



Evangelical Witness in a
Religiously Plural and Secular
Canada

Five Spiritual Masses/Forces in the West:

- Judaism
- Islam
- Evangelical Protestantism
- Catholic Church
- Ideology of Human Rights

– *Beyond Radical Secularism* by Pierre Manent

January 25, 2018



- Both the job and my organization's core mandate respect individual human rights in Canada, including the values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as other rights. These include reproductive rights and the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression

Alternative Attestation

Both the job and my organization's core mandate respect the principles of the Bible, including values underlying the Christian faith. These include religious freedom of individuals and groups, the sanctity of human life, and the equal dignity of all persons

- Thriving amidst
Religious Diversity

Secular

- Non-sectarian
- Abstinance
- Conditional/Selective
Religious Neutrality

Religious Freedom

- Public space to for expression (individual and institutional)
- Knowing what you believe

–J. Ellul *The New Demons*

- Public Religion
- Ideology
 - a set of ideals, principles, doctrines, myths or symbols of a social movement... that explains how society should work, and offers some political and cultural blueprint for a certain social order

Civil Religion

Ronald Beiner

- Appropriation of religion by politics for its own purposes
- Empowerment of religion not for its own sake but for the sake of enhanced citizenship

Canada and Civil Religion

- BNA Act 1867 – no aspirational language
- No State Church (UK)
- No Formal Separation (US)
- Christianity provided the moral consensus and cohesion
- State felt no need to appropriate

John Webster Grant

“Canada grew under the tutelage of its church and the church exerted its influence in pulpit, school and press, serving as the keepers of the moral and spiritual foundations of nationhood and the conscience of the state.”

1967 – Christianity was
“**established**”

1987 – a “**memory**”

Convergence or *Modus Vivendi*

- The *Charter* was affirmed as most could see their principles recognized in the text
- What norms, traditions, doctrines, ideologies, “forces” are used to interpret it?
- Emergence of “Charter Values”
 - Independent basis for cohesion

What fills the role once played by Christianity?

- Society of deep pluralism
- Where does sense of belonging come from?
- What will provide social cohesion?
- What does it mean to be Canadian?

In Period of Rapid Secularization:

1. Adoption of Charter of Rights and Freedoms
2. Shift in Religious Neutrality and Secularity
3. Primacy of meaning of being Free and Democratic

Cohesion

- Source of Fraternity and Inclusion in context of deep pluralism?
- What nurtures the background culture?

“Charter Values”

- **Autonomy**
- **Dignity (Freedom)**
- **Equality**
- **Inclusion (Fraternity)**

Emerging Public Religion

- *Charter* now symbolic and directive (Courts become sovereign)
- The presumption of normativity is modern heresy
- Commitment to Canadian Values required for public benefit and service (trumps other commitments)

To Thrive in Babylon:

- Name the prevailing public religion/ideology
- Promote Religious Freedom
- Identify and promote the requirements for civility in a deeply plural society
- Love our neighbours





Blessing Canada in the Name of Jesus

What others can expect from Evangelicals

- Ground what we say and do in Scripture and as an expression of our faith
- Promote the relevancy of Scripture and our faith to matters of life and society
- Affirm the sanctity of human life and the dignity of all
- Express compassion for the vulnerable
- Promote peace and reconciliation
- Defend freedom of religion and conscience for all
- Work for the common good
- Contribute to fair and just governance

Uphold Requirements for Civility in Deeply Plural Society

- Affirm Dignity of all
- Promote tolerance
- Offer Respect
- Collaborate for the Public Good
- Champion benefits of a free and democratic society
- Advocate a non-sectarian version of the secular

Religious Agenda

- Bear witness to Jesus as Saviour and Lord both at home and abroad
- Invite all to consider the need to be reconciled to God and to receive forgiveness of sin
- Promote biblical authority and literacy as essential to Christian discipleship
- Love God and our Neighbour
- Promote a life of holiness and personal dedication to Jesus
- Live out our faith in word and deed
- Support local, national and international evangelical organizations and movements
- Study our faith and pass it on to the next generation
- Practise individual and corporate prayer and worship
- Foster a biblical understanding of being human and in His image
- Seek to understand the faith commitments of others
- Engage in respectful dialogue with those of other faiths

Social Agenda

- Deepen understanding and respect for Indigenous Peoples
- Welcome refugees/immigrants
- Care for sick and dying (palliative care)
- Assist those experiencing homelessness and in poverty
- Advocate with and for those with disability
- Protect life from conception to natural death
- Defend those exploited
- Protect children
- Care for seniors
- Steward the earth

Political Agenda

- Pray for our leaders
- Seek to live peacefully with all
- Seek the blessing of Canada and be a blessing to other nations
- Respectfully promote the application of biblical principles in law and public policy
- Advocate for vulnerable persons
- Collaborate with others for the public good
- Promote freedom of religion and conscience