

# Respectfully Submitted



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## POLICY REPORT for Parliamentarians

Courtesy of the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada

*"Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize **the supremacy of God and the rule of law**"*  
- Preamble to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Who is supreme in Canada? Some will point to the justices of the Supreme Court of Canada, others to the Prime Minister's Office and still others to the people who elect the politicians. But all of them, and all of us, are here today and gone tomorrow.

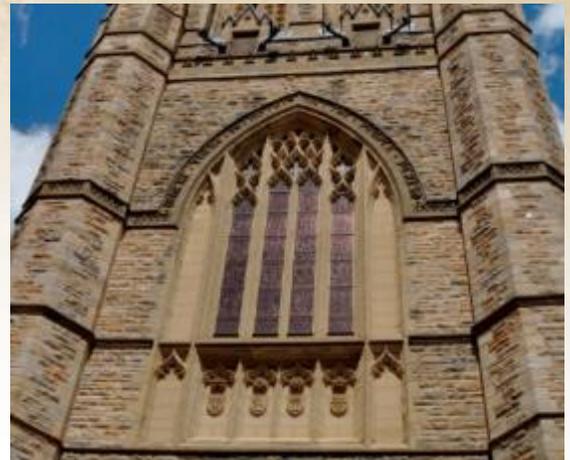
We may argue that it is ideas which shape a society because ideas don't retire or die – they have the power to overthrow an empire. Our Chief Justice once wrote that law itself is supreme.<sup>1</sup> But laws change and ideas are like the wind. Progressivism, the unarticulated goal of many legislators, becomes a self-defeating enterprise as the next generation looks upon it with the same disregard that it looked on those ideas before it.

Canada is a nation in search of an identity. We don't publicly recognize any god as supreme, let alone the Christian God. We follow leaders and ideas for a time, only to move on to the next person or thing that stirs us. But hockey, donuts, and beer aren't exactly symbols on which to build a nation.

Over the decades Canada has divorced the Christian God from our public institutions and replaced Him with self-worship, state-worship, and earth-worship, among other things. Yet we continue to lay claim to, and benefit from, many of the political and legal by-products of the Christian faith, including fundamental human rights, much of the *Criminal Code*, and the concept of rule of law.

We are like a crew on a ship that set out on a course, only to decide in the middle of the ocean that we had no use for the captain or those who initiated the voyage. We threw the map, itinerary and compass overboard along with the captain and are now charting our own course, largely following the direction of the prevailing current or winds. But even though we have the freedom to go where we like, our voyage will one day end and we will have to give account for what we did and didn't do. After all, the ship isn't ours. We were entrusted with it for a purpose. Do we even know what the purpose is anymore?

You, dear Legislator, have been given great authority. We respectfully remind you that this authority does not come from your charisma, talent, experience, or education. Nor does it come from your constituents. It comes from God, "for there is no authority except that which God has established" (Romans 13:1).



*"Where there is no vision the people perish."*

*Proverbs 29:18*

*Inscribed above the west window of the Peace Tower*

# Supremacy of God

Spring 2014

## There is no Neutrality – Worldviews Will Always Direct Public Life

This suggestion that the God of the Bible is *the* authority from which all human authority is derived *sounds* radical. But the status-quo is not all that different. Much of what is guiding public policy in the provinces and our nation today is also religious – it’s just hidden under a superficial veneer of neutrality.

Religion is “an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group.”<sup>2</sup> Every official is guided by his or her own beliefs or worldview – it is why you entered public office. As historian Link Byfield noted *“All laws – not just laws concerning sexual behaviour – are based upon some moral principle. The entire Criminal Code, for starters, is an anthology of morality. Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not murder, all these rules are moral principles.”*<sup>3</sup> In many regards Feminist MP Niki Ashton is no less religious than self-described evangelical Christian Stephen Harper. As a result, the policies coming out of our Parliament and Legislatures are also religiously based, though some are more explicit than others (see the example on the right). For example, the belief that health care should be distributed “freely and fairly” is a religious conviction based on a view of human worth and the role of the state.

In his article “Notes Towards a (Re)Definition of the ‘Secular,’” legal expert Iain Benson explains how a common understanding of secularism holds that the state is expressly non-religious and must not support religion in any way.<sup>4</sup> This understanding, today epitomized in Quebec’s Charter of Values, seems to be the most prevalent in public discussions of ethical issues like abortion, physician assisted suicide, and pornography. But it is a definition that is impossible to maintain in practice. A religious symbol can be hidden, but the belief that it points to cannot. Judges and politicians are human as well. They were raised in families which held to certain beliefs, they are part of communities which expose them to different worldviews, they are aware of what is going on in the media, and they possess a human nature like everybody else. It is impossible to separate these experiences and this nature from one’s profession.

If explicitly religious motivations disqualify a law, laws against slavery should be thrown out because they were advanced by William Wilberforce, an evangelical activist Member of Parliament, and laws against racism should be thrown out because they were advanced by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist preacher.<sup>5</sup> To simply dismiss a proposal or law because it comes from a recognized religious foundation is fallacious at best, and discriminatory at worst. Most of our Criminal Code would have to be thrown out the window.<sup>6</sup>

Secularism, as we see it in Canada today, is just another worldview that sits around the negotiation table, arguing for a public square that is shaped by its beliefs. If the state really is neutral, why would Quebec, in its Ethics and Religious Culture course (see illustration above), insist that parents not be allowed to have their children taught in a way that is consistent with their faith? A “neutral” state would not insist that “its” views on religion be taught. “Anti-bullying” laws, as passed in Ontario and Manitoba, are also laden with ideology, requiring the celebration of all sexual lifestyles.

### *Case in Point: Québec’s Ethics & Religious Culture Course*

Like all Québec schools, Loyola School, a private Roman Catholic institution (not publicly funded), is being forced to teach the province’s Ethics and Religious Culture course, and to teach it from a “secular” perspective. The Court of Appeal declared that because Loyola’s own World Religions course is confessionally Catholic in orientation, it could not be considered equivalent to the ERC program, because the ERC course was specifically designed to be religiously “neutral”. In other words, the province of Québec and the Québec Court of Appeal will only allow one teaching of religion – their own! Even Roman Catholicism has to be taught from a “neutral perspective.” If this isn’t intolerance, what is?

Democracy, the rule of law, and religious freedom should all work together to ensure that people of all faiths, including secular humanism, get an equal opportunity to explain their respective contributions as to what is best and right for our province or nation. The decisions that result will not be “neutral.” You are called leaders for a reason.

What about the “separation of church and state?” We concur that this concept is crucial to the proper ordering of society. It actually has Christian origins, stemming from the recognition that the state ought not to interfere in the authority of the church and vice versa. The concept is often misunderstood today. It means that the institutions of the church and of the state are each sovereign over their own sphere of authority. But that does not mean that the sphere of the state is religion-free. That is impossible because, as we already have seen, all of life is religious. All institutions receive their authority ultimately from God and all are accountable to Him.

Table 1: Comparing Canadian Law and God’s Law

|  | Canadian Law  | God’s Law  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Summary of Law</b>                      | Negative - Do no harm.  | Positive - Love God and neighbour.   |
| <b>Source of authority</b>                 | Some aspects of law are assumed (e.g. human rights, dignity, equality) but without an articulated basis. Others are advanced on account of the changing will of the majority. | As Creator, God decides how His creation is meant to live, providing a blueprint for a healthy, happy life: individual, familial and societal.                       |
| <b>Formulation of Law</b>                  | Subjective and changing: written and interpreted by privileged individuals and developed from tradition or current values.  | Objective and unchanging: 1) natural law – God’s creation, preservation, and government of the universe; 2) Bible - complements natural law but with deeper clarity. |
| <b>Administration of Law</b>               | Large bureaucracy required. Most responsibility put on the State. Little individual responsibility.   | Very limited role of the civil government with increased freedom <u>and responsibility</u> put on other spheres of authority and government.                         |
| <b>Accountability in administering Law</b> | Broken and back-logged justice system which does little to address wrongs.  | Judgment by the Sovereign God of the universe – waiting for every human being.   |
| <b>Freedom as a result of Law</b>          | Increasingly undermined by secular notions of equality and neutrality. As the state expands its reach, freedom diminishes.  | Promoted extensively and protected vigorously (See our Freedom & Liberty policy report).   |
| <b>Effects of Law</b>                      | Continual expansion of law leads to discouraged citizenry, contraction of productivity, and individualism.  | Liberates - when humanity lives as God intended us to live, we flourish. Health, industry, equality and charity are promoted.  |

## A Christian View of the State Promotes Freedom & Flourishing

Far from being a restrictive force bent on demanding religious devotion of all peoples and cultures, the Bible reveals a very limited role for civil government and calls for freedom of religion for all people (see our publication *A Biblical Perspective on the Role of the State* by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam - free on request - for more details). Indeed, religious freedom was born in the Christian West. Peer-reviewed research from Robert D. Woodberry in the *American Political Science Review* has concluded that conversionary Protestant missionaries “were a crucial catalyst initiating the development and spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, newspapers, voluntary organizations, and colonial reforms, thereby creating the conditions that made stable democracy more likely.”<sup>7</sup>

In a nutshell, civil governments are called by God to be his servant for good, to bear the sword to punish criminal wrongdoing and to promote justice and righteousness (see Romans 13:3-4). The goal for civil government is to allow for citizens to enjoy a peaceful and quiet life (1 Timothy 2:1-2), not to convert souls or eradicate false religions.

One reason for this limited role of the civil government is because there are other governments instituted by God and described in the Bible. Each of these governments has their own roles and responsibilities. For example, the family is a governing institution that is accountable directly to God, not to the State. It is entrusted with the duty of raising and educating children, among other things. The State has no business telling parents what their children must be taught. The family unit is not subservient to the State. Both are accountable directly to God.

## Questioning our Worldview

We respectfully ask you to examine the worldview which informs and directs your decisions, words, and votes by contemplating these questions:

- How did humanity originate? How does this shape your view of human rights?
- Who has dignity? How does this shape your view of abortion, human trafficking, and euthanasia?
- What is your purpose in life? Do you get to determine this? How would the answer change if your purpose was designed by your Creator?
- Who gets to determine what is right and wrong? If it is the individual, how can we judge when one person's choice undermines another person's choice? If right and wrong is determined by a higher standard than the individual human impulse, is the will of the majority the final arbiter? And if it is a divine standard, how is this demonstrated in Canadian law and policy?
- Why are you giving a significant part of your life to public service? If it is for the good of citizens, how do you define "good"? Is it objective or subjective? If objective, what is the basis? If subjective, how can you justify imposing your morality on the broader public?

Dear Legislators, we recognize that you have an incredibly difficult role. You work long hours striving to uphold the wellbeing of your neighbors and often get very little appreciation and respect. We thank you for your devout service, your heart for this nation, and your willingness to take all the criticism. We also pray for you regularly, asking that God will guide you with wisdom so that this nation can flourish and our Creator is glorified. And we would be grateful to discuss the questions above with you over the phone or in person.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada*

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<sup>1</sup> Hon. Beverley McLachlin, "Freedom of Religion and the Rule of Law" in Douglas Farrow, ed., *Recognizing Religion in a Secular Society: Essays in Pluralism, Religion, and Public Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 14 where Her Honour writes, "the rule of law leaves no aspect of human experience unaffected by its claim to authority."

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster dictionary, available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion>.

<sup>3</sup> Link Byfield, "Pettigrew Puts Boots to Religious Canadians" *Calgary Sun* (January 30, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Iain Benson, "Notes Towards a (Re)Definition of the 'Secular'" (2000) *University of British Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 33, p. 520, at 530.

<sup>5</sup> Even the Magna Carta of 1215, the original Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the Commonwealth, was first proposed by and eventually addressed to "Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots..."

<sup>6</sup> See, *The Influence of Religion on Law* by the Rt. Hon. Lord Denning, an address he gave to the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship (U.K.). Republished in 1997 by The Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> Robert D Woodberry, "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy" *American Political Science Review* Vol. 106. No 2, online: <[http://www.academia.edu/2128659/The\\_Missionary\\_Roots\\_of\\_Liberal\\_Democracy](http://www.academia.edu/2128659/The_Missionary_Roots_of_Liberal_Democracy)>.