



The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada

Marci McDonald

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In her new book, award-winning journalist Marci McDonald draws back the curtain on the mysterious world of the right-wing Christian nationalist movement in Canada and its many ties to the Conservative government of Stephen Harper.

To most Canadians, the politics of the United States — where fundamentalist Christians wield tremendous power and culture wars split the country — seem too foreign to ever happen here. But **The Armageddon Factor** shows that the Canadian Christian right — infuriated by the legalization of same-sex marriage and the increasing secularization of society — has been steadily and stealthily building organizations, alliances and contacts that have put them close to the levers of power and put the government of Canada in their debt.

Determined to outlaw homosexuality and abortion, and to restore Canada to what they see as its divinely determined destiny to be a nation ruled by Christian laws and precepts, this group of true believers has moved the country far closer to the American mix of politics and religion than most Canadians would ever believe.

McDonald's book explores how a web of evangelical far-right Christians have built think-tanks and foundations that play a prominent role in determining policy for the Conservative government of Canada. She shows how Biblical belief has allowed Christians to put dozens of MPs in office and to build a power base across the country, across cultures and even across religions.

"What drives that growing Christian nationalist movement is its adherents' conviction that the end times foretold in the book of Revelation are at hand," writes McDonald. "Braced for an impending apocalypse, they feel impelled to ensure that Canada assumes a unique, scripturally ordained role in the final days before the Second Coming — and little else."

The Armageddon Factor shows how the religious right's influence on the Harper government has led to hugely important but little-known changes in everything from foreign policy and the makeup of the courts to funding for scientific research and social welfare programs like daycare. And the book also shows that the religious influence is here to stay, regardless of which party ends up in government.

For those who thought the religious right in Canada was confined to rural areas and the west, this book is an eye-opener, outlining to what extent the corridors of power in Ottawa are now populated by true believers. For anyone who assumed that the American religious right stopped at the border, **The Armageddon Factor** explains how US money and evangelists have infiltrated Canadian politics.

This book should be essential reading for Canadians of every religious belief or political stripe. Indeed, **The Armageddon Factor** should persuade every Canadian that, with the growth of such a movement, the future direction of the country is at stake.

The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada Details

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Author : Marci McDonald

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Canada Marci McDonald**

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Dianne says

details organised and far reaching efforts to counteract secularism in Canadian institutions, schools and government. An eye opening book.

Jean-François Lisée says

Excellente présentation de la montée de la droite religieuse au Canada anglais.

Lire ma recension ici: <http://www2.lactualite.com/jean-franc...>

Nadine Lumley says

Marci McDonald, author of the upcoming The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada, says, "Harper has given the religious right a welcome and access in Ottawa and government they've never had before – and they've become used it."

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Review for free on Google Books:
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Peter Darbyshire says

Unlike many Canadians, I've never believed Stephen Harper is the Second Coming of George Bush. First off, I think he's smarter than Bush, although I think Bush had more political cunning. And second, while Bush turned out to be even more religious and right than most of his followers anticipated, Stephen Harper has always appeared to me to be more of an economic conservative than a social one. Now that I've finished reading Marci McDonald's The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada, I see no reason to change that viewpoint.

Sure, the book examines Harper's religious beliefs and background — even down to what churches he has attended — but there's nothing to be alarmed about in the details. Harper goes to church, yes, but his politics

seem informed by the holy books of the economists, not the Bible. In fact, The Armageddon Factor quotes more than a few Christians who complain that Harper has courted them for their votes only to make token efforts to support their causes in office — the vote on gay marriage was designed to fail, for instance — while throwing all the resources of the government into economic and political reform. Hardly the thecon that nightmares are made of.

But as the book makes clear, it's not Harper that poses a threat to our society of multiculturalism and tolerance. It's the growing religious right movement in Canada. Or, more accurately, a growing religious right movement that embraces the American model of intolerance, paranoia and hate. It doesn't matter what kind of conservative Harper is, because he's turned to these people to shore up the party's base, and they are driving the party deeper and deeper into American-style religious fundamentalism and social conservatism. The book cites example after example of Canadian religious zealots who have imported American religious right strategies and moved into the circles of power in Parliament along with the Conservatives, or who influence the Conservative Party through fundraising and social networking, or just plain organizing. Who, in short, are starting to affect policy in ways that even Harper, with his iron fist on his party, can no longer control. Call it Harper's deal with the devil or just politics. It doesn't matter. The Conservative Party of Canada's future will be more Stockwell Day than Stephen Harper.

The Armageddon Factor is fearmongering, sure, but it's fearmongering based on fact. Just take a look south at the border to see how much damage the fundamentalists have caused to that society. Now imagine the same fault lines spreading to this country. It wouldn't take much for the same kind of civil cold war to happen here.

There are flaws with the The Armageddon Factor, of course. It's more anecdotal than statistical, when at times stats would be useful. And it could certainly use more accounts from inside circles, although it's not a surprise politicians are unwilling to talk on record. But what it needs the most is more voices from the religious left, or at least the religious centre. The book — hell, Canada — needs an alternative to the simple formulation of left vs. right/religious right. We need to recognize there are other voices in the religious community besides those who use their bibles to justify their hatred and anxieties, their rejection of modernity and their future. We need to recognize and promote those who embrace tolerance and pluralism, science and reason. In other words, we need to find ourselves in Christian Canada. If not, we're destined to the same descent into madness as the U.S.

Sarah says

As an American whose side of the political spectrum has spent much of the past few decades losing to the other side at least in part due to the influence of the religious right, I've long had an interest in understanding more about how the institutions of the religious right developed, how they operate, and how they are tied to (primarily, although not exclusively) the Republican Party. Despite that interest, I'd never really given much thought to the religious right in Canada, accepting the conventional wisdom that it was weak and isolated, only influential in Alberta and parts of BC. Right wing governments like the Harris government in Ontario might pay a certain amount of lip service to social conservatism, but *deep down* we could rest assured they were secular and driven mostly by economic issues.

Marci McDonald's book was thus a real eye opener for me, detailing as it does the fact that the institutional religious right in Canada is increasingly well-organized, well-funded, and has close ties to the Harper government (even if the Prime Minister himself is sometimes a disappointment to them). And that, although it does have many close connections to U.S.-based groups like Focus on the Family, there are distinctive

Canadian aspects -- particularly the prominence of conservative Catholics (although, coming from Cincinnati, which is both heavily Catholic and a hub of the anti-abortion, anti-gay, and anti-pornography movements, that's not all that different from what I'm used to) and traditionalist ethnic minorities. Which makes the religious right a force to be reckoned with in Canadian politics.

I learned a lot from this book. Granted, I haven't lived in Canada since 2002, and my attention to Canadian politics isn't that consistent these days. So it's possible that, had I been in Canada and paying attention to the national news over the past few years, this all would have been old hat to me. But as it were, this book was both fascinating and informative to me.

Solanderdog says

Excellent book, but it gave me nightmares. It's truly depressing that there are so many people in, and outside of, Canada who truly believe in this nonsensical and immoral religion and how desperately they want to control our schools, courts, and governments. Clearly, our educational systems are failing us.

Jane Harris says

Marci McDonald's understanding of the root causes and of evangelical culture, particularly in Western Canada is minimal and somewhat stereotypical. Still, her book brings to light serious issues regarding the role of political organizations in churches.

In light of the Aberhart era in Alberta, which did more than anything to tie religion to political manipulation, there is much we should be wary of when politicians recruit in churches.

A book worth reading, but it contains some misunderstandings of both theology and relationships between individuals and churches. Some people she calls leaders in the Christian right are not linked to those organizations at all. Others, particularly the more charismatic elements of the so-called Christian right, are barely on speaking terms with the more traditional members of conservative churches.

Marci also doesn't seem to realize that, traditionally Canadian evangelicals called themselves CCFers or social reformers.

Not a bad start, but she needed to understand her subject --and the people she writes about -- better.

Nykea says

Illuminating connect the dots of the rise of Christian nationalism in Canadian politics. Brings to light Harper's ties to evangelical right wing organizations that I never thought could be so powerful.

Peter says

There needs to be an additional star in the rating list. There needs to be one that accepts good writing, a compelling read but at the same time a deep and abiding difficulty. I chose 3 stars because this book makes you argue and think and dispute and those are all good things. But at the same time, McDonald is engaged in spinning a conspiracy theory here that conflates and links too many people and too many perspectives into a vision of an overarching conspiracy bent on creating some Christian Nationalist Theocracy here in Canada. It's a form of leftist envy...we want the Christians in this country to be as crazy as the ones we find south of the border and while there are some they aren't any where as numerous as in America. Read the book, it is worth it, but read it with one question present throughout...what's wrong with people of strong moral conviction engaging in the political sphere?

Adrian Hart says

There were actually few surprises in this book for me. I always had the sense that the Harper government was actively trying to import American-style religious politics into this country, opening the floodgates to allow the sickest and most depraved among the God-squad to mold this country into their own personal wet dream. This book just gave me one more reason to hate the Conservatives. I'm never voting for them again

Hugh says

In her new book, award-winning journalist Marci McDonald draws back the curtain on the mysterious world of the right-wing Christian nationalist movement in Canada and its many ties to the Conservative government of Stephen Harper.

I copied that from a summary of the book. Every Canadian should read this book. It makes what Mr. Harper doing understandable, and to many, very frightening. Read it and make up your own mind.

Isidore says

An extremely disturbing book.

Most Canadians regard the U.S. Christian right with scorn, and smugly assume that we're too enlightened to entrust such crazies with power, but McDonald strips us of this comforting illusion.

Not only do we harbour burgeoning legions of highly-politicized fundamentalists, but, under Harper, they have established themselves in high office and the judiciary, where they make no secret of their desire to profoundly reshape our society. Hawkish Christian Zionists who momentarily expect the Battle of Armageddon determine our foreign policy. Amply-funded think tanks erode our commitment to tolerance, secularism, and multiculturalism with a steady stream of propaganda. There is a growing number of equally well-funded indoctrination centres—sorry, *schools*—training the next generation in the inerrancy of Scripture and the need to fight "pagans" with pit bull aggression. And it turns out we are even more vulnerable to all these machinations than the Americans, since we have no constitutionally guaranteed separation of church and state.

In particular, they are striving ceaselessly to overturn laws protecting homosexuals and abortion rights, replace public schools with Christian schools, and discredit modern science; but their long-term plans are for a wholly "Christianized" state, possibly with death by stoning for the crimes of blasphemy and adultery.

Too bizarre to be true? McDonald interviews many key players in the Christian nationalist movement and explores their ties to cabinet ministers, the PM's office, and the Conservative party in general. She also reports how followers are trained to dissemble, since whenever the public gains some idea of the movement's agenda, it recoils in horror.

The book appears to have been assembled from a series of articles, and wants cohesion; McDonald also fails to clearly differentiate the various evangelical sects under discussion. But the book is still obligatory, if unpleasant, reading for the sane majority of Canadians who don't want to see the country turned into a theocracy.

Sarah says

This is a book of which I periodically read sections. And it always fills me with equal parts relief and nervousness.

Relief because I remember how I felt reading The Armageddon Factor for the first time. I remember what I worried Canada was going to turn into. And while there are definitely exceptions (individual MPs raising the spectre of the abortion debate, the Senate essentially destroying a transgender rights bill), a lot of what I feared did not come to pass.

...which is not to say that I was happy overall with how the Harper government went. No, I think the word I'd use is more "disgusted" and "horrified." But I didn't feel like that was because of any pressing religious bias.

Nervousness because this book is still accurate and well-researched. It describes something that still has the potential to rise and influence politics in our country: the radical Christian right. There's a whole lot of stuff that Marci McDonald gets right, and there's a whole lot of stuff that is still relevant to Canadian politics.

It can be tempting to write off this book now that we've got a majority government. Keep an eye on what's going on with the PCs in Ontario, though, or some of the candidates for the Conservative leadership, and it becomes obvious that this hasn't gone away.

Lynda says

Very interesting and troubling information about how Canadian government officials are threatening our liberty. Anyone who values their religious liberty and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms needs to read this book. Hopefully before the next election (May 2nd, 2011) to prevent Stephen Harper and his Conservatives from obtaining a majority, or even another minority.

One quote from the book illustrates just how dangerous a Stephen Harper government is to our liberty. "In February 2007, on the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Harper rose in the House of Commons to declare that he intended to select judges who respected his legislative agenda...That confirmation of his government's intention 'to imprint its views on the judiciary,' a Globe and Mail editorial marvelled, was unprecedented in the Charter's quarter-century history, but no one doubted his

resolve."

According to the information gleaned by the author there are people in very influential positions in Ottawa who are determined to make Canada a big player in a coming "Armageddon". They seek to force their right-wing "Christian" values on the Canadian people. Peace is not one of those values. Equality for same sex couples is definitely not on their list of values. Women's rights don't make it to the list of values either.

Marci McDonald writes that she is attempting "a wake up call" to Canadians. Please wake up and don't let the Religious Right take over our great country!

Antic says

An excellent book that exposes the close ties of the religious right to the current Conservative government of Canada.
