

Affirming the Strength Brought to the Law by a Lawyer's Personal Religious Conviction

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The presentation considers the meaning of the first line of the Law Society's mission statement: "We affirm the strength brought to the law by a lawyer's personal religious conviction." Is there strength brought to the law by a lawyer's personal religious conviction? Or is our personal religious conviction something that operates primarily, if not entirely, outside of our professional life. Do private religious views have a role in the public square?

Among other topics the presentation will consider:

1. Do religiously affiliated law schools add value to legal education that other law schools cannot?
 - a. The Ontario Superior Court's decision on Trinity Western Law School.
 - b. Diversity of thought and anti-dogmatism.
 - c. Connecting professional values with religious belief.
2. The value of a lawyer's personal religious conviction.
 - a. Can lawyers of faith help insure a certain cultural literacy in understanding the birthplace and purpose of many legal doctrines.
 - b. Understanding law as one of the original three professions and as a degree in healing.
 - c. Religious reverence for the rule of law and its importance to the fabric of civil society.
3. The ascendancy of the philosophy of public reason and the idea that political power should be exercised only pursuant to shared premises and publicly acceptable reasons that fellow citizens can reasonably be expected to endorse.
 - a. A review of Rawls, Kant and Hobbes.
 - b. Law as the product of public reason
 - c. Does public reason delegitimize claims of private conscience?
 - d. If public reason is the acceptable form of public discourse, what does that mean for religious voices in the public square? And for the religion and speech protections in the First Amendment?