.”

69. Dr. Andrew Corbett

12 March 2023 at 10:51:06 am

1Pet. 5:6 ¶¶ Humble yourselves,
therefore, under the mighty hand
of God so that at the proper time
he may exalt you,
1Pet. 5:7 casting all your
anxieties on him, because he
cares for you.

70. Dr. Andrew Corbett

12 March 2023 at 11:06:04 am

Christ invites His followers to give
Him their cares, burden,
anxieties, worries,