

TONY JONES: Good evening. Welcome to Q&A. I'm Tony Jones and answering your questions tonight: the director of Griffith University's Islamic Research Unit, Imam Mohamad Abdalla; Singer, songwriter Deborah Conway whose latest recording draws on stories of the Old Testament and her Jewish heritage; atheist, comedian and star of Please Like Me, Josh Thomas; Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Mark Coleridge; and an Australian-raised Catholic whose spiritual journey led her to Tibet and to Buddhism, the Venerable Robina Courtin. Please welcome our panel.

Thank you. Q&A is live from 9:35 eastern daylight saving time. You can join the Twitter conversation using the hashtag that just jumped up on your screen. Well, our first question tonight comes from Lyn Simiana.

WONDER OF CREATION00:01:13

LYN SIMIANA: Yes, my question is for Josh.

JOSH THOMAS: Oh.

LYN SIMIANA: Josh, we all acknowledge that for every building there is an architect and for every painting there is an artist and for every book there is an author. How do you reconcile this with your belief as an atheist that our beautiful planet with its marvels and its diversity has no creator?

JOSH THOMAS: Well, there's a fairly classic atheist response to this, which is if you create something, if you think something can't just appear, then it must have a creator. That creator has to be more complicated than the thing that was built. So it's not a very satisfying conclusion for me to say that, oh, the world is beautiful so there must be a God, because it can't just appear. Because then the next question is, well, why are you comfortable with a God just appearing out of nowhere? Why don't you think he needs a creator? If you think he is more impressive than the world, which he presumably would be.

TONY JONES: Let's hear a Buddhist perspective on this. Robina Courtin, is there a creation story in Buddhism?

ROBINA COURTIN: Basically Buddha says we create ourselves. That all our minds are beginningless and endless and every action we do leaves in an imprint in the mind that produces our experiences so he says an external creator is an unnecessary embellishment.

TONY JONES: He doesn't say one doesn't exist though, does he? He just refuses to talk about it?

ROBINA COURTIN: No, he would say that's a misconception.

TONY JONES: (Indistinct)

ROBINA COURTIN: About a superior - yeah. Well, if you'd like to say that; be controversial. But the Buddha would suggest that we need to discuss these things. I mean there is nothing secret and hidden and we need to comprehend it and understand it and so the position - I would say that I am taking Buddha's view of the universe as my working hypothesis and I'm happy to find Buddha wrong. It's okay.

TONY JONES: Mark Coleridge.

MARK COLERIDGE: Well, I'm not happy to find Buddha wrong but I'm happy to find the Bible right in my own view. The Bible certainly posits a creator and an uncreated creator. So your point, Josh, about who created God...

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah.

MARK COLERIDGE: ...in a sense isn't a question that the Bible asks at all and it's not a question that's on my radar screen either, I have to say.

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah.

MARK COLERIDGE: But the God who creates in the Bible is a God who brings something out of nothing. It's the only thing he is good at is bringing something out of nothing; doing what seems to be the impossible. So and what the Bible would also say is that I can't create myself. In other words I am led to that point of impotence where I say, "I just can't do it", but at that point you have got a God who says "Well, I will do it for you".

TONY JONES: Okay. But were humans created - in your version of this were humans created by evolution? Did they spring from apes?

MARK COLERIDGE: I haven't got the slightest problem with evolution. In fact, I think it's a great idea. Thank God for Darwin. In other words, the Biblical account doesn't presume the Bible that the Bible is talking science. The Bible doesn't talk science. Its science, to call it that, has been shot to pieces long ago. What the Bible talks about is not what happened but what it means and what its purpose is. It's a different kind of truth. So to reconcile the Biblical account and evolution, I haven't got the slightest problem with that. Even with the Big Bang theory.

TONY JONES: All right. Let's get an Islamic position on this. First of all, creation, what's the Islamic version of how it began?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: It began with a creator and once we limit our understanding of creator and give him human limitations, it becomes almost difficult to comprehend that such a limited God could create a magnificent cosmos, a universe as we know it today and that is why the Islamic concept of God, monotheism, if you like, is very emphatic. In fact, almost one-third of the Koran or the holy text of Islam is about the oneness of God, who God is and who God isn't and it says that he is the absolute creator of the universe. God is known through attributes in Islam and two of the attributes that are relevant to the discussion, one is Al-Khāliq, which is the creator. But that in itself may not answer the question that "Did he create the universe or didn't he?" So the creator - we can be creators ourselves. We can make things and call ourselves creators, but to do that we need to have raw material. We need to have something to create something. But another attribute that the Quran...

TONY JONES: Let me - can I - I will just interrupt you there.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yeah.

TONY JONES: And same question really that I asked to Mark Coleridge: does your God create humans fully formed or does Islam accept evolution: that man evolved from apes?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: The Islamic world view is that God created Adam and Eve and he created humans as we know them. The Islamic understanding is that...

TONY JONES: So no evolution or...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Evolution within species, not from species. So Islam accepts the idea that evolution from within species, we adapt, we reform, we evolve in various ways, but not from a totally different species to a wonderfully amazing perfect human being.

TONY JONES: Deborah Conway?

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah, the other thing, if I could just chip in here and say that for the Bible, not only does God create but God calls the human being to be a co-creator. So it's not as if - the standard account of why God created the human being was to be a slave, to do all the dirty jobs. But, in fact, what the Bible does is put a bomb under that conventional understanding as the Bible so often does and says, no, God created us to be co-creators with him.

TONY JONES: So is it okay for man to create life if we reach the sort of medical...

MARK COLERIDGE: It depends how we do it.

TONY JONES: ...technology to do that?

MARK COLERIDGE: We can do all kinds of things but there is a point beyond which we cannot go. But, yeah, God wants the human being to cooperate in the ongoing work of creation in all kinds of ways and human creativity is a fantastic thing.

TONY JONES: You'd draw the line under cloning I dare say?

MARK COLERIDGE: I would.

TONY JONES: Okay. Deborah Conway?

DEBORAH CONWAY: Yeah. It's a good question, Lyn, because, you know, there is so much beautiful poetry in the world and in the Bible as well. The Jews would say that God is unknowable; that there is nothing that any human being could actually know about a creator that can create everything. I would say the same thing. God is unknowable but I can't subscribe to that myself. I think that science is also incredibly beautiful. There is so much poetry in the way that we perceive the world to have started from a Big Bang, from tiny little organisms, they have sprung into fish and birds and mammals and eventually human beings. I mean, personally I think there is so much extraordinariness in the world around us within the field of science that you don't necessarily need to explain it in the creator sense, in the one God putting everything together. Having said that it's a very comforting idea.

A QUESTION FROM TWITTER00:08:37

TONY JONES: Deborah, I'm going to interrupt you because we have got a Tweet that's just come in for you. For Deborah from Lauren Ingram: "How can you be a Jewish atheist?"

DEBORAH CONWAY: Oh, that's really easy. That's a really easy question. You can - well, I am Jewish because my mother was Jewish. My mother was Jewish because her mother was Jewish and so on and so forth. You can convert to Judaism. It's not a proselytising religion and it is really hard work if you do want to convert to Judaism. It involves a lot of - many, many years of study and probably a small circumcision along the way if you happen to be of the opposite sex. But you can embody all of those things about being Jewish and be raised in a secular Jewish household that observes, you know, as I did in my household, Friday night dinner Shabbat, we had Seders at Passover, Pesach. We - I fast on Yom Kippur, and you know, observe Rosh Hashanah and all of those other things. But, I don't know, I'm just - I just can't quite go the extra mile and say, you know, and all of this is about God. But, you know, I love so much about what it is to be Jewish. I love all the songs. I love the humour. I love the food. You know, it's...

MARK COLERIDGE: (Indistinct)

TONY JONES: Sorry, I am going to move us on into the realms of higher theology now.

MARK COLERIDGE: Okay.

TONY JONES: We have got a question from Hugh Cameron.

WHAT HAPPENS IN HEAVEN?00:09:55

HUGH CAMERON: I have two questions for the panel generally. What actually happens in heaven day by day and, should there be such a place, can you be expelled from heaven?

TONY JONES: Mark Coleridge?

MARK COLERIDGE: Thank you Tony. Well, first of all there is no time in heaven. We are caught up in eternity. Now, isn't that tough? What happens, I imagine heaven, and heaven is hard to imagine. Hell is far easier. You have only got to read Milton to see that. I imagine it is perfectly knowing not only God but everyone who has ever existed and knowing them in a way that is perfect love. Now, if you love one person in life, it is enough to galvanise a whole life. But to perfectly love and be loved by everyone who has ever existed, I mean, who wouldn't want that? That's as I imagine heaven.

TONY JONES: So do you have a personality in heaven, do you suppose? What's the current church teaching on whether you retain your personality?

MARK COLERIDGE: The church doesn't have a teaching on personality in heaven, you might be surprised to learn. But I think, yes, we remain the person that we are, even with a body in some sense. I mean that sounds weird, doesn't it? But Jesus, when he rises from the dead, has a body. He is not just a spirit. So there is some kind of bodily reality. Don't ask me what it is, I don't know.

TONY JONES: So just a quick question.

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah.

TONY JONES: Because the other part of that was can you be expelled?

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah.

TONY JONES: And ...

MARK COLERIDGE: And the other quick answer to that is, no, you can't be because once you are perfectly in love there is no desire to leave and there is no way of being booted out.

TONY JONES: But if you retain your personality, you would retain, for example, impure thoughts?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, you don't. You have got beyond all that. Even the Buddha teaches you that, Tony. No impure thoughts in heaven.

TONY JONES: Let's find out.

DEBORAH CONWAY: Does everybody get to drive a really great car in heaven?

MARK COLERIDGE: You can, Deborah, if you want.

DEBORAH CONWAY: Yeah. Okay.

TONY JONES: I don't know whether you have just rewritten theology there or you're creating a very large car dealership.

JOSH THOMAS: I just think heaven sounds quite disappointing now, if there's no...

DEBORAH CONWAY: Because there's no traffic jams there.

TONY JONES: Let's hear the - there isn't a Buddhist version of heaven, is there, because it doesn't exist?

ROBINA COURTIN: Listen, Buddhist has got - I mean from the big picture point of view, Buddhists have an amazing world view but I am kind of bored talking about it. I'd rather talk about down to earth and find the common ground between it all. I find it like boring.

TONY JONES: Yeah, but the question has been asked. Is there a Buddhist...

ROBINA COURTIN: I know that.

TONY JONES: Is there a Buddhist heaven?

ROBINA COURTIN: Buddha asserts a whole - many realms of existence and they are all mental states created by those beings.

TONY JONES: Is nirvana...

ROBINA COURTIN: Nirvana is a word.

TONY JONES: A state of enlightenment, is that also a kind of heaven?

ROBINA COURTIN: No. No. No. It's like what he said, a state of being of going beyond. Buddha would say that all the delusions and neuroses in our mind are adventitious, which means they are not at the core of our being and so the job of being a Buddhist is working on yourself day by day perfecting your consciousness. I mean I think it's a bit of a shocking state. If you go to a therapist and ask them to get rid of all ego, and all neurosis and all anger and all jealousy they'd be quite shocked but this is what Buddha is asserting. And so a statement the achievement of your nirvana is the achievement of your own perfection, which can be in this human body. It can happen anytime.

TONY JONES: Mohamad? Excuse me, I'm sorry. Mohamad is there a - well, is there an Islamic - fully fleshed Islamic version of heaven?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely. I mean the idea that heaven exists is part of Islamic world view. But I think a more important question is: if there is a heaven and it's something to do with metaphysics, it's the unseen, how would we know about it? And that links to the question of a creator. If there is a creator and we believe there is, and he has created heaven, then should he not tell us what heaven is like otherwise we will be making our minds about what heaven is. Everybody will be using his own rational reasoning to come up to some form of what paradise may look like, or heaven, based on his or her own experiences. So what Islam says, no-one has the right to talk about what heaven is or what it is not unless you have evidence. So what is the evidence that there is heaven? What is the evidence that - what does it look like? What is in heaven and so in the Islamic world view, the Islamic scripture provides ample evidence as to what is heaven, who or what type of life will be in heaven and what type of enjoyments, if you like, there will be in heaven and once people are in heaven, Tony, no they will not come out of heaven. And heaven - the important thing about heaven it that it is the manifestation of God's mercy, God's compassion and we must not limit the idea that it is only those who believe - for instance it is not only a Muslim in this instance who may enter heaven, but the Islamic world view says anyone who believed in any of the prophets and the messengers that God sent to humanity and there would be, according to Islamic narrative, 124,000 prophets and messengers. The first people of this county may have received a prophet and we would have no problem in believing that. So anyone ...

TONY JONES: Briefly, I am going to interrupt you there just to go back...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yeah.

TONY JONES: ... to the original part. What happens in heaven? I mean do people exist as personalities? Are there rivers, lakes, you know...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely.

TONY JONES: You know, all that in the Islamic heaven? What is there?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yes, the unanimous view of Muslim scholars is that people will live a physical life. They will be totally pure. There will be no impurities in their thoughts or in their lives, there will be no back-biting and no slandering, no enmity, no animosity and

there will be the rivers and houses and there will be fruit and so on.

TONY JONES: Will there be Christians and Jews there?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Those who followed what the Islamic narrative says - any Christian who followed the teachings of Jesus, peace be upon him and any Jew who followed the teachings of Moses, peace be upon him. As sent to Moses and Jesus, they will be in heaven.

TONY JONES: And they will all get on?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely. I mean, that's...

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS TALK AT ONCE

DEBORAH CONWAY: But, Josh, you and I, we're gone. The atheists, we're not going anywhere.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS TALK AT ONCE

TONY JONES: Deborah, you must have grown up with a view of heaven?

DEBORAH CONWAY: No.

TONY JONES: Oh, you didn't?

DEBORAH CONWAY: No, I seriously didn't.

TONY JONES: Not in your household you didn't?

DEBORAH CONWAY: No.

TONY JONES: Because it was a secular household

DEBORAH CONWAY: Yeah. It was a secular household. Heaven was never really mentioned. Heaven was like, oh, you know, chocolate truffles with chocolate inside. Dark chocolate truffles, that's heaven.

JOSH THOMAS: My concept of heaven has always been a lot more fun than what you guys described.

MARK COLERIDGE: What could be more fun than perfect love, Josh?

JOSH THOMAS: Well, forever? It sounds exhausting.

DEBORAH CONWAY: Chocolate.

TONY JONES: Okay. Look, I think we're probably not going to get to the bottom of heaven tonight. But we have another question. It's from Arthur Escamilla.

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN VALUES OUT?00:16:43

ARTHUR ESCAMILLA: My question is for Archbishop Coleridge. Would you agree there is a push to uproot Judeo Christian values from our society and to silence religion in the public square? And if you do, what do you think is the cause of it?

MARK COLERIDGE: I think in the Western world there is, at the moment, a certain tendency to regard Christians as the enemy. Sometimes Christians can be their own worst enemy and can provoke that kind of reaction but not all the time. A recently coined word is Christianophobia. I think that goes a bit over the top but I think that Christianity is a threat to secularist ideology and secularist ideology has gained momentum so that but any ideology, in the end, will find not just Christianity but I have to say Biblical religion seriously inimical. In other words: the enemy. So I think that certainly evidence around the world, not just in the Western world, but around the world, is that Christians are being persecuted at a greater rate now than they have been for a very, very long time. It's one of the facts that we don't focus on too well in a place like Australia. So I think there is cause for concern. I don't think there is cause for panic but it's one of the things the new Pope has talked about, the level of persecution. In the Western world it is not so much overt but there is a tendency to exclude not just Christianity but religion from the public square. And that's what I mean when I talk about secular ideology. Now, certainly the form of Christianity that I know best, the Catholic form, will not be pushed into some churchy little corner that - we're not a political party but we are certainly intent upon engaging the public realm so that there will be a real resistance to that kind of pressure but the pressure I think comes from a secularist ideology, which in its own funny way can be totalitarian and any totalitarian ideology, whether it be explicitly so or implicitly so, will always find Christianity, and I would say Biblical religion, seriously inimical.

TONY JONES: Okay. Josh Thomas, are you trying to uproot Judeo Christian values?

MARK COLERIDGE: Not you, Josh.

JOSH THOMAS: No, I mean, I don't think - I mean I would often challenge the Catholic Church and the Christian Church because you guys have made some pretty odd choices. But I don't - I love that we live in a country where we have freedom of religion. I love that you can believe whatever you want to believe and you have the right to go to church and I would fight for that. But as soon as you start lobbying the government to have your religion impede on my life then, yeah, people are going to get angry because it is annoying. So, you know, yeah, that's my - I'm done.

TONY JONES: Okay, Robina, I'd like to hear from you. I mean you have jettisoned Judeo Christian values to eastern values, is that right?

ROBINA COURTIN: No, I think...

TONY JONES: Or have you kept Judeo Christian values along with it?

ROBINA COURTIN: This is what I meant before when I - it's really nice to have all these discussions about is there heaven or not. But my feeling is almost that this is sort of private business and I'd rather not talk about those things. I think it's a bit embarrassing. I mean I don't mean that but for me I'd much rather talk about the Dalai Lama is coming in June, right,

and his big deal at the moment is beyond religion, which is not meant to be rip out religion but to try and find the common ground. And I think if you found a good Muslim, a good Jew, a good gay atheist comedian, you know, a good Catholic Archbishop and a good Buddhist and a good communist, they're all going to have fundamental good ethics and I think that's the common ground. So we can keep our religion private, you know. I think it's really important. Okay, I've got to wear these 14th century robes. What can I do? But, you know, what does that mean? It means fundamental goodness, not lying, not stealing, not killing, don't cheat on your partners and, you know, practise kindness and, I mean, it sounds kind of cute but it's the most intense job we will ever do. Then (indistinct)...

TONY JONES: Let's go back to our questioner, Arthur. Okay. Arthur Escamilla, who asked the question, now, you're listening to this. I think you're a Christian yourself.

ARTHUR ESCAMILLA: Yeah.

TONY JONES: I mean do you find - what do you find threatening?

ARTHUR ESCAMILLA: Well, I find that, as the Archbishop pointed out, there is a push to take away from society many of the structures that have made - have created this world we live in and the structures of charity, of concern for others are rooted in Judeo Christian principles. I don't know how many atheists are setting up orphanages around the world.

TONY JONES: Okay. Deborah Conway.

ROBINA COURTIN: It's rooted in good humanity. Christians happen to also agree with humanity. They didn't create it. Buddha didn't create it either.

DEBORAH CONWAY: I think you have got a point in the sense that I think at the moment what's happening is that the baby is getting thrown out with the bath water. I think there is so much animosity and anger towards the church. I think, you know, largely to do with the terrible suffering that numbers of people have now admitted to with paedophile priests and, of course, and I would actually point out that paedophilia doesn't exist in the Church alone. I mean there's numbers of institutions and numbers of them not having any religion in basis that that's happened in. But I think there is an enormous amount of anger that has been directed at the Church because of the way they've dealt with those things. And, in a sense, you know, what's happening is that we have just decided that, you know, it's all bad and let's get rid of the whole lot. And I think that's a terrible mistake really because it does actually offer a lot of - you know, speaking as an atheist, it does actually offer a lot of comfort for a lot of people. And, yeah, there has been a huge amount of good things that have been set up in the name of whatever religious institution. That's not to say that atheists don't do it. You know, Medecins Sans Frontieres is a wonderful organisation that I don't believe has any - one of my favourite charities. But I do think that there is real issues that have to be confronted within the Church and I think that they are starting to do that now. And I think there is a danger that everybody has turned far too aggressively against a much wider issue than what actually exists.

TONY JONES: Mohammad, look, I don't know whether Judeo Christian values are totally compatible with Islam, or there are crossovers obviously. Do you feel a kind of push back from the community against religion?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: First, there are, of course, many commonalities between Islam and Judeo Christian moral, ethical, spiritual values and teachings and very much a lot of commonalities, in fact, with Buddhism, when you talk about mysticism and spirituality, which many people are unaware of. It is the unfortunate nature perhaps of secular modern societies that religion does not necessarily play a role in their lives. And that doesn't mean that religions do not have core values, as Deborah has mentioned. There are core values in all faith, traditions and all religions and in every time and every place and every society these core values are necessary for the enhancement of our humanity. You don't have to be a Muslim, and you don't have to be a Jew or a Buddhist or a Christian to have these innate good nature and to have these wonderful human values that can enhance our societies. So the concentration should not be on whether a particular faith, tradition or religion, but rather to examine the commonalities, the human essence, that is in all of us to enhance our society; a secular modern society wherein one religion cannot dominate and will not dominate and must not dominate.

ROBINA COURTIN: That's right.

TONY JONES: Okay.

ROBINA COURTIN: Very good.

TONY JONES: Thank you.

TONY JONES: You are watching Q&A. Trying to get into as many questions as we possibly can. So you're watching Q&A, no matter what you believe. Our next question comes from Simon Lenton.

CATHOLIC CELIBACY00:25:12

SIMON LENTON: My question is for Mark Coleridge...

ROBINA COURTIN: Can you just - I can never see you. Stand up when you say the question.

SIMON LENTON: Oh, sure.

ROBINA COURTIN: It is really nice to see who you are.

SIMON LENTON: I didn't sign up for this.

ROBINA COURTIN: Hello, Simon.

SIMON LENTON: Hi. This question is for Mark Coleridge. It is a three-part question so bear with me. How does the church...

MARK COLERIDGE: I hope I can remember all three.

SIMON LENTON: I will remind you if you don't, don't worry. How does the church, in good conscience, uphold the discipline of clerical celibacy when there is and has been widespread abuse by the clergy and subsequent cover-ups by the church? Does the church perceive that the benefits of celibacy contribute to outweigh the detriment to society and the church caused by the abuses and, finally, how does the church justify such a discipline when the Bible says that God himself states immediately after creating man, i.e., Adam he declared that it is not good for man to be alone?

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah, well, celibacy doesn't mean you are alone. It's not the same just as abstinence. I am a celibate and I regard my celibacy as genuinely a way of loving as is marriage love or friendship. So it's not saying no to sexuality, it is a different way of living sexuality. Now, that sounds strange but that's the reality. Now ...

TONY JONES: It is saying no to sexuality thought, isn't it? Personal sexuality.

MARK COLERIDGE: Well, it's saying no to sexual activity but I still live my sexuality. I don't just put it on the shelf.

TONY JONES: How do you live it? I mean it's quite...

MARK COLERIDGE: I live it as a way of self-giving.

TONY JONES: Right.

MARK COLERIDGE: In all kinds of ways...

JOSH THOMAS: I don't know what's happening.

TONY JONES: I am not sure if you are talking about what goes on behind closed doors?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, I am not. I'm talking about what goes on in the goldfish bowl that I inhabit as a Catholic bishop.

TONY JONES: All right.

MARK COLERIDGE: A pouring out of one's life, a giving - a self-giving. A kind of a living from day to day...

TONY JONES: But seriously I have never heard an Archbishop describe that as a sexual feeling?

MARK COLERIDGE: It involves - see sexuality is more than sexual activity. Every cell of my body is male and I have to live that from day-to-day. So I come back to the point that, as I experience it and have for many years, celibate living is not an abandonment of sexuality or a rejection of it. It is simply a way of living my life differently and my sexuality.

TONY JONES: Okay. I'm going to bring you to the core of the question.

MARK COLERIDGE: Yep, the question. Yeah.

TONY JONES: the core of the question really is a lot of people have made the case that celibacy...

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah.

TONY JONES: ... creates sexual a kind of deviancy...

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah, well ...

TONY JONES: ... in some individuals within the church.

MARK COLERIDGE: Sure. I...

TONY JONES: ...and that's led to the scandals and the sexual abuse of children and so on?

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah. I am not convinced and I think many are not convinced that celibacy is a major factor in the whole business of sexual abuse. Far and away, the major proportion of those who abused kids are in fact married people.

ROBINA COURTIN: That's right.

MARK COLERIDGE: Not celibate people.

ROBINA COURTIN: That's right.

MARK COLERIDGE: Now, that having been said, I don't think celibacy - it could contribute to a certain - creating a certain culture that makes sexual deviance more possible but I don't think you can trace a direct link from celibacy to sexual abuse. Now, why retain it? And, look, it could be revised at some future date, I don't know. I didn't bring my crystal ball with me. But it goes back to Jesus. I mean Jesus wasn't married. That was a very mysterious and unusual thing in a Jew of that time so there's ...

TONY JONES: Be you can't say that he was celibate?

MARK COLERIDGE: Well, I would, in fact, yes.

SIMON LENDTON: The majority of his followers were married.

MARK COLERIDGE: That's true. That's true. Although given the little we know about them, yeah, they were. But I think the judgment has been made in the Church, rightly or wrongly - I happen to think rightly - that celibacy, in fact, although it is lived poorly by some and perhaps by many, is also lived very well by others and by many and becomes an extraordinary source of spiritual fruitfulness and pastoral fruitfulness. In other words it unleashes energies in a human being and this is perceived not only within Christianity but dare I say in Robina's presence, also within Buddhism and other religious traditions. So that to this point historically, the Catholic Church has made the judgment that the pros outweigh the cons. You know...

JOSH THOMAS: So my question, so I think there's an important question here. So you're

saying it is not celibacy because this has been going on a lot, right...

ROBINA COURTIN: What?

MARK COLERIDGE: What?

JOSH THOMAS: Paedophilia in the Catholic Church in every country for a very long time. And we're not talking about, like ...

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah.

JOSH THOMAS: I think it's important when we talk about sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, I didn't realise until recently we are talking about rape. We are talking about raping kids. A lot of people don't know that. A lot of people watching this think we're talking about...

MARK COLERIDGE: I can assure you I know it.

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah. A lot of people don't though. We're talking about rape and it's happening in Australia, it's happening in a lot of countries, it's happening for a long time and it's happening a lot more in the Catholic Church and...

MARK COLERIDGE: No, see that last statement I would dispute. It is happening at about the same rate, I would say, but it is worse because Catholic priests have unusual access to the young and an exceptional degree of trust is placed in the Catholic priest.

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah. And you also have a tradition of covering it up.

MARK COLERIDGE: So therefore - well, we do. Who is "We"?

JOSH THOMAS: The Catholic Church has a tradition of covering it up and the response that I find...

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah, but Josh - but Josh, if I could just say is it only - or ask is it only the Catholic Church that has been covering up? I don't deny what you are saying.

JOSH THOMAS: Well, I don't know. I'm talking to you. You are the Catholic Church.

MARK COLERIDGE: Okay. Okay.

JOSH THOMAS: If they were here, I'd be hassling them.

MARK COLERIDGE: Okay. Well, keep hassling them.

JOSH THOMAS: So their response has been with these two programs that they have, to sort of apologise and give money often. But I just think the Catholic Church needs to sit down and they need to question why so many people in their institution think this is an appropriate way to spend their time. So if it is not celibacy, my question is what do you think needs to change? Because it's a question that I haven't heard a lot of Catholics ask.

MARK COLERIDGE: Well, I can assure you that I and many others have been grappling with this for at least 25 years.

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah.

MARK COLERIDGE: Asking how - well, first of all when it appeared on my radar screen in about 1985 I would have said, I couldn't believe it. I just thought it was absolutely impossible. And then one thing after another followed and I began to see the scale of it, and not just in my own church either. And then another stage in my own journey of discovery was to see there were cultural factors conspiring in all of this.

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah.

MARK COLERIDGE: It wasn't just individuals. There was something cultural. It took me years to see this, I have to say.

TONY JONES: Why did it take so long for the church to stop shifting around paedophile priests to different areas...

MARK COLERIDGE: Well...

TONY JONES: ...and take them away from where they were abusing...

MARK COLERIDGE: ...Yeah.

TONY JONES: ...and put them somewhere elsewhere...

MARK COLERIDGE: No.

TONY JONES: ... where they - where they were unseen by the people they'd abused...

MARK COLERIDGE: Absolutely...

TONY JONES: ...and then they'd go on to abuse another group?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, that is a crucial question. The answer, in brief, is that the perception was, and it was sometimes based upon clinical advice, that it was a kind of a moral problem and with the right kind of admonition and spiritual discipline and a fresh start that the whole - in other words the understanding of the pathology was pathetic and the understanding of how to address the pathology was equally pathetic.

DEBORAH CONWAY: Isn't it about like - isn't it sort of equitable to arsonists who join the fire brigade? I mean, we're not talking about - I would have thought we're not talking about Catholicism corrupting the minds of priests who then become paedophiles. I would say that people who have those inclinations see the Catholic Church or any church or institutions where you work closely with children...

MARK COLERIDGE: Or boy scouts.

DEBORAH CONWAY: ...or boy scouts as an opportunity to be able to explore their sexual

deviancy or, you know, and by and large the Catholic Church have been completely inadequate about dealing with it.

MARK COLERIDGE: I agree.

DEBORAH CONWAY: But I can't imagine that Catholicism itself or - I mean, as you said, I think, earlier the act of children being abused it exists with married couples as well. I mean it's not about taking vows of celibacy.

TONY JONES: So do you think that's right, though, that the general principle that people joined the priesthood to abuse?

MARK COLERIDGE: I think, no, it wasn't that conscious...

TONY JONES: Because that would give them the opportunities?

MARK COLERIDGE: No. I don't think it worked at that conscious level. I think that there were people in whom there were, as it were, latent paedophile impulses who were drawn to the priesthood and those impulses only emerged from latency later on because some of those who have been appalling abusers in the clergy, there was no hint of it in their seminary training or their early years of the priesthood. So I think it was working at some deep unconscious level and was hidden in that sense too.

TONY JONES: So very briefly, because you said it was seen as a moral issue when, in fact, it was a criminal issue.

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah. Criminal issue and...

TONY JONES: Was it actually criminal to treat it as a moral issue?

MARK COLERIDGE: Well, that's one possible line of argument. I don't know the answer to that.

TONY JONES: Okay. We've got quite a lot of different questions to get through tonight. Our next one - I'm going to move on. Our next one comes from India O'Neill.

ROBINA COURTIN: Where are you? Where is she?

TONY JONES: India, yep.

INDIA O'NEILL: Just at the back there.

TONY JONES: Go ahead.

JIHAD00:34:20

INDIA O'NEILL: TIME Magazine world editor Bobby Ghosh famously stated that Osama Bin Laden's greatest legacy was redefining the word 'Jihad' from an internal struggle against vice to an external struggle against forces that would threaten the faith which might involve taking up arms. How can Muslims reclaim the original definition of Jihad and how can the

perception of Islam amongst Muslims and non-Muslims alike be returned to the focus on ethics, love and peace?

TONY JONES: Mohamad?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Thank you so much for that very important question. Yes, it is true, unfortunately, that Juhud or the word 'Jihad' has been misunderstood, misinterpreted and, indeed, hijacked for various ulterior motives, political reasons. The etymology of the word 'jihad' is jihad, which means to strive and to struggle and, as you have rightly mentioned, one of the greatest forms of jihad or struggle is the inward struggle to reform one's own self, to refine one's own self so that a person is morally and ethically enhanced, if you like. Unfortunately, the word 'jihad' has been misused by people like Osama Bin Laden, where it implied in their mind a war against infidels or non-believers and, incidentally they didn't have to be non-Muslims but also Muslims were a casualty of this misinterpretation. Jihad has many meanings in Islam, one of which is to strive and struggle. As I said, a woman giving birth for instance is in a form of jihad, she's in a form of struggle. I am standing here in front of you trying to explain, this is a form of jihad, without guns and swords waging. So it's a struggle. However, I think there is a tragedy in the way Islam is being taught in institutions, in schools and so on and as Muslims we need to rethink the way we are teaching Islam. For the last century or so, Islam has been taught in a very puritanical way, Islam has been taught in a very legalistic way and we have forgotten a tremendous wealth of spiritual heritage, a mystical tradition that Islam has left us and, therefore, I think it is upon the leaders and the teachers to begin teaching their communities, the Islamic communities, about that wonderful mystical, spiritual heritage that is intended to reform the inward of a human being, and not only the external observances.

TONY JONES: Mohamad, can I just interrupt you there? Because you talk about the teaching...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yes.

TONY JONES: ...and how the teaching has been wrong and part of the distortion of the idea of jihad has included radical Imams offering - this, again, is a sort of sexual perversion, it seems...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely.

TONY JONES: ...but offering to young men the prospect of 72 virgins in heaven...

DEBORAH CONWAY: Such a specific number too.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yeah.

TONY JONES: ...in heaven if they become a martyr and die...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yes.

TONY JONES: ...in the process of, for example, a suicide bombing. How did it get to that point?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: First, this number of 70 virgins is somewhat concocted. I don't know how it came from, you know. To be specific about it is rather...

TONY JONES: It came from the Hadees.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yeah, but I mean, there is - the Hadees doesn't specify 70.

DEBORAH CONWAY: 72.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: There are many Hadees. Well, not 72 actually. It doesn't. There are various traditions and that is a problem in western discourse. Not looking at the context when we talk about Islam or Islamic issues. The idea that a person can commit suicide and therefore go to heaven is, in itself, a self-contradiction because Islam prohibits suicide. So a person who actually commits suicide, according to the majority of scholars, the unanimous opinion of scholars, this is a person who has committed an act - a criminal act for which he is not entitled to heaven. It is a person - this is a person who will be punished and, under Islamic law, it is a crime against humanity. And so the idea that a person kills innocent people and, therefore, achieves the mercy of God in the manifestation of going to heaven is a fallacy. It is a delusion in the minds of these people.

TONY JONES: And offered up - I am saying this because, you know...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yeah.

TONY JONES: ...it does seem in some major religions, at least in branches of them, there is a perversion of sexuality and in this case, it is aimed at young men...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely.

TONY JONES: ...coming from repressed sexual backgrounds and it's offering up something that they would otherwise never find?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Well, I don't so. That is not the only reason. I think there are a host of reasons. We must never point at one cause, at one single faceted cause, as to why these people commit acts of - criminal acts of suicide. To assume that it is poverty or to assume it is because they want to enter heaven, this is rather too simplistic. Abundant research tells us there are socio-economic, political reasons as to why people become vulnerable and they are engulfed in this ridiculous understanding of the faith, socio-economic reasons. There is a host of research out there, marginalisation, racism against these people, that pushes them out of mainstream society, that makes them more vulnerable. The idea that that they don't feel belonging so to a place like Australia, a person who has grown up all of his life here and loses his sense of belonging and becomes more vulnerable to the...

TONY JONES: But the teachers - the teachers that you say are perverting the faith, they're not vulnerable. They're just manipulating these people.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely, yes. 100 per cent. 100 per cent. They are manipulators. They take the text out of context. You have to look at the text and the context and to use the term Islamic terrorism or extremism is a self-contradiction. There are Muslim extremists definitely. There are Muslim terrorists definitely but Islam as a faith itself is 100%

against any form of extremism, even sexual extremism. That's why in Islam sexuality is recognised. It's an innate nature of human beings that must be expressed in a lawful way but it should be controlled otherwise any other form of manifestation can lead to extremism.

TONY JONES: Okay. I'm going to bring in Deborah Conway here.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yeah.

TONY JONES: I would like to get your perspective on what we are hearing. This is a type of Islam which most people would be very comfortable with.

DEBORAH CONWAY: I am very comfortable with it already but it's not - it certainly doesn't fit with what I have been accustomed to and since those bombers went into the World Trade Centre on 9/11. It is really refreshing to hear you talk that way and I suppose I wish that more Muslim leaders had come out and talked more openly and more vigorously by criticising the proponents of people...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: But they have. But they have but people are not listening.

DEBORAH CONWAY: I would have liked to have seen...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: They have.

DEBORAH CONWAY: I would have liked to have seen...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: There has been so many fatwas, legal opinions, issued against terrorism and I get asked this question again and again: why don't Muslim leaders speak. They have spoken. The fact that you didn't hear about it is perhaps the problem of the media.

DEBORAH CONWAY: Yeah. Perhaps that's it.

TONY JONES: Is it also possibly true, very briefly, because we have to move to other questions...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yeah.

TONY JONES: But is it also possibly true that in places where you get the flash points like Afghanistan and Pakistan, those voices are mute?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely. I mean...

TONY JONES: I mean the moderate voices.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Most certainly. You know, it's often the majority are silent. Those who are opposed - and that is another problem. Whilst there are leaders who speak against ...

DEBORAH CONWAY: Of course. It's always the silent majority. It doesn't help when, you know, when there is demonstrations on the street and they carry signs that say...

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: It doesn't. Absolutely it doesn't.

MARK COLERIDGE: ...you know, 'Infidels should be beheaded'. It would have been terrific if the Muslim community had come out and marched. I think that would have been a wonderful thing and people would have applauded loudly if that had happened, you know, against this kind of extremism. I mean extremist anything is dreadful.

TONY JONES: A very brief response to that and we'll move onto our next question.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Absolutely. I think the Muslim community has, in a number of ways, also failed to come out openly and condemn acts of terrorism. Yes, there has been condemnation but I think there could be more of it. The silent majority needs to come out and we began to see this happening recently in Australia. I think you have to understand also the community was under shock. Sometimes you are damned if you respond and you are damned if you don't respond, as in the case of Dr Muhamed Haneef, if you recall. We were in a real dilemma. If you respond you are damned, and if you don't respond you are damned. Muhamed Haneef, if you recall, the story of Muhamed Haneef. But what we are beginning to see in Australia, there is a sense of maturity among the Australian Muslim community. There is a sense of maturity and it is heartening to see that. It is a good, positive improvement. The latest violent protests that took place in Sydney as a consequence of the film that was made against the Prophet Muhammad, it was met with wide condemnation from the Islamic leaders and the community, which was fantastic.

DEBORAH CONWAY: Yes. Yes, it was.

TONY JONES: Okay. All right. We'll leave that point there. You're watching Q&A. Our next question is a video. It comes from Mohammed El-Leissy in Melbourne.

GAYS, ISLAM AND CATHOLICISM00:44:25

MOHAMMED EL-LEISSY: As a youth worker in the Islamic community, I am in constant contact with young Muslims struggling with same-sex attraction. Many of them are also dealing with chronic depression as they struggle with a sexual orientation that they have no choice over and the prospect of losing their family and community if outed. I have spoken to many imams, rabbis and priests on this issue and the answer that always comes back is these people should either remain celibate or, if appropriate, get married to somebody of the opposite sex. Both of those solutions I feel are unrealistic and unsustainable in the long term. So my question is this and especially to the honourable Archbishop and the respected Imam: Do you feel this issue has become the Achilles' heel of our faiths as we struggle to provide sensible and realistic solutions especially in this post-modern world?

TONY JONES: Let's start with Mark Coleridge?

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah, well, I don't think for a moment it has become our Achilles' heel but I think we are faced with a conundrum and if I could put it as briefly as possible: gay people have as much right to justice as anyone else in the community. I state the obvious there. At the same time - and therefore these people, whether they be Muslim or whatever, young people particularly who are, as the questioner said, struggling with same-sex attraction, they need every kind of support, help, accompaniment ...

TONY JONES: Do you mean so they can get over it?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, I don't necessarily mean that at all. They might have to live with it. I mean the phenomenon of same-sex attraction can mean all kinds of different things. It is not a single rubric it seems to me. That sometimes it is a developmental thing, it is a phase. Other times it seems to be something that's permanent and more deeply-rooted, who knows. It is a mysterious thing. Human sexuality always is so certainly young people need all the support that Mohammad and those like him can provide. But what the church has to do is to remain faithful to our understanding of homosexuality and yet, at the same time, to work in every way we can to ensure justice for homosexual people. Now, clearly this doesn't mean to say, for instance, that we support gay marriage. The church's position on that is very well known and controversial. But in every other way, to work to defend the dignity of homosexual people, just as we work to defend the dignity of other people. How to do that and to maintain fidelity to our understanding of homosexuality, which is grounded upon a particular vision of the what the human person is and what human sexuality is within that context. How to hold those two things together is the conundrum that we are dealing with. I don't think it is an Achilles' heel but I think it is a real conundrum with which the church has to continue to grapple at this time and in this culture.

TONY JONES: All right. Josh is dying to get in here but I want to hear from Robina first.

ROBINA COURTIN: Sorry, the question is?

TONY JONES: Well, the question really about how...

ROBINA COURTIN: Is it okay to be gay? Okay. Well, I think...

TONY JONES: Well, how both the Catholic Church, in this case, and the Islamic face are dealing...

ROBINA COURTIN: Okay. Well, I've no idea about that but...

TONY JONES: ...with people struggling with homosexuality?

ROBINA COURTIN: I don't know about that. But I feel - my answer to this would be - I mean, if I look into the Buddhist texts there is probably just as many restrictions in some way in relation to sexual life but bringing it down to earth in a most practical way and being realistic, human beings are human beings and if we practise morality and compassion and forgiveness and have good relationships with each other and practise generosity and live good lives, that's the point. And the other point for Buddhism, because there is no concept - of course I was taught as a Catholic that God made us all and you need to have sex within the sacrament of marriage. Well, there's no concept like that, for example, among Tibetan Buddhists. Tibetan people who are totally - fairly moral, good people, they have partners and they sometimes have two husbands and two wives because it is convenient, you know, but there is no concept of living with someone forever. It's not called a sacrament. As long as you are a moral, good person and have honesty with each other and don't cheat and be mean then, you know, have a good relationship. Nothing wrong with this. Be good (Indistinct). That's the point.

TONY JONES: Okay. Josh?

JOSH THOMAS: I wasn't dying to get in. I was terrified.

TONY JONES: Okay.

MARK COLERIDGE: Well, you're in now, Josh.

JOSH THOMAS: I don't know if you are gay and Christian, to me it just seems like you play a constant game of stop hitting yourself, stop hitting yourself, stop hitting yourself.

MARK COLERIDGE: No, but there are plenty of gay Christians who aren't doing that.

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah. But that's not for me. From my point of view, I just think the Churches really overhype what the texts say about homosexuals. There is not that many texts. There is about five, I think. They are all quite weird.

MARK COLERIDGE: No. No. Yeah. Yeah.

JOSH THOMAS: I read them on the...

MARK COLERIDGE: Well, hang on. It depends how you read them.

JOSH THOMAS: Sodom and Gomorrah. It's pretty odd.

MARK COLERIDGE: I will talk to you later.

JOSH THOMAS: It's pretty weird.

TONY JONES: How do you read the ones for example that say homosexuals should be stoned to death?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, I don't take those ones at all at face value.

TONY JONES: So you pick and choose which ones you...

MARK COLERIDGE: No. No. In other words the Bible only lives by interpretation. Here I am sounding like a rabbi, Deborah.

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah.

MARK COLERIDGE: In other words the text itself is dead. It only lives by interpretation and it has to be interpreted again and again and again and again and from culture to culture.

JOSH THOMAS: And this is my point. I think that the interpretation at the moment is really heavily against gays and the text isn't. I mean we've got - I mean there was a study that last year the Australian Christian lobby sent out about five times as many press releases about gays than they did about any other issue. The next issue down was human trafficking.

ROBINA COURTIN: It seems to me there are two issues though. One is - I mean, if you do have the view of a creator and you do have the view that God made us this way and that mean and women have this mutual relationship, which looks fairly evident, you know...

JOSH THOMAS: Yeah.

ROBINA COURTIN: ...in the simply way of talking and then it's done in this sacrament, I would accept that's fine so that you can't argue with that. I think the problem is the fanaticism and the hate and the anger and the panic and the fear and the drama.

MARK COLERIDGE: And I'm not justifying any of that.

ROBINA COURTIN: That's, for me, the issue. I don't (indistinct)...

TONY JONES: Okay. Well, got right across to the other side of the panel because that question really started with talking about young Muslim gay people who are struggling because of how they are being treated within their religion. Can you tell us how they should be treated?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Well, thank you for that question. I think when we discuss these issues we have to be very genuine about the perspective of a particular faith. In the Islamic faith the question of homosexuality is very explicit and very clear. So there is two dimensions to this issue. One is one does the faith say about homosexuality?

TONY JONES: And briefly, what does it say?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Very briefly, it prohibits it. It doesn't allow it. The second thing is what attitude should we have towards people who choose that lifestyle. Should we become - should we lose our compassion? Not at all. We have to have compassion towards people. It is prohibited by the unanimous agreement of Muslim scholars but it is prohibited for those who have accepted Islam as a faith. Those who are not Muslims, Islam says nothing about them. You want to choose homosexuality that is your choice but for those who...

TONY JONES: But the people who are in pain that he is talking about in that question are Muslims.

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Yes, that's correct.

TONY JONES: So is there a better way to deal with this than excluding them from the religion?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Precisely. What we have to understand is that homosexuality is seen as a sin. It does not take a person out of the fold. So it doesn't become out of the fold of Islam. It is like in Islamic tradition it is very much like alcoholism, if you like. And so people like this should not be seen as outside of the fold. Compassion should be showed toward them. But the culture we have - many Muslims have grown up in cultures that does not tolerate that behaviour. And so we have to have a compassionate approach. We have to approach them...

TONY JONES: So do you have to change their view now they are living here in Australia?

MOHAMAD ABDALLA: Well, you can't change anyone's view in this country. You know, people choose their own views but you can try to interact with them. You can try to be

compassionate towards them. And if the truth of the matter, it will remain very difficult for their families to accept that lifestyle.

TONY JONES: Okay. Just we've got a couple of people with their hands up there. We'll quickly go to the gentleman right up the back there. If you have got a brief comment that would be great because we're nearly out of time.

A QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR00:52:45

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sure. It is quite brief. My statement is to the Archbishop. You can accept evolution and creationism and yet you can't accept homosexuality as a - kind of a lifestyle, if you will. I'm going to avoid the use of the word choice because it really isn't one.

MARK COLERIDGE: No, I understand that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And my second point, you touched briefly about marriage. We are talking about a socio-legal thing. I am not asking for you to ordain over my marriage, for example, but why should your beliefs impact on my ability to be perhaps taken in front of a justice and for them to preside over my marriage?

MARK COLERIDGE: Yeah, well, just first point I'd say is I'd distinguish completely between sexual orientation and lifestyle. They are not necessarily the same thing. Lifestyle is chosen, sexual orientation is not. That's an important distinction.

TONY JONES: So, sorry, can we just confirm what you're saying there? So if it is not chosen, that means God has created it?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, not necessarily at all. It can be - it can be a warp in the creation to use that rather unfortunate expression.

TONY JONES: It couldn't just be part of God's plan?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, I - that's not...

TONY JONES: Is that impossible from your point of view?

MARK COLERIDGE: It is impossible from my point of view. Yeah. Yeah. What I...

TONY JONES: So I have got to hear Josh on this.

MARK COLERIDGE: Okay.

JOSH THOMAS: Well, obviously I don't think I am a warp in God's plan. Obviously I reject the - I reject that. What he is saying is, right, marriage in our country is not a religious institution. We're talking about changing the law.

MARK COLERIDGE: Yep.

JOSH THOMAS: So you can understand when this man says why are we fighting against religion in this square, why people get a bit annoyed when you challenge us wanting to

change the law, which is completely irrelevant to your life. It is completely irrelevant to everything you do.

MARK COLERIDGE: No, it's not. See, Josh, it's not irrelevant to my life because it's not irrelevant to the basic functioning of society as a whole. It is not irrelevant to the common good.

JOSH THOMAS: What common good? What is happening?

MARK COLERIDGE: Because I...

JOSH THOMAS: When I kiss my boyfriend goodnight and I tell my boyfriend that I love him and he says, "I love you too" and we fall asleep hugging each other. What about that is hurting you?

MARK COLERIDGE: No, nothing is...

JOSH THOMAS: I don't understand.

MARK COLERIDGE: Nothing is hurting me personally but marriage is not just between two individuals.

JOSH THOMAS: But surely...

MARK COLERIDGE: It is, in fact, something that goes to the heart of what makes for human flourishing in any society. That's been the wisdom of the ages...

JOSH THOMAS: Well, no, it's not any society.

MARK COLERIDGE: ...and the wisdom of the ages, in my view...

JOSH THOMAS: Not everyone here.

MARK COLERIDGE: ...has something to contribute to shaping the common good therefore we will continue to speak with our voice and other voices are welcome to contribute.

TONY JONES: I think that's - I say it's been a great discussion. I see that a number of people have their hands up but I'm afraid we're out of time. In fact we've just gone overtime so please thank our panel: Mohamad Abdalla, Deborah Conway, Josh Thomas, Mark Coleridge and Robina Courtin. And, Deborah, that's your cue. Thank you. And join us next week for another special Q&A, our very first all-women panel, with Indigenous opera singer, composer and impresario Deborah Cheetham; research scientist Brooke Magnanti, who funded her university studies by working in London as a call girl and published her memoirs as *Belle Du Jour*; author and historian Germaine Greer, whose book *The Female Eunuch*, helped launch modern feminism; Mia Freedman, the founder of the influential women's website *Mamamia*; and outspoken critic of old-style feminism, *The Australian's* columnist Janet Albrechtsen. Well, we'll leave you tonight with Deborah Conway and Willy Zygiel singing on the search of meaning with *The Book of Life*. Until next week's Q&A, goodnight.

DEBORAH CONWAY:

Everybody's empty but it's not for food
And everybody's praying here to be rescued
Examining our sins it is hard not to conclude
We're screwed

The world's in flames
These maddened days of black and white
No shades of grey to keep at bay the darkest night
There's never been a song that could save a life
Aha.

Blow the horn, blow the horn
Give a voice to all the mournful souls
Who search to be reborn tonight
Forgiveness like the sharpest knife
Oh God inscribe me in the Book of Life
I've been hungry since before the dawn

Tired and full of un-cried tears I still can't shed
Stored up with the unsaid things we never said
You wanted forgiveness
I wasn't ready yet
Now you're dead

To all the souls who lost themselves I sing for you
Apart from that there's nothing more that I can do
And though I know it's useless
It kind of helps me through
Mm hmm

Blow the horn blow the horn
Give a voice to all the mournful souls
Who search to be reborn tonight
Forgiveness like the sharpest knife
Oh God inscribe me in the Book of Life
I've been hungry since before the dawn

I want to see my children out in the world
Grown into women from little girls
Why wouldn't you that too?
The older you get the more friends you lose

Next year I won't disappear in fire or flood
Next year I'll still be here to do some good
I won't be taken by pills or thrills or wine
I should be doing fine

Blow the horn blow the horn
Give a voice to all the mournful souls

Who search to be reborn tonight
Forgiveness like the sharpest knife
Oh God inscribe me in the Book of Life
I've been hungry since before the dawn
I've been hungry since before the dawn



Archbishop Mark Coleridge

Archbishop Mark Benedict Coleridge was born in Melbourne on 25 September, 1948, the third of five children of Bernard Coleridge and Marjorie Harvey.

Archbishop Coleridge's education was split between South Australia and Victoria, with attendance at primary schools in Trammere (St Joseph's School) and Adelaide (Rostrevor College) before the completion of his senior years in Melbourne (St Kevin's College).

At tertiary level he was awarded an Arts degree, majoring in English and French, from Melbourne University. Initially these studies were undertaken with a view to entering the diplomatic corps, however circumstances changed and he subsequently pursued a vocational call instead.

Archbishop Mark's study for the priesthood was undertaken at Corpus Christi College's various campuses at Werribee, Glen Waverley and Clayton during the years 1969-74. He was ordained a priest in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne on 18 May 1974 by Bishop John Kelly, then serving as Administrator of the diocese following the retirement of Cardinal James Knox.

After Ordination, he worked as an assistant priest in various Melbourne parishes for a few years before studying Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. After four years in Rome and Jerusalem he returned to Melbourne to teach Scripture.

Three years later he was again back in Rome for doctoral studies, after which he returned to teach in Melbourne and was eventually made the Master of Catholic Theological College.

In late 1997 he was both greatly surprised and humbled to be invited to work in the Vatican Secretariat of State.

Four years later he returned to Australia and was episcopally ordained Auxiliary Bishop for Melbourne.

In 2004, he was appointed a member of the pontifical Council for Culture and Chair of the Roman Missal Editorial Committee of the International Committee for English in the Liturgy. He was subsequently named Chair of the International Commission for the Preparation of an English-language Lectionary.

In 2006, he was appointed as Archbishop of the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese upon the retirement of the long serving Archbishop Francis Carroll.

In 2011, he was appointed a member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

On 2 April 2012, he was named Metropolitan Archbishop of Brisbane.

Archbishop Coleridge's move to the Brisbane Archdiocese has elevated him to the role of a Metropolitan - i.e. the head of a See with suffragan dioceses. Although all bishops are deemed to be on equal footing, the Metropolitan See of Brisbane makes Archbishop Coleridge the head of the province of Queensland (which also comprises the suffragan dioceses of Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns).

In reflecting upon his four decades as a priest and a Bishop, Archbishop Coleridge has noted that almost nothing had turned out as he expected, but invariably events had turned out better than they would have had he planned them himself.



Dr Mohamad Abdalla

Associate Professor Abdalla is the Founding Director of the Griffith University Islamic Research Unit (GIRU) and Director of the Queensland node of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (NCEIS).

Dr Abdalla is a member of the Council of Imams of Queensland, the peak Islamic body in QLD; the Vice-President of Australia branch of Al-Azhar University Office; and a member of the advisory board to the Hon. Glen Elmes MP, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier.

He has served as the Chairperson of the Queensland Government Muslim Community Reference Group (MCRG), and as the Vice-president and spokesperson for the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), Australia's leading Islamic religious organisation.

In 2008, Dr Abdalla was one of 1000 Australians invited by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to Australia 2020 Summit. Dr Abdalla is an active member of the QLD Muslim community and after 9/11 and the burning of his local Mosque led a reconciliation strategy leading to a successful initiative of building bridges of understanding between the Islamic and Australian communities.

He is also an academic and a public intellectual with a host of publications in the field of Islam and science, media, intimate partner violence, democracy, and Sharia Law. He lives in Brisbane with his Irish background wife, Peta, and son Abdul Jaleel.



Robina Courtin

Australian-born Tibetan Buddhist nun Robina Courtin travels the world teaching Buddhist psychology and philosophy and helping those in need. Well known for her work for 14 years with people in prisons in Australia and the US, including inmates on death row, Robina's life

and work is the subject of Amiel Courtin-Wilson's award-winning film *Chasing Buddha* and ABC's *Key to* .

Ordained since the late 1970s, Robina has worked full time since then for Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, a worldwide network of Buddhist centers and activities. Over the years she has served as editorial director of Wisdom Publications, editor of *Mandala Magazine*, executive director of Liberation Prison Project, and as a touring teacher of Buddhism.

Robina was born in Melbourne and brought up as a Catholic. She studied classical singing until her early twenties. In 1967 she traveled to London where she lived for four years and became actively involved in the radical left, working mainly with a London-based support group for black and Chicano prisoners. In the early seventies she became a feminist and returned to Melbourne to work with other radical feminists. In her quest for a spiritual path Robina began studying martial arts in 1974, and moved to New York where she studied karate. She continued karate in Melbourne until 1976, when she attended a Tibetan Buddhist course in Queensland given by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. She traveled to Kathmandu the following year and ordained as a Buddhist nun at Kopan Monastery.



Josh Thomas

Josh Thomas was born in Blackwater Queensland and brought up in the western suburbs of Brisbane.

According to his twitter profile Josh is a “*Comedian. (hopefully.) I have a dog called John. Also I have a boyfriend, his name isn't Ralph but we are calling him Ralph.*”

Josh has performed solo stand up seasons all over the world and was also the curator of the Brisbane Comedy Festival for two years.

In 2005 when he was just 17, Josh Thomas was the youngest ever winner of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's RAW Comedy Competition. He also made the finals of So You Think You're Funny, Edinburgh's equivalent to RAW Comedy. Josh thought he was the King of the world but his next gig was in a scary you-might-actually-die-when-they-stab-you style Tavern in front of 12 comics and a man sitting at the bar crying into his beer.

Josh Thomas is the Generation Y Team Captain on Talkin' 'bout Your Generation and has appeared on Good News Week and The 7pm Project. He was also on Celebrity Masterchef but his Italian Meringue didn't work.

In 2010, he was named GQ Comedian of the Year and nominated for a Logie Award for Most Popular New Male Talent.

Josh is an atheist who hosted the Think Inc. conference on science and rationalism in Melbourne in September 2011.



Deborah Conway

Deborah Conway's diverse career encompasses recording, performing, composing and acting. Her trademark entrepreneurial spirit has forged innovative collaborations of variety and depth. Deborah has been prominent in the Australian music scene ever since her first band Do Re Mi topped the charts in 1985 with the single *Man Overboard* and album, *Domestic Harmony*.

Her solo career began in 1991 with the release of *String Of Pearls*; *Bitch Epic* was her debut collaboration with Willy Zygiel. They went on to make *Ultrasound*; *My Third Husband* ; *Exquisite Stereo*; *PC – The Songs Of Patsy Cline* and *Only The Bones*.

In 2004, Deborah & Willy Zygiel shucked off the record companies and started releasing albums on their own label. *Summertown* came out in 2004 and was accompanied by the highly original marketing idea of the Summerware Party; and *Half Man Half Woman* in 2010.

Deborah has also made screen and stage detours along the way: director Peter Greenaway (*Draughtsman's Contract*) cast her in his film *Prospero's Books*, singing the score by Michael Nyman; Pete Townshend cast her in his musical, *The Iron Man*, alongside Nina Simone and John Lee Hooker; and Geoffrey Rush directed her in his Belvoir Street production of Aristophanes *Frogs* alongside Toni Collette. In 2001, Deborah took the title role in *Always... Patsy Cline*.

In 2005, Deborah produced *Broad*, a stage show exploring the talents of Australia's key female singer-songwriters. *Broad* became part of the national musical calendar, with annual sell out shows across the country.

In 2008, Deborah took on the role of Artistic Director of the Queensland Music Festival for the 2009 & 2011 programs.

In February 2013 Deborah & Willy Zygiel released their 9th studio album *Stories Of Ghosts*.

- Introduction 0:00
- WONDER OF CREATION 1:13
- A QUESTION FROM TWITTER 8:37
- WHAT HAPPENS IN HEAVEN? 9:55
- JUDEO-CHRISTIAN VALUES OUT? 16:43
- CATHOLIC CELIBACY 25:12
- JIHAD 34:20
- GAYS, ISLAM AND CATHOLICISM 44:25
- GAY MARRIAGE 52:45