Iain T. Benson, *Short-form Biography* **(June, 2010)**

Born in Scotland and dual citizen of Canada and the United Kingdom, Iain Benson is a lawyer and was the first Executive Director of the Center for Cultural Renewal, Ottawa, Canada, (1994-2009) a non-partisan, non-denominational charitable foundation (est. 1993) with status in both Canada and the United States, dedicated to examining the nature of pluralism with particular reference to the associational rights dimension of religion and expression.

He studied in Canada, Scotland and England and holds degrees from Queens University (literature), the University of Cambridge (law) and University of Windsor (law). He was called to the Bar in 1985 and is currently a PhD. Candidate (constitutional law) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. On November 1, 2009 he was made Professor Extraordinary of Law in the Department of Constitutional Law and Philosophy of Law, Faculty of Law, the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein). He is the first non-national Research Associate for the South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional, Public, Human Rights and International Law (Johannesburg). He is a Senior Fellow of the Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, University of Alberta, Canada and is on the Founding Board of the Global Centre for Pluralism, a joint project of the Government of Canada and the Aga Khan Development Network, based in Ottawa, Canada.

Iain has appeared before all levels of Court in Canada up to and including the Supreme Court of Canada in cases involving human rights and constitutional law and has been a witness before a wide variety of Professional Organizations, Commissions and Parliamentary committees. He has consulted to the governments of Ireland and Canada

He has lectured across Canada, the United States, Europe, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. At the invitation of the Canadian Bar Association Iain gave a paper to the 2006 National Conference on "Religion and the State." His work on "secular" and "secularism" has been cited as authority by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

He was one of two people retained by the Canadian Federal Government to write background "think-pieces" for the Policy Research Initiative (an internal Federal Government "think-tank") looking at "Religion and Public Policy" as an aspect of Federal Multi-culturalism Policy. That work *Taking a Fresh Look at Religion and Public Policy in Canada: The Need for a Paradigm Shift* was submitted in January 2008. A Monograph, *Living Together With Disagreement*, was published in May 2010.

Over the past two years he has been invited to be part of an inter-faith working group drafting the *South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms* – and is one of eight members of the Continuity Committee drafting that document. This work has drawn together the leaders of every major religion in that country. This *Charter*, due for completion in 2010, could be a model not just in South Africa but around the world since it sets out – *in a manner endorsed by all the religions themselves* – core aspects of citizenship and the rights and freedoms of religion and conscience in a constitutional democracy.

Currently Senior Associate Counsel for one of Canada's largest law firms, Miller Thomson LLP, he travels regularly between his home in France and Canada when he is not in South Africa.

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