Religious Pluralism in
the Public Sphere in Canada

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> The cathedral is made of marble, oak and granite. It is the image of the nation I would like to see Canada become. For here I want the marble to remain the marble; the granite to remain the granite; the oak to remain the oak; and out of all these elements I would build a nation great among the nations of the world. – Wilfrid Laurier (Prime Minister, 1896-1911)

In Canada, recognition of world religions is a continuing process – in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the courts, and human rights commissions – as individuals and groups make their claims for judgement or accommodation. The public language of human rights is the most widely appreciated vocabulary used in the public sphere (Taylor, 2004). Debates using the language of rights are found in the media, on the Internet and in public for a, shaping public opinion on matters of civic contention. Freedom of religion is a recognized right in the Charter, but religions are only reluctantly acknowledged, if at all, as legitimate participants in contemporary Canadian public debates.

Resistance to a public role for religions is expressed in the claim that Canadian society is secular, thus separating "church" – more rightly religion – and state. Religions ought to be sequestered in the private sphere of ordinary life. This view of religions is relatively new in Canadian history as well as paradoxical in light of the elaborate historical role Christian pluralism has played in Canada and the proliferation of religious pluralism in the country since the 1960s.

In thinking about pluralism in the Canadian social imaginary (Taylor, 2004) the issue at stake is the conception of the public sphere. Does being secular mean a refusal to recognize contributions to debates arising out of the religious convictions and expressions of faith

characteristic of the plurality of religions in Canada? Put simply, can religious points of view be included in debates within the public sphere? This paper argues that a restrictive conception of a secular public sphere understood to exclude voices arising from religious convictions is impossible given that approximately 30 percent of the Canadian population practices one religion or another. If phrases such as "separation of church and state" or "secular society" are used to restrict recognition of religious voices seeking to contribute to public debate, to that extent the democracy is weakened. A reluctance to recognize religions as characteristic of Canadian society restricts the capacity of some citizens to participate in the public sphere in the language of their most fundamental convictions. Such practices diminish the capacity of a democracy to discern authentically public opinion.

The public sphere requires of citizens literacy in the diverse faiths of fellow citizens and a renewed civic commitment to diversity and pluralism. The "Canadian Diversity Model": A Repertoire in Search of a Framework (Jenson and Papillon, 2001) illuminates the kind of civic education required by providing a map of the essential elements or characteristics of the public sphere. The map portrays the practices or repertoire required for balance between individual freedom and collective equality. It also makes it possible to see the restrictions on recognition in the public sphere and points toward the pluralist practices or sensibilities which are essential to recognize the diverse faiths and values of Canadian citizens.

The Cathedral and the Dominion: Christian pluralism in the public sphere

For Wilfrid Laurier, the cathedral – a solid edifice constructed of marble, oak and granite – was a compelling metaphor for the Canadian nation yet to be built. Each of the three materials would contribute their distinctive strength and beauty to the cathedral and to the nation. Laurier's metaphor of the cathedral is, of course, recognizable as Christian and, with Laurier's roots in Quebec, specifically Roman Catholic. In Quebec an historic, intimate linkage between French Canadian identity and Roman Catholicism endured until the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. The Laurier image represents the perpetual importance of minority voices in Canadian nation building. In the late nineteenth century, these voices spoke for a confederation based on a division of powers between provinces and federal government that would empower each province to manage and preserve its cultural wellbeing through responsibilities such as education. In Quebec, the Roman Catholic Church played a central role in education, with the provinces making religious accommodations of various kinds in their education systems to account for the Christian pluralism in their respective jurisdictions (Murphy & Perrin, 1996; Seljak, 2005, 2008).

English Protestants had another metaphor to bind Christianity and the nation. It is thought Sir Leonard Tilley suggested the term "Dominion of Canada" based on the King James version of the Old Testament, Psalm 72.8: "May He have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." With Canada as the first, "dominion" became a standard imperial term used to describe the semi-independent nation-states of the British Empire. At the time of Confederation (1867), the dual references inscribing the word

"dominion" – biblical and imperial – expressed the mindset of the English-speaking and mostly Protestant majority. For them, the accent was on the importance of federal institutions and their historic connection with Britain. A cultural and political ambiguity was created that lingered through the first hundred years of confederation in anglophone Canada. What was "public" in the English-speaking provinces was substantively embedded in Protestant Christianity and the imperial connection. Together they fostered the notions of good citizenship and the English-Canadian social imaginary. Public education for that citizenship required knowledge of the Bible and of British imperial history. (Murphy & Perrin, 1996; Clifford, 1973, Van Die, 2001) and both were central to "public" education in regions such as Ontario and the Maritimes.

Cathedral and dominion as metaphors for Canadian nationality express in significant part the social imaginary (Taylor, 2004) that characterized Canada's history through to the end of the Second World War. The public sphere (Taylor, 2004, p. 83-100) – understood as the space in which Canadians debated public issues of their day for the edification of municipal, provincial and federal governments – was permeated by public languages rooted in the diversity of Christian denominations, institutions and theologies. Together with the public languages of enlightenment humanism, British imperialism, economic capitalism and scientific progress, public debates had a rich and complex range of resources with which to debate the issues of the day and shape public opinion. Employing all of these elements of the Canadian social imaginary contributed to the formation of the particular form of Canadian political pragmatism. From John A. MacDonald forward no political party could command an electoral majority without incorporating into the federal cabinet regional and religious representation. Striking a delicate balance created the capacity of Parliament and the Cabinet to discern public opinion in all its complexity as it arose out of the debates within the public sphere.

Inclusion of Christian pluralism as a resource in the public sphere was an important historical characteristic of Canada. This pluralism was a fragmented resource, however. Protestantism was notorious for its multitude of divisive churches. Anglicans, Dissenters, Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists could be as disgruntled with each other as they could be collectively suspicious of, and in competition with, the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church. Virtually all Protestants accused Roman Catholics of having a primary loyalty to the papacy, a loyalty that rendered political or national identity, to a secondary place. Protestant, English-speaking Canada was fractured religiously, but unified around the imperial, loyalist allegiance to Britain. French-Canadians maintained a deep suspicion of the Protestant and imperial view of national unity as the conscription crisis of First World War demonstrated.

Further complicating the picture is a darker side to the Canadian social imaginary and its Christian pluralism. Hidden on reservations or in the furthest reaches of the wilderness were the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and their religions. Visible was the collective Christian mission, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, designed to convert native peoples. The missionaries met with considerable success from the churches' point of view.

Recognition of the public role of the churches was so pervasive that they could function as government "NGOs" in the now-notorious Aboriginal-schools policy of the federal government (Miller, 2001). In this respect both Roman Catholic and Protestant citizens shared in the orientalism (Sardar, 1999) of their day that saw Aboriginal peoples as "other" and their religion as "pagan."

Aboriginal peoples were not the only "others" swept up in the orientalist views Canadian citizens. "Others" were also Black or Asian-Canadian immigrants. Church missions and imperialist convictions combined to make it entirely appropriate to ban the sun dance and to bar Sikhs, Chinese and Japanese Buddhists, Jews and others as historical circumstances permitted. The cultivation of "otherness" – whether religious, racial, ethnic, or linguistic – was a potent theme in Canadian nation building (Bramadat and Seljak, 2005; Day, 2000, Johnston, 1988, 1989).

The delicacy of the conflicting elements of the Canadian social imaginary had two results. The first was the pragmatic requirement to balance majority and minority constituencies in Parliamentary practice. The second was a spectrum of suspicion of the other embedded in the historic Christian pluralism found in Canada. Protestants suspected Roman Catholics of marginal loyalties to the nation; Protestants were divided among themselves denominationally, but they could agree on the imperial ideologies of the Empire; both Roman Catholics and Protestants viewed racial minorities through the imperial, orientalist lenses of the 19th and 20th centuries. Managing such divisive forces contributed to the formation of the United Church of Canada, the presumptive "national" Protestant Church of the nation. It also led to ecumenical efforts such as the Canadian Council of Churches.

It is no surprise that the delicate management required to maintain such a fractious social imaginary in Canada did not survive. Whether or not two world wars combined with a long depression in the economy are at the root of its demise can be debated. Without question, the imperial and Christian pluralist contributions to English Canada's public sphere died. The intimate connection between Roman Catholicism and Quebec governance and society ended with the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. Of course, the public languages about the economy and scientific progress continued unabated as dominant resources for public debate.

Contemporary religious pluralism in Canada

The shift in terminology from "Christian pluralism" to "religious pluralism" is important. The latter reflects the present diversity of world religions involving Canadian citizens. The shift in terminology implies that the new terminology incorporates Christian pluralism into it. In doing so, it creates a problem for contemporary religious pluralism. The historic model of Christian pluralism brings its privileged history and its historical relation to the public sphere into the contemporary discussion, making the issues more complex. To what extent, for example, is the ambivalent place of religious pluralism in the public sphere of

today's Canada a reaction to the privileged place of Christian pluralism in Canadian history?

The post-war years and especially the 1960s saw a profound re-imagining of Canada and its social make-up. The immigration rules were transformed in an attempt to be race neutral, and with that change emerged a reformulation of the social imaginary in which bilingualism, biculturalism and multiculturalism, among others, were added to the mix of resources already in place for use in public debate (Biles and Ibrahim, 2004). Christian pluralism did not fit into this new emerging imaginary and little thought or consideration went into the emerging forms of religious pluralism taking shape with the new patterns of immigration. In addition to new immigration policies designed to create a much more pluralistic citizenry, governments progressively took over Christian institutions creating a new understanding of "public" in relation to education and other public services such as health and social services (O'Toole, 2000, p. 45). Symbolic of the end of Christian pluralism as a component of the public sphere in Canada was the memorial service following the Swissair 111 crash off Nova Scotia in September of 1998. In the service authorized by Prime Minister Chrétien, no Christian priest or minister was invited to participate. Dr. Jamal Badawi, the Muslim imam in Halifax, offered the only prayer in the memorial service. Recognized in this decision was the death of a Saudi prince in the disaster and the growing importance of Islam in Canada.

The results of the initiatives in the 1960s are already visible nearly 50 years later. In the modern and post-modern setting of Canada, religious pluralism presents in a strikingly new form as illustrated by the Statistics Canada report below.

Major Religious Denominations, Canada, 1991 and 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003)

	2001 Number	2001 Per cent	1991 Number	1991 Per cent	Percentage change
Roman Catholic	12,793,125	43.2	12,203,625	45.2	4.8
Protestant	8,654,845	29.2	9,427,675	34.9	-8.2
Christian Orthodox	479,620	1.6	387,395	1.4	23.8
Christian (not elsewhere) 2	780,450	2.6	353,040	1.3	121.1
Muslim	579,640	2.0	253,265	0.9	128.9
Jewish	329,995	1.1	318,185	1.2	3.7
Buddhist	300,345	1.0	163,415	0.6	83.8
Hindu	297,200	1.0	157,015	0.6	89.3
Sikh	278, 415	0.9	147,440	0.5	88.8
No Religion	4,796,325	16.2	3,333,245	12.3	43.9

1 For comparability purposes, 1991 data are presented according to 2001 boundaries.
2 Includes persons who report "Christian", as well as those who report "Apostolic", "Born-again Christian" and "Evangelical".

Many religions now make up religious diversity in Canada. According to the 2001 census, the fastest-growing religions in Canada included Islam, Evangelical Christianity, Hinduism,

Sikhism, Buddhism and no religion. The latter category may include very high numbers of East Asians who are not provided with an appropriate religious category by which to report their religion. The post-1960s reforms to immigration policy have created a new picture for religious pluralism. While the Roman Catholic and Protestant populations remain a majority, the reality of declining membership is an established feature of the census data, especially among the Protestant churches (Statistics Canada, 2005, Clark and Schellenberg, 2006). To discuss the meaning of religious pluralism in Canada, and in the globalized environment in which Canadian citizens live, requires a focus on this new, more diverse picture of being religious in Canada.

What is religious pluralism?

Religious Pluralism is not just a bunch of religions! Nor is it just a representative selection from the list of religions which have turned up in Canada and are now recognized for census purposes by Statistics Canada. Wilfrid Smith, in his still famous book *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962), has comprehensively reviewed the historical development of the term "religion" and made clear its problematic uses in the modern world. Despite Smith's assertion that the term "religion" should be abandoned, it remains in lively use in global English and is either translated or a neologism in many languages worldwide.

There are many dimensions to the meaning of religion in public speech: it has been a subject of philosophical and theological debate since the Enlightenment; it has become a version of a name for academic study of world religions (religious studies or comparative religion); it functions as part of our systems for categorizing knowledge in the Library of Congress and the Universal Decimal Classification systems; in public parlance, it also has a variety of meanings, from personal faith and belief to the broad designation of the variety of religions in society. The list could go on with most uses having a contested meaning among academic interpreters.

In the semantic evolution of the concept of religion, the taxonomy of world religions is among its most characteristically modern meanings. There is the genus "religion" with its variety of species and sub-species. To see the taxonomy at work, it is only necessary to look at any world religions textbook. The taxonomy emerged in the midst of European colonialism as a generic system to structure knowledge about the religions encountered in the colonies. The taxonomy of religions required the creation of names for the religions encountered: Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism – to list only a few. Many of these names have no origin in the self-descriptions by religious people living in South Asia, China or Japan.

The world religions taxonomy is clearly a European or Western construct that has taken on a life of its own in the midst of globalization. In addition to its uses to organize knowledge, it has become integral to the theological and historical thinking of religious leaders and people globally. The names of the religions, however arbitrary and foreign have been appropriated for use within the religions and by the states in which they are found. In

addition, a religion can become a world religion in its own eyes. There are examples of theologians and historians who have re-interpreted a religion's self-understanding in ways that permit it to be, or aspire to be, a world religion on the global stage (Beyer, 2006). Not the least example is Sikhism, which is important in the Canadian context. What was once an imperial, colonial construct naming the world's religions, can become internalized for the use of religions in their own re-imagining in the modern world.

In addition to the religions named in the world religions taxonomy, there are other religious forms, which are not sufficiently dispersed around the globe or have too few adherents to rate inclusion in the taxonomy. For example, New Religious Movements (NRMs) – sometimes wrongly referred to as "cults" – are well studied but clearly not yet world religions. There are varieties of spiritualities ranging from strictly individual forms to small groups such as Wicca. Aboriginal religions worldwide are often collectively designated in the taxonomy as primal or Aboriginal religions. These latter terms have emerged to replace terms like "primitive religions" which reflected the nineteenth-century quest for the origins of religion as well as the cultural evolutionary viewpoints shaping it.

In summary, "religious pluralism" depends for its substantive meaning on the taxonomy of world religions as it has evolved in western cultural understanding. The taxonomy functions both within the religions which make it up and, as I shall show next, is essential in the construction of legal determinations and the creation of public policy.

Religious pluralism in the public sphere in Canada

Religions are important in the lives of Canadians. Clark and Schellenberg (2006) using a religiosity index made up of affiliation, attendance, personal practices and stated importance of religion show that overall "40 percent of Canadians have a low degree of religiosity, 31 percent are moderately religious and 29 percent are highly religious."[1] With 60 percent of Canadians either moderately or highly religious, there is a puzzling attitude about religion in the public sphere. At the same time as a majority of Canadians are religious, there is, paradoxically, the widely held conviction that Canada is a secular society. A frequent consequence of that view is that religions belong in the private lives of citizens. This conviction appears to be a characteristic of religious and, presumably, non-religious people.

It comes as something of a shock to most citizens that religions and religious issues keep leaching out of the private sphere where they "belong" and into the courts and the public sphere where, presumably, they ought not to be. The sense of "shock" – or more mildly, of the inappropriateness – reveals just how dramatically Canada's public sphere has changed with regard to religions. It appears that there is a critical lack of understanding of religions in the contemporary make-up of Canada's multicultural society. There are numerous plausible factors contributing to the lack of understanding of the religions that make up Canadian society. It could be a willful forgetting of religions' historic role in nation-building or a repudiation of the positive significance of that role in the light of scandals

involving pedophilia among priests in Newfoundland and elsewhere. It could be a judgment on the churches' administration of Aboriginal residential schools. It also could be a more willful desire simply to exclude religions as participants in the public sphere. Certainly in the post-September 11 world, security concerns have created an intense focus on Islam and Sikhism.

Whatever the reason underlying it, indications are that Canadians are not well informed about religions. Nor do they have an adequate public language in which to speak about and interpret religious pluralism. There are numerous examples of the inadequacy of our public language. Canadian policy-makers and citizens sometimes speak of Canada's separation of church and state as if this American phrase were as a part of Canada's 1982 Constitution. The first amendment to the United States Constitution does not even use "separation of church and state", although the phrase does convey the sense of the amendment requiring that there cannot be an established or state religion. The American phrase, however, is widely adopted by Canadians despite the fact that Canada has no established church or religion and that separation of church and state was never the historical mode relating religion and state (cf. Seljak, 2008, pp. 39-49). Such mistaken public interpretations frequently appear in the media. Such misunderstandings of religious pluralism and Canadian history create profound difficulties for interpreting religions in contemporary Canadian society. The difficulty is compounded by the ubiquitous use of "secular society" in tandem with the "separation of church and state" to try to place religion in the privacy of Canadians' lives.

The voices advocating a secular society and separation of church and state in Canada are suggesting that religions – and perhaps also those who speak from faith-based convictions rooted in religion – have no role in the public sphere and in the formulation of public opinion. Such a view is reflected in the fact that national newspapers and other media rarely employ experts on religion for journalism positions and have repeatedly demonstrated little expertise to explain the place of religious pluralism in Canada. For citizens generally, world religions are rarely taught in schools and Canadian history courses frequently ignore the role of religions in Canadian society. The result is that the resources for public debate about the religions, religious issues and religious pluralism as a characteristic of Canadian society are nearly non-existent.

Is the post-1960s attitude toward religions a product of discrimination? There is clearly some truth to that argument (cf. Seljak, 2007). One of the most characteristic ways of discriminating is to focus on a limited range of information about religions. In the midst of multiple religious-based points of view on the same-sex marriage debate, for instance, the media consistently chose to focus only on those points of view rooted in conservative, fundamentalist religious perspectives. Muslims frequently make this same point. Politicized Islam is discussed in the media over and over again making it appear to be the only Islam. As a result, the breadth and complexity of the tradition are lost. Religious pluralism and the diversity of religious voices in public debates are reduced in complexity. This kind of misrepresentation makes religions more like the "other" in the imperialist, orientalist

constructions which characterized Canada's history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There is another way to view the public portrayal of religions that is more subtle than the lens of discrimination. Religions seeking to participate in the debates in the public sphere are more like unexpected guests or relatives showing up for dinner when the secular table has already been set and the meal served (Biles and Ibrahim, 2005). This analogy suggests that what may also be happening is like confusion in etiquette resulting in a lack of civility. The limitations put on the invitation list to dinner cause offense. When the uninvited guests show up anyway, the feelings of offense are compounded all around. Viewed through this analogy, the issue is one of civility that directs our attention to the public sphere and how it is imagined. That is to say that there may be excuses that can be offered for the lack of civility. The cultural transformation that has been ongoing in Canada since the 1960s has permitted only a very short period of time for social adjustment. The complexity of the results is such that no one anticipated, or prepared for, all of the consequences. Not the least of those unanticipated consequences is religious pluralism and the continuing vitality of religious sentiments, practices and institutions in society broadly. The best theories about religions in the midst of modernity argued that religion would die out and be replaced by science-based progress in secular societies. That view has now largely been repudiated or radically reinterpreted (Asad, 2003, Casanova, 1994).

Civility or etiquette is a learned skill. Remedying a failure of etiquette is to learn the skills required. From the outset of education in Canada, it was understood that the skills for good citizenship for use in the public sphere and in governance could and should be taught. In the period of Christian pluralism, Roman Catholic and Protestant educators were united in the view that the one objective of education was good citizenship. Religion and religious knowledge were thought to be essential to that result. That conviction has disappeared and it is not clear what substantive forms civic education now takes. It is an open question in the face of the disparaging views of the humanities and social sciences in the eyes of government officials whether citizenship as an objective of education is taken seriously in modern Canada. For a multicultural, multi-religious society, it should be of paramount importance.

With very high levels of immigration, and religious, ethnic and racial differences proliferating, the political philosopher William Connolly (2005) argues for a civic education designed to create a "bicameral orientation to political life" (4), in which it is acknowledged: first, that all citizens bring to their participation "the faith, doctrine, creed, ideology, or philosophy…that you adopt as an engaged partisan in the world" (4); and second "the engrained sense that you should exercise presumptive receptivity toward others when drawing that faith, creed or philosophy into the public realm." (4). The bicameral orientation reflects a learned sensibility of citizens for participation in a pluralist public sphere. Connolly argues that all participants in public debate bring a "faith" into the public sphere. This is not a uniquely religious quality or characteristic of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus or Sikhs. Partisans of the marketplace bring to it faith in the market to

"decide", as do partisans of the progressive good of scientific method and technological innovation. It is the task of faiths of all kinds to cultivate the bicameral sensibility for use in the public sphere.

A civic education conceived in Connolly's terms is necessary for the creation of a public language capable of broad inclusion in the public sphere. Such a language is essential in order to incorporate Canada's religious traditions into the public sphere. The danger of exclusion is written in the history of Canada in the treatment of Aboriginal peoples, Sikhs, Japanese Buddhists, Jews and Blacks. The risk of exclusion and misrepresentation of religions is, in the final analysis, a reduction in capacity of society to deal with the issues that come before it. How can we discuss the problems of religious accommodation when we do not know about the religions that are integral to the lives of Canadian citizens? How can fellow citizens learn to hear the variety of discourses arising out of religions or any other fundamental conviction as persons speak in public debate? How can a religiously pluralist society discover how to welcome the unfamiliar language of various religions in the formation of public opinion on issues before citizens in the public sphere?

Recognition of religious pluralism

Section 2 of The Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes religious freedom as a fundamental right. It is important for religious pluralism that the Canadian Charter also entrenches multiculturalism (Article 27) as a defining attribute of the nation. As a result, religious pluralism is integral to the meaning of diversity in the 1988 multiculturalism legislation. However, it has been only over the past ten years or so that the subjects of multicultural diversity and religious pluralism in Canada have become a topic of inquiry and research among Canadian scholars at scholarly conferences such as the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, at national and international Metropolis Conferences, and through Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Heritage Canada research projects (cf. Beyer, 2006, Bramadat and Seljak, 2005, Seljak, 2007, 2008).

It is possible to argue that, given the reference to freedom of religion and conscience in section two of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, religion has enough or at least, ample recognition (Taylor, 1994) in law. Entrenching religious freedom in the Charter is important given the changing demographic facts on religious pluralism. In terms of recognition, the further that one moves from the recognized traditions in the world-religions taxonomy, the more difficult it becomes for experts to certify claims of authenticity about a religion. A private individual with his or her own spirituality would find it very difficult to argue against conscription into the military based on a private religious view. No Quaker, Hutterite or Old Order Mennonite would have comparable difficulty. Belonging to a religion in the world-religions taxonomy matters in public policy and from this base, the public language about religion can develop. Indeed, it suggests that the courts play a foundational role in shaping such a language.

Religions have already had occasion to use the Charter provision to make their case before the Supreme Court and their successes there have made religious pluralism a matter of considerable public debate. Noteworthy, for instance, was the public reaction to the Supreme Court decision on a young Sikh wearing his kirpan in a public school ground. Sikhism is now a world religion recognized within the world-religions taxonomy. Within the structures of knowledge about it as a world religion, such as university curricula, research projects and library resources, it is possible to bring expert opinion to bear on issues of religious rights in the courts. Expert witnesses both from academia and the Sikh community can offer evidence to establish the centrality of the kirpan as one of the essential religious attributes of a Khalsa Sikh. The five Ks (the turban covering uncut hair, the comb, iron or steel wrist-ring, the kirpan and breeches) have been objectively and historically essential attributes for the Khalsa Sikh at least since the 1800s. This is recognized worldwide. There are of course other cases – the turban as part of the RCMP uniform, and other human rights commission cases dealing with allegations of religious discrimination – which can employ the public resource of expert scholars and trained teachers. A challenge ahead for the courts involving a sect of Mormonism will likely be a case on polygamy, more properly polygyny, in Bountiful, British Columbia.

The problem of recognition is not primarily situated in the courts. Rather, it becomes visible in the public sphere when public issues involving religions emerge and there is little or marginal capacity of the public, the media and politicians to speak in an informed way about religions and the issues related to them. The results of the court case on the kirpan in schools, along with other religious issues, threatened to become a political issue in the Quebec election of 2007. To avoid that possibility, the government created the Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences in Quebec (http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/commission/decret-en.pdf May 2, 2008, cf. Seljak, 2008, pp. 60-66). Public debate was postponed for fear, at least on the part of the governing party, of the electoral consequences. Many of the presentations to the Commission, however, betrayed a profound apprehension about religious accommodations, indeed, even about the presence of the religions in the country. In other words, the problem of religious recognition is situated squarely in the public sphere.

In those instances where debates in the public sphere have taken place, the results are mixed. Noteworthy in recent years was the so-called sharia law debate in Ontario, (more properly the debate over religion-based, family-law arbitration) which began with a thoroughly competent government review of family arbitration in faith communities by Marion Boyd (2004). There followed, nonetheless, an inflamed public debate about the possible recognition of sharia law in Canada, instead of about the decade of successes in faith-based arbitrations of family disputes in Ontario. The debate brought to the fore the diversity of views of Muslims on this issue and at the same time provided little explanation of the history of sharia law and its interpretation historically, let alone its place in the arbitration process. The end result was that the Ontario government banned all faith-based arbitration of family disputes. This was a clear victory for some Muslims, especially feminist Muslims. However, the debate itself did little to advance the public understanding

of either the diversity of views in the Muslim community or about religious pluralism in the province.

The debate on faith-based arbitration may well have set the stage negatively for a second public debate, this time on religiously funded schools. The election proposal was to expand religiously funded schools in Ontario to include all religiously organized private schools. The debate ignored the history of public funding for Roman Catholic schools as a requirement of Confederation, resulting in new resentments. Once again, the debate did much to perpetuate the public suspicion of Islam (Seljak, 2008). In these recent debates in the public sphere, there is little evidence of capacity to bring a sophisticated understanding either of Canadian history or of the diversity of religions in the country.

There are issues of genuine public concern associated with religions. Despite waning support among most Sikhs, there continues to be security issues involving Khalistani Sikhs. Associated with this issue are the continuing attempts to explain the Air India bombing disaster. Similarly, there are security concerns about politicized versions of Islam. The Canadian government lists entities of concern to public safety including several which are related to religions (http://www.ps-sp.gc.ca/prg/ns/le/cle-eng.aspx, May 16, 2008).

To acknowledge such substantive issues of public concern is essential. However, in the absence of broad public understanding of religions, there is the risk in the current environment that such a focus will make Sikhism or Islam appear to be the problem. Such a focus reflects the limited capacity of the media to frame issues about religions in a way that recognizes the multitude of voices and views in all religions. Nothing illustrates this better than the endlessly recurring discussion of Muslim women wearing the hijab in public and the consequent debates about reasonable accommodation of religious communities. The interpretations of this issue reflect the absence of historical memory compounded by lingering orientalism. There is an absence of knowledge about Canadian grandmothers or great-great-grandmothers who, in the world of Christian pluralism, would hardly consider a public appearance in church or other formal event without wearing a hat and veil. Nor do interpreters grasp the choice of some Muslim women to resist the sexualized expectations of commercial fashion in the name of their faith. The list could go on. A dominant theme in many of these debates has been the inability of the media generally to pass beyond stereotypes and caricatures of religions.

The legal language of human rights used in the courtroom or before human rights commissions is an important setting in which to begin to develop a language for use in the public sphere. It is not, as has just been shown, a full-blown public language essential for debate in the public sphere. The formation of public language is an ongoing process and it is plausible to suggest that the 26 years since the Charter's inception in 1982 is hardly time to work out the full extent of the meaning of human rights for use in the public sphere. What clearly is required is a range of education initiatives about religious diversity in the schools, for the media, and the public at large in the hope that it can begin to establish the resources necessary for public discussion of issues arising from religious pluralism. In

addition, it is necessary to formulate the meaning of citizenship for a pluralist democracy. Furthermore, this must be done within the context of a renewed conception of citizenship for a pluralistic society.

Imagining world religions in the public sphere: thinking with the "Canadian Diversity Model"

The bedrock fact of Canadian history is diversity among its citizens. Jenson and Papillon point out at the beginning of their study of the "Canadian diversity model" – which they describe as "a repertoire in search of a framework" – that "Canadianism could never be built by seeking simply to eliminate difference." (2001, p.1) They describe four dimensions of difference, each encompassing a dyad: uniformity-heterogeneity; individual rights-group rights; symmetry-asymmetry; and economic freedom-economic security. "The four dimensions and the value tensions they provoke can be understood as four concrete expressions of the fundamental debate about equality in liberal democracies, and the closely related question of the best way to integrate and achieve cohesion in a diverse society" (2001, p. 7) The challenge is to find points of balance among these competing objectives. All four dimensions encompass the choices which have defined Canadian history along the way and the choices which stand before it as issues arise in the public sphere.

For the purpose of the discussion in this paper, the diversity model maps the public sphere in Canada, permitting historical versions as well as new maps of the contending forces necessary to illuminate social and religious change. Several maps of the four dyads would be required for the period in which Christian pluralism participated in nation-building as a component of, and participant in, modernization itself. Quite different maps of the four dyads are required to display the public sphere in contemporary Canada. Religious pluralism can potentially bring to the public sphere the heterogeneous voices of the world religions represented by the population of the citizens of Canada. The Charter provisions of freedom of religion and conscience, along with the sections on multiculturalism, are grounds for the legitimacy of religion's claim to participation in the public sphere. However, there appears to be considerable resistance to such participation oftentimes voiced in terms of a "Canadianism" which admits diversity, but not religious diversity.

What can be said about religious pluralism and its many voices in the midst of all of the other forms of diversity among Canada's citizens? Being religious within the world religions entails both thought and practices about being faithful religiously and about being a citizen of Canada's liberal democracy. Religions bring to bear a range of convictions about the meaning of behaviour and its relation to goodness and justice. They envision the meaning of good life and the kinds of social convictions which enhance the possibility of such a life. Such convictions obviously are rooted in individuals, but as with all faiths and the convictions that go with them, they manifest themselves in social relations which carry their implications into public debate. To imagine that these convictions are simply private is to ignore Canadian history and the presence of religious pluralism in Canada's midst. What

is required is recognition of religious pluralism as an integral participant in the diversity model and the debates appropriate to each of the dyads. They will be there anyway. Recognition will come with the development of pluralist civic skills or practices among Canadian citizens. It is with the essential characteristics of that education that we conclude.

Recognition of the religious pluralism entails an invitation to acquire and learn the practices, or as John Connolly calls them "sensibilities," required for a civic life in Canada's liberal democracy. Jensen and Papillon describe those practices as follows:

> This general problem of *equality of individuals* and *acknowledgement of community* exists in a variety of "locations." Put otherwise, it provokes a range of specific responses within the social architecture and citizenship regime, directly related to the four dimensions. These are located in:
>
> - **uniformity–heterogeneity** – practices that acknowledge, or not, diversity of political and social identities
>
> - **individual–group rights** – rights guaranteed to provide equal protection to groups as well as citizens
>
> - **symmetrical–asymmetrical treatment** – practices of the state that institutionalize the differential representation of communities
>
> - **economic freedom–economic security** – institutional forms and practices to achieve socioeconomic equity and substantive equality
>
> (Jensen and Papillon, 2001, p. 8)

Citizenship for a pluralistic society involves "practices" which lead to judgments for use in the public sphere. A practice which fails to acknowledge and recognize diversity enhances uniformity while diminishing heterogeneity.

There is an important debate here. Canadians are reasonably asking what is essentially "Canadian" for all citizens to communicate to new immigrants so that they can understand what citizenship implies. The Canadian "diversity model" maps the repertoire of options along the four lines of contention. The practices are identified in terms of choices that have been made in Canadian history. Those choices tell Canadians how they got to the current social arrangements.

The practices are also open to debate in the public sphere. So, for example, the Constitutional guarantee of Roman Catholic education in Quebec has been overturned in favour of a language-based model for education. Newfoundland has created a public education system and ended the role of churches in the management of education. Skilled practices in full knowledge of the repertoire and its meaning can lead to adaptation and change. Skilled practice based on the repertoire, which is characteristic of Canada, provides the foundation for recognition of diversity and for debate in the public sphere.

Recognition involves the skill of seeing beyond the limitations of the public sphere as it is presently imagined. For example, what happens when Canadians fail to employ best practices for informed seeing about what is happening in the public sphere? Two years ago, in the midst of the public debate about publication of the Danish newspaper cartoons, one of which depicted Muhammad with bomb in his headscarf, there was an interesting illustration of how easy it is not to see what is happening in the public sphere. Both Halifax and Saint Mary's University were a minor epicentre for this international issue. What was missed in the commonplace framing of the issue almost exclusively as one of freedom of expression and of the press?

Missed were two Palestinian women superbly skilled at organizing and leading a peaceful protest march while the professor, who was in part the object of their protest, provocatively tried to march along with them. Careful organization prevented a confrontation. Missed were the students' civic skills in accessing the press even though it was fixated on the professor and his skilled use of the media. Missed were the students' civic skills in using the conflict-resolution procedures in the university and the procedures of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. In the face of a hypothetical question, "Can Muslims learn the skills of democratic citizenship?" the unnoticed evidence in this incident in Halifax was emphatically, "yes!"

Here were two Palestinian citizens of Canada living out their "bicameral orientation to political life." They employed practices or sensibilities that reflect concerns arising out of their religious faith and the civic practices essential for a pluralist citizenship. That story never got printed and the public sphere was thereby diminished in its capacity to interpret religious pluralism in Canada and its legitimate voice in the public sphere. The question is: how many other such stories are being missed, thereby diminishing the possibility of enhancing the heterogeneity and righting balance required for civic life in Canada's public sphere?

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