

Trudeau vs Harper on Religious Freedom¹

The Harper government established an office to monitor religious freedom in various countries. It is interesting that, to the best of my knowledge, Canada was not among the nations to be monitored. Why do you think that was? No problems with religious freedom in Canada? Are you kidding? Many of the posts in my blog (see footnote 1) refer to restrictions on religious freedom in Canada, but most people do not usually identify them as religious and so only a few recognize it. I will try to make that more clear as we go along. In the meantime, think about or even check out various posts and see if you cannot find evidence or instances of it.

The Trudeau government has closed down that office and merged the concern for religious freedom with a new Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion. No more special attention for religious freedom; only freedom in general. Marie-Danielle Smith wrote a piece about this development in which she summarizes and quotes various statements on this merger by Andrew Bennett, formerly in charge of the Harper office. I encourage you to read it at this URL:

<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/regina-leader-post/20161208/282316794665256>

Pay special attention to Bennett's critique of the new situation. The concept of inclusion in the merged office is, he said, "ill defined and thoroughly vague" so that it "could muddy the water and distract from specific religious persecution issues faced by minorities abroad. More training is needed for the staff, *"because there is a 'relative ignorance' of religion in the public-service ranks and a 'false understanding of separation of church and state' still seems prevalent."*

¹Written Dec. 14 2016. This piece is written on basis of Marie-Danielle Smith, "Ex-envoy criticizes New Human Rights Office." *Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 8, 2016. The URL above is that of Smith's article. I originally wrote this for my blog < My World—My Neighbour >but I decided to place it here on Boeriana as well.

Ask yourself what Bennett said about ignoring the public role of religion. Yes, the office's attitude is out of step with recent scholarship. It used to be said that religious issues were basically a sub-set of economic and political challenges. You solve the latter two, and the religious issue will be solved as well. It is now widely recognized today that this is not the case: religion is an issue in itself.

What is "historically inaccurate" according to Bennett?

What are Canada's allies wondering about with respect to our government?

So, I have drawn your attention to an important switch made by the Trudeau Liberal government. That's no mere accidental change. It is a typical Liberal move downplaying the role and importance of religion. That is not to say that Liberals are not Christian. Many of them are, including, from the information I have, even Trudeau himself.² However, it is the typical secular reductionist view of religion so dominant in our country, where, like children in the past, religion is to be seen, not heard. It is a diminishing and trivialization of religion that is not acceptable to those who have more than a secular grade-one idea of religion in general. Our current Liberal establishment overlords seem to be plagued by the latter.

²He may be a lapsed Catholic, as he describes himself, but he is not a lapsed Christian, if I read his book *Common Ground* correctly.