

Chapter Three

The Québec Church-Planting Challenge

Glenn Smith

Introduction

The inquiry and the stories recounted in this chapter are rooted in three realities seen in Québec today. First, the French world is in dramatic motion. Globalization is now as much a missiological category as it is an economic, technological, or demographic one (see for example: Friedman, 1999 and Schreiter 1997). *La Francophonie*, the French-speaking world of 51 political entities, is but one example of what is transpiring across the globe at the beginning of the 21st century. Québec strives, very successfully, to be at the center of La Francophonie and is very much caught up in this globalizing motion. The province increasingly looks in that direction more than to English-speaking Canada for orientation. Second, urbanization in this political network is exploding. Montréal and Québec City are leaders among the 40 cities with 500,000 or more people in the *La Francophonie* network. The implications are enormous yet these realities are barely beginning to preoccupy the Church. Third, in spite of the continuing marginalization and decline of the social significance of institutional religious life, adherence to rather orthodox traditional beliefs and a strong attachment to one's spiritual roots are evident in Québec. Preparing practitioner-leaders for authentic contextual mission of the Church in places like Québec must be rooted in a new reflection in these three realities. Fresh actions that bring together congregations, mission, and denominational societies and theological institutions into a concerted partnership are a necessity. Otherwise this culture will continue to be an overwhelming challenge for the Church.

This chapter examines the state and needs of the Protestant church in Québec as we move into the 21st century. An ongoing trait of French Protestantism is its commitment to an evangelical faith and practice. As noted in our previous writings on the subject, any liberal or high-church tendencies have been isolated and ephemeral. English Protestantism

is still in a 40-year decline (see Table 1) due to the volatile political landscape. Recent initiatives could bring renewed spiritual life, especially in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Montréal. Immigration has brought vigour to the Church and is one of the most encouraging and fascinating stories in Québec at this time. If the recent initiatives tell us anything, however, it is that it is the evangelical side of Protestantism that is engaging the Québec context seriously; this is true in both principal linguistic communities and among the cultural communities at the present time. In large part this is due to a renewed interest in mission in Québec that has not been seen in decades. Although denominations have always led the way in ministry in the province, more activity has been generated throughout Protestantism than could have been speculated previously. But as we will see, the challenges are real.

The present period is closely linked with the Sermons from Science '67 Pavilion at Expo 1967. This particular form of outreach was the result of the vision of a small group of lay persons with a keen desire to have a clear presentation of the evangelical Gospel made at the International Exposition to be held in Montréal for Canada's Centennial Year, 1967. From the date of incorporation, November 24, 1964, until the day the Fair opened, April 29, 1967, a series of crucial decisions and events took place that brought to fruition this vision. In addition to raising the necessary finances to build the pavilion and to translate the Moody Science Films into French (a first for that organization), this strategy became the joint project of Québec and Canadian evangelicals during Canada's centennial. Over 60 local committees were formed across the country to train people to be counsellors and to do follow-up. Over 8,200 people took the courses, 1,500 served as hosts, 150 Home Bible Study leaders were trained, and 19,000 Bible correspondence courses were distributed. During the years leading up to the Fair and through 1967, \$737,000 was raised.

The Pavilion showed a film 17 times a day, averaging for the six months of the Fair 5,000 people a day. Besides the films, there were four live scientific demonstrations a day. From late April to October 1967, 840,538 people saw one of the films and 261,308 went into the counselling room. Initial predictions foresaw that 70 percent of the attendance would be anglophones, representing the approximately 50 million people that Mayor Jean Drapeau estimated would visit the city for Expo '67. The remaining 30 percent would be Francophones, native *Québécois*. This reflected the harsh realities of little dialogue between Roman Catholics and Protestants at this time and the extreme ultramontanist theology of Québec Catholicism that was only beginning to evolve by the mid-1960s. But in God's providence, those percentages were inverted. Nearly 2 million French Quebecers visited the pavilion. In the climate of post-Vatican II, the Pavilion became a context for dialogue and spiritual renewal.

This chapter is divided in three sections. The first section examines the evolution in present religious/cultural context and familiarizes the reader with the state and the needs of the Protestant church.¹ In the second section, three missiological challenges of mission in the province will be examined. Alongside each challenge, the implications for equipping the Church will be explored. In the final section, we will examine stories from three administrative regions across Québec on what is transpiring.

Three Realities About Québec's Worldview Landscape

Ongoing research about religious life in Québec continues to underscore three tendencies in the worldview.² It is also obvious that ministry practitioners in (post) modern Québec

need to be able to identify worldviews in order to reflect about the spirituality in the context.

The first thing that we see in a worldview analysis of Québec is that religion is alive and well in the culture. Religious affiliation continues to remain very loyal to the Roman Catholic Church. Better than 88 percent of Québécois continue to self-identify as Roman Catholics. As Reginald Bibby points out, “Approximately nine in ten Catholics in Québec...identify with the religion of their parents. To the extent that they don’t, the tendency is to say that they have no religion”³. But in making this first affirmation, we could certainly move beyond the principle criteria that Bibby affirms. In the last major inquiry into the place of religion in public life in Québec during the debate on the place of religion in schools, Léger and Léger documented that only 18 percent of respondents think that religion is very important or pretty important to life today. Eighty percent did think that religion was important or pretty important 20 years ago (definitely another indication of selective amnesia in the culture for those of us ministering back then!). However, when the question is moved from perception to desire, 83 percent of the respondents wanted religion to have a bigger place in public life. Ron Graham said so insightfully about Québec, “Three centuries of mysticism do not evaporate in three decades of materialism”⁴.

The second observation is that spirituality is at the root of the religious affiliation. It is interesting to note that 63 percent of Québécois who have no religious affiliation think that spirituality is very important or pretty important in their lives. This is only slightly lower than for Roman Catholics (74 percent), Protestants (75 percent) and adherents of other faiths (83 percent). Just visit the semi-annual Psychic Expo in downtown Montréal and you will see the manifestation of these percentages. In a study by Serge Larivée, professor of educational psychology at the Université de Montréal, it was found that 89 percent of all books sold in Québec bookstores in 2002 about “science” dealt with the “soft sciences,” like esoteric phenomenon, astrology, paranormal phenomenon, popular psychology, and spirituality as opposed to the study of religions. In fact, numerous bookstores state that more than 50 percent of their sales are from this part of their selections! In Québec, 80 percent of Bell Canada’s revenue from 1-900 toll phone lines comes from astrology service. Pornography counts for the rest.⁵

Finally, the content of the beliefs is not divorced from the socio-cultural changes that have taken place in Québec over the past 40 years. These changes include a remarkable 67 percent decline in weekly church attendance! Although 85 and 88 percent of Québécois continue to affirm belief in God⁶, the waters get murky when you ask people their description of this “God.” Some 31 percent affirm the God of classical church teachings, 46 percent believe in a Creator, “in my own way,” 14 percent affirm that this supreme being is only a force (which parallels the adherence to New Age belief systems), and 8 percent “believe in God,” but affirm that in reality, “life is purely biological.” This demonstrates that Québécois have a very selective adherence to Christian doctrines. Like the majority of Canadians, 61 percent believe in angels, 67 percent believe in heaven, and 62 percent believe in modern day miracles. But in contrast to their fellow Canadians (52 percent), only 32 percent believe in hell and Satan.

It is also important to draw attention to two parallel phenomenon in the socio-religious landscape that have enormous implications on local congregational life. They pertain to charitable giving and volunteering. Everyone is well aware that Québécois give the lowest amount (by far) in charitable giving. Saskatchewan gives the most with an average of \$308

per person per year. In Québec, it is \$127.⁷ Even in the largest French denominations, better than 60 percent of their churches are still subsidized after more than 20 years of existence. This is only true in Francophone congregations. English and ethnic congregations in Québec have a much more liberal style of tithing. Furthermore, the Québec sociologist Gary Caldwell⁸ has shown the startling decline in participation in civil society activities in Québec in comparison to Ontario (which mirrors the national rate) and Saskatchewan (which far surpasses all provinces). Fifty-four percent of people in that Prairie province are involved actively in volunteering in one form or another, whether it be in sports, school, leisure, or fraternal organizations. In Ontario, this drops to 43 percent, the national average. But in Québec, it is only 33 percent, and lower still for people younger than 44 years old.

But Caldwell does show that in Québec this tends to be influenced largely by language (49 percent of Anglophones volunteer actively) and one’s confessional affiliation. Protestants lead the way at 46 percent, followed by people from other religious traditions. People with no religious affiliation have a 39 percent rate of volunteering actively. Roman Catholics figure at the bottom of the list at 31 percent. But this confessional and linguistic distinction does not hold in Ontario, where Franco-Ontarians participate more than Anglo-Ontarians (47% versus 43%), and Roman Catholics in the two provinces reflect the provincial norm but remain the lowest in religious analysis (for example, 52% of Protestants in Ontario volunteer actively versus 44% of Roman Catholics. In Saskatchewan 61% of Protestants versus 59% of Roman Catholics volunteer actively).

These realities often baffle Protestant ministry practitioners, particularly church planters.⁹ Although the culture marginalizes the social significance of religion—seen in weekly church attendance figures and the confusing “practice” of certain classic beliefs—people continue to remain loyal in word to the religious traditions. It is for this reason that we believe church planting will always be a challenge. As long as basic worldview issues are not addressed in how we invite people to follow the God of Jesus Christ, Protestantism, especially in its evangelical manifestations, will only be marginal in the culture. There seems to be little desire to contribute to the social capital of the culture. There is very little in the tradition to encourage them. Evangelical traditions are doing far too little to contribute to the common good.

Survey of Church Data Since 1998

Previous studies on the state and needs of the Protestant Church in Québec have concentrated on congregational extension and the under representation of churches in the five major urban areas of the province.¹⁰ In this undertaking, the author continued that research.¹¹ Table 1 illustrates the growth of Protestant congregations over a 40-year period, highlighting the local church numbers for French, English, and the cultural communities¹² for 2002.

Table 1

| | 1960 | 1980 | 2002 | | |
|---------------------|------|------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | | French | English | Ethnic |
| Anglican Church | 275 | 234 | 3 | 90 | 5 |
| United Church | 250 | 210 | 8 | 97 | 7 |
| Presbyterian Church | 63 | 58 | 2 | 25 | 5 |
| Brethren Assemblies | 30 | 51 | 14 | 11 | 1 |
| Fellowship Baptist | 21 | 43 | 63 | 13 | 7 |
| Pentecostal | 21 | 90 | 83 | 16 | 23 |
| Lutherans | 10 | 15 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| Associated Gospel | 5 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| BCOQ | 20 | 19 | — | 13 | 5 |

The Province of Québec is divided into three administrative structures. Across the province there are 1,599 municipalities,¹³ 102 municipal regions, and 16 administrative regions.¹⁴ Table 2 documents local congregational data.

Table 2
Québec's 16 Regions – 2002

| Regions | Municipalities | Population | Churches | | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|------------|-----------|------|--------|-----|
| | | | Fr. | Eng. | Ethnic | |
| 01 | Bas Saint-Laurent | 152 | 201,765 | 11 | 1 | 3 |
| 02 | Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean | 70 | 281,673 | 16 | 3 | — |
| 03 | Québec | 94 | 652,263 | 30 | 8 | — |
| 04 | Mauricie - Bois-Francs | 181 | 481,999 | 24 | 6 | — |
| 05 | Estrie | 115 | 293,189 | 27 | 47 | — |
| 06 | Montréal | 29 | 1,853,488 | 62 | 140 | 242 |
| 07 | Outaouais | 89 | 328,432 | 17 | 29 | — |
| 08 | Abitibi-Témiscamingue | 105 | 148,521 | 14 | 5 | — |
| 09 | Côte Nord | 57 | 99,693 | 9 | 4 | — |
| 10 | Nord-du-Québec | 48 | 39,654 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11 | Gaspésie - Îles-de-la Madeleine | 70 | 98,906 | 15 | 7 | 3 |
| 12 | Chaudière - Appalaches | 171 | 390,765 | 21 | 4 | — |
| 13 | Laval | 1 | 359,627 | 8 | 8 | 10 |
| 14 | Lanaudière | 83 | 404,987 | 12 | 4 | — |
| 15 | Laurentides | 110 | 485,012 | 29 | 28 | — |
| 16 | Montérégie | 218 | 1,335,264 | 63 | 40 | 11 |
| Total | | | | 361 | 340 | 274 |

In light of this recent urbanisation, coupled with the nationalist crisis, cities in Québec show a great spiritual vacuum. Table 3 reveals this in part. In the five major cities we find 170 French-Protestant churches. In other words, only 47% of French churches serve 62% of the French population. The other 191 churches are found in cities of fewer than 100,000. In fact, although there was a 2.4% growth in population since 1996, there was no growth in the number of congregations.

Table 3
French and English Evangelical Churches in the Five Major Urban Centres of Québec, 2001

| City | 2001 Population | | | Evangelical Churches | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|----------------------|-----|-----|
| | F* | A* | CC* | F* | A* | CC* |
| Greater Montréal | 2,275,035 | 408,185 | 667,485 | 116 | 179 | 237 |
| Québec | 647,925 | 9,745 | 12,720 | 31 | 12 | |
| Chicoutimi\Jonquière | 150,570 | 1,145 | 785 | | 6 | 1 |
| Sherbrooke | 136,575 | 8,015 | 4,850 | 13 | 12 | |
| Trois-Rivières | 131,655 | 1,425 | 1,370 | | 8 | 1 |

F* = Francophone; A* = Anglophone; CC* = Ethnic Communities

Beyond this typical manner of studying congregational extension in Québec, we proceeded to examine other variables about the state and needs of the Protestant Church in Québec. In the previous volume in this series, the editors estimated that Québec would need 3,092 new churches, 1,346 in Montréal alone, based on the ratio of 1 church per 2,000 residents (This is the same ratio used by the College of Pharmacists to gauge how many drugstores one needs in a given community). One is never quite sure if this hypothesis or the missiology is appropriate for this culture. Other questions not strictly related to church planting must be addressed. What about the contextualization of the message of the Gospel within a (post)modern culture? What types of churches are we going to plant? What happens once we have verbally declared the Good News? Why is the culture so resistant to the verbal proclamation of the Good News? What will the church look like? Moreover, how will church renewal be fostered in this society?

These issues become critical in light of new data. We know that there are 43 different Protestant denominations working in Québec. Their congregations now represent 84% of the local churches. In the 1991 census, 357,000 people identified themselves as Protestants. However, in a study of church attendance, we learn that only 77,000 attend these congregations on a weekly basis. In the five years since the last study¹⁵ there has been an 8% increase in the number of Francophone congregations, a 12% decrease in the number of Anglophone congregations, but a 92% increase in the number of congregations among the cultural communities. Québec's population grew by 3.4%. Today we can identify 112 Haitian Protestant churches (47% are non-aligned with a denomination) serving the estimated 125,000 Haitians who live in Québec.¹⁶ There are 80 Spanish-speaking congregations (77% are non-aligned) serving the 125,000 Latin Americans living in Québec. In the past five years, 10 Congolese Protestant churches have been planted. In total, one-third of the people attending a Protestant church in Québec on a weekly basis are part of a congregation within the cultural communities. But this population represents only 10% of Québec.

Three Major Challenges

A. Secularisation, the process by which the social significance of religion is marginalized in society, is an ever-present reality. Furthermore, (post)modernity has its intellectual and architectural roots in Montréal. The ensuing pluralism and privatisation of faith in public life needs to be taken much more seriously.

We now know that the secular does not eliminate the religious, contrary to early secularisation theories. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the relationship between the secular aspects and the religious aspects of public life overlap and influence each other much more than anyone imagined.¹⁷ But the social “location” of religious life is certainly changing. Secularisation influences the structures of the culture and forces religion to redefine the nature, grounds, and scope of its authority. People begin to interpret the world without constant reference to religious life and symbolism. Religion is not destroyed, but it is displaced as the defining integrating force for the worldview. This is evident in the socio-religious description at the beginning of this chapter.

Secularisation “Québec style” means two things. First, in spite of religious affiliation, faith and practices are highly privatised. Second, people transfer their religious loyalties to economics, or to the notion of “people-hood” or any other object of unconditional devotion. David Martin has illustrated that in former homogenous Roman Catholic societies, secularisation means that hope becomes political.

Numerous authors attempt to define and to elaborate theories on this process of secularisation—this intersection within (post) modernity of an increasing industrialized and scientific society, a religious faith and the marginalization of religious practices. Some link this process entirely to industrialization and urbanization. Others associate it more directly to the conflict between science and religion.

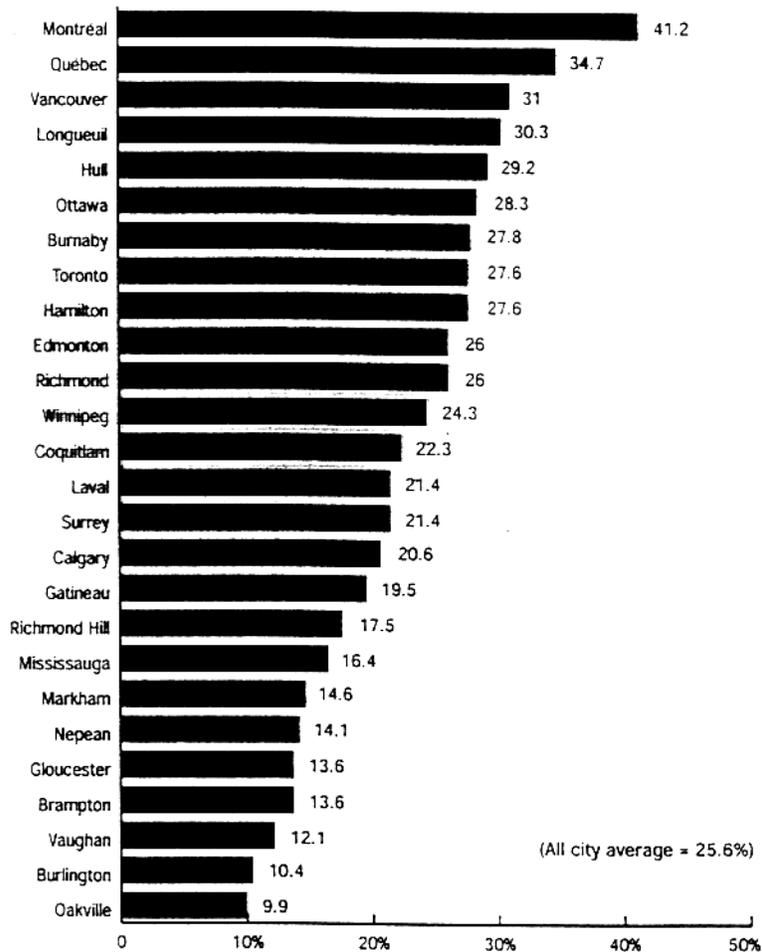
The past prestige of faith has lost out to technology and the modern economy. Certainly there are exceptions to this process and the extent of its influence. But it is real. Church structures and the social significance of religion have been increasingly marginalized.

The consequences are more than evident. Multiple worldviews and manners of expression, tensions between order and disorder, symbols, the flux of life—all these define the new order. All have been deconstructed. Ernest Gellner clearly states the reason, “Post-modernity would seem to be rather clearly in favour of relativism, insofar as it is capable of clarity, and hostile to the idea of unique, exclusive, objective, external, or transcendent truth. Truth is elusive, polymorphous, inward, subjective...”

As urban cultures began to evolve, neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic churches were able to help their parishioners face the changes that were occurring. Their churches’ contributions to culture were minimal.

B. On the other hand, the communities of Québec find themselves in increasing structural poverty. Four of the five poorest cities in Canada are in Québec.

FIGURE 1.1
POVERTY RATES FOR CITIES IN LARGE CMAs, CANADA, 1995



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's 1996 Census, custom tabulations.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the extent to which poverty is a present reality in Québec today. The nature of poverty is that it affects one's identity and one's vocation. The poor often see themselves as God-forsaken and as servants that have nothing to offer. The non-poor in their identity live out of privilege believing that their wealth and power mean they can do as they wish.

Poverty in our cities is creating two cultures, if not two solitudes, that have nothing to do with religion or language. There is one culture that is educated and increasingly rich and another that is uneducated, increasingly poor, and decidedly feminine. The feminization of poverty in our cities is a striking fact.

However, a theology of creation levels the playing field. One's identity is restored because we are all made in the image of God, children of the Creator. One's vocation is also restored because we all are called to use the gifts that God gave and to be partners in the stewardship of the creation as mandated in Genesis 1:26, 2:15.

C. Theological education is not keeping pace with these missiological challenges. Although there are marvellous examples of innovation to deal with these emerging realities, much of the curriculum is not preparing men and women for ministry in Québec.

In the mid 1990s a study was undertaken for denominations and mission societies working in cities of La Francophonie. The purpose of this survey was to measure the quality and quantity of the training that missionaries receive and how this influences strategies and work in French urban areas.¹⁸ The survey underscored an issue that is increasingly concerning the Church - the small number of urban ministry practitioners in large cities. Interestingly, only 70 of 179 North American denominations and mission societies who answered the survey work in the urban centres of La Francophonie. They represent only 751 urban missionaries out of a total of 10,415 Protestant missionaries in the 51 French countries. In other words, even the mission societies that would be interested in an urban-based project have only a small percentage of their practitioners working in cities of 500,000 or more people.

The research illustrates how denominations and agencies perceive what their practitioners do in ministry in comparison with what the missionaries perceive they are doing. It underscores the typical training of an urban worker and specific training one might receive. In both cases the practitioners themselves confirmed what their organisations required before sending them into ministry in a large French-speaking city.

The survey results highlighted three critical issues:

1. Missions and denominations think that practitioners are involved in typical urban initiatives, although it is surprising how low ministries of compassion appear on the list of activities. Only 15% pursue such strategies across *La Francophonie*. In light of the second missiological challenge of poverty, it is obvious that educational innovations in holistic ministry and social justice must be conceived.
2. The survey indicates that a real distinction is made between formal, theological education in terms of time and content, and a more contextual, sociological and hands-on training. Yet the result is that both agencies and practitioners perceive a difference in the ability of someone to choose a strategy, implement it, evaluate its effectiveness, and work independently based on the extent of one's training, particularly in the more practical issues. In statistical terms, agencies think that 40% of their practitioners with such a practical training are "excellent" or "very good" in choosing pertinent urban strategies versus 14% of those without the background. Practitioners themselves are much less optimistic—only 15% with the background are "excellent" or "very good" in choosing a strategy versus 11% without the training. Agencies think that 50% of their people are "excellent" or "very good" at implementing strategies with a practical background versus 21% without it. Again practitioners are less optimistic—only 15% of the trained people see themselves as "excellent" or "very good" at implementation. But the greatest discrepancies appear when you ask the question, "*How would you rate a formally trained practitioner in the capacity to be self-initiating and autonomous in ministry-learning once on the field?*" Sixty-two percent of the agencies rate their people as "excellent" or "very good." Fifty percent of the practitioners themselves say the same thing. However, this percentage drops to 29% for untrained workers

through the eyes of their agencies and 23% for the practitioners themselves. A new approach to integrating traditional curriculum and new subjects to prepare people for urban ministry must be high on the agenda of all concerned across Québec.

3. The four groups of statistics (based on the questions dealing with quantity, quality, effectiveness, efficiency) are combined in two graphs, one on urban training and the other on work in urban settings. A hypothesis presupposes that there is a correlation between the level of urban training and the work in an urban context (it will be important to explore the nature and limitation of such a correlation). The research indicates that:
 - more training does not positively influence its quality;
 - the knowledge to know how to choose a strategy does not necessarily mean one will be able to implement it;
 - \$4,000 and two years are the maximum that one would need to spend in preparing practitioners for the city.

This helps us grasp the changes that need to take place in practical theological education for the years ahead if we are to train leaders for mission in Québec.

Does the Past Have Anything to Teach Us?

The temptation is always present to try to repeat the glories of the past, especially if we are living through a season of malaise and facing great uncertainty in the future. For instance, when we speak on the history of Québec Protestantism and especially the successful events of the Sermons from Science'67 period, someone wants to organize a similar initiative. But we need to remember two things. The Spirit was moving in an unprecedented way and our social and church context have radically changed since those days. In subsequent years, Montreal's economy declined and the Quiet Revolution was making an ever deepening impact on the social and spiritual culture. Therefore, the greater question is, "What principles can we glean from this experience to inspire our lives and mission as we look to the future?"

In reviewing the historical record, it is striking how unified the Church was in this unique outreach—how much "good will" there was to work together. This common voice and structure brought plausibility to the message. Now, as the Protestant church faces fragmentation, we need to remember that God created the Church and Jesus prayed for its unity. We must be diligent to work together. The success of the movement was due in large part to the fact that it integrated all aspects of the mission of God for the world, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There was creative proclamation, small group follow-up, church planting, and relevant materials, all under-girded by prayer. These elements comprised a true spirit of collaboration.

Let us not miss what perhaps was the most striking element—it was the laity who conceived and birthed this initiative, one of many great forward moves in French Protestant history. They had a vision and they took risks, trusting in God with their very livelihood. Many took great financial risks, believing God to bring to life their vision. The events of Sermons from Science 67 that contributed to this recent harvest in Québec

Protestant church history remind us not to try to repeat these events, but inspire us to seek our own projects with the same spirit of risk and innovation.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- In light of the challenges described in this chapter, what would the “ministry tool box” look like for new initiatives in Québec? What knowledge, skills, and attitudes would be important for a team of church planters for the years ahead?
- In what ways does the description of Québec’s worldview landscape help you to understand the challenges of mission in Québec?
- Read the following case studies from three administrative regions in Québec. How can we better pray for church planting initiatives?

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Chapter Notes

¹ For An excellent presentation of the Roman Catholic Church in Québec since the 1980's see Raymond Lemieux et Jean-Paul Montminy, *Le catholicisme québécois* (Ste-Foy: PUL); Gregory Baum, *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novelis, 1991) and F. Dumont, *Une foi partagée* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1996). In 2002, the diocese of Montréal published a series of articles in *Vivre en Église* that examined the state and needs of the Roman Catholic Church in this the largest diocese in Canada.

² This research includes:

1. Le programme 3SC du CROP. La Presse a publié les données, samedi, le 3 avril, 1999. (Section B, page 1)

2. *Les Attentes Sociales à l'Égard de la Religion à l'École Publique: Rapport de Recherche*. Groupe de Travail sur la Place de la Religion à l'École, 1999.

3. Léger et Léger : Étude sur les perceptions des Québécoises et les Québécois sur la place de la religion à l'école et les implications du Rapport Proulx: Rapport de recherche quantitative. 1999.

³ Bibby, 2002 p.41 and 81-82

⁴ Graham, 1990, p.123

⁵ Sylvie Saint-Jacques, La Presse, mercredi, le 12 mars, 2003. Section E, pages 1-2.

⁶ Angus Reid, April 2000 and CROP, April, 2000

⁷ Statistics Canada, March 2002

⁸ Gary Caldwell and Paul Reed, "Civic Participation in Canada: Is Québec Different?" *Inroads*, No. 8, 1999. 215-222. See also, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 1997 Survey of giving, Volunteering and participating*, 71-542-XPE. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1998.

⁹ For an analysis of these realities visit the study on the Christian Direction web-site:

www.direction.ca/EN/urban/index.html

¹⁰ Smith, 1998, 1999.

¹¹ This research was done by Christian Direction with the help of Edward Hoyer and Richard Loughheed, professor of Church history at the Faculté évangélique théologique. Beginning in 1984, Christian Direction asked each denomination to submit a list of congregations for the *Christian Directory* that is published annually. Confirmation of all information was then done. This chart represents only trends because exactitude especially prior to 1984 is virtually impossible. The reader will notice the sharp decline in the number of Anglican and United congregations. This is in large part due to the manner of counting. Although the number of congregations is much higher (213 for the Anglicans and 115 for the United Church) the actual addresses submitted by their Québec offices is reported on Table 1.

¹² Cultural communities is the expression used for peoples born outside of Canada.

¹³ For a complete list of these municipalities including population see, *Répertoire des municipalités du Québec*, 1996, tableau 3.3.3, p.77-92. This research does not reflect the mergers of the large cities that took place in January, 2002.

¹⁴ This chart does not reflect the creation of a 17th region. Le Centre-du-Québec (Drummondville) is now separate from the Mauricie

¹⁵ Smith, Loughheed and Peach 1999, p.152

¹⁶ Labelle, 2001, 23

¹⁷ Berger, 1999, 2

¹⁸ A full copy of the study, Survey of Mission Agencies Working in *La Francophonie*, including the methodology and the results is available from Christian Direction Inc. (Write to: urbanus@direction.ca)

VOICES OF HOPE FROM ACROSS QUÉBEC

Addendum to Chapter Three

Administrative Region 2 Saguenay Lac St-Jean

Roy Buttery

Jacques Cartier explored the Kingdom of the Saguenay, the largest north-central administrative region of the province in 1535. Tadoussac, established at the mouth of the Saguenay on the St. Lawrence River, became an important colony before the founding of Québec, Trois-Rivières and Montréal. In 1643, Father Jean Dequen arrived in the region for the first time, going as far as Lac St-Jean. The development of this vast virgin basin of 104,036,000 km² began, gradually known in the following years as the Kingdom of Furs (1569-1600), the Kingdom of Lumber; the Kingdom of Grain (around 1800); called the bread basket of Canada until the opening up of the West, the Kingdom of Pulp and Paper (1897), and the Kingdom of Aluminium (1926). Today, tourism and the blueberry industry flourish. The Copper Valley—with some gold—is situated at Chibougamau, 350 km. northwest, halfway between the Hudson Bay and the St. Lawrence, and has been developed since 1900.

In the developing days of the colony, this land was mainly used for agriculture. At the turn of the 20th century, the area rapidly became industrialized as hydroelectric resources were developed. In 1926 the area developed significantly with the establishment of the Alcan aluminium foundry at Arvida (Jonquière). The modernization and expansion of the big pulp and paper companies, as well as Alcan's capacity to produce aluminium, have ensured an incredible prosperity and stability for the region ever since.

Unfortunately, two severe tragedies struck the region. In 1870, "The Great Fire" devastated a third of the population. From the shores of Lac St-Jean to the town of La Baie, everything was destroyed by fire except the town of Chicoutimi. Then, in the summer of 1996, the

largest dams in the area broke under the pressure of torrential rains, creating enormous floods and destroying an important part of the region and its hydroelectric system.

Damages were evaluated at \$700 million—one of the worst catastrophes in Canadian history, second only to the ice storm of the winter of 1998 in Montréal.

The French Canadian Missionary Alliance was the first to send pioneering missionary Thomas Côté (from Île Verte) during the summers of 1866-1870. After his theological studies, the Presbyterian pastor Côté founded a church in Chicoutimi in 1871 and worked there until 1876. Even though the Presbyterians sent other missionaries during the summer (for example, to Dequen during the summer of 1911), for some reason the church did not continue. However, two church workers came from the area—Henri Duberger, who became a French-speaking Congregationalist worker in New-England (1889-1897) and Louis Bouchard, ordained as a Presbyterian pastor in 1894.

Almost 60 years later, in 1933, John Spreeman, a Brethren worker, visited the area in response to letters from those who expressed a desire to know more about the Gospel. He established various ministries in Girardville in 1934, then at Albanel and in Dequen North. The Assembly of Arvida began in 1947, followed by Chibougamau in 1960 and Chicoutimi in 1977. The Pentecostal Church, with eight congregations, has the most churches in the area, followed by the French Fellowship Baptist and the Brethren. The Bible Speaks organizes theological courses at UQAC (University of Québec at Chicoutimi) and in its own church in La Baie. The Baptist Union works in Dolbeau.

Presently, aside from the small United-Anglican Church in Jonquière, there are no Anglophone churches in the region. Formerly, each of these denominations had their own churches in Jonquière, Alma, and Chibougamau. Eventually, there will be no trace of their presence.

Particularities

Historically and geographically, the Saguenay region was and still is the most isolated from the rest of Québec. People from Saguenay have a mentality of their own. They are conservative and proud, very independent, and patriotic. Their resistance to change, their religion and attachment to the French language have dominated the area for more than 350 years. The changes brought on by the Quiet Revolution, with its political flurries and social reforms, as well as changes brought by television, have invited modernity into all Québec homes.

In contrast to Montréal, the population of Saguenay is largely French Canadian and Aboriginal. Inter-marriages within the same French families have resulted in many congenital defects affecting the population. The presence of Anglophones is minimal, having very little influence in the area. French Canadian professionals have gradually replaced the English-speaking administrative personnel in most principle industries of the North. Presently, the economy of the region is very weak; it has the highest level of unemployment in Canada. Québec has one of the highest rates of suicides among youth in the world, and the Saguenay region leads within the province.

The population is concentrated mainly in larger urban centres. The Saguenay Valley, the cities of La Baie, Chicoutimi, and Jonquière have a combined population of 160,000. Around the lake, major centres such as Dolbeau-Mistassini, Alma, Metabetchouan, Roberval, and St-Félicien are laced together by a number of smaller villages and hamlets. Chibougamau,

at the northern frontier of the region, is considered a mining centre, with some 15,000 inhabitants.

A Look Toward the Future

Since the 1960s, the Catholic Church has lost its control on Québec and its influence on the culture. Nonetheless here, as elsewhere in the province, few turned to cults, though they are numerous today. The ideologies of this period are:

Materialism—the accumulation of material goods and the pleasures of life;

Individualism—career success, characterized by the cult of the ego (the "me" generation) at the cost of the sense of belonging to a community and of unity so valued by their ancestors;

Hedonism—the search of pleasure which replaces the sense of duty. The desire to live fully in a voluptuous world, enticing the flesh. Giving in to this god, we become like the nations around us, living without God and hope.

A lack of full-time French-speaking workers, trained to respond adequately to today's modern and educated society, is felt in this region. Further, we perceive that there is not enough unity among those who work in this region—a phenomenon that is difficult to understand. This result of failing to evangelize has come from a lack of commitment so predominant in this permissive society, where the disillusioned flutter from church to church. We have not succeeded in disciplining the converts of the 1970s and 1980s. Many have not persevered in the faith. We are still faced with the tremendous challenge of reaching this region with the Gospel.

Administrative Region 3 Québec

Claude Duquette

The arrival of Protestants in the province is engraved in the long rich memory of the Québec region. The growth of the evangelical Church, due to constant opposition from Catholic clergy, has been slow.

At the time of the foundation of Québec, Huguenots (French Protestant Reformed believers), of which many were administrators and merchants, were already present. Yet there is no mention of any church or minister. Furthermore, since Champlain and the Jesuits complained about the Psalms sung on ships, Protestants were excluded from joining the charter of *La Compagnie des Cents Associés* after 1627. In 1760, during the British conquest, there were only a few Huguenot merchants left. The English favoured the Anglican faith and offered no French services, even when they called the Swiss reformed pastor, D-F. Montmollin, to the Anglican Church of Québec (1868-1803). All the Huguenots or any converts—such as Jean-Baptist Pain from St-Roch-des-Aulnais mentioned in 1786—were required to learn English. It was Jacques Reeves, one of those converted in Québec at the beginning of the work there, who wrote the first evangelical tracts in French in Québec. The French Canadian Missionary Society was founded in 1839, but it was some time before it came to the capital. Around 1846 it made its first attempt. The Methodists worked with the French community of Québec from 1855 to 1867. The Grande-Ligne (Baptists) also began a work from 1857 to 1869 with the help of the former priest, Louis Normandeau, who

had gathered a group of 20 members in 1877. It could be that the visit of the well-known ex-priest Charles Chiniquy in 1859 helped these missionaries. At the same time, the Québec Bible Society engaged missionaries to travel through the whole eastern part of the province (for example, Mr. and Mrs. A-W Grenier). Port-au-Persil was the springboard of the mission from 1880 to 1912. But these efforts did not bear lasting fruit. The Presbyterians, since 1876, and the Baptists, since 1894, planted churches that the Anglophones protected. For many years, these two assemblies were the only French Protestant ministries in Québec. They still exist today (the Presbyterian Church joined the United Church in 1925).

Some violent incidents took place against The Salvation Army around 1887 and against the Baptists in 1894. Even without these incidents, the Protestant churches were struggling to survive, especially because there were no French Protestant schools, forcing the children to attend the free English schools. The anglicization of children and the impossibility for them to attend French high schools or to obtain French jobs, due to the rule of the Catholic Church, contributed to the loss of the young French Protestant generation for the Church. Between 1900 and 1960, no great changes took place in these two entities and no new assemblies were created. Around 1920, with the help of Louis Dutaud, the Pentecostal denomination established a work in Québec that was short-lived.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination came to Québec in 1959, and even established a Bible school that lasted for some time. The Reformed Church also chose Québec as its base and founded the Farel Bible Institute. There was a time when one could find many such institutes. Now, the only institute belongs to the French Baptist Fellowship.

In 1967, the Bible Training Centre, established by the Baptist Union of Churches, had a student body of ten missionaries and pastors.

During the 1970s and the 1980s, thanks to the charisma of the pastors and the zeal of young believers reacting to Catholic indoctrination—a burden from which they were finally freed—the Gospel was rapidly spreading in the capital. In 1972, a collaborative effort—which was a precedent—took place; uniting the evangelist Alain Choiquier from France, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Baptist Union, and the Brethren Assemblies. This common project was known as “Operation Hope.” Through this effort, forty young people made a decision to follow Jesus. At that time there were some 250 believers in the evangelical community in Québec, and ten years later that number had quadrupled.

In the last decade, there has been very little growth. The Church in Québec has experienced many little jolts caused by the arrival of the Vineyard movement in the area. The Pentecostal Church split, and 200 of their members attached themselves to other churches in the area. Some fundamentalist churches also lost members to churches that were less dogmatic. The number of people regularly attending the various churches averages anywhere between 2,500 and 3,000.

A lot of church “hopping” goes on. Christians tend to move from one Church to another, like the several hundred who left the Pentecostal Church to attend three Churches with a Vineyard orientation. On the other hand, about the same amount of people are now moving back from those Churches to more moderate ones.

Québec City’s largest church is the *Carrefour chrétien de la capitale*, affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies, with about 500 members. The next largest is the Fellowship

Baptist Church of Québec, located in Neufchâtel. It has about 350 adherents. The membership of other churches rarely exceeds a hundred.

Currently, a healthy collaboration exists among churches in Québec. In the 1970s, the rumour, rampant in evangelical congregations, was that the city of Québec was a graveyard for evangelicals. This is no longer the case. An evangelical ministerial has been meeting on a monthly basis for several years. Only the closed Brethren, Vineyard churches and Fellowship Baptists refuse to participate.

The challenge for Québec and its region is church planting, where there is a lot of room for growth. Québec, throughout its history, was dominated by the Catholic Church. As a consequence, the population of this region seems saturated with religion and, therefore, no longer wishes to be associated with groups that are dogmatic. Even Catholics have perceived this situation. The diocese and several of the parishes are taking ministry out of the buildings to work in the neighbourhoods. They are establishing and financing ministries with a social orientation. I think that any mission interested in church planting in Québec and the surrounding region must take into account its historical background and develop a more “holistic” approach to evangelization. Inviting people to an evangelical *mass* will not work. The targets for church planting are the suburb cities around Québec, such as Val Bélair, Loretteville, Neufchâtel, and Cap Rouge, where the evangelical church has no presence whatsoever.

Administrative Region 5 Estrie

Hélène Provost Audet

The Estrie region comprises seven MRCs (Municipalités régionales de comté). It shares its eastern and southern border with the United States. In the past it was known as the *Eastern Townships*, because it welcomed the Loyalist Americans who wanted to remain faithful to the King of England. From this heritage, many Protestant churches stand as vestiges of time past and a faith that was not well communicated.

The predominance of English people in this region brought about many missionary attempts by different groups, but only one French-speaking Protestant church was established in Roxton Pond. It has remained active since 1844. Granby also had a French assembly, beginning in 1847 (Grande Ligne), but it gradually decreased and lost its resident pastor sometime before 1900. From 1854 onward, South Ely, which later became Valcourt, was the only other stable, even flourishing, church of the region. Magog and Waterloo also had their own Christian workers before 1900. The work of evangelization among the French speaking population even spread to Vermont, where churches were established in Chazy (1841) and Montgomery (after 1863).

Most of these efforts began by *Grande Ligne* mission. A missionary was sent to Sherbrooke in 1886; another, Joseph Gendreau, travelled across the Eastern Townships during the 1890s. Robert Kean also worked as a missionary in this area of the province from 1921 to 1930. The *Grande Ligne* sent another missionary to the Mégantic township during the summers of 1894-1896, and to Lévis of the Mégantic in 1903-1904.

Prior to 1851, the FCMS sent a missionary to Mégantic. In the 1850s, the Methodists organized different routes for their missionaries, going through Stanstead, Dunham, and St-Armand, competing with the Roxton Pond community. As for the FCMS, it later worked in the Farnham area in 1881.

In 1943-1944, an ex-priest became a Presbyterian missionary at Lac Mégantic. Alongside this effort, the presence of the Brethren denomination in Sherbrooke around 1946 and of the Presbyterians at Melbourne in 1947 made the situation look much better. Later on, the Pentecostal Church, in 1955, and the Associated Baptist denomination, around 1957, both set foot in Sherbrooke. The French Fellowship Baptist pioneered a work in Compton in 1955, and around 1957 it went to Danville and Asbestos. For their part, the Brethren began a new work in Granby in 1952. The Pentecostal Church re-opened their work at Lac Mégantic in the early 1960 and concentrated their efforts around Magog.

In the 1970s and 1980s, almost every city of this region has been touched with the Gospel for the first time (Victoriaville and even Cookshire). The Fellowship Baptists have the most churches in the region. Yet, it is interesting to notice that the highly English areas are the least touched with the Gospel and that Granby has become the new Evangelical centre east of Montréal.

Previously rich with its good land and factories, today's Estrie's population has considerably increased, especially in Sherbrooke, Magog, Lac Mégantic, and Coaticook, attracted by the different services now offered in these cities. Yet, the economy is still grounded in agriculture, tourism, and industries with underdeveloped technology.

Here are some interesting statistics:

42.8% Estrians, 15 years old and over have not completed their high school diploma;
26.9% of the children in Sherbrooke live under the poverty level, compared to the average 21.2% elsewhere in Québec;

Sherbrooke is the highest, with a rate of single parents reaching 22.9 %; the Québec average is 18.1%;

Sherbrooke scores as one of the poorest cities of Canada;

Sherbrooke's population is divided as follows: 89% are Catholic and 5% are Protestant, of which 1% is evangelical, and 4% have no religion;

The Sherbrooke diocese, which is responsible for the whole Estrie region, held a three-year synod (from May 1994 to May 1997) during which 26,300 adults and 2,000 youth (12 years old and less) responded to a questionnaire prepared for the Estrie population. Some 125,000 questionnaires were mailed out, and 20% of the population responded.

Here are some of the questions and relevant spiritual observations from the study.

In response to the question, *What gives you the greatest desire to live?* Young people responded in the following order: family, friends, love, success, and freedom. The adults responded: family, love, spirituality, self-achievement, and work. Eighty-six percent of young people declared that God is present in their life, adults are at 80%. Fifty percent of the young people believe in reincarnation to 70% of adults. To the question, *Does the Gospel relate to my life experience and can it help me?*, 25% of the young people answered yes, while 64% of adults did! As to the following statement, *There is no sin any longer*, only 22% of the young people agreed and 20% of adults did. When the question about the Gospel was

presented in this new way, *Can Jesus Christ help you in the challenges you meet?*, 66% of the youth responded positively.

Concerning religious practices, here are the answers given by those who responded by *Often* or *Very often* to the following questions: *Do you attend Mass?*, 33 % of the young people and 73% of the adults attend. *Do you pray for a miracle?*, 47% of the young people and 39% of adults do. *Do you ask help from a dead person?* 48% of the young people and 65% of adults do. *Do you pray or meditate?*, 39% of the young people and 80% of adults do. *Do you read the Bible?*, 18% of the young people and 29% of adults do.

Young people (67%) stated that Moral and Religious Education was the means that helped them learn most about God and the pertinence of the Gospel. Adults stated (65%) that Jesus Christ could help them face the challenges that were ahead of them. People expect the Church to be involved in matter such as social impoverishment and the difficulties lived in single-parent families.

At the closure of its Synod, the Sherbrooke diocese chose *Evangelization* as its theme for the years to come.

Yet, this poll does not show the whole picture of the region. It expresses fairly clearly that those who accepted to answer the questions have deep spiritual and Christian values, though “sprinkled” with New Age thinking.

The Catholic Church admits that only 10% of the baptized attend church once a month. As for the Protestants, their attendance corresponds to that of the English people of the area. The Evangelical Church feels tremendously intimidated in Sherbrooke and it is non-existent in the other cities. There are 47 English Protestant churches for 8% of the population and 27 French-speaking evangelical churches for 88% of the population. In Estrie, the Sunday attendance to any French-speaking evangelical church worship service represents 7% of the population.

Thirty-three percent of the population is under 25 years old, thus becoming a target for the Gospel; especially when taking into account the Synod's results concerning the 12 year-old-and-under group, or when considering the challenges facing the other age groups. At the moment, there is no full-time French-speaking Christian worker assigned to this task, while there are some on the English side. Both Cégeps and both universities are also very accessible with the Gospel.

The many challenges arising from a high number of single-parent homes, poverty, and the lack of work increase the isolation and vulnerability of families. No help is really offered at this level. Some secular help is available in education, conflict resolution, and couple or family support.

The missionary efforts of the evangelical churches in this region are done with little or no coordination and have very little impact on their environment. As for the areas far from the main centres, evangelization remains a true challenge.

Due to secularization, the fear of religion stands as a giant challenge, even if behind this fear is hidden a true thirst for spiritual experiences. The population of this region searches for concrete solutions and true help for its problems. No doubt the Church could offer some options that comprise a spiritual dimension. In every age category, the family remains the place and value where people best find their desire to live.

Questions for Action and Reflection:

- How can the Evangelical Church build bridges with its society?

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- How should it now move forward?
 - Will it know how to offer services that will provide opportunity for the proclamation of the Word?

About the Author

Dr. Glenn Smith is married to Sandra (1976) and together they have three daughters, Jenna (né 1981), Julia (né 1984) and Christa né 1986)). Glenn did his graduate studies in Patristics at the Université d'Ottawa and his doctoral thesis in contextual theology at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago. He received an honorary doctorate from the Union des universités privées d'Haïti for his contribution to urban theological practice in that country.

He has been the Executive Director of Christian Direction in Montreal since 1983 - a multi-faceted ministry committed to the spiritual transformation by Jesus Christ of all of life in the cities of the Francophone world. He is a professor of urban theology and missiology at three Protestant faculties in Montreal, a sessional lecturer at McGill University and at the Université chrétienne du Nord d'Haïti. He and his family were involved in pastoral ministry with an Anabaptist Francophone congregation in Montreal, Quebec for 20 years.

He is co-author of the book, *Espoir pour la ville; Dieu dans la cité* (Hope for the city, God in the city), the co-author of *Éduquer les enfants: une vision protestante de l'éducation. L'Histoire du protestantisme au Québec depuis 1960* and the editor of *The Gospel and Urbanization*, a 250 page reader that is into its 5th edition in French and English on urban ministry. He also wrote the book, *Following Jesus: God invites us to transformative discipleship*, which was published in English, French and Spanish. His forth-coming book is entitled, *City Air Makes You Free: To transform the city through a fresh, biblical hermeneutic*. He is the author of numerous articles on urban mission.

