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"For God and Country": Religion and the Endorsement of National Self-Stereotypes

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Abstract

Based on analyses of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and civil religion (Bellah, 1967), we reasoned that devout, intrinsic religion would be associated with the salience and importance of a nation's depiction of itself (i.e., the national self-stereotype). The contents of national self-stereotypes were expected to differ as a function of the nation's distinct history. To test this possibility, Canadians and Americans were asked to list and then rate the importance of the thoughts that came to mind about their own country. Among Americans, intrinsic religious orientation predicted greater ascribed importance to the national "heritage" (e.g., freedom, equal opportunity, tradition, and family), and to traditional national symbols such as the flag. Among Canadians, intrinsic religious orientation predicted greater ascribed importance to the official policy of multiculturalism, but was unrelated to the enshrining of national symbols. In both cases, intrinsic religion was associated with the endorsement of ideological components of the nation's dominant self-stereotype. Implications of these findings for both religious and national identification, and for political behavior more generally, are considered.

"For God and Country":

Religion and the Endorsement of National Self-Stereotypes

Defining the proper relationship between "church" and "state" has, for centuries, sparked considerable debate. Indeed, even within recent history, preferred models of religion and nation relations as institutions have varied dramatically--from the Islamic theocracy of Iran to the officially atheistic former Soviet Union. Religiously inclined individuals have likewise struggled to define their role as citizens of a nation-state, with equally divergent consequences, leading Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch (1996) to suggest that religion can inspire either acceptance or rejection of the dominant political system.

Certainly, there exists much anecdotal evidence consistent with both acceptance and rejection of the political system by religious groups and their members. In the United States, for example, religions indicate their support for the political system by their unobtrusive display of the Stars and Stripes near the pulpit or altar in places of worship, and in such congregation-sponsored events as Fourth of July celebrations. More extreme manifestations of acceptance include attempts to enlist the political system as an agent for instituting religiously-inspired public policy by organizations such as the Moral Majority or the Christian Coalition. Yet, religion in the U.S. can also seemingly inspire rejection of the political system. Salient examples include refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance among Jehovah's Witness schoolchildren, or the withholding of taxes by congregations of the American Coalition of Unregistered Churches. Such observations nicely illustrate the variety of possible religious connections to existing national ideology. They fail, however, to identify whether (and why) certain responses are more typical than others among religious persons. Indeed, Hood et al. (1996) remarked that the interface of "faith and politics" is a "realm that begs for exacting research" (p. 145).

Thus, in the present research, we sought to examine the relationship between religion and what is perhaps the most basic political construct: the nation.

The Inescapability of Nationhood: "Banal Nationalism"

According to Billig (1995), "nation" is a fundamental political construct because its existence is a necessary presupposition for political dialogues to take place. The phrase "Members of the Canadian Parliament," for example, implies both a unity and an exclusiveness of purpose. Even if two Members of Parliament belong to opposing parties or bitterly disagree for ideological reasons, they do share the common goal of shaping the political system of their own nation, Canada in this example, as opposed to some other nation, such as the United States. Indeed, Billig (1995) argued that "nation" is an inescapable construct even when the focus of attention is on more mundane matters, as when national boundaries are displayed on a continental weather map, or when an "unwaved" national flag hangs unassumingly over a community sports arena. The result, to use Billig's term, is "banal nationalism," where an implicit awareness of one's national identity is maintained via such unobtrusive reminders.

Of what does national identity consist? As with other social or political categories, one's nation can provide first a sense of "we-ness," of identification with the group (Koch, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Those who do not belong are correspondingly transformed into "foreigners," members of an outgroup nation. Second, the nation provides a common group stereotype (analogous to the self-concept at the individual level), which aids the citizen in defining who s/he is, as well as how s/he should act (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Turner, 1982). In international affairs, for example, Canadians may perceive themselves primarily as diplomats or peacekeepers, whereas Americans may perceive themselves as committed to promoting freedom and democracy via their role as the "world's police force" -- perceptions that may, at least to some degree, reflect the actual status conditions of the two countries (see Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). Third, the nation provides outward markers or symbols of its collective

identity such as flags, anthems, monuments, and heroes. Such symbols serve an important communicative function for outsiders as well as insiders. As Billig (1995) has pointed out, no nation is recognized as such by the world community without distinctive symbols such as national flags or anthems.

Fusing Faith and Politics: Civil Religion

We suggest that the combination of collective identity, common group stereotypes, and the shared symbols that are inherent in nationhood bears a striking resemblance to core features of religious systems. Devoutly religious individuals, relative to the less devout, are highly motivated to maintain perceptions of themselves as exemplary religious group members in the face of disconfirming evidence for example (see Burris & Jackson, in press). Orthodoxy of belief, or adherence to "correct" ideology, seems particularly integral to maintaining religious group boundaries (Deconchy, 1980, 1984). Religious symbols and religiously-connoted kinship language have been implicated as potential facilitators of intense religious experience and group-oriented prosocial behavior, respectively (Batson, 1983; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). Given the evident similarities between the two, it is not surprising that the boundary between "faith and politics" -- to use Hood et al.'s (1996) phrase -- can sometimes blur, resulting in a syncretism labeled "civil religion."   Invoked most often in analyses of the American political system (e.g., Bellah, 1967; Benson, 1981; Billig, 1995; Hood et al., 1996; Reimer, 1995), civil religion has been applied occasionally (e.g., Hood et al., 1996) to situations in which a religious group such as the Christian Coalition attempts to further its agenda through widespread political involvement. In such cases, the implication is that the nation is subordinate to religion. More often, however, the reverse is implied--that is, religious identity, ideology, and symbols are enlisted to further the nation's dominant political interests. Billig (1995) stated this position forcefully: "The order of nations is not designed to serve God, but God is to serve the order" (p. 5). Regardless of which is subordinate--religion or nation--or whether that varies by context,

civil religion supports and legitimates the dominant political system.   How pervasive, then, is civil religion? That is, to what degree do religious and national group identities overlap among citizens, at least in North America? That religion is viewed as integral to "the American way of life" seems well established. Reimer (1995), for example, noted that the percentage of Americans who report regular attendance at religious services is substantially and consistently higher than percentages in all other industrialized nations. Moreover, evidence exists that the reported frequency of church attendance among Americans is greater than actual attendance (e.g., Hadaway, Marler, & Chaves, 1993), underscoring the apparent social desirability of religious involvement. Similarly, stated agreement with traditional religious concepts (e.g., belief in God) among Americans tends to be relatively high even among the religiously inactive compared to Canadians who are not religiously active for example (see Reimer, 1995).

Thus, there is ample support for the suggestion that the majority of Americans offer, at minimum, token assent to religious ideas or ideals, at least when asked directly by a surveyor. The question remains as to how deeply ingrained such religious assent is and whether citizens spontaneously link their national and religious identities. We are unaware of any research that has directly addressed this question. There are, however, some strands of evidence that supply indirect support for the suggestion that devoutly religious individuals might be particularly likely to absorb aspects of their national or cultural milieu. For example, based on a then-extensive review of the literature, Dittes (1969, p. 636) noted that "religion is associated...with a strong responsiveness to the suggestions of other persons or other external influences." More recently, Schwartz and Huismans (1995) found consistent evidence of commitment to preserving traditional values across four major Western religions (see also Burris & Tarpley, 1998, Study 3). Likewise, Snook and Gorsuch (1985) observed that a measure of devout religious commitment predicted greater preferred social distance from non-Whites among white high school students of Afrikaaner, but not English, descent, suggesting that the nature of

the relationship between religion and prejudice depends upon subcultural norms (see also Batson et al., 1993, for an analysis of the regional variability of the link between religion and prejudice). Finally, devout religious commitment has been found to be associated with increased social desirability concerns, although the interpretation of this oft-replicated finding remains open to debate (e.g., Batson, Naifeh, & Pate, 1978; Leak & Fish, 1989; Richards, 1994; Watson, Morris, Foster, & Hood, 1986; and for a recent examination of the link between social desirability concerns and conformity to perceived group norms in a nonreligious context, see Postmes & Spears, 1998).

Thus, available evidence (some of which is cross-cultural) suggests that (especially devout) religious individuals are likely to endorse the values and norms that are consistent with the (sub)culture in which they are embedded. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that religious individuals may be also likely to feel identified with or connected to their nation, to engage in national self-stereotyping, and to spontaneously associate "official" symbols with their nation. Even if this hypothesized relationship between religion and national identity generalizes across nations, however, the specific contents of national identity may obviously vary considerably. To illustrate, we consider the potential similarities and differences in national identity content between two neighboring nations: the U.S. and Canada.

National Identity Among Neighbors: The United States and Canada

One of the more thorough expositions of the differing national identities of the U.S. and Canada has been provided by Lipset (1990a, 1990b, 1996). According to Lipset, the clarity of U.S./Canada differences depends upon the context of comparison: Subtle differences between these two North American nations can be obscured if both are compared to Tanzania, Paraguay, or Kazakhstan, for example. When, however, they are directly compared with each other, the differences are more obvious, and can be traced to the contrasting historical origins of the two countries. As a result of the American Revolution, the United States was founded largely by a group of political and religious

refugees whose commitment to populist democracy was motivated, in part, by their desire to forestall the potential for oppression deemed inherent in monarchies and other elitist forms of government. As a consequence of having been born of such ideologically-justified rebellion, the U.S. came to be more individualistic, more assertive, and more possessing of a clear concept of its national "way of life" than its northern neighbor. In contrast, the settlers of Upper Canada were generally not malcontented refugees. Rather, they were individuals who accepted living in the New World as subjects of the British (or French) governing body, with the eventual establishment of a bicultural, confederated Canada being motivated more by convenience than by an ideologically-rooted desire for independence from the motherlands. Thus, owing to its more peaceable birth, Canada is more oriented towards cooperation, is less individualistic and assertive, and has a less clear concept of a national way of life than does its southern neighbor (Lipset, 1990a, 1990b, 1996). Given these very different histories, in what ways might the contents of the respective national identities of contemporary Americans and Canadians differ?

In the U.S., commonplace phrases capture the clear conception of a national way of life that Lipset (1990a, 1990b, 1996) suggested. "The American Dream," for example, conjures up historic images of hopeful immigrants coming to America, working hard, and becoming successful. This promise of individualistic reward--along with professed values such as freedom, democracy, and family--are the core elements of "the American Way" or "the American Heritage." Moreover, the U.S's world presence and reputation as a "superpower" is consistent with its ideologically-based drive to "keep the world safe for democracy," i.e., to protect and to promote American interests. These aspects of the American self-stereotype are crystallized in the U.S.'s "official" symbols -- pervasive, potent, and banal reminders of the American way of life (Billig, 1995). The Stars and Stripes, for example, is the devotional focal point for both the American national anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance. Thus, to the extent that American civil religion encourages a fusion of national and religious identities, we might expect religiously committed

(versus nonreligious) Americans to be particularly likely to think of their country in terms of its shared "heritage," its international role as a world power, and its official symbols, such as the flag.

Characterizing Canadian national identity has historically proven to be a difficult task. Rather than having well-known phrases to describe Canadian identity, we can only point to "symptoms of Canada," to use Keohane's (1997) phrase. Perhaps the most frequently cited symptom is Canada's ideological commitment to multiculturalism, declared to be an official policy of the federal government in 1971 (see Lipset, 1990a). Reflective of its confederation as a joint venture of France and Britain, Canada's emphasis upon maintaining cultural distinctness among its various immigrant populations contrasts sharply with the "melting pot" (or cultural assimilation) model of the U.S. Canada tends also to be more pro-government than is the U.S., a stance facilitated by the absence of political revolution in Canadian history and exemplified by greater federal and provincial regulation of economic and social matters (e.g., taxes and health care; see Lipset, 1990a, 1990b).

Canadians are arguably more likely than Americans also to include geography and the natural environment as part of their national self-stereotype. The land may loom larger in Canadian consciousness, in part, because Canada is physically larger but much less densely populated than the U.S. (e.g., Keohane, 1997; Olive, 1996). Finally, a probable symptom of Canada is a sheepish attitude toward national symbols, due in part to the fact that the official adoption of such symbols has been relatively recent. For example, the red and white Maple Leaf became the official flag of Canada in 1965; "O Canada" became the official national anthem in 1980. This, in combination with Canada's commitment to multiculturalism, may effectively suppress the importance of traditional symbols with respect to Canadian national identity. To the extent that there exists a fusion of religious and national identities in Canada, we would therefore expect that religiously committed (versus nonreligious) Canadians may be particularly likely to think

of their country in terms of its multiculturalism, its pro-government stance, and its physical features, but not in terms of its official national symbols.

The Present Research

In order to test our specific predictions for the two countries, we first asked American and Canadian students to list whatever thoughts that came to mind when they thought of their respective nations. They were then asked to rate the importance of each feature or thought that they had generated. Assessing the degree of importance assigned to the different self-generated thoughts seemed to be as critical as assessing the contents of the thoughts themselves for, as research in ethnic stereotyping has shown, an individual's awareness of the content of a stereotype does not necessarily imply that s/he endorses it or perceives is at valid (Devine, 1989).

We then content analyzed participants' thoughts about their nation. Based on the preceding theoretical analysis, we expected several specific content themes to be evident and ascribed greater importance as a function of whether they were part of the nation's self-stereotype. Specifically, we expected heritage and power themes, along with distinctive national symbols, to emerge and be deemed as more important among Americans versus Canadians. Similarly, we expected multiculturalism, government, and environment themes to emerge and be deemed more important among Canadians versus Americans. Thus, to determine the respective national self-stereotypes of the U.S. and Canada, we subsequently assessed whether the absolute magnitude of each importance-weighted thought category differed by nation.

In order to test whether devout religious commitment would predict endorsement of the national self-stereotype in the U.S. and/or Canada, we had participants complete measures of religious commitment and, for comparison purposes, measures of national identification and authoritarianism. Thus, to assess whether the "faith and politics" relationship is similar for each nation, we subsequently compared religious commitment/ national self-stereotype correlations for Americans and Canadians. We expected that

religious commitment would be associated with thoughts related to the categories centered on heritage, power, and official national symbols such as the Stars and Stripes among Americans. In contrast, among Canadians, we expected that religious commitment would be associated with thoughts concerning multiculturalism, the government, and the physical environment, but not with recently acquired national symbols such as the Maple Leaf.

<div align="center">Method</div>

Participants

The American sample consisted of 83 psychology undergraduate students (44 women; 39 men) from the University of Kansas. The (English) Canadian sample consisted of 72 psychology undergraduate students (42 women; 30 men) from the University of Western Ontario. Participants from both samples received partial course credit in exchange for their involvement. Religious affiliations were generally comparable in the two samples: There were 28 Protestant, 29 Catholic, 9 Jewish, 10 agnostic, and 7 "other" respondents in the American sample, and there were 28 Protestant, 17 Catholic, 6 Jewish, 11 agnostic and 9 "other" respondents in the Canadian sample. The Canadian respondents were somewhat older ($\underline{M} = 21.72$, $\underline{SD} = 6.65$) than the American respondents ($\underline{M} = 19.06$, $\underline{SD} = 2.03$), $\underline{t}$ (153) = 3.47, $\underline{p} < .001$, although age was not reliably related to any of the variables in the analyses we report.

Materials and Procedure

The study was conducted in small groups. Upon arrival, participants received a packet of materials that they completed at their own pace. After the questionnaires were completed, participants were debriefed and thanked.

Religion measures. As a measure of religious commitment, participants completed Gorsuch and Venable's (1983) "age-universal" adaptation of Allport and Ross's (1967) Intrinsic religious orientation scale (see Burris, 1998, Burris & Jackson, in press, and Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990, for reviews of research supporting use of the

Intrinsic scale as a measure of religious commitment and/or religious group identification). This 9-item scale used a 9-point (1 = <u>not at all</u>; 9 = <u>very much</u>) response format, and yielded an internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .91. For comparison purposes, participants also completed three additional measures of religious orientation: Gorsuch and Venable's (1983) Extrinsic scale, which measures the degree to which religion is deemed useful for seeking nonreligious ends such as personal comfort and social status; Batson and Schoenrade's (1991) Quest scale, which measures the degree to which asking existential questions, doubts, and openness to change are seen as positive aspects of religious experience; and Burris and Tarpley's (1998) Immanence scale, which measures degree of emphasis on present-oriented awareness and acceptance of one's experience, as well as the motivation to transcend intra- and interpersonal boundaries. Because, as expected, the pattern of findings we present was uniquely associated with the intrinsic orientation, these other measures will not be discussed further.

National identification. Participants also completed a 4-item measure of national identification. Specifically, they rated how much each of the following items applied to them, using a seven-point (1 = <u>not at all</u>; 7 = <u>very much</u>) Likert-type response format: "I identify strongly with other Canadians [Americans] as a group"; "I feel attached to my identity as a Canadian [American]"; "Even if I could change my nationality, I wouldn't want to"; "I value being a member of my nation." These types of items have been used successfully to assess degree of identification with a group (or "we-ness") in other domains such as gender (Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 1996). This scale yielded an internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .88.

Authoritarianism. In response to recurring concerns that observed relationships between religious indices and variables of interest may be attributable to (right-wing) authoritarianism (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), we also asked participants to complete Gelfand, Triandis, and Chan's (1995) 8-item measure of authoritarianism. This

scale used a 7-point (1 = <u>not at all</u>; 7 = <u>very much</u>) response format, and yielded an internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .73. Both this and the previous measure were included primarily as covariates, i.e., to assess whether intrinsic religious orientation could predict endorsement of national self-stereotypes or symbols over and above two variables that seem logically to be more proximally related, viz., authoritarian tendencies and intensity of national identification.

<u>National stereotypes and symbols</u>. In order to assess the contents of the national self-stereotype as well as the salient symbols that participants associated with their respective countries, we asked participants to list up to 10 thoughts that came to mind when they thought of their nation (Canada or the United States). They were then instructed to rate the importance of each thought or idea that they had listed, using a seven-point (0 = <u>not at all important</u>; 6 = <u>extremely</u> <u>important</u>) Likert-type response format.

The first two authors devised a content-coding scheme that incorporated categories of stereotypes and symbols that were broad enough to accommodate responses from both Americans and Canadians, yet theoretically meaningful enough for us to expect differing degrees of endorsement as a function of participants' nationality. For example, the "Government" category could accommodate a uniquely American respondent such as "two-party system," as well as a uniquely Canadian response such as "accessible health care." Two categories of national self-stereotypes were expected to be cited as more important by Americans than by Canadians: Heritage and Power. Three categories of national self-stereotypes were expected to be cited as more important by Canadians than by Americans:
Multiculturalism, Government, and Environment. In addition to these, four other categories were identified, none of which was expected to be differentially endorsed as a function of nationality: Prosperity, Traits, Emotions, and Other. Two symbol categories also emerged: "Official" symbols, including such things as flags, anthems, and

monuments, were expected to be deemed more important by Americans versus Canadians; "Unofficial" symbols, including such things as sports, food, and entertainment, were not expected to be differentially endorsed as a function of nationality. Table 1 presents a sample of the responses that were assigned to each category.

Two coders, blind to participants' religious orientation scores, independently coded each completed thought-listing task. Interrater agreement was approximately 95%; differences were resolved by discussion. Thoughts assigned to any given category received a "1" with respect to that category; thoughts not relevant to that particular category were assigned a "0." No thought was assigned a "1" for more than one category. Weighted-category scores were subsequently computed by summing the importance ratings for every listed thought relevant to a given category for each participant. Weighted scores could therefore range from 0 (0 thoughts and/or all importance ratings equal to 0) to 60 (10 thoughts and all importance ratings equal to 6). The actual range of category scores varied from 0-12 for Power to 0-44 for Official Symbols.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Preliminary Analyses

Intrinsic religious orientation. Mean Intrinsic religious orientation scores among Americans (M = 4.40) and Canadians (M = 3.89) did not differ significantly, t (153) = 1.49, p < .14. Intrinsic score variances for the Americans (4.37) and Canadians (4.67) also did not significantly differ, t < 1, suggesting that it is unlikely that any between-nation differences in the correlates of intrinsic orientation observed are artifacts of differences in Intrinsic scale score distributions between the two samples.

National identification. Similarly, the overall level of national identification among Americans (M = 5.74) and Canadians (M = 5.76) did not differ, t < 1. National identification variances for Americans (1.39) and Canadians (1.77) were also comparable, t < 1.

Authoritarianism. Americans were somewhat more authoritarian (M = 4.44) than were Canadians (M = 4.14), however, t = 2.10, p < .04. The variance of American authoritarianism scores (.94) was also greater than the variance of Canadian scores (.64), t (153) = 2.58, p < .02.

National stereotypes and symbols. As shown in Table 2, Canadian and American participants spontaneously generated and ascribed importance to thoughts according to the predicted pattern. Specifically, Americans were more likely to list "heritage-related" values (e.g., freedom, equal opportunity, tradition, and family) and (military) power as relevant and important to American identity than were Canadians with respect to Canadian identity. Canadians, in contrast, cited multiculturalism, government, and the environment as more important to national identity than did their American counterparts. References to prosperity, traits, emotions, and other, unclassifiable themes did not differ between the two nations. Also as expected, Americans were more likely than Canadians to generate and to ascribe importance to a variety of official national symbols (e.g., flag, anthem), whereas references to unofficial symbols (i.e., indirect associations such as "hockey" or "apple pie") did not differ between nations.

Hypothesis Testing

To the extent that there exists a fusion of religious and national identities in the U.S. or Canada, we expected religious commitment to predict spontaneous association of, and importance ascribed to, the self-stereotypes and/or symbols of the respective nations. Specifically, we expected intrinsic religious orientation to predict thoughts related to heritage, power, and official symbols among Americans. In contrast, we expected intrinsic orientation to be associated with thoughts related to multiculturalism, government, and the environment, but not official symbols, among Canadians.

Results offered partial support for our predictions. First, as shown in Table 3, the Intrinsic/Heritage correlation was positive and significant for Americans (p < .006), whereas for Canadians it was not; the two correlations significantly differed, z = 1.95, p <

.03 (one-tailed). Second, the Intrinsic/Official Symbols correlation was positive and significant for Americans ($\underline{p}$ < .03), but not for Canadians; these two correlations also significantly differed, $\underline{z}$ = 1.85, $\underline{p}$ < .04 (one-tailed). Third, the Intrinsic/Multiculturalism correlation was positive and significant for Canadians ($\underline{p}$ < .001), whereas for Americans it was not; once again, these two correlations significantly differed, $\underline{z}$ = 3.03, $\underline{p}$ < .002 (one-tailed). Fourth, Intrinsic scale scores were not significantly related to Prosperity, Traits, Emotions, Unofficial Symbols, or Other in either national sample. Not consistent with predictions, however, the American Intrinsic/Power correlation and the Canadian Intrinsic/ Government and Intrinsic/Environment correlations also did not approach significance.   As shown in Table 3, the correlations between either national identification or authoritarianism and national self-stereotypes and symbols were generally unremarkable, with a few exceptions. Both national identification and authoritarianism predicted greater emotional responses and endorsement of heritage-related thoughts among Americans, whereas national identification predicted decreased endorsement of traits among Americans. For Canadians, as for Americans, national identification predicted greater emotional responses. In no case did simultaneously controlling for national identification and authoritarianism reduce to nonsignificance any of the significant correlations between intrinsic religious orientation and national self-stereotypes or symbols in Table 3, however.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

The differences in national self-stereotypes of Americans and Canadians observed were generally consistent with those postulated by Lipset (1990a, 1990b, 1996) based on the different historical origins of the respective nations. Specifically, Americans spontaneously cited "heritage"-related values (e.g., freedom, equal opportunity, tradition, and family) and (military) power as relevant and important to American identity, whereas Canadians associated Canada with multiculturalism and other government policies. Americans were also more likely than Canadians to ascribe importance to official

national symbols such as the flag, as predicted, whereas no differences emerged with respect to unofficial symbols. Canadians were more likely than Americans to include the natural environment as part of their national self-stereotype, a finding which -- although not directly derivable from Lipset's analysis -- is not surprising due to Canada's larger size and sparser population (e.g., Keohane, 1997; Olive, 1996). No differences emerged with respect to thoughts regarding prosperity, another unsurprising finding given the generally comparable levels of economic and technological attainment in the U.S. and Canada. Similarly, no national differences emerged with respect to the importance of traits ascribed (the aspect of national stereotypes that perhaps most resembles the content of stereotypes of individuals) or emotions evoked by the two nations.

Having noted the striking similarity between nation and religion in terms of the provisions that they offer their respective adherents -- viz., collective identity, common group stereotypes, and shared symbols -- we reasoned that devout religious commitment might predict endorsement of national self-stereotypes in both the U.S. and Canada. We found partial support for this prediction. Intrinsic religious orientation indeed predicted ascribing importance to multiculturalism among Canadians, but it did not predict thoughts related to other government policies or the physical environment. Similarly, intrinsic orientation predicted ascribing importance to "the national heritage" among Americans, but it did not predict thoughts related to power. Thus, in each country, religious commitment was associated only with those aspects of the national self-stereotype that are explicitly ideological, versus those that are more internationally consensual. To illustrate this distinction, consider how each nation may perceive the other. Few Canadians would dispute the U.S.'s ability to influence world affairs, for example, but many might question the freedoms and equal opportunity that the U.S. claims to offer in light of its continued problems with racism. Similarly, many Americans may note Canada's vast expanse of wilderness or its reputation for lower crime and a more accessible health care system, but few would be convinced of Canada's

commitment to multiculturalism in light of the ongoing threat of Quebec's separation (e.g., Olive, 1996). By focusing on the subjective, ideological aspects of their respective national stereotypes, intrinsically religious individuals in the U.S. and Canada seem to be projecting a commitment to their own nation's preferred vision of itself, i.e., to notions of what the nation "should" be. Moreover, partial correlation analyses suggested that this apparent commitment was not attributable to greater levels of national identification or authoritarianism among intrinsically religious persons.

Thus, religion appears to be associated with acceptance rather than rejection of the prevailing national ideology, at least among North American university students. That is, in both the U.S. and Canada, the line between religious and national striving seems blurred: God may in fact "serve the national order," as Billig (1995) suggested. It is worth reiterating, however, that the contents of prevailing ideologies differ across nations: The notion of individual striving for success that is enshrined as part of the American heritage contrasts rather sharply with the more interdependent, group-focused conception of Canadian multiculturalism, for example. Thus, although both the U.S. and Canada show evidence of "civil religion," the potential sociopolitical implications of devout religious commitment may differ depending on the national context in which it occurs.

The mode of expression that civil religion takes may also differ as a function of national context. In the U.S., civil religion appears to be externalized via traditional national symbols, as religiously committed Americans were more likely than the less committed to ascribe importance to such objects as the Stars and Stripes. Among Canadians, in contrast, civil religion does not appear to be consistently externalized, as religious commitment did not predict the degree to which official Canadian national symbols, such as the Maple Leaf, were emphasized. Thus, to borrow the traditional ecclesiastical distinction between "high church" (those that emphasize sacrament and ritual) and "low church" (those that deeemphasize the same), intrinsically religious

Americans appear to be "high church" with respect to their national devotion. In contrast, "low church" national devotion appears to be preferable among Canadians. This is a curious finding, given that precisely the opposite would be expected in the religious domain due to the historical prominence of high church denominations (e.g., Anglican) in Canada and low church denominations (e.g., Baptist) in the U.S. (e.g., Lipset, 1990a).[1] This raises the interesting possibility that some form of symbolic expression is essential to obtain the maximum benefits of identification with social groups, such that the relative absence of symbols in one domain may be associated with increased symbol use in other domains (cf. Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). More broadly, consideration of the overlap between religious and national identities raises questions concerning "meta-identity," and whether functional similarities or complementarities between religion, nation, and other social identifications (e.g., gender, ethnicity) can account for their apparent overlap in the self-structure. Such a structural-functional analysis may ultimately provide a coherent account of how individuals successfully or unsuccessfully manage their multiple social category memberships (cf. Deaux, 1996).

We should at this point offer an important qualifier with respect to interpretation of our Canadian data. Specifically, the Canadian sample consisted exclusively of Anglophones rather than Francophones. Ongoing national discussions regarding Quebec's possible secession from Canada, combined with that province's lower ranking on traditional measures of religiosity compared to any other region of North America ("How Very Different We Are," 1996), suggests that there is little reason to believe that our Canadian results regarding national and religious identification would generalize to a French-Canadian sample. Indeed, a natural extension of the present research would be to examine similarities and differences in the spontaneous national stereotypes of French and English Canadians. Such an effort would not only be consistent with the spirit of Canada's official commitment to multiculturalism, but it may also help to clarify what

common ground exists between these two peoples. Inuit Canadians' national self-stereotypes could be similarly explored.

The thought-listing technique that we used to explore national self-stereotypes in this study is not, by itself, novel: Variants have been employed successfully to measure distinct components of intergroup attitudes (Esses, Haddock, and Zanna, 1993) and cognitive responses to persuasive messages (Petty, Ostrom, & Brock, 1981), for example. We believe that its use in the context of assessing national self-stereotypes is an important innovation, however, for it by-passes some of the potential problems associated with standard survey techniques. Most notably, the free response format seems particularly well suited to assessing respondents' spontaneous associations in reference to their respective nations. Unlike survey questions, the contents of which may prime respondents to think about their respective nations in ways that they might not have otherwise, the thought-listing technique allows for assessment of the most accessible images. Relatedly, exclusive reliance upon standard survey techniques could leave important aspects of national stereotypes unassessed, unless one has the foresight to include all of the relevant items.

These advantages notwithstanding, we should also note that our thought-listing technique is still a self-report measure. Thus, it is an open question as to whether the importance that intrinsically religious persons ascribed to aspects of their national ideologies is more than lip-service. It is unknown whether there is any corresponding impact upon political attitudes or voting behavior, and whether that translates into a more left-leaning religious vote in Canada and a more right-leaning religious vote in the U.S. (e.g., Benson & Williams, 1982). Indeed, the veracity of self-reported relationships between religious commitment and prosocial behavior (e.g., helping) has been seriously questioned due to intrinsically religious persons' apparent motivation to present themselves in a socially desirable fashion (see Batson et al., 1993; see also Burris & Jackson, in press). Thus, in the present study, intrinsically religious Canadians professed

to enshrine multiculturalism, but whether they would indeed vote in favor of pro-immigration legislation is an open question. Likewise, although intrinsically religious Americans professed to enshrine individual freedom as part of their shared heritage, whether they would be prepared to defend civil liberties is unknown. Political issues are often sufficiently complex as to invoke conflicting ideological commitments, however. Burning the U.S. flag, for example, pits the American value of freedom of expression against respect for traditional national symbols. Certainly, the context of such an event may determine which ideological commitment is more salient and influential. Thus, the behavioral implications of endorsement of multiple aspects of national ideology, as moderated by situation-specific conflicts and religious and/or national identification, may prove to be a fascinating line of research.

For now, our results remind us of the messages about nations than can be encountered in the U.S. and Canada. We have heard anecdotes of Canadians who attended American services and heard the minister proclaim that "God made America great." We have also heard of Americans who attended Canadian services of the same denomination and heard the minister denounce the importing of American culture by saying that "pretty soon we [Canadians] will be thinking like them." The different -- yet similar -- implications of the links between religion and politics across national borders can be startling. Thus, although there is little question that the devoutly religious perceive themselves to be preservers of "the good," what constitutes "the good" may be more locally defined than congregations and their members realize.

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Footnote

[1]Post-hoc probing revealed two noteworthy religious affiliation effects. First, mirroring the dominance of (particularly evangelical) Protestantism in U.S. history, American Protestants ascribed significantly ($p < .05$) greater importance to heritage-related thoughts ($M = 10.36$) than any other religious group (particularly Canadian Protestants, who were in fact the lowest scoring group, $M = 3.39$). Second, consistent with Lipset's (1990a) suggestion than Canadian Catholics have historically been more politically left-leaning than their American Catholic peers, these two groups were the highest and lowest scoring groups with respect to Multiculturalism ($Ms = 6.76$ and 1.31, respectively, $p < .05$), although neither group significantly differed from their same-nation Protestant or non-Christian religious peers.

Table 1

Sample Contents of National Self-Stereotypes and Symbol Categories

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Distinctive American Stereotypes

      Heritage   freedom, democracy, liberty, land of opportunity,

                                       patriotism, family values, tradition/history

      Power   superpower, armed forces, strength

Distinctive Canadian Stereotypes

      Multiculturalism   welcomes all people, tolerant of diversity, immigration,

                                         helps other nations, melting pot, racism

      Government   welfare, health care system, safety, laws, politics,

                                         corruption, national debt

      Environment   big, beautiful, clean, wilderness, pollution

Non-distinctive National Stereotypes

      Prosperity   technology, jobs, education, wealthy, poverty,

                                       homelessness

      Traits   compassion, quiet, reasonable, reliable, obnoxious,

                                       arrogant, lazy, self-destructive

      Emotions   happiness, optimism, pride, togetherness, confidence

      Other   bright colors, easily identified

National Symbols

      Official   anthems, monuments, president/prime minister,

flags,   eagle/beaver

Unofficial   baseball/hockey, apple pie/beer, rock 'n' roll, "eh?"

Table 2

Comparison of National Self-Stereotype and Symbol Scores by Nation

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	Nation		
-Category	U.S.	Canada	t
-Distinctive American Stereotypes			
Heritage	7.66	4.36	3.47***
Power	1.77	.19	4.10***
Distinctive Canadian Stereotypes			
Multiculturalism	2.06	5.01	4.30***
Government	3.45	5.18	2.09*
Environment	.87	4.47	5.47***
Non-distinctive National Stereotypes			
Prosperity	3.53	2.96	<1
Traits	1.49	2.51	1.62
Emotions	2.40	2.79	<1
Other	.88	.46	1.31
National Symbols			
Official	2.54	.72	2.13*
Unofficial	1.14	1.35	<1

-Note. All significance tests are two-tailed.

*p < .05; ***p < .001.

Table 3

Correlations between Predictors and Importance-Weighted National Stereotypes and Symbols by Nation

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	U.S.			Canada		
	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth

Predictors

	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth
Intrinsic		.20	.24*		-.01	.14
National ID			.54***			-.04

Distinctive American Stereotypes

	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth
Heritage	.30**	.32**	.24*	-.01	.16	-.05
Power	.10	.05	.01	.04	.02	.04

Distinctive Canadian Stereotypes

	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth
Multiculturalism	-.11	-.12	-.03	.37***	-.10	.03
Government	-.03	.02	.04	.02	.17	.21
Environment	.10	-.04	-.02	-.10	.22	.03

Non-distinctive National Stereotypes

	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth	Intrinsic	Natl ID	Auth
Prosperity	-.04	-.08	-.12	.10	-.03	.05
Traits	-.02	-.24*	-.20	-.11	.01	.05
Emotions	.07	.27*	.29**	-.01	.24*	.18
Other	-.18	-.09	-.02	.05	.11	.03

National Symbols

Official	.24*	.03	.10	-.07	.10	-

.04

Unofficial	-.11	-.21	-.04	-.13	.15	.13

-Note. All significance tests are two-tailed.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.