

### **Mixed picture for Religion in latest BBC Annual Report**

The BBC's Annual Report for 2013/14, published in July, paints a mixed picture for programmes in the Religion genre. On BBC1 the number of programme hours was down to 80 (from 99 in 12/13). However, the number of hours on BBC2 and BBC4 increased, with BBC2 hours up to 69 (from 47 in 12/13) and BBC4 hours up to 21 (from just 5 hours in 12/13).

The report shows network radio hours of Religion down by over a third to 611 (from 975 in 12/13).

As ever, because they only cover programmes formally categorised as Religion, the figures give few clues to the amount of coverage of religion across all programme genres. A case in point is BBC3, which is shown as having broadcast no programmes categorised as Religion in either 13/14 or 12/13. Yet its factual output in 2013 included *Make Me a Muslim*, which was shortlisted for the 2014 Radio Times Readers Award, and *Teen Exorcists*

The page showing the results for Network hours by genre, including Religion, is attached to this briefing. The full Annual Report can be downloaded [here](#).

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### **Programme news and reviews**

Simon Schama's *The Story of the Jews*, a dual winner at this year's Sandford St Martin Awards, has been shortlisted in the ***ITN Source Best Historical Documentary*** category for this year's Grierson Awards. The Awards, which will be made on 3 November, recognise and celebrate documentaries from Britain and abroad that have made a significant contribution to the genre and demonstrate quality, integrity, creativity, originality and overall excellence.

*World War 1 Remembered*, the sombre service from Westminster Abbey commemorating the 100th anniversary of Britain's entry into The Great War, broadcast at 9pm on Monday 4 August, was the most-viewed programme of the week on BBC2, with 2.43million viewers and an audience share of almost 13%.

Channel 4's *Meet the Mormons* (27 June) made much of the unprecedented access granted to filmmaker Lynn Alway as she followed 20-year-old Josh Field at the start of his two-year missionary training with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Independent was less than impressed by the amount of access actually granted, giving the final score as *Mormons* 1 Documentaries 0. The Telegraph too felt that, while the film "offered a helpful primer" ultimately "we were denied what we most wanted: answers. The companion arrangement meant that Alway could not speak to Field about his feelings alone. A member of church's PR team was always lurking in the background too." For more reviews and to see what members of the Church – and some others – thought about the documentary, read this blog piece and the comments that follow.

### **'Marvellous' in more ways than one**

BBC2's much-praised biopic based on the true story of Neil Baldwin, circus clown, kit man at Stoke City and friend of Church of England bishops, was notable for its matter-of-fact portrayal of religious belief – Anglicanism in the case of Baldwin, Christadelphianism in the case of his mother – as a central part of everyday life.

Marvellous was also the setting for a unique work experience scheme, in which eight young people from communities underrepresented in television production, spent six days gaining a thorough insight into the business of making TV. Marvellous will feature as a case study at the Broadcast Production & Post Forum on 6 November.

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### **No messing around with Thought for the Day**

Future guest editors of BBC Radio 4's Today programme have been put on notice to leave Thought for the Day alone. In his first interview since taking charge of Today in 2013, the programme's editor, Jamie Angus, defended the slot as one of the hidden pillars supporting the architecture of a pluralist and religiously tolerant Britain, and made it clear that the guest editorship of Today should not be used "as a lever to do a secular Thought for the Day or a backdoor way to open up a Thought for the Day debate".

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### **"We need to talk about religion more," says academic**

The Director of the Faith and Civil Society Unit at Goldsmiths, University of London, has blamed religious illiteracy for a "failure to understand and appreciate the power of religion" and for leading to "anxiety about the role of religion in the public sphere".

Writing in the New Statesman, Professor Adam Dinham cites strong evidence "that a better understanding of the real religious landscape will result in better public services and culture" and calls for "a newly invigorated national conversation around the future of religious education in the UK".

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### **Research: trust in the BBC (and CofE) and an audience boost for Premier**

Two broadcasters – the BBC and Premier Christian Radio – feature in this recent research bulletin from British Religion in Numbers (BRIN).

The bulletin reports on the findings of an Ipsos MORI survey for the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust. The State of the Nation survey ranks the BBC one place above the Church of England, but locates both below the Bank of England and the legal system in a poll asking respondents to assess their trust in 14 institutions on a scale from 0 to 10. Topping the public trust poll were the armed forces, followed by the charitable/voluntary sector, the police and the monarchy. Bottom of the poll come various political institutions, with 'political parties in general' scoring lowest of all.

The BRIN bulletin also looks at Premier Christian Radio's announcement that it has reached its biggest ever audience since it began broadcasting twenty years ago. According to RAJAR figures, the station's weekly audience reached 241,000 in the second quarter of 2014.

Commenting on the figures, BRIN notes that the rise follows a rebranding exercise and the launch of a new website incorporating listen again features. It also observes that historic data back to 2010 "indicate that there has been some volatility in Premier's audience, so it is too soon to say whether this increase will be sustained".

### **More soggy quiche, Vicar?**

Kate Bottley, the vicar from Gogglebox (C4), has confessed in Radio Times that she "can't stand Songs of Praise", which she finds "a bit depressing" in its failure to reflect the richness and diversity of faith.

Likening the programme to "a piece of soggy quiche", Bottley makes a spirited argument in favour of "brave, bold and at times controversial" religious broadcasting, and says that: "Prime time religious programmes should be the most talked-about shows of the week."

Last year Bottley, who is a parish priest in Nottinghamshire, made headlines when she led a flash mob disco dance at the end of a wedding ceremony she conducted.

# Performance by genre

Network hours of output by genre						
News and Weather	13/14 12/13	3,322 hrs (2,611 hrs)	475 hrs (914 hrs)	32 hrs (34 hrs)	6 hrs (6 hrs)	11,617 hrs (11,317 hrs)
Current Affairs	13/14 12/13	188 hrs (241 hrs)	395 hrs (292 hrs)	135 hrs (195 hrs)	112 hrs (110 hrs)	1,759 hrs (1,885 hrs)
Factual	13/14 12/13	2,053 hrs (2,222 hrs)	3,228 hrs (2,396 hrs)	912 hrs (1,153 hrs)	1,157 hrs (1,207 hrs)	2,481 hrs (2,543 hrs)
Music and Arts	13/14 12/13	55 hrs (84 hrs)	281 hrs (333 hrs)	54 hrs (50 hrs)	1,429 hrs (1,354 hrs)	41,866 hrs (41,812 hrs)
Religion	13/14 12/13	80 hrs (99 hrs)	69 hrs (47 hrs)	n/a (n/a)	21 hrs (5 hrs)	611 hrs (975 hrs)
Drama	13/14 12/13	606 hrs (665 hrs)	314 hrs (129 hrs)	220 hrs (268 hrs)	152 hrs (232 hrs)	4,932 hrs (4,971 hrs)
Film	13/14 12/13	443 hrs (411 hrs)	753 hrs (745 hrs)	221 hrs (220 hrs)	94 hrs (119 hrs)	n/a (n/a)
Entertainment	13/14 12/13	631 hrs (457 hrs)	316 hrs (374 hrs)	294 hrs (214 hrs)	59 hrs (54 hrs)	7,654 hrs (7,796 hrs)
Comedy	13/14 12/13	216 hrs (237 hrs)	273 hrs (196 hrs)	1,182 hrs (1,149 hrs)	85 hrs (43 hrs)	n/a* (n/a)
Schools/ Formal Education	13/14 12/13	n/a (n/a)	335 hrs (339 hrs)	n/a (n/a)	n/a (n/a)	112 hrs (108 hrs)
Sport	13/14 12/13	636 hrs (858 hrs)	1,082 hrs (783 hrs)	103 hrs (290 hrs)	n/a (n/a)	5,144 hrs (5,550 hrs)

\* The radio comedy hours are disclosed within the Entertainment genre.