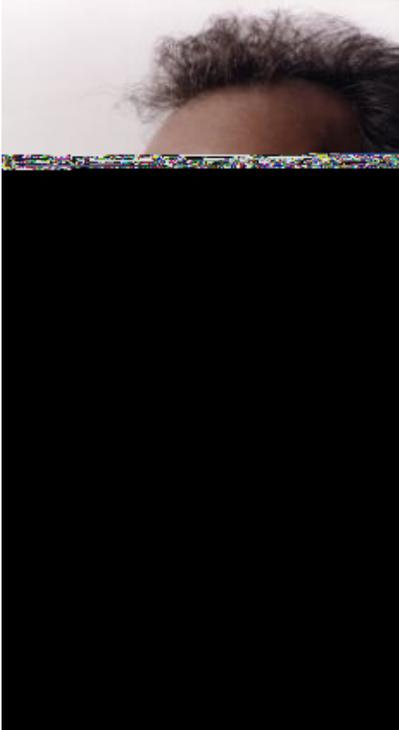


BBC is full of liberals afraid to mock Islam (says veteran of the BBC)

By [Paul Revoir](#)

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Roger Bolton said BBC bosses were out of touch with the public

A respected BBC broadcaster has claimed television is dominated by 'liberal sceptical humanists' who laugh at Christianity but are afraid to mock Islam.

Roger Bolton, a former editor of Panorama, said an obsession with human rights over religious beliefs had left corporation bosses out of touch with the public.

In the modern culture of broadcasting, Mr Bolton said anyone who opposed gay marriage or IVF was treated as a 'lunatic' if it was because of their religious beliefs.

He added: 'The default position in broadcasting is always, it's a question of human rights and how can they do it.'

Mr Bolton said it had got to a point where audiences thought it was 'fun' to mock Christianity but would not dare laugh at jokes about Islam.

He said in the last few years 'something went wrong with the BBC's religious programming' and questioned whether it was 'fit for purpose'.

Mr Bolton presented Sunday, Radio 4's main programme for religious news and current affairs, for 12 years until 2010.

Now the presenter of Radio 4's Feedback show, he made his comments at the BBC's Re:Think festival in Salford, when he gave a speech and sat on a discussion panel.

He said that Christians wanted a 'level playing field' when being laughed at rather than being 'singled out'. And he added that those who raised the matter of religion felt other faiths did not 'have to put up with what Christianity does'.

'It is perfectly alright to make any joke you like about Christianity,' he said. 'You try to make a joke about Muslims, or Jews, or about Sikhs.'

Issues are too often seen purely in terms of human rights, he said.

'At least there should be an effort to people to say that just because someone opposes gay marriage, just because someone opposes IVF, doesn't mean they are a lunatic, it is out of their beliefs.'



A spokesman said BBC religion and ethics airs a variety of programmes that reflect society's relation to religion today

'Liberal sceptical humanists tend to dominate television,' he said. 'But they are not, I believe, representative of the country.'

He added: 'I believe it is no coincidence that the last three BBC heads of religious broadcasting left their jobs to various degrees disillusioned with the corporation's treatment of religion and ethics

But Mr Bolton also said: 'What I do now think is that Muslims in particular ought to be mature enough in this country to take that humour and that Christians do have a right on their side when they say the satire applied to them ought to be applied to others.'

The BBC's head of religion and ethics, Aaqil Ahmed, a Muslim, said it was a 'complicated' situation, adding that things 'took time to evolve' and newer communities had not had their religion 'ridiculed' for as long as others had been.

A BBC spokesman said: 'This is an incorrect view of BBC religious and ethics programming.

'As well as observing major religious festivals across TV and radio, BBC religion and ethics provide over 170 hours of programmes ranging from Songs of Praise to documentary series, such as Dead Good Job, Divine Women, The Life of Muhammad, as well as topical debate such as The Big Questions.

'These provide the audience with a rich mix of programmes that reflect society's relation to religion today.'