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—MARK DEVER, Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church

“In a day when we honor megachurch pastors, it is refreshing to read this account of an ordinary pastor—representing the unsung heroes among us who do not aspire to greatness but rather to godliness and faithfulness. This account of Dr. Don Carson’s father gives us valuable insight into the life of a man who accepted the challenges of ministry with both integrity and grace, and in the telling of his story we are also treated to a rare insight into the life of a Protestant pastor in French Québec. This book is a powerful reminder that there are no little places if we are faithful to the God who called us. Read it to be blessed, challenged, and instructed in matters that really count.”

—ERWIN W. LUTZER, Senior Pastor, Moody Church, Chicago

“*Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Ministry of Tom Carson* is a deeply edifying and timely book. Faithfulness, not numbers, not ‘success,’ not novelty, not ‘relevance,’ but faithfulness is the accrediting mark of gospel ministry, and that message comes through loud and clear from introduction to conclusion of this memoir. Reading it brought to mind the powerful words of Anna Waring: ‘content to fill a little space, if Thou be glorified.’ I found the content profoundly evocative and pastorally instructive. In a day and age of celebrity preachers and personality-driven ministries, it is utterly refreshing to be instructed and encouraged by the recounting of unfamous, lifelong, biblical fidelity in gospel labors. Read. Repent. Be encouraged. And then go thou and do likewise.”

—LIGON DUNCAN, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church,
Jackson, Mississippi; President, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals;
Adjunct Professor, Reformed Theological Seminary

“This book is a rare and precious gift from one of evangelicalism’s greatest scholars. It is rare, because given our modern fascination with megachurches and celebrity pastors, we tend to overlook the simple, faithful pastor. It is precious for ordinary pastors like me, because Tom Carson’s life is a biblical and inspiring model for pastoral ministry—ministry that is centered on the gospel, marked by integrity, and faithful to the end. How generous of Dr. Carson to bequeath his father’s quiet legacy to us all. May every pastor and Christian who reads this book aspire to pass on such an ‘ordinary’ legacy.”

—C. J. MAHANEY, Sovereign Grace Ministries

“How can the application of a Bible-saturated mind (Don’s) to a Bible-saturated life (Tom’s) produce an even more helpful story to encourage pastors? Let the ‘mind’ be carried on a river of love because the ‘life’ is his father’s. Then add a kind of narrative creativity you didn’t know Don Carson had. That’s how.”

—JOHN PIPER, Pastor for Preaching and Vision,
Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis

“Scores of books assure us—ordinary us—that we were meant to be extraordinary or to accomplish extraordinary things for God. Well, thank God, this small book by D. A. Carson is not one of them. Recounting part of his father’s *ordinary* life and ministry, and reflecting upon it in his characteristic gospel-centered, lucid way, Dr. Carson strikes at the heart of what’s wrong with us when we forget that, as servants, we were meant to live ordinarily under the gospel of grace. Read this book. You will be deeply encouraged in your life and ministry. You might also stand corrected about your take on true success. Perhaps you will even end up praying you’ll be deemed as ordinary as Tom Carson was.”

—MICHEL LEMAIRE, Pastor of Église Baptiste de la Foi,
Drummondville, 1984-2005

“Those of us ministering in French Canada are proud to point out that D. A. Carson got his start among us here in Québec. In *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor*, not only do we get an intimate glimpse of that start, through the life and times of his father and mother, but we also get another facet, another perspective, of the rich history of the Fellowship Baptist movement in Québec. Obedient and faithful men, like Tom Carson, laid the foundation so others could build upon it. Ordinary builders working on an extraordinary building, the dwelling place of God in French-speaking living stones. *Gloire à Dieu!*”

—REV. TERRY CUTHBERT, Fellowship French Region
Church Planting Director; Former President, FEBCC

“Here is D. A. Carson’s most personal book, providing us with details about his early years in French Canada. This story about his father, documented from Thomas Carson’s personal journals, correspondence, and posthumous testimonies, is a clear demonstration of God’s faithfulness toward a man whose integrity, patience, and deep commitment to French Canadians brought eternal results amidst little fruit, poverty, discouragement. In our twenty-first-century tendency toward glamor, our obsession with numerical growth, and expectancy for quick results, this personal testimony is a healthy reminder of heavenly priorities in the pastorate and Christian ministry.”

—PIERRE CONSTANT, Associate pastor, Église Baptiste
Montclair de Hull, 1982-1997; Professor of
New Testament Studies, Toronto Baptist Seminary



**MEMOIRS OF AN
ORDINARY PASTOR**

**The Life and Reflections
of Tom Carson**

D. A. CARSON

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Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor

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PREFACE

Some pastors, mightily endowed by God, are remarkable gifts to the church. They love their people, they handle Scripture well, they see many conversions, their ministries span generations, they understand their culture yet refuse to be domesticated by it, they are theologically robust and personally disciplined. I do not need to provide you with a list of names: you know some of these people, and you have been encouraged and challenged by them, as I have. Some of them, of course, carry enormous burdens that watching Christians do not readily see. Nevertheless, when we ourselves are not being tempted by the green-eyed monster, we thank God for such Christian leaders from the past and pray for the current ones.

Most of us, however, serve in more modest patches. Most pastors will not regularly preach to thousands, let alone tens of thousands. They will not write influential books, they will not supervise large staffs, and they will never see more than modest growth. They will plug away at their care for the aged, at their visitation, at their counseling, at their Bible studies and preaching. Some will work with so little support that they will prepare their own bulletins. They cannot possibly discern whether the constraints of their own sphere of service owe more to the specific challenges of the local situation or to their own shortcomings. Once in a while they will cast a wistful eye on “successful” ministries. Many of them will attend the conferences sponsored by the revered masters and come away with a slightly discordant combination of, on the one hand, gratitude and encouragement and, on the other, jealousy, feelings of inadequacy, and guilt.

Most of us—let us be frank—are ordinary pastors.

Dad was one of them. This little book is a modest attempt to let the voice and ministry of one ordinary pastor be heard, for such servants have much to teach us.

Sporadically across a ministry that spanned almost six decades, Dad kept journals. There is almost nothing from the first twenty-five years (roughly 1933–1959); most of the journals belong to 1959–1992. Yet these latter documents sometimes comment with perceptive retrospection on Dad’s memories of the early years. Even in the years covered by the journals, Dad sometimes went for a block of time without recording anything. At other times he recorded nothing more than the mundane details of his ordinary ministry: his sermon preparation, lists of people he visited that day, mundane duties of administration, his prayer lists, picking up the kids from school—that sort of thing. And sometimes he carried on for pages of self-reflection, confession, addressing God through his words on the page in heart-wrenching intercession. Certainly he never expected any of his lines to be published: he wrote as a matter of self-discipline, to hold himself accountable. He was not trying to write classic devotional literature.

In addition to his journal, he penned thousands of pages of sermon notes. Ever the pack rat, he kept all the letters he received, and copies of many of the letters he wrote. After Dad had left this life, my brother Jim sent me all the files, and I found every letter I had ever sent home—two or three thousand pages. And clippings: Dad kept envelopes and files and scrapbooks of clippings from newspapers and other publications, trying to keep abreast of what was going on, not only in his own patch but, selectively, throughout the world.

At one point I wondered if there was enough worthy material in the journals to make a book. In that case, these “memoirs of an ordinary pastor” would have been using the word *memoirs* in the sense that the plural form usually enjoys: the work would have been autobiographical, and I would have merely edited it. You would have had before you Dad’s “take” on his ordinary ministry. But frankly, the journals as a whole do not lend themselves to publication. Large chunks of his life and service would not have been accounted for—and in any case, countless pages do not merit wide circulation. So eventually I decided to make this book an amalgam. I have tried to weave together some of the material in Dad’s journals (“memoirs” in the narrow sense) with memories and reports from

other people (what a “memoir” often refers to in the singular). My brother and sister have sent along several pages of their own memories and reflections; the churches Dad served have loaned me their records; trusted friends in Québec have advised me what books and essays I should read to remind myself of the time and place when and where Dad served.

Sometimes I have appealed to his letters, especially in the early years of his ministry when he was not keeping a journal. Where I have done so, I have usually masked the names of those who wrote or those who received letters from Dad by using their initials, for some of these folk are still alive, and certainly most of their children are. Occasionally I have edited these materials in order to correct obvious mistakes (typos and the like), but I have taken care not to change the meaning. When I have inserted an asterisk beside the date, it is to indicate that I have not included everything Dad wrote for that date, but only part of it.

So this is not a critical biography. If it were, I would have included much more about Dad’s ancestry, far more factual details of his ministry, a full account of his wife and our Mum, prolonged probing of the social and historical circumstances of his life and service, more theological probing of his thought, and an attempt at a critical evaluation of his life. But my aim is much more modest: to convey enough of his ministry and his own thought that ordinary ministers are encouraged, not least by the thought that the God of Augustine, Calvin, Spurgeon, and Piper is no less the God of Tom Carson, and of you and me.

Three more brief explanations will set the stage. First, the bulk of Dad’s ministry was in French Canada. That is a foreign culture to many readers in the English-speaking world; so in the first chapter I’ve tried to fill in at least a few of the details needed to make Dad’s vision and passion coherent. In the first half of the twentieth century, Québec was the most Roman Catholic “nation” in the world, if that can be assessed by the per capita numbers of priests and nuns it sent out as Catholic missionaries to other countries. Evangelical witness was extraordinarily difficult. Between 1950 and 1952, Baptist ministers spent a total of eight years in jail for preaching the gospel (though the

charge was inevitably something like “inciting to riot” or “disturbing the peace”). By contrast, today Québec is astonishingly secular, even anti-clerical. Dad’s life spanned the years of dramatic change—though rarely at the time did Dad or other ministers fully grasp the significance of the changes through which they were living.

Second, Dad’s journals were written sometimes in English, sometimes in French. English prevails in the early years of the journals; the final years are mostly in French. Sometimes Dad would switch from one language to the other in the middle of a sentence, or back and forth several times in the middle of the day’s entry. Here, of course, everything has been put into English. Beginning his ministry when he did, inevitably his English Bible was the King James Version; his French Bible was the less outdated Louis Segond Version of 1910. Neither is widely used today, but in deference to Dad’s historical and cultural location, I’ve preserved the KJV for Dad’s Bible quotations, unless he himself departs from the older versions. I have, of course, translated the rare snippets of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin.

Third, I have decided to refer to Dad as Tom (as all his friends called him) in the ordinary course of this book, and to Mum (that’s the dominant Canadian spelling where British influence prevails) as Marg or Margaret (Dad often called her “my dear” but commonly addressed her or referred to her as Marg; he sometimes wrote of her as Margaret). The exception will be when I am talking about family matters. Then they will become “Dad” and “Mum” again.

My thanks to my sister Joyce and my brother Jim for their anecdotes, suggestions, and criticisms. Heartfelt appreciation goes to Michel Lemaire for providing me with important materials that I would have had to spend a lot more time gathering myself. It would be unthinkable to finish this Preface without expressing gratitude beyond measure to Église Baptiste de Montclair and its two pastors during the final years of Dad’s life, viz. the brothers André and Pierre Constant. I know full well that these men and many others feel indebted to Dad. All I can say is that they and the church they served discharged the debt full well in the love and support they provided him during Mum’s eight-year descent through Alzheimer’s

and in his final three years of living on his own. For you see, he was never on his own. God displayed his great love for him in the church's faithful care, making sure the chores around the house got done, even encouraging him in his return to preaching, visiting, and counseling again, at the age of seventy-eight.

At the risk of saying too much prematurely, I end this Preface with two observations. The first is that Dad's "glass half-empty" awareness of his failures and inadequacies rarely aligns with the view of him taken by his contemporaries. I've given this discrepancy a lot of thought and will reflect on it from time to time in this book. The discrepancy may say something important to other ordinary pastors who are feeling discouraged. Second, few assessments of Dad's journals are likely to prove more penetrating than that of Michael Thate, my administrative assistant. Michael cheerfully transcribed the English parts of the journals. When he sent me the last digital files, he accompanied them with an e-mail that said in part, "I used to aspire to be the next Henry Martyn [heroic British Bible translator and missionary to the Muslim peoples of India and Persia]. However, after reading your dad's diaries, the Lord has given my heart a far loftier goal: simply to be faithful. I know we as men are but dust, but what dust the man I read about in these diaries was!" And after proofing the manuscript he sent me a note telling me he was reminded of Tolkien's lines about Strider:

*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king.*

All true. And yet Tom was a most ordinary pastor.

D. A. Carson
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Soli Deo gloria



Every life and every ministry have a historical context. When that context is very similar to that of the reader, very little needs to be said about it. Tom’s context was quite different from that of most people who will read this book. Since he cannot readily be understood apart from that context, this short chapter supplies what is needed.

Canada

The first Europeans to settle the country we now call Canada were French. Samuel de Champlain arrived in 1535—many decades before the Pilgrim Fathers landed several hundred miles farther south. Many of the French settlers were trappers and fur traders—*coureurs de bois*, they were called, literally “runners of the woods.” They established linked communities and trading posts at strategic points along the St. Lawrence River, down through the Great Lakes, across to the Mississippi River, and down the Mississippi to New Orleans. They thus encircled what became the Thirteen Colonies, whose residents tended to be more agrarian.

The differences between the French and English settlers were more than economic and geographic. The French were solidly Catholic and brought French traditions of churchmanship, education, and government with them. The American settlers were

mostly from England, a mix of Congregationalists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians, and eventually Baptists and Methodists. Inevitably the perennial European conflicts between France and England spilled over into the new world. Even within French Canada—then called New France—tensions in Europe generated violence. In France the Edict of Nantes had guaranteed remarkable religious freedom for the fast-growing Protestants, the Huguenots. In 1685, however, King Louis XIV of France revoked the Edict of Nantes. Tens of thousands of Huguenots were killed or sent to the galleys or simply fled. Historians continue to debate how many of them were put to death in New France.

Meanwhile, rising numbers of English-speaking settlers were making their homes to the east of Québec in Acadia. It was not until the British took over New France that substantial numbers of such settlers made homes for themselves further inland, in what was later called Ontario. The turning point came in 1759. General Wolfe from England led a flotilla of warships up the St. Lawrence to Québec City, the seat of government for Québec, pondering how to land his troops and lead them up the sharp escarpment without being slaughtered by the massed French troops on the heights. In the dead of night, he managed to get them up a tiny trail that was left unguarded, and in the morning there was a classic battle on the Plains of Abraham, just outside the city itself. The English won. Both General Wolfe and the defending French General Montcalm were killed. The English took over governance of New France, and this arrangement was finalized and enshrined in the Treaty of Paris, signed at Versailles on 10 February 1763, between France and England. Canada and the American States were ruled from London. By 1791 a distinction was made between Lower Canada and Upper Canada. Lower Canada—so-called because it was situated on the downstream parts of the St. Lawrence, the area we now call the Province of Québec—was French-speaking and Roman Catholic, and its influence stretched through the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi to New Orleans. Upper Canada—so-called because it lay upstream on the St. Lawrence system, in what is now Ontario—was traditionally English and Protestant.

In 1776, when the American War of Independence broke out, not all Americans were convinced that rebellion against the British crown was the right thing to do. Thousands of Americans trekked north and resettled in Upper and Lower Canada. In Canada they were known as UELs—United Empire Loyalists. Historians have sometimes compared the sermons of American patriots in this period with the sermons of UELs: how was the Bible handled in the two populations? Yet not only was there a deep rift between UELs and other Americans, there was also a fundamental division among the UELs themselves. Those who arrived in Upper Canada were absorbed by a population that spoke English and was largely Protestant; those who arrived in Lower Canada faced a thoroughly alien world. Some small percentage of them founded new communities that spoke, taught, and worshiped in English, forming little villages with names like Sawyerville—English Protestant enclaves that were largely left to themselves. But most UELs who settled in Lower Canada eventually intermarried with the French population and were absorbed into its culture and religion. That is why it is still possible to visit towns that are virtually 100 percent French-speaking and find significant numbers of families in the phone book with names like Williams, Smith, and Rogers who cannot understand a word of English.

Subsequent events in American history were sometimes mightily influenced by these developments in the neighbor to the north. Two are worth mentioning. Ongoing tensions between England and America were equally tensions between Canada and the United States, surfacing most dramatically in the War of 1812–14. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain was at war with France, struggling to defeat Napoleon, and used its navy to impede American trade with France, which, understandably, America viewed as illegal restriction of free international commerce. The Royal Navy also pressed many Americans into its service. Equally frustrating to the Americans was the British strengthening of the French-Canadian and Indian forts around the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi to New Orleans, arming them with a ready supply of the most up-to-date weapons. The Americans were now trying to move west and

viewed these military developments with alarm. On 18 June 1812 the Americans declared war on Britain and invaded Canada.

The struggle does not need to be reviewed here: it is the outcome that is important to our story. Americans viewed the conflict as a second war of independence, while the British were less interested in this conflict than in the war with France. Once Napoleon was defeated, that war had achieved its primary aim. Britain cut its losses and signed the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814 to end the war with America. Before news of this signing could reach the U.S. southern coast, United States forces won a resounding victory at New Orleans (its losses on land had been considerable up to that point, including the sacking of Washington and failure to take any part of Canada), while British forces captured Fort Bowyer in Alabama. Canadian and American history books read the results in very different ways. Seeing this (as I've said) as a second war of independence, Americans not only saw the outcome as a resounding victory (the Battle of New Orleans is the stuff of legend) but also found themselves more united as a nation than they had been before the war.

Proud and grateful that they had lost none of their territory, Canadians also saw the outcome as a resounding victory, for under the capable leadership of General Sir Isaac Brock they had successfully repulsed invading American forces, and they too found themselves more united than before the war. Many in the francophone population did not particularly like the British government, but they certainly preferred it to the American, for they feared they would be swamped by America's English language and culture, not to say its Protestantism, if they fell under rule from Washington. Residents of Upper and Lower Canada began to think of themselves as having a good deal more in common with each other than with their neighbors to the south. That newly born sense of unity ultimately resulted in the founding of Canada.

The second major event that must be understood is the birth of Canada. It was not until 1867 that the Dominion of Canada was born under the terms of the British North America Act (now called the Constitution Act, 1867). Until that time Canada (called British

North America until 1867) was essentially ruled by governors sent out from Britain's Parliament at Westminster. Now Canada secured full legislative freedom, barring the right to change the Constitution independently, a right not repatriated (as it was called) to Canada's House of Commons until 1982. The reason for this delay was not that Westminster was begrudging about giving up its power; rather, Canadians could not agree on a formula for changing their own Constitution. Until 1982 changes were made (akin to constitutional "Amendments" in the U.S.) through Westminster. The inability to agree sprang in large part from Canada's substantial minority of French-speaking citizens, understandably nervous about potential constitutional amendments that would take away their unique rights. These we must understand if we are to grasp the shape of evangelical ministry in Québec in the mid-twentieth century.

Québec

Just as the fledgling United States kept adding states until it reached its current total of fifty, so fledgling Canada kept adding provinces until it reached its current total of ten, plus three territories. The last province to be added was Newfoundland (1949). From its beginning, however, Canada had to agree to establish a constitution that would ensure that the provinces enjoyed certain legal rights that would allow Québec to preserve its peculiar linguistic, cultural, and religious character. Although there is a minority of French Canadians in Ontario, along with tiny pockets in Alberta and about a fifty-fifty split in New Brunswick, only Québec enjoys an overwhelming majority of francophones. Although Québec is only one of ten provinces, nevertheless throughout much of the twentieth century about one-third of Canadian citizens claimed French as their first language. (The percentage has in recent years dropped slightly to about 30 percent.) The result was a constitution that made both English and French, at least on paper, official languages of the entire country. Moreover, it granted the provinces enormous legislative rights in virtually every domain except criminal law, national economic policy, and foreign affairs. In other

words, although the other nine provinces developed laws that were roughly in line with British heritage, in Québec criminal matters were constrained by laws derived from the British heritage, but civil, religious, educational, and other cultural sectors were constrained by laws adapted from the heritage in France, frequently from the Napoleonic Code. Perhaps the greatest exception was in the area of religion, where Québec followed neither Britain nor France. Québec never went through anything analogous to the French Revolution with its strenuous anti-clericalism. Québec laws granted enormous authority to the Catholic Church, especially in the domain of education.

Until the 1960s and 1970s, the influence of the Catholic Church among the six million or so francophones in Québec is difficult for those who never lived through that time to imagine. An astonishingly high percentage of the population attended weekly Mass, and the will of the Church was mediated through thousands of priests. It is essential to understand at least a little of what this looked like.

First, the birthrate was very high, and the abortion rate was very low. In many parts of Québec, the average number of children per family was eight. The family that lived behind our home had eleven children. Down the road from where we lived was a family with twenty-one children, no multiple births, one mother. This is not hearsay; we knew the family. It was not uncommon to hear priests urging *la revanche des berceaux* (“the revenge of the cradle”): the English may have taken over the country by military might, but the disparity in birthrates would sooner or later renew French and Catholic strength.

Second, the form of Catholicism in Québec at the time was frankly medieval. This was Catholicism still untouched by Vatican II (1962–1965) and largely uninfluenced by European secularization or the Reformation. I remember the indulgences that were sold, the sight of devout pilgrims climbing the stairs of l’Oratoire St-Joseph on their knees while reciting the Rosary at each step, and popular forms of adoration of Mary that I have seen duplicated nowhere in the world except Poland. I recall the vast crowds that turned out to see Cardinal Léger ride slowly in an open car down the main street

of our city, and as he passed, everyone—well, everyone except the Carsons—fell to their knees or even flat on their faces before him by the side of the road, a human wave that followed the progress of the car.

Third, the Catholic clergy openly encouraged a certain kind of isolationism from the rest of the country. Some of this was understandable. If too many learned English, perhaps the French language, history, and culture would be obliterated. Nevertheless, the system that produced priests, nuns, and lawyers tended not to produce engineers and senior managers, for they would have to interact with peers who spoke English. The result was inevitable: English Canadians, never slow to push their own interests, tended, even within Québec, to be the managers, the bosses, the planners, at least on the economic fronts, while French Canadians were the laborers. Resentments were festering that would explode into violence in the 1960s. These resentments were also fueled by basic inequities. Nominally both English and French were national languages, but whereas an anglophone could be tried in an English-speaking court in Québec, a francophone could not be tried in a French-speaking court in most of the rest of the country. Road signs in Québec were bilingual; elsewhere in the country, they were only in English. A box of cereal that sold across the country was printed only in English.

The fourth factor was perhaps the most important for Tom's ministry in the early years. The Catholic Church had so much authority, through the Québec legislature, in the domain of education that two school boards were set up—one Catholic and the other Protestant. The so-called Protestant School Board was not really religiously Protestant at all. It more or less paralleled the provincial school boards of the other provinces: essentially it was moving in the direction of increasing secularization. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and anyone else could attend. The catch was that this Protestant School Board was permitted to have schools in the English language only. By contrast, the Catholic School Board was distinctively Catholic. Often the teachers were nuns and teaching brothers; it was not uncommon for a priest to be in charge. In other words, the public system for six million francophones in Québec

was essentially like a conservative Catholic parochial school today. These schools, of course, were mostly French. Here, too, there was a catch. If a French-speaking family with children in the (French) Catholic school system converted and, say, became members of a Baptist church, sometimes they were no longer allowed to send their children to the Catholic system.

Where this happened—it was common enough, though it depended greatly on local administrators—the parents soon discovered that if they wanted to send their children to a school under the Protestant School Board, whether because they were forced to or out of theological conviction, the schools of the Protestant Board were in English. There were no French-language schools under the Protestant School Board. Not only did the children often lose a year learning the English language, but over time their friends became English, and their reading skills and educational strengths were in English, and so when they grew up many of them drifted toward English churches. That meant that the French evangelical churches tended to be perennially first-generation churches, since many of the children defected to the English side.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were about seventy French-speaking evangelical Baptist churches dotted up and down the St. Lawrence Valley, most of them belonging to the Grande Ligne Mission. Most of these were small, and some faced the challenges of being perennially first-generation. Theological liberalism wiped out almost all of these churches in the early decades of the twentieth century. By the mid-1930s, only a handful remained, along with a few francophone Plymouth Brethren assemblies, serving a population of six million.

This was the context in which three men—Wilfred Wellington and Tom Carson, both from English-speaking Canada, and a man from Switzerland, William Frey—in the late 1930s committed themselves to full-time church-planting in French Canada. Frey, of course, was fluent in French; the other two had to begin by learning the language. But before we take up that story, it is important to understand how massively Québec has changed in the last seven decades.

Just as many other countries in the Western world went through

their own forms of 1960s and 1970s rebellion, so also did Québec. While America smoked pot in Haight-Ashbury, agonized over Viet Nam, and tore itself apart over Watergate, Québec developed its own homegrown terrorists. They called themselves the FLQ, the *Front de libération du Québec*, and thought of themselves as avant-garde Marxist revolutionaries as they detonated about two hundred bombs between 1963 and 1970. Their violence killed five people and seriously wounded scores more. The end came in October 1970 when the FLQ kidnapped British trade consul James Richard Cross (later released) and snuffed out the life of Pierre Laporte, the Vice-Premier and Minister of Labour of Québec, allegedly strangling him with his rosary chain. Encouraged by Jean Drapeau, the Mayor of Montréal, and Robert Bourassa, the Premier of Québec, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act, effectively imposing a form of martial law across Canada. The FLQ was quickly broken (their cells had already been penetrated by anti-terrorist police), and martial law was lifted.

Trudeau was shrewd enough to see that some grievances had to be addressed. In short order not only cereal boxes but anything that was sold across the nation had to use bilingual advertising, and any project that was federally funded—major highways, for instance, and airports—had to deploy bilingual signs. This was initially irritating to Canadians in English sectors of the country, but in reality they were merely facing the flip side of what French-speaking Canadians had experienced for years. Immersion schools were set up across the country for learning the other language, and the court system became more equitable.

As recently as 1972, there were only about forty evangelical French-speaking local churches in Québec, half Baptist and half Plymouth Brethren, all of them small—so small that those who had paid ministers could afford them only because of supporting grants from churches in English Canada.

But Québec was changing. In the eight years from 1972 to 1980, the number of such assemblies and preaching points grew exponentially to almost five hundred, some of them of substantial size, and representing numerous denominations. In some ways this was a sin-

gular movement of the Spirit of God. Yet God normally uses means, and hindsight sometimes affords a glimpse of those means. In the providence of God, the way for this growth was paved, in part, by the increasing restlessness of Québec youth, growing awareness of a larger world, and the corresponding weakening of the Catholic Church, especially in the cities. From 1960 on, Québec experienced what came to be called the Quiet Revolution, a rubric covering major pieces of legislation and a wide array of cultural shifts. In September of that year, Jean-Paul Desbiens, a friar and educator, published *Les insolences du frère Untel* (“The Impertinences of Brother So-and-So”), a hilarious satire on the manifold weaknesses of the educational system in Québec and a runaway best-seller. The pressure for change was on.

Though they were merely small pieces in the Quiet Revolution, three educational policies pursued by the Provincial government turned out to have a huge unforeseen impact on the gospel. The first was the determined push for more science and engineering in the universities, combined with the formal end of the Catholic Church’s control of education in the Province. The second was the invention, in 1967, of the CEGEP system. CEGEP is a French acronym for *Collège d’enseignement général et professionnel* (College of General and Professional Education). High school ended at year eleven. Students who wanted to go further attended a CEGEP, which offered either a three-year diploma for one of the “skill” or “trade” professions, or a two-year pre-university course before going off to university. In 1967, the year they began, there were twelve CEGEP schools; today there are forty-eight, six of them English-speaking. When the gospel began to make enormous strides from 1972 on, very often it was among the students, especially the young men, of the fledgling CEGEP system. Hundreds of them were soundly converted, and many became, over the next few years, the nucleus of the next generation of French evangelical leaders.

Third, in November 1969 the Québec legislature passed an Act to Promote the French Language in Québec (known as Bill 63). Its purpose and achievement were both complex, but one of the effects of this and other steps in educational reform was that

French-speaking schools could be accessed by anyone regardless of religion; another of its effects was that French was favored in a variety of ways. Thus it became a lot easier to build a second- and third-generation evangelical church.

Today the city of Montréal has the highest per capita number of tertiary (post-high school) students of any city in North America, including Boston. Québec has the highest abortion rate and the lowest birthrate in North America. These latter statistics may not be applauded, but they constitute one measure of the almost embarrassing weakness of current Québec's ancient Catholic heritage. The percentage of Canadians whose mother tongue is French is shrinking slightly, and the primary reason it is not shrinking faster is because of the rising numbers of Haitian immigrants who bring their French and Créole with them. *La revanche des berceaux* ("the revenge of the cradle") is over. Québec is now notoriously secular, except in remote villages—and even there the vitality of the Catholic Church has been sapped.¹ Tom Carson lived through much of this change. In 1972, when the gospel began to advance rapidly, Tom turned sixty-one.

¹Most readers of this volume will probably not be interested in the many technical studies of social and religious change in Canada, and specifically in Québec, in the decades that concern us. For those who may be interested, however, the place to begin is the important essay by Mark A. Noll, "What Happened to Christian Canada?" *Church History* 75 (2006): 245–273. See also Hubert Guindon, "Chronique de l'évolution sociale et politique du Québec depuis 1945," available online at http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/guindon_hubert/chronique_evolution_qc/chronique.html. Less reliable is the work of Glenn Smith, "Le mouvement 'évangélique' au Québec depuis 1960," *Revue Scriptura* 7/2 (2005): 29–46, whose figures do not always align very well with those of Statistics Canada. In particular, his analysis of his figures depends upon the flawed (though admittedly popular) definition of "evangelicalism" offered by Bebbington (David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1830s* [London: Unwin Hyman, 1989], 2–17). The result is that he finds that fewer than 1 percent of Québeckers call themselves "evangelicals" (Statistics Canada, with a slightly different question, puts the figure at 2.7 percent), but about 30 percent of Catholics identify themselves with Bebbington's four defining characteristics of evangelicalism and therefore must be considered evangelical Catholics. In reality, what this analysis displays is the hopeless inadequacy, especially in a Catholic context, of the Bebbington grid.