



Canada and the United States – important differences

A series of books and studies have been produced over the last few years, arguing that Canada and the United States are distinct in terms of their culture and their values – including the place of religion within those cultures.

See, for example:

Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (Penguin, 2003).

Using research to determine where Canadians and Americans fit on a social values grid, Adams argues that distinct differences in values have emerged between the two countries and are increasing. The book is rich in details which explore these differences, including those related to religion.

One fascinating reality is that this book was published before the attacks on September 11, 2001 and before the invasion of Iraq. One would anticipate that the growing divisions between the two nations in terms of values has only been increased by these recent events.

More recently Michael Adams has published *American Backlash: The Untold Story of Social Change in the United States* (Viking: 2005). The book uses data from surveys to analyze values in the United States. Among the book's arguments is the suggestion that in many ways the real division is not between politically engaged liberals and politically engaged conservatives, but between those who are politically engaged and those who are apathetic. Like all of Adams' books, this one is well written and thought-provoking.

Why does this matter?

Canadians continue to look to the United States for resources on how to make the church alive in the early 21st century. Hence our word of caution – the literature is showing that there are important differences between the two cultures. Anything from the United States, and particularly from certain regions in the United States, will need to be either used carefully or heavily translated.

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