

**Evangelicalism Meets the Continental Divide:
Moral and Economic Conservatism in the United States and Canada**

Dennis R. Hoover

Trinity College

Michael D. Martinez

University of Florida

Samuel Reimer

Atlantic Baptist University

Kenneth D. Wald

University of Florida

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Abstract

One of the most prominent ideas subsumed within the “American exceptionalism” literature is that evangelical Protestantism has always had an unusually powerful influence on the U.S. political culture. In contrast, more recent literature points to the transnational influence of social movements, including those based in evangelicalism and other religious traditions. We examine the extent to which evangelical influences on moral conservatism and economic conservatism are similar in the United States and Canada. We employ regression models with slope dummy variables on data collected from comparable telephone surveys conducted in the two countries in 1996. Evangelicalism’s influence on moral conservatism and value priorities is transnational, but its influence on economic conservatism is distinctively American. Compositional analysis shows this pattern is largely shaped by the greater influence of fundamentalism among U.S. evangelicals.

Introduction

One of the most prominent ideas subsumed within “American exceptionalism” is that evangelical Protestantism has always had an unusually (perhaps even uniquely) powerful influence on the U.S. political culture. This commonplace assumption in comparative political study dates at least to Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. Even by comparison to Canada, argues Seymour Martin Lipset (1990, 1996), a leading advocate of American exceptionalism, the United States has been and continues to be distinctive.

Lipset argues that from the colonial days to the present, a particular set of values and ideological emphases have distinguished Americans, and these values in turn help explain why U.S. political behavior and institutions are distinctive. Among these ideological tendencies, two are said to especially implicate evangelicalism: (1) a streak of conservative moralism that fuels recurring crusades for social reform, and (2) meritocratic individualism that supports the spirit of capitalism, anti-statist attitudes, and a bourgeois economy. Evangelicalism in the United States is exceptional because it has had exceptional success injecting this ideology — a combination of social and economic conservatism — into the main arteries of the nation’s political culture.

Lipset does not directly address whether U.S. evangelicalism is distinctive, not only for the muscle it has flexed promoting this ideological package, but also for the very content of this package. Is it possible that one or both of these two right-wing ideological tendencies is not shared by co-religionists abroad? Lipset’s failure to examine closely the politics of evangelicals outside the United States is reflective of most of the literature in this area, the vast majority of which is strictly American. The extant literature does not clearly establish if evangelicalism has a common political effect across borders, or if it has diverse effects.

As a transnational religious movement, evangelicalism might be expected to produce cross-border similarities. National boundaries are increasingly permeable, facilitating the transnational diffusion of religious groups and religious social movements (Rudolph and Piscatori, 1997). And because U.S. evangelicalism has tremendous resources to apply to international projects (Hunter, 1987) — support for leadership training, missionaries, revivalists, Christian broadcasters, publishers, and entertainers — there may be reason to suspect that non-U.S. evangelical politics is taking its cues from the U.S. experience, emulating its rightist ideological bent.

This article explores the extent of transnational similarity (an evangelical transnationalism hypothesis) or difference (an evangelical diversity hypothesis) in the effect of evangelical belief on political behavior. Given the global diffusion of evangelicalism, a full comparative test would require a virtually global study. Our analysis has more modest ambitions, focusing on a bilateral comparison of the United States with Canada. As Lipset's own arguments in defense of American exceptionalism attest (Lipset, 1990), Canada has great value within the "most similar" strategy of comparative case selection. Canada's structural similarities and proximity to the U.S. make it an appropriately difficult hurdle for the American exceptionalism thesis to clear. We employ data from the 1996 *God and Society in North America* survey of Americans and Canadians (Angus Reid Group, *et al.* 1996) to determine the relationship between evangelical doctrine and policy preferences on a range of moral and economic issues. Using OLS regression and the slope dummy approach, we analyze both the direction of the relationship between evangelical religion and these political orientations, and the relative strength of the relationship across the U.S.-Canada border.

Background and Literature

While religion has increasingly been recognized as a global phenomenon, the burgeoning scholarly corpus on religion and politics remains largely a collection of single country or regional studies. Within this subfield, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the phenomenon of “fundamentalism,” abstracting common traits from a wide variety of religious traditions. The specific religious tradition that gave birth to fundamentalism, evangelical Protestantism, has been carefully studied in the United States, but has received less attention in comparative studies of social movements and comparative religion and politics research.

To be sure, a growing number of multi-national studies of evangelicalism have been published in recent years (Wallis and Bruce, 1985; Coleman, 1993; Soper, 1994; Noll, Bebbington, and Rawlyk, 1994; Poewe, 1994; Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, 1996; Freston, 1998; Bruce, 1998). Still, much of the terrain remains unexplored, and the need for such studies is increasingly apparent due to worldwide patterns of religious change. As David Martin (1999) has observed, evangelicalism, especially in Pentecostal and charismatic forms, is growing rapidly in diverse locales around the world—Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, Korea, the Philippines, China, Romania, and elsewhere. In many western advanced industrial societies, particularly the English-speaking ones, it is holding its own or growing (even as other Christian traditions lose adherents), and is of ongoing special relevance in Ulster and South Africa.

There are conflicting findings in the literature examining non-U.S. cases of evangelical political attitudes. Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose (1996) have argued that American evangelicalism is successfully exporting right-wing ideology, especially to developing countries. However, single-nation studies of evangelicals in Nicaragua (Smith and Hass, 1997), Chile (Steigenga and Coleman, 1995), and the

Netherlands (Dekker and Stoffels, 1993) suggest that evangelicals are not necessarily right-wing. Similarly, the literature on North American evangelicalism is less than conclusive and especially thin vis-à-vis comparative politics. There are only a few published studies of contemporary Canadian evangelicalism (Stackhouse, 1993; Burkinshaw, 1995; Rawlyk, 1996, 1997). And while much of this evidence, along with more general studies of North American religion, suggests that Canadian evangelicalism should not be expected to comport with the pattern set by its American neighbor, recent changes cast doubt on the conventional wisdom that conservative evangelical politics is necessarily “un-Canadian.”

The conventional expectation of divergence in evangelical politics across the 49th parallel is built on factors both external and internal to Canadian evangelicalism. Regarding the former, Canadian political culture and national identity are the most significant. The Canadian political tradition has historically emphasized moderation and deferential appreciation for the state and its programs (such as national health insurance). And Canada has no “charter myth” (Bibby, 1987) of divine blessing, no sense that it is a chosen nation entrusted with a special covenant. Likewise, it boasts few cultural supports for civil religion (Kim, 1993; Reimer, 1995). Consequently, invocations of nostalgia for a time when the nation supposedly enjoyed divine favor because the values of traditional morality and economic self-reliance held sway do not resonate very deeply in Canada.

What’s more, Canadian nationalism has long been self-consciously defined in opposition to American national identity. In some respects American and Canadian national identity can be seen as inversely proportional—the more that a given trait is identified as “quintessentially American,” the less likely it is to be embraced by the typical Canadian nationalist. Accordingly, while in America few are

surprised when evangelical religious rhetoric is pressed into service for a conservative political agenda, the unwritten rules of Canadian public discourse call for contemptuous rejection of this sort of religious politics.

Thus the Canadian cultural context might exercise an external check on evangelical conservatism. This blunting effect might be all the greater due to the demography of Canadian evangelicalism; evangelical Protestants are a smaller minority of the Canadian population (between 10% and 12%, depending on the measurement criteria employed) than they are of the U.S. population (between 25% and 33%). Canadian evangelicals, furthermore, have no regional stronghold comparable to the American South. As a result, Canadian evangelicals may have greater difficulty maintaining sub-cultural boundaries and mustering the numerical strength necessary to influence politics.

The composition of Canadian evangelicalism—that is, the balance of movements and denominations that comprise it—likewise argues for its political distinctiveness. In their 1985 essay outlining reasons why they believed that the “deep structure” of Canadian society mitigates against a Moral Majority-style “politics of moral causes,” John H. Simpson and Henry G. MacLeod cited the “historical insipidity of fundamentalism as a cultural force in Canada” (228). Indeed, fundamentalists, who have a long history of strict moralism and militant opposition to Social Gospel liberalism and Communism (and who have been prominent in the American Christian Right), have always been a comparatively minor presence in Canadian evangelicalism (Rawlyk, 1990; Gauvreau, 1991; Stackhouse, 1993). On a proportional basis, more Canadian evangelicals are to be found in denominations that do not share this tradition of hostility to liberal social teaching—such as Mennonite, Reformed, or mainline denominations. In contrast, U.S., evangelicals are comparatively more likely to

be found in the pews of Southern Baptist and independent Baptist churches.

Also, if Canadian evangelicalism produces few historical examples of clergymen, interest groups, or party politicians who champion across-the-board conservatism, it does have a notable historical association with economic populism. American evangelicalism has a record of occasional partnership with populist movements (Hertzke, 1993; Williams and Alexander, 1994; Bicha, 1976), but in the 20th century the Canadian record is stronger. Under the leadership of party founder and radio preacher William “Bible Bill” Aberhart, Alberta’s Social Credit Party offered a classically populist economic response to the Depression. And in Saskatchewan the socialist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, forerunner to the New Democratic Party, originally had roots in evangelicalism. Indeed, a Baptist clergyman, Tommy C. Douglas, was the first socialist premier of a Canadian province.

Notwithstanding these reasons to doubt a U.S.-Canada convergence in evangelical political attitudes, the possibility cannot be ruled out. Historically, American influences on Canadian evangelicalism have increased while British influences have waned (Noll, 1997). Some of this influence is a result of immigration (for instance, in the early 20th century the Canadian prairies welcomed a sizeable contingent of American settlers). More important, though, is Canadian participation in U.S.-based evangelical denominations, and Canadian exposure to U.S.-produced evangelical culture—books, magazines, videos, contemporary Christian music, radio and television broadcasters, traveling revivalists, parachurch associations (such as the Promise Keepers men’s movement), etc.

The rise of a North American “generic evangelicalism” (Reimer, 2000), stamped “Made in the U.S.A.,” may well have political as well as religious implications. As social movement scholars have amply demonstrated, transnational diffusion (McAdam and Rucht, 1993) of movement ideas and tactics

is a common occurrence. This is all the more likely in light of the ever-accelerating process of regional economic integration under NAFTA and, more broadly, of globalization, which minimizes the importance of national boundaries to cultural flows (Waters, 1995; Robertson, 1992).

As a social movement, the American Christian Right has been active since the late 1970s. Twenty years later, there are indeed some *prima facie* signs that cross-national contagion has occurred in Canada. The evidence for this is especially clear with respect to moral issues, which in recent years have generated increased conflict in Canadian politics (Brook, 2000; Foot, 2000). Many evangelicals have felt that their moral values are under attack, especially from the courts, which since the 1980s have delivered numerous decisions advancing legal abortion and gay rights. In response, a range of evangelical activist groups have become increasingly active in issue advocacy and court interventions (Herman, 1994; Hoover, 1997; den Dulk and Hoover, 1999).

The evidence of economic conservatism among organized evangelical activists is more mixed. Some organizations, such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, jealously guard their reputations of being more moderate than their American counterparts, while others, such as the Canada Family Action Coalition, emulate the thoroughgoing conservatism and aggressive partisan tactics of the Christian Coalition (Hoover, 1997). Indeed, activists of the latter sort scored a major victory on July 8, 2000, when Stockwell Day (a sometime lay Pentecostal preacher) became leader of the Canadian Alliance Party, Canada's Official Opposition (Walker, 2000; Heer, 2000; Desbarats, 2000). Day is an unabashed champion of combining social with economic conservatism, and his rise has sparked widespread speculation (and no small amount of media hand wringing) about the further Americanization of Canada (Hoover, 2000).

Thus, we are confronted with two strands of literature pointing in opposite directions. Lipset points to the unique influence of evangelical religious beliefs in American political culture's tilt toward individualism and moralism. More recent social movements literature suggests that religion exhibits strong transnational effects on public opinion and politics across borders. Are U.S. and Canadian evangelicals separated by a "continental divide" (Lipset, 1990)?

Empirical Analysis

Data

Our analysis is based on telephone surveys of 3023 Americans and 3000 Canadians conducted by the Angus Reid Group between September 19 and October 10, 1996.¹ Respondents were asked about national priorities, likely vote choice in the next national election, subjective proximity of parties and candidates on a range of issues, political participation, opinions on social, moral, and economic issues, religious beliefs and identification, and opinions on the role that religion should play in political life. Interviews were conducted in both English and French in Canada, and in English and Spanish in the United States. Surveys conducted in the two countries were very similar in both content and question order. Most questions were identical (in the English language versions), though some were necessarily adapted for the national context.

The content, comparability, and large sample sizes of the surveys make this dataset well-suited for addressing our basic questions: Are evangelicals in the United States and Canada distinctive in their political attitudes, and, if so, does evangelicalism have different effects in the two countries? In this paper, we will examine evangelicalism's effects on individual's national priorities and attitudes on homosexual rights, abortion, and on the government's role in society and the welfare state.

Method

We answer these questions with regression analysis with slope dummy variables (Hanushek and Jackson, 1977: 106-108). In a regression model, the estimated coefficient for a dummy variable is the mean effect of having a particular quality (e.g., evangelicalism) as opposed to not having that quality, controlling for the other variables included in the model. The basic structure of the model is represented by

$$Y = a + b_1 \text{ U.S.} + b_2 \text{ Evangelicalism dummy} + b_3 \text{ U.S.} * \text{ Evangelicalism} + b_{4\dots k} \text{ control variables} + e$$

This formulation, with dummy variables for evangelicalism and U.S. residency, as well as an interaction term between them, allows us to address several questions. The b_1 coefficient tells us how much U.S. non-evangelicals differ from Canadian non-evangelicals. The b_2 coefficient tells us the degree to which Canadian evangelicals differ from Canadian non-evangelicals. Finally, the b_3 coefficient tells whether the effect of evangelicalism is significantly different in the two countries. The interaction term (U.S. * Evangelicalism) can be referred to as a “slope dummy variable”, and its coefficient represents the difference in slopes of evangelicalism on the dependent variable in the two countries. Thus, statistically speaking, transnational effects of evangelicalism are reflected by a non-zero b_2 coefficient and a zero b_3 coefficient. Exceptional effects of evangelicalism in the U.S. are indicated by a non-zero b_3 coefficient.

Independent variable

Our key independent variable is doctrinal evangelicalism. Evangelicals were identified by their agreement (either moderately or strongly) with *all* of the following “common denominator” (cf. Bebbington, 1989; Kellstedt, 1989; Burkinshaw, 1995; Rawlyk, 1996) evangelical beliefs statements:

- I feel that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of my sins.
- I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.
- I have committed my life to Christ and consider myself to be a converted Christian.
- I feel it is very important to encourage non-Christians to become Christians.

For the entire sample, this measure achieved a high reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.87$), suggesting that it did indeed evoke a consistent reaction among respondents. Non-Christians, Catholics, Witnesses, Mormons, Orthodox, and Blacks in both countries are coded as non-evangelicals, reflecting the separate “social embodiment” (Green et al., 1996) of their beliefs and identity. Table 1 shows that doctrinal evangelicalism is more widespread in the United States than in Canada.

[Table 1 about here]

The doctrinal approach is one of three alternatives commonly used to identify theologically conservative Protestants. While the alternatives, denomination or self-identification, are available in the *God and Society in North America* dataset, they are much less commonly used and have not been validated for use outside the United States. Under the circumstances, the most prudent strategy is to rely on agreement with doctrinal statements that are widely recognized as the hallmark of evangelical theology.

Dependent variables

We created a national priorities variable based on respondents’ answers to a series of closed ended questions. Respondents received a point on the moralist national priorities scale if they answered that “preserving and promoting the family” was more important than either “protecting the environment”

or “building a healthy economy”, and if they answered that “raising moral standards” was more important than either “giving people more say in government” or “maintaining law and order in a nation.” A point was deducted if “preserving and promoting the family” was identified as the least important priority in its set, and another point was deducted if “raising moral standards” was the least important in its set. The resulting scale ranges from +2 (most moralist priorities) to -2 (least moralist), with “don’t know” excluded as missing. Table 2 shows that Americans are more moralist on this measure than are Canadians.

[Table 2 about here]

We also assess attitudes on social issues. Moral conservatism is reflected in disagreement with two statements: “Any governmental regulation of abortion is an infringement upon the rights of women” and “Homosexuals should have the same rights as other (Canadians/Americans).”² Because the correlation between the responses on these two questions is modest in both countries ($\tau_b = .177$ in Canada and $.225$ in the U.S.), they are analyzed separately. The mean scores for the two countries on the abortion question are quite similar (2.45 in Canada, 2.47 in the United States, $t = 0.509$, $p = .61$), but Canadians were slightly more sympathetic to equal rights for homosexuals than were Americans (2.46 in Canada, 2.55 in the U.S., $t = 2.148$, $p = .032$).

These first three items above tap dispositions that are usually defined as social or moral issues. These are the kinds of questions on which evangelical Protestants have usually emerged as politically distinctive in studies of the United States. To assess opinions in a domain where evangelicals have not always been deemed distinctive, we also created an index measuring opposition to the social welfare state. Respondents received a point on this index for each of the following responses:

- moderate or strong disagreement with “The government should spend more to fight hunger and poverty even if it means higher taxes,”
- moderate or strong disagreement with “The gap between the rich and poor in this country is a significant problem,”
- preference for “The less government the better” over “Government should be involved in aspects of society,” and
- preference for “The free market can handle economic problems without government being involved.” over “We need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems”

The resulting scale ranges from 0 (most supportive of government involvement) to 4 (most opposed to government involvement) with $\alpha = .58$. On the whole, Canadians score lower on this scale (1.40 to 1.63, $t = 6.94$, $p < .01$).

Control Variables

Because our goal is to isolate the effects of evangelicalism on political behavior, it is crucial to control for the many social factors associated with evangelical affiliation and other factors likely to account for mass political attitudes. Accordingly, we created dummy variables to represent Black (either African-American or Afro-Canadian), Catholicism, female, being married, the use of the French language in Canadian interviews, and the use of Spanish language in U.S. interviews. We also controlled for education and income categories and age (in years). An appreciation of regional variations is vital for an understanding of public opinion in both countries, and it is possible that evangelicals may appear to be different than non-evangelicals due to their regional concentrations. To control for that possibility, we created dummy variables for residence in the U.S. South and the

Canadian prairie provinces.³

Results

Table 3 presents the estimated regressions for the national priorities variable, opposition to gay rights, and opposition to abortion. High scores on the national priorities variable indicate that respondents accord more importance to moral and family concerns than to other priorities. The equation shows several things. First, evangelicals are more moralist in their national priorities than are non-evangelicals. This unsurprising finding rests on the observation that the coefficient for doctrinal evangelicalism is large, positive, and significant.⁴ Second, even controlling for evangelicalism and a host of other factors, Americans are more moralist than are Canadians (the coefficient for the U.S. dummy is positive and significant). Third, evangelicalism has quite similar effects on national priorities in both countries, as shown by the small and non-significant coefficient on the interaction between evangelical doctrine and U.S. residence. The other patterns in the table are fairly straightforward. Moralism is higher among Catholics (especially U.S. Catholics), Southerners in the U.S., older people, and married people, and lower among people with higher levels of education and French speaking Canadians.

[Table 3 about here]

At the bottom of the first column of Table 3, we provide a clear picture of the effects of evangelicalism and country on moralist priorities by noting the predicted values for an “average” person (a forty-four year old White married English-speaking woman who resides outside the U.S. South and Canadian Prairies with a mean score on education and income). Moralism is higher in the United States than in Canada for both evangelicals and non-evangelicals, but the effect of evangelicalism is similar in the two countries. The average effect of evangelicalism in Canada is .98, the difference between the

Canadian evangelical score (.73) and the Canadian non-Catholic non-evangelical score (-.25). The average effect in the United States is slightly smaller in magnitude (.80), the difference between our U.S. evangelical score (.99) and our U.S. non-Catholic non-Evangelical score (.19). The two countries have different baselines, but evangelicalism has similar effects on national priorities across the border.

Table 3 also shows the effects of evangelicalism on opposition to abortion rights. Looking at the findings, the coefficient for evangelicalism is positive and significant, and the coefficient for the interaction term between evangelicalism and country is trivial. Taken together, these coefficients show that evangelicalism is strongly associated with opposition to abortion in both countries. The predicted values for our “average” evangelicals on both sides of the border are very similar (3.00 in Canada, 2.95 in the U.S.), as are the predicted values for non-evangelicals (2.09 in Canada, 1.99 in the U.S.). Religious influence on attitudes about abortion appears to be transnational.

The last column of Table 3 shows that evangelicals are significantly more opposed to equal rights for homosexuals than are non-evangelicals in both countries. As we saw for the other two dependent variables in the table, the coefficient for evangelicalism is positive and significant. The small nonsignificant coefficient on the interaction term again suggests that Canadian and U.S. evangelicals are roughly similar in their opposition to gay rights, and that expectation is borne out in the predicted values. The “average” non-evangelicals in the two countries have nearly identical scores on gay rights (as do the “average” Catholics), and the “average” evangelicals also have similar scores.

The findings for all three dependent variables in Table 3 tell essentially the same story, and support the transnational interpretation of evangelical influence on public opinion. Evangelicals are more morally conservative than non-evangelicals in both societies, and there is no substantial difference in the

reactions of evangelicals by nationality. However, before we conclude that evangelicalism has a uniformly transnational impact, we must look at a dependent variable that is not so closely tied to the moral values of this religious tradition.

Model 1 in Table 4 shows a striking difference between Canadian and American evangelicals in attitudes toward income inequality and government's role in society and the welfare state. As we have seen, and consistent with conventional wisdom (Lipset, 1990), Canadians are more concerned about economic inequalities and supportive of government's role in alleviating them than are Americans (despite the fact that those inequalities are sharper south of the border). In contrast to the findings on moralist issues, evangelicalism has a trivial impact on the opposition to redistribution, but the coefficient for the slope dummy representing U.S. evangelicals is positive and significant. This pattern shows that U.S. evangelicals (but not their Canadian co-religionists) are distinctive in their opposition to the welfare state, and is borne out in the predicted values. The difference between the average evangelical and non-evangelical scores in the United States (.27) is over five times as large as the corresponding difference in Canada (.05). To put it another way, Canadian evangelicals' attitudes about redistribution are similar to Canadian non-evangelicals' attitudes, and both are, on average, less opposed to big government than are U.S. non-evangelicals or Catholics. U.S. evangelicals are even more sharply opposed.

[Table 4 About Here]

Sources of Difference

Having controlled for the major factors likely to confound religious differences, the results provide support for the claim that U.S. evangelicals are most distinctive from their Canadian brethren in their attitudes about wealth distribution and the role of government in the economic sphere.

Evangelicals in both countries have moralist national priorities, and are opposed to abortion rights and equal rights for homosexuals, but American evangelicals are distinctive in their disdain for large government.

What is it about evangelicals in the two countries that account for their differences on the role of government? If the goal of comparative research is to eliminate proper names as explanatory variables, we must explore some factors that may account for the way in which the evangelicals part company in this domain. One possibility is that economic conservatism is especially pronounced among the most religiously committed evangelicals, and that Canadian evangelicals are less religious than their U.S. counterparts. These survey data suggest that is not the case. Despite the generally higher rates of self-reported church attendance in the United States, American and Canadian evangelicals attend weekly worship services at identical rates (59.2% for Canada, 59.4% for U.S., $t = -.05$, $p = .96$).

Another possibility is that because the connection between evangelicalism and political conservatism has been encouraged and cultivated by the actions of political elites, American evangelicals are politically distinctive in their association with the Christian Right. In both countries, interest group activists and elected politicians associated with the Christian Right have been attempting to mobilize evangelicals behind an agenda of thoroughgoing conservatism, but the American Christian Right social movement is both older and larger. But again, our data do not support this conjecture, as American evangelicals are no more prone than Canadian evangelicals to identify themselves with the Christian Right (58.8% for Canada, 59.3% for U.S., $t = -1.6$, $p = .87$).

Compositional differences may be significant factors. If particular denominations or religious movements within evangelicalism are especially prone to economic individualism, and those groups are

over-represented in the United States as compared to Canada, controlling for affiliation with these groups may make U.S. evangelicals less distinctive. As we noted earlier, American evangelicalism harbors disproportionately large contingents of Baptists and fundamentalists (Kollar, 1998; Rawlyk, 1996). The Baptist tradition has been associated with an individualist ethos (Hiller, 1978), and some studies comparing fundamentalists to other evangelicals suggest that the former are more conservative in their political ideology (Wilcox, 1987; Smidt, 1988; Beatty and Walter, 1988). Compared to the doctrinal evangelicals in Canada, American evangelicals in the *God and Society in North America* dataset were somewhat more likely to think of themselves as fundamentalists (37% vs. 32%) and much more likely to claim membership in a Baptist church (26% vs. 9%).

We modified the regression models by adding Baptist and fundamentalist dummies and their interactions with U.S. residence. As is apparent from the second model in Table 4, the Baptist variable did not perturb the earlier findings. Notwithstanding the much larger proportion of Baptists among U.S. evangelicals, the significant difference between U.S. and Canadian evangelicals remained. However, the analysis with the fundamentalism dummy told a different story. With this measure included as the final model in Table 4, we learn it is the fundamentalism of American evangelicals that apparently drives them further to the right on economic issues than their Canadian counterparts. The interaction term for U.S. fundamentalism drives the U.S. evangelicalism variable to non-significance. It appears that Tocqueville and Lipset were correct that the religious composition of the United States is largely responsible for its generally anti-statist and anti-welfare orientations. However, this can now be stated with more specificity; America's economic conservatism is related to its large population of self-identified fundamentalists who hold exceptionally conservative views on redistributive issues.

Interpretation

The empirical analysis revealed an interesting interaction between issue type and national behavior. On three items that have been defined as moral issues—family concerns, abortion and gay rights—evangelical Protestants in the United States and Canada reacted quite similarly. On broader questions with economic ramifications, the evangelicals in the two countries reacted differently. American evangelicals were more conservative than their fellow countrymen and their Canadian coreligionists.

We suspect this is a function of multiple reference groups. In their study of Roman Catholics in the United States, Welch and Leege (1991) reported that Catholics who practiced what they called evangelical-style devotions were similar in political outlook to other Catholics on some issues but distinctive on others. On closer inspection, they found that the evangelical-style Catholics supported the position of the Church on issues where Catholic leaders had issued clear and unambiguous policy guidelines. But on questions that had not produced authoritative pronouncements from the Vatican or the North American leadership, these Catholics imbibed political direction from evangelical Protestant televangelists.

An analogous pattern emerges from these data. If there is one thing that distinguishes evangelical preaching on social issues, it is what Samuel Hill once described memorably as “finger sins.” For evangelicals, Christian morality has long centered on “right behavior” in personal relations and preachers emphasize lapses as grave failings. The literature from the United States shows abundantly that the major themes of evangelical preaching on politics are concerns about alcohol abuse, drug use, homosexuality, abortion, sexuality in the media, etc (Welch et al., 1993; Guth et al., 1997). Discussion

of economic and what are sometimes called “social justice” questions does not loom large in the evangelical world but tends to preoccupy mainline Protestantism. Although there is a paucity of data analyzing evangelical preaching on social messages in Canada, we suspect that the major focus is also on the traditional moral issues (Reimer, 1996).

This suggests a conclusion similar to that drawn by Welch and Leege. On political issues where the evangelical tradition provides clear guidance, evangelical Protestants in the United States and Canada exhibited the same political tendencies. Where such guidance is absent or mixed, we would expect evangelical attitudes to be affected both by national cultural influences external to evangelicalism and by the particular balance of economic voices within each nation’s evangelical community. Thus the two groups of evangelical Protestants reacted with predictable moral conservatism on questions of family values, abortion, and gay rights. On the question of economic justice, American evangelicals were influenced by the general American cultural tradition of anti-statism and the particular social forces that have prompted fundamentalists to embrace economic conservatism. Canadian evangelicals, who are less likely to be found in fundamentalist environments and whose national cultural milieu is much less friendly to right-wing polemics and laissez faire individualism, were prone instead to embrace the modal Canadian position.

Table 1

Doctrinal Evangelicalism in Canada and the United States

	Canada	United States
Evangelical	11.8%	32.7%
Not Evangelical	88.2%	67.3%
Number of cases	3000	3023

Source: “God and Society in North America, 1996” survey. Evangelicals are those who agree with four evangelical belief statements, excluding Non-Christians, Catholics, Witnesses, Mormons, Orthodox, and Blacks (see text). Calculations by authors.

Table 2

National Priorities in Canada and the United States

	Canada	United States
- 2 Least Moralist	21.5%	10.6%
- 1	22.7%	14.7%
0	26.2%	22.2%
+1	17.4%	20.4%
+2 Most Moralist	12.3%	32.1%
Number of cases	2759	2730

Respondents received a point on the moralist national priorities scale if they answered that “preserving and promoting the family” was more important than either “protecting the environment” or “building a healthy economy”, and if they answered that “raising moral standards” was more important than either “giving people more say in government” or “maintaining law and order in a nation.” A point was deducted if “preserving and promoting the family” was identified as the least important priority in its set, and another point was deducted if “raising moral standards” was the least important in its set. “Don’t knows” are excluded as missing.

Table 3

Regressions of Moralistic Priorities, Opposition to Abortion, and Opposition to Gay Rights

	Moralistic Priorities		Opposition to Abortion		Opposition to Gay Rights	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
(Constant)	-0.72	0.11	2.25	0.12	1.93	0.12
Evangelical Doctrine	0.97	0.08	0.91	0.10	0.73	0.09
USA	0.62	0.15	-0.16	0.17	0.03	0.17
Evangelical Doctrine * USA	-0.17	0.11	0.05	0.12	0.10	0.12
Catholic	0.26	0.06	0.38	0.07	0.12	0.07
Catholic * USA	0.19	0.09	0.13	0.11	-0.01	0.10
Black	0.37	0.20	-0.12	0.22	0.72	0.22
Black * USA	-0.05	0.22	0.30	0.25	-0.47	0.25
Married	0.20	0.06	0.08	0.06	0.26	0.06
Married * USA	0.03	0.08	0.21	0.09	0.13	0.09
Education	-0.04	0.02	0.03	0.02	-0.15	0.02
Education * USA	0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03
Age	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00
Age * USA	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.00
Income	-0.02	0.02	-0.04	0.02	-0.03	0.02
Income * USA	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.03	-0.00	0.03
French language (Canada)	-0.21	0.07	0.09	0.08	-0.18	0.08
Spanish language (USA)	0.00	0.12	0.29	0.13	0.05	0.13
Female	0.09	0.05	-0.24	0.06	-0.45	0.06
Female * USA	-0.00	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.24	0.08
Canadian Prairie	0.06	0.07	0.16	0.08	0.11	0.08
US South	0.13	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.22	0.06
R ²	0.15		0.07		0.13	
Number of Cases	5016		5418		5418	

Predicted values for 44 yr old white English-speaking female with average income and education, who does not reside in the Canadian Prairies or the U.S. South.

Canadian Evangelical	0.73	3.00	2.96
Canadian Catholic	0.01	2.47	2.35
Canadian Non-Evangelical	-0.25	2.09	2.23
U.S. Evangelical	0.99	2.95	3.05
U.S. Catholic	0.63	2.50	2.34
U.S. Non-Evangelical	0.19	1.99	2.22

Table 4

Regression of Attitudes toward Income Inequality and the Welfare State

	Model 1		Model 2 (Model 1 + Baptist)		Model 3 (Model 1 + Fundy)	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
(Constant)	1.05	0.10	1.05	0.10	1.04	0.10
Evangelical Doctrine	0.05	0.08	0.04	0.08	0.03	0.08
USA	0.09	0.14	0.10	0.14	0.05	0.14
Evangelical Doctrine * USA	0.22	0.10	0.23	0.10	0.13	0.10
Catholic	-0.02	0.06	-0.02	0.06	-0.03	0.06
Catholic * USA	-0.04	0.08	-0.04	0.08	-0.06	0.08
Black	-0.43	0.18	-0.44	0.18	-0.43	0.18
Black * USA	-0.26	0.20	-0.24	0.20	-0.29	0.20
Married	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.05
Married * USA	0.11	0.07	0.11	0.07	0.09	0.07
Education	-0.02	0.02	-0.02	0.02	-0.02	0.02
Education * USA	0.09	0.03	0.09	0.03	0.09	0.03
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Age * USA	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Income	0.15	0.02	0.15	0.02	0.15	0.02
Income * USA	-0.08	0.03	-0.08	0.03	-0.08	0.03
French language (Can.)	-0.18	0.06	-0.18	0.06	-0.18	0.06
Spanish language (USA)	-0.58	0.11	-0.59	0.11	-0.55	0.11
Female	-0.34	0.05	-0.34	0.05	-0.33	0.05
Female * USA	-0.17	0.07	-0.17	0.07	-0.16	0.07
Canadian Prairie	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.07
US South	0.11	0.05	0.12	0.05	0.11	0.05
Baptist	—	—	0.17	0.19	—	—
Baptist * USA	—	—	-0.21	0.20	—	—
Fundamentalist	—	—	—	—	0.06	0.08
Fundamentalist * USA	—	—	—	—	0.26	0.10
R ²	0.11		0.11		0.115	
Number of Cases	5091		5091		5091	

Predicted values for 44 yr old white English-speaking female with average income and education, who does not reside in the Canadian Prairies or the U.S. South.

Canadian Evangelical	1.32	1.30	1.30
Canadian Catholic	1.25	1.24	1.24
Canadian Non-Evangelical	1.27	1.27	1.27
U.S. Evangelical	1.70	1.70	1.57
U.S. Catholic	1.37	1.37	1.32
U.S. Non-Evangelical	1.43	1.43	1.41

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Notes

1. The Principal Investigators for the “God and Society in North America, 1996” survey were the Angus Reid Group with Queen’s University’s George Rawlyk Research Unit on Religion and Society; the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, John Green, Jim Guth, Lyman Kellstedt, and Corwin Smidt. The data collection was funded by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. We obtained the data from the Religious Data Archive (<http://www.thearda.com/archive/QUEEN'S.html>, accessed June 8, 2000). Neither the principal investigators nor the source of the data should be held responsible for our analysis or interpretation.
2. Responses are coded so that the most conservative responses receive the highest scores (strong disagreement = 5, moderate disagreement = 4, don’t know = 3, moderate agreement = 2, strong agreement = 1).
3. In our U.S. sample, nearly half (47%) of all evangelicals live in the South, and evangelicals constitute nearly half (44%) of the Southern population. Evangelicals are not as numerous nor as regionally concentrated in Canada, but the Prairies appear to be the region most likely to account for observed differences between evangelicals and non-evangelicals. 27% of all Canadian evangelicals live in the Prairie provinces, and they constitute 20% of the population of the region.
4. Coefficients which are roughly twice (or precisely 1.96 times) the size of the associated standard errors are statistically significant from zero at a 95% confidence level. Following Gill (1999), we eschew designation by stars.