

media monitoring project

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RELIGION IN THE MEDIA: ALL BAD NEWS?

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Jeremy: So here's a question, what role in the secular society does the media have and particularly radio when it comes to religion. How should the issue be played out in the public broadcasting sphere. More broadly how different religions are covered and how do you maintain a fair weighting. What are some of the key issues is this continually a debate driven by same sex marriages and gay priests or is there a lot more to discuss? Obviously there is a lot more to discuss.

Another hour in our series of specialists radio conferences as we ask this question, religion and the media, all bad news. Let me tell you about our panellists this morning. From the Media Monitoring Project on the line is William Bird, Peter James Smith organiser of religious programming here at SAFm. We'll also be talking a little later to Miss Shohreh Rawhani who is the chairperson for the Forum of Religious Broadcaster. On the line to us from Australia is Professor Rodney Tiffen, Government and International relations of the University of Sydney and a little later on in the programme we will be joined by the Reverend Gerrit Kritzinger who is chief executive officer of the Bible Society of South Africa.

William Bird: A very good morning to you and welcome. Let's start with you, what do we mean by religious broadcasting? Is it the covering of services, tapping the issues from a religious perspective or reporting politics and developments in religion or a bit of everything?

William: Good morning Jeremy, it is a little bit of everything generally speaking. If you look at religious broadcasting it does involve programmes that have specific religious focus in a specific religious [01:29]. But also I think more generally for people and the way it impacts them in their daily lives is how and where we see and hear about religion in media generally speaking and I think that some of the key areas we need to start looking at and thinking about. So for example today often we'll hear about religion in the sense of it usually being about a bad thing. It would be about a sex scandal involving priests or usually if it's involving Islam, it's usually Islamists fundamentalists.

And that raises a whole series of questions on its own about things about saying, like we hear often about Islam fundamentalists but we don't often hear anything about Christian fundamentalists. So it immediately intertwines the whole series of political and agenda issues relating to those broader religious questions. And I guess for us here in South Africa we have so many religions, we need to be

saying, ok lets look at what role our media can play in helping us all understand the religions just a little better.

Jeremy: Why is it important for us to understand it William?

William: Well I guess partly because we've got enormous challenges that we need to overcome and understanding peoples different states and how people see the world especially trying to challenge perceptions that religions are all necessarily conservative and morally repressive. I think whenever we tend to see religion; we tend to see them in terms of scandal [02:43] conservative and limited line. And I don't think that that's always necessarily the case.

Jeremy: Peter James Smith in the first hour of the programme I was talking to [02:51] who is the editor of [02:53] he was [02:54] the skills when it comes to court reporting in South Africa. He says that we miss many stories simply because the media generally doesn't have enough skills in that regard. When it comes to skills as far as reporting religious is concerned, do we understand deep enough the challenges that go with it?

Peter: Well I don't think really that religion is much of a bleep on the radar screen of any news editor or religious station to a very strong degree, so we tend not to have specialists, so we have on SAFm, which is quite unusual. But generally speaking there is not somebody like a religious affairs reporter in the same ways that the BBC would have one so we don't cover it from a news point of view. We cover it purely from a station point of view, which is quite different. And I think this is quite true, religion does tend to have gay priests and sex scandals and single sex marriages and the only thing the Catholic Church has an interest in is obviously the use of condoms. That is obviously a big problem in reality because there is a little bit more to religion than that.

Jeremy: By not reporting it sufficiently, what's the consequence, what are the dangers we are facing if at all?

Peter: The thing is there has to be an understanding of religion in an African context and domestically in a South African context because this country is by a large a religious country. And that means that people react to certain things in the media throughout. So that if you don't have an understanding of religion and how it functions in Africa, you are not going to be able to do trade very well for example, so it's all pervasive.

Jeremy: Professor Rodney Tiffen a very good morning to you South African Time and welcome to our programme.

Prof. Tiffen: Yes good morning Jeremy.

Jeremy: Nice to talk to you. What is the experience like in Australia?

Prof. Tiffen: I think it's somewhat the same but probably in a slightly more senseless society. There is the emphasis in the sex scandals and homosexuality within the church. Often it focuses on division within religion and especially

conservative versus liberal views if you like. And if anything the media has a bias towards more liberal elements within religion. So when a conservative religious leader puts forward a view like in Australia in our current election campaign, Archbishop [05:11] the recent Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney questioned the whole thing of global warming, well that quickly changed into a religious superstition framework here. So there is a degree of stereotyping I think.

Jeremy: William Bird as someone who monitors the media, who manages the media message best of the different types of religions?

William: I think it's then it is very much linked to very obviously to certain political questions and when they tend to come into and make the news agenda given what we've been just talking about how rare it is in fact for religious specifics to get there.

Jeremy: Is that the problem William Bird, that they are driven by the political agenda of the day?

William: Well not necessarily it as a problem but I think what it does, for the clever media people within the religious fraternity, it gives them an opportunity to manage the messages that make it look more appealing. We've got to remember that on some levels, religion faces a number of questions and challenges in terms on how people get access to religion and I know we are going to be talking about this a little later in terms of using new technologies to access and get their messages across. So I think in terms of who gets their messages across best is a difficult thing to say but I think in terms of the ones who are more prominent, certainly Islam has given all the issues around terrorism and given the common associations that are made maybe more often and frequently but directly. But it something that I guess is [06:30] because of that.

Jeremy: Peter James Smith organiser of religious programming here at SAFm lets come back to a point that William Bird made. Is it all about religious organisations being reactive?

Peter: Yes, I would say so. They are very seldom proactive and because they are reactive they tend to be negative or perceived to be negative. I think this is a problem all round. If you look at religion generally or a church, well because both effectively they have the same attitude, they are interested in what people do, nothing else. So if you look at the gay issue for example, they are interested in what people do, not in what they are or what maybe even what they think.

It's only when they stick up flag that the church will react. So obviously the same thing applies when it comes to any constitutional issues for example. They are going to be reactive and they are going to prevent or attempt to prevent people doing thing as opposed to thinking or feeling things. And that I think is a very important point.

Jeremy: Professor Tiffen do you agree with that and if so how does religion then get ahead of the news curve in order to manage better it's messaging?

Prof. Tiffen: Yes I do broadly agree. I think that dogmatism is always more news worthy than dialogue and not in the more dogmatic people actually are thinking and going publicly and they know how to do it. I think it is interesting on the homosexuality issue that in fact in Australia the churches take quite a leading role in campaigning against discrimination against homosexuals or speaking for them when they were victims of bashings and so forth.

But in the media as they've got more attention in the issues like gay marriages and so forth symbolically charged issues. So I think like any other major institutions, religion is news worthy when things go wrong or when there is conflict or when someone is taking a seemingly extreme view or something. But on the other hand as well, religion does get a whole lot of positive publicity too but it tends to make the headlines when it's surrounded by conflict and contention.

Jeremy: But Rodney Tiffen let me ask you this question, aside from the believers in the particular religions, how seriously does the broad public then take the view of the church these days?

Prof. Tiffen: It's hard to say; I think the influence of the religious institutes in our society is declining considerably. Even when you look at societies like Italy, the practice of contraception's is way out of line with the churches' preaching. So at one level it is easier to say that it is declining and it is true to say that. On the other hand there are high credibility spokespeople and they are often seen as promoting superstitious.

They are sometimes seen as people putting forward [09:21] principled views. But I think quite often it is credible and strong voice when a religious leader comes out on something. For example in Australia, religious leaders came out strongly on refugee issues, the treatment of asylum seekers and so forth under the powered conservative government. And that's was the time they spoke with an aura of authority and I think they were [09:44]

Jeremy: Peter James Smith often there are default spokespeople you know the type of quote that you are going to get from them. So to Rodney Tiffen's point is the influence [09:55]. Is the message as powerful as they were maybe a decade or two ago?

Peter: Well you need to put into consideration of course that we came from an apartheid society, where the church, the religious voices were seen if you like on being on the side of the angles. And now we are in a post apartheid society and from a social point of view I think many of the churches have struggled to find a role and maybe they have found one in HIV/Aids in many instances.

But then you get this extraordinary jaxtar position of perception. For example the Catholic Church is perceived as being anti condoms and to a degree ineffectual where AIDS is concerned in the eyes of the media. Whereas the reverse side of the issue is that the Catholic Church is the biggest Non Governmental Organisation that handles HIV/Aids sufferers and it's the biggest network of carers.

Jeremy: But why don't we know that though?

Peter: Because that church itself is not particularly good on media relations. Because I suppose in all churches they put media relations as a low priority, they are more concerned with helping the HIV/Aids sufferer than having somebody run around saying how good they are where media is concerned. I think that it is a matter of priority from their point of view that they would see that talking to the media as low priority and effectively in many instances they don't even see as if it is part of their vocations of religion to push the point because it is not important.

Jeremy: Let me bring a fourth person into our discussion now Chairperson of the Forum of Religious Broadcasters Miss Shohreh Rawhani, good morning to you and welcome.

Shohreh: Good morning Jeremy.

Jeremy: Such a range of media these days the issue of religion, has it moved from mainstream broadcasting to specialist religious media. In other words it is not a general subject anymore. You are preaching to the converted and you are happy to do that.

Shohreh: Well I don't think that is exactly true. I think a lot of the religious communities are trying to find ways to make their programmes a lot more widely appealing and they are constantly looking at trying to come up with alternative programmes that could attract other people than just the so called converted.

Jeremy: How do you do that though, how do you make your particular subject more appealing?

Shohreh: I think personally one way that we haven't tried now is to be more creative especially in programming that would be more appealing to children and youth and make it much more appealing in terms of music and drama and programmes like that. And I think quite a few religious communities are looking at that.

Jeremy: But Peter James Smith we know what the core messages of any religious broadcasters is going to be. So as hard as they try to make it more diversified and more appealing, they are surely going to default back to their central

messages people know that. And it puts them in a very difficult position to try and expand what it is they are trying to say and also broaden the constituency.

Peter: Well I think it depends very much on religion it's self. I mean if you are an orthodox Jew you are not interested in preaching and attempting. You are only interested in preaching to the converted if you like, I mean you are not interested in converting other people. Unfortunately the more aggressive religions tend to be fundamentalist ones and they are the ones who effectively is trying to drag people in, not only from outside, but from other religions.

Jeremy: And how are they using the media to do that?

Peter: They are using the media quite effectively to do that and don't forget that they have an appeal because obviously people want certainty in life and they are offering certainty. And so if you have that sort of prescription then you'll have some people who are going to [14:01] onto it. Fortunately I would say there is no such thing as certainty and so it is a false message. But the idea of offering insurance does appeal. The other religions are not fundamentalists in their approach and tend to be, to have a more intellectual approach or theological approach; those are the ones who find it to be more difficult.

Jeremy: Shohreh Rawhani what do you say to that? Is your core job as a religious broadcaster simply to offer certainty and insurance as Peter puts it? Surely that is the case?

Shohreh: Well in some cases it is especially when your programmes are aimed at the people in your own particular religious communities. But I think that there is also a feeling that they are giving a message of hope to the hundreds and thousands of people out there who might not have some kind of religious affiliation but need to have a message of hope. So I don't think it is only the preaching to the converted and giving insurance against the next world or anything lie that. I think there is awareness that the situation in the world is getting worse and worse and people need hope.

Jeremy: William bird no one can disagree that we all need a message of hope but would you also agree with me that that message of hope is simply being lost in the blur of media, as it exists because we haven't even started talking about other role of mobile technology of the Internet. We are simply focusing on traditional media platforms like the radio, television and print.

William: Yes certainly but I think that if you look at it there is fair range of I guess you'd call it choral music, I think there is some of that in our African radio stations where at least people can sort of get some sense of perpetuating and continuing of their religious practices. But I think in terms of a message of hope, I'm not sure that it's necessarily our media's role to give that message of hope, it is more of a matter of how religious groups are able to use that as a means I guess of trying to do that.

But more importantly it is a means of saying on an overall picture, we need to say do we get a sense of how these religions work, do we have a sense of, when we say it's Idd and it's Ramadan, do people understand what that means? Do they know why that's happening, do we know why we have the various religious holidays that we do. Because I think in order to help our society to build and grow and understand each other, we need to get some sense of actually how some of these things work and give people a real sense of what it actually means.

So at the moment we are talking on a fairly high level about some of these things. But I think we also need to remember some of the basics about these issues, we need to bring them into context. So we see on Sunday groups of people going and singing and praising in small groups wearing particular clothes. Why do they wear those clothes, what do they mean, what are the songs they are singing about? Some of these, i'm not sure that some of those messages are getting out to people.

Jeremy: Peter?

Peter: But William I mean surely, that's sociology, that's not religion.

William: See there I would disagree with you because in the same way we need to need to understand how our government works if we need to understand how democracy work. These questions are all interrelated, lots of people want to criticise a particular religion, that's well and fine. But I think we need to give people the basics of understanding what different religions stand for.

Peter: Isn't that part of the education syllabus anyway?

William: Certainly in the media when we cover some of these things, it's about giving a bit more context to the particular position. So instead of just seeing the Catholic Church in an example you used earlier, saying we are opposed to all condoms. Well it is about saying look here; these are some of the things that the Catholic Church actually does do. So giving of a broader picture and a context to that.

Jeremy: Rodney Tiffen I know that you've got time pressures here with us for another minute or so. So let me ask you this question as we bid farewell to you. Is it about contextualisation and explaining the fundamentals as William Bird is suggesting or is it more about a message of hope?

Prof. Tiffen: I think i'm broadly on Williams's side in this. If the media is to be an institute dedicated pluralism, then I think at one level there is some stereotypes presenting a difference unexplained but it is part of the institutional responsibility of the media I think to give more context, give a sense of what animates people in their different beliefs and so forth. And that holds up the hope of reconciliation. So I don't think the media should be committed to a message of hopelessness as such.

I think they should be committed to truth and accuracy and sometimes there will be grounds for hope and other times not. I mean our political leaders are very good at giving us false hope in all sorts of ways. So I don't think there is a sort of complete absence of hope, sometimes it is the wrong hope in the media but I do

think the media has a sense to explain why actions are taking place and give a sense of understanding and hopefully through that understanding, dialogue grows and reconciliation grows and so forth.

Jeremy: That's where we'll leave it, Prof. Rod Tiffen Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. Thank you very much for joining us, you are listening to a special round table today on SAFm in association with the Media Monitoring Project and the Open Society Foundation. As we talk about religion in the media here and I ask the question, is it all bad news?

Jeremy: Back to Peter James Smith who is the organiser of religious programmes here on SAFm. The issue of accuracy that's an interesting one, do we always get that right?

Peter: Well does the media get anything right some people would say.

Jeremy: But we try as hard as we can.

Peter: It's not peculiar for religion for things to go wrong is it? And I think this maybe in a religious forum like this. One would assume that they would always get the religious couture wrong and there is as strong tendency for that to happen. Priests and ministers have never really differentiation so they never really know who does what to whom within the religious perspective.

Jeremy: How does that impact on the wider debate?

Peter: I don't know if it does quite honestly but I think the point is the accuracy issue is a problem the media has in all sorts of fields not just religion. I'm not sure if it's any better or worse where religion is concerned.

Jeremy: But perhaps reporting religious issues Peter is open to a little more interpretations than other issues sometimes?

Peter: It could be and there is also an emotion element very often when it comes to religious issues. Because people react emotionally rather than pragmatically, and that could be the problem and that I think is why it's so important that there should be socialists when it comes to media publications whatever it might be. Because they at least know where things fit in the grand design.

Jeremy: Shohreh Rawhani surely Peter James Smith makes a very important point about this entire debate being driven by emotions. That any type of religious issue is immediately a reactive one. Is that your experience and how do religious broadcasters deal with that issue?

Shohreh: I think in some ways Peter is right because religion is a love affair between an individual and his creator so it would be an emotional thing. But I think that just by going back to some of the things that Professor Tiffen was saying, I think one of the problems in our experiences is that often when religious communities try and get into the media that are positive and are good, often the interest is not there. It is always, there is fantastic interest if it is something

derogative or it is something contentious. But when there are good things happening, there isn't media interested in religion.

Jeremy: But that William Bird is just the broad nature of news, isn't it?

William: Well generally yes and it is also something I guess in some instances we can dispute because it is often how we choose to place those messages. So I think if you look at someone like Desmond Tutu for example, we've seen him take a lead on several issues coming from a particular moral perspective where there will be an absence almost of religious voices and he will come out and say this is what I think we should do about this particular issue.

So I think it is very often a case of a lack of understanding maybe of how the media works so that if they are doing something that is positive, the media might well be sceptical because of it. But if you look at Burma, I mean we are talking about current events here, which have seen monks take quite clear lead in protest. You know you've got peaceful people taking a lead in a protest against a vicious and oppressive regime. That to me is quite a positive action by any particular religion in terms of wanting to go for something that is more open and more democratic and human rights respecting opportunity.

And I think there is a missed opportunity for religion to pull over to say look here there is a very positive role that religion is playing in our society. So let's not only focus on the extreme conservatives or the extreme fundamentalists, but let's look at this here, you've got a group of people that are quite willing to give up their lives. Again you've seen lots of examples of this here in South Africa, I guess you've got Ghandi as one of those in history who played a very positive role in bringing about social change. So even though they were in a very clear political sphere, they were certainly doing something about bringing a very positive representation I guess of religion and its power and its abilities to media.

Jeremy: I need to get to the role of the public broadcaster and also the role of new technology because all of this has a direct bearing on young people as well. But Peter James Smith very quickly I was hoping that I wouldn't have to bring this phrase up but you both forced me to do so. What in effect you are both saying in religion these days is also a brand and you've got to market your brand properly.

Peter: Of course it is a brand; I mean what else would it be. The problem of course is that it is a fluid one it is not consistent. You are not waving a coca cola sign because every individual member of that religion would probably have a different opinion.

Jeremy: But in Britain for instance, I know the Anglican Church had an ad agency a few years ago.

Peter: Absolutely and the Anglicans are very good at this. It is very interesting when you deal with the different like I do and the different churches. How they react to you in the media and what their attitude is, and that's very intriguing. I'm obviously not going to spill the beans on the various churches but it is very interesting how different their cultures are when you approach them to do something specific.

Jeremy: I guess someone at some point is going to value the Catholic brand, but that is a different discussion entirely.

Into the home stretch, let me introduce the fifth into the discussion now, Reverend Gerrit Kritzingler is the Chief Executive Officer of the Bible Society of South Africa. Reverend good morning to you and welcome.

Rev. Kritzingler: Good morning Jeremy.

Jeremy: Nice to talk to you. Now blogs, mobiles, sms's, the internet. Is that where the future of religious messaging lies?

Rev. Kritzingler: I really believe so Jeremy. The topic today all bad news, I don't think everything is bad news. Bible Society on our side we really try to be proactive on the cutting edge when it comes to new technology.

Jeremy: I'd like to hear what you are doing.

Rev. Kritzingler: Go back a few years, think about our [05:50] we used major television broadcasts to tell the people about the work of the Bible Society, that was a first in the world. And last year the Bible Society of South Africa was in partnership with Christian mobile in Cape Town, we launched the cell phone bibles, which has the complete bible, all the data of the bible has been compacted into 1.2 MB and therefore it is possible to download the complete bible onto your cell phone by sending an sms. And we are very excited, it is available I think already in English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Tswana, Zulu and other languages are also coming. So we really try to be on the cutting edge when it comes to new technology.

Jeremy: What sort of take up have you had on your downloadable bible?

Rev. Kritzingler: Very good, the reaction is very good especially also aimed at the younger people to the youth. And there are also downloading bibles on their cell phones so the reaction at this stage is very good.

Jeremy: Are churches broadly reverend Kritzingler attuned to using these new technologies or they are a little shy?

Rev. Kritzingler: I think they are starting to use this because when we share it with them, they were very excited. Maybe another example I can mention is the complete bible on a microchip. And the churches are so excited, it is a listening programme, it is aimed at the illiterate people in the third world. But you have the complete the New Testament on microchip, it is the instrument called the

proclaimer. More or less like the tape player with a solar panel if there is no electricity, you can't play anything else, just the New Testament in dramatized form so again it is aimed at the illiterate people. So again our target audience is very important and this project, the churches are very excited about it.

Jeremy: Ok a question to William Bird and also to Peter James Smith and Peter I'll start with you. All very well to be able to download a bible, is there any guarantee question one that people are actually going to engage with it? And two accesses to technology particularly on this continent does remain a problem?

Peter: I think it does remain a problem and I know, I've done work with the Bible Society, I personally don't feel that downloading copies of a bible is going to do anything for anyone.

Jeremy: You prefer a more tactful field?

Peter: No, I think it depends on how you look at the bible and how you see it's power. If you see it as effectively a magic book so yes you are going to think that. If you don't see it as having some form of power on it's own, then probably you wouldn't see that. It's like having a Gideon's bible in your room or in your hotel, that way you might incline and read it and think well on the other hand you might have a short leg on your [08:50]

Jeremy: Are you saying that initiatives like these lessen the importance of the bible?

Peter: No I don't think it does, it depends on how you look at the bible. It is the same as anything like that; it depends on the person who is receiving it on their reaction to it. Now you would get people who would be absolutely delighted to have the bible on the microchip and would be able to use it and would want to use it. And you will get probably the majority who see absolutely no point of this at all, it's a personal opinion I think.

Jeremy: William Bird, access to technology of course in the African context remains the biggest issue though.

William: Yes certainly and I think that we know that there is a significant problem and a significant challenge around access to technology. But we also know that technology is spreading particularly mobile technology and we see that it is growing at a huge rate, I think at a rate of 400% as they said in the news bulletin at the top of the hour.

Yes it is certainly a significant limitation but it doesn't mean that it should be something that we ignore and not look at. I think if you look at it, some of the recent innovations for example, there is a Quran for the ipod, which is not actually words alone, it's videos and images and there is also a similar version for the Jewish [10:01], it's called the [10:02] I think. Which again it's got programming on it, it's got all sorts of things. So mobile technology is spreading at a sufficiently fast rate that I think it's something that certainly may as well might be considered useful for a whole lot of people of various religions as we move on.

But I think the critical thing for us in Africa is say we need to look at the role of public broadcasters which is something that you mentioned earlier. Because what tends to happen generally is those religions with the most money tend to get the most airtime. If you look at our scenario we see on our private [10:33] that, even now we've seen the latest one that has just been given the licence, people will have to pay to get access to that and I think we are going to have a fairly large [10:41] budget to get your programmes put on air.

Which is why I guess it is so important for institutions like public service broadcasters throughout our continent to make sure that all religions get various amounts of airtime. Precisely because we need to make sure that if you live in a country you get a sense of the various religions and you know what your options are.

Jeremy: William I'd like Peter James Smith to respond to that. What Peter then in terms of religious programming is the role of the public broadcaster? And how do you manage that weighting? And as William suggest if the Anglican have got a big chequebook than the Catholics, are they going to get more services on the radio?

Peter: No it actually doesn't affect us at all because we have one constraint and that it the service has to be in the main in English. So say about 90% of the service should be English. And that's our only constraint and so therefore we look at religions purely in terms of the percentage of population and we are nice to minorities.

Jeremy: What does that mean?

Peter: Well what that means is that if somebody [11:40] two services this year then you can say to them well in terms of demographics, you are actually entitled to only 12 ½ minutes per annum and we have given you two hours. So effectively what we are doing it. So no one can point a finger at SAFm and say that you are not giving us enough airtime and that's exactly how it works out. So what the bible society is saying is that they want their own programmes on our airwaves and w of course do not allow religious bodies to effectively buy time on the public broadcaster. Because we have to be fair to all and we certainly don't allow any form of [12:24] when it comes to religion.

Jeremy: Reverend Kritzingler what's your ideal in terms of the public broadcaster?

Rev. Kritzingler: I think all format should e used and if it is possible to have say for instance on bible readings on the national broadcaster because one of the issues is [] of our vice president. Those issues of values of, you mentioned biblical values.

Jeremy: Shohreh is that the role of a public broadcaster?

Shohreh: Well I think the public broadcaster has been doing and recently a good job of bringing to the attention of the public the different faith groups. It's

become much wider in its vision and it has been sharing its information with public. But Jeremy one interesting thing is that the Independent Forum for Religious Broadcasting in realising that there are other ways of broadcasting has actually held a workshop recently for the various religious groups. There is a move towards making people aware of other forms of sharing information and it is going beyond just the public broadcaster.

Jeremy: And Peter James Smith, is that the future for instance should the Pope have a blog?

Peter: The Pope doesn't have a blog but I know a couple of Cardinals who have blogs and the [13:54] of the church of Egypt has an amazing website. It depends on the [14:00] have meditation programmes everyday and of course because it is international, the Internet is international, you can access these things from the comfort of your own home as they say. So yes, some people have caught on to it and have switched on to it and the very bit of cause it is for this really, have providing or for allowing for the means of their own constituency and that I think is the most important thing. It is not a [14:33] thing as far as i'm concerned.

Jeremy: William Bird from the Media Monitoring Project, i'll give you the final word on this as we run up to the 11:00 news. An interesting debate with lots of views on it but it will always be contested space, wouldn't it be?

William: Yes and I mean it is good that it remains contested space. I think that it is brilliant that we are able to sit and discuss and argue about some of the finer points about religion and religious broadcasting. And I guess as we continue forward, it is about which religion, especially with now the new broadcasting area, the new technology is coming in. We need to be looking at how religions are building their brands and how we can make sure that everyone in South Africa gets a fair spiritual understanding of it.

Jeremy: William Bird The Executive Director of the Media Monitoring Project, The Reverend Kritzingler from the Bible Society, the CEO. Shohreh Rawhani Chairperson for the Forum of Religious Broadcasting and also to Peter James Smith the organiser of religious programming here at SAFm. To all of you thank you very much for joining us.