

THE NATIONAL BESTSELLER BY

JOHN D.  
MacDONALD

ONE  
MORE  
SUNDAY

The powerful novel about the high-stakes,  
big business of saving souls...

"MacDONALD HAS OUTDONE HIMSELF,  
WHICH IS NO MEAN TRICK." USA Today

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**ONE  
MORE  
SUNDAY**

**JOHN D.  
MacDONALD**

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*To the memory  
of quiet Sunday mornings  
in South Congregational Church  
on Genesee Street in Utica, New York,  
with my  
grandfather, Edward Odell Dann,  
my great-aunt, Emily Grace Williams,  
my mother, Margarite Dann MacDonald,  
my father, Eugene Andrew MacDonald,  
and my sister, Doris Jean MacDonald  
—now all at rest in Plot 63,  
Lot 814 and contiguous Lot 6325,  
in Forest Hill Cemetery  
in Utica.*

**I know that a community of God-seekers is a great shelter for man. But directly this grows into an institution it is apt to give ready access to the Devil by its back-door.**

**RABINDRANATH TAGORE,**  
*Letters to a Friend*

**It is becoming more and more obvious that it is not starvation, not microbes, not cancer, but man himself who is mankind's greatest danger, because he has no adequate protection against psychic epidemics, infinitely more devastating in their effect than the greatest natural catastrophes.**

**CARL JUNG**

**I believe more and more that God must not be judged on this earth. It is one of his sketches that has turned out badly.**

**VINCENT VAN GOGH**

# ONE

**THE REVEREND DOCTOR JOHN TINKER MEADOWS** stood silent and motionless at the pulpit of the great Tabernacle of the Eternal Church of the Believer, staring at the stained-glass window at the far end of the building, listening to the murmur and rustle of the enormous congregation as the sounds slowly diminished.

Once again the vast space was filled for an early-morning service, even in the heat of the sun belt in August. The three broad aisles which sloped down toward the altar rail at a slight angle cut the congregation into four equal portions, fifteen worshippers wide, sixty rows deep. Another thousand were over in the University theater, watching him on the big screen in closed-circuit color, and he knew that up in the control booth to the left of the stained glass, high above the entrance doors, the production manager and the director were watching the monitor

sets, cueing the camera stations. The sound was being mixed with due regard for whichever camera was being used.

He felt a trickle of sweat on his ribs, under the cassock and surplice, and reacted with familiar exasperation toward the so-called experts who had designed the subterranean air conditioning. It had proven ample for the giant space even in midsummer, but had a built-in low-frequency rumble which made it impossible to use at full throttle when taping. Finn Efflander had someone working on a filter that might keep the rumble off the recording. But even were it working properly, he knew that by the end of the sermon his clothing would be sodden. He perspired heavily whenever and wherever he preached. His face would be wet and shiny in the closeups, partially defeating the efforts of makeup to give him the look of a younger Charlton Heston.

He was aware of a slight change of the light off to his left and realized that someone in the control booth had pressed one of the buttons which controlled the movement of the huge translucent, fire-resistant draperies, to move one of them slightly to cut off an edge of morning sun, making the interior light whiter and more luminous.

He heard a smothered giggle forty feet behind him, and he could imagine the stare his sister would direct at the offender. The choir of fifty young women, the Meadows Angels, was a constant discipline problem. Had they been selected more for voice quality and less for beauty, he guessed the problem would be lessened. But the Reverend Mary Margaret Meadows exerted an iron control which kept disorder at a minimum.

John Tinker Meadows knew that many in the congregation were seeing the service in person for the first time, after years of faithful membership and television viewing. To them the thrill of being in

the same space, breathing the same air, as the famous elderly Reverend Matthew Meadows and his two talented children was only slightly dimmed by their being such tiny figures, so far away. And as the service proceeded, they would begin to realize that it was a lot longer than the fifty-minute version edited for broadcast.

It was time. When a child coughed, the church was so silent the small sound could be heard by everyone. He looked then at the congregation, feeling the tension and the expectation. He was a tall slender man with gray-blond hair worn long at the sides, brushed back.

**"O MIGHTY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON THIS GOOD EARTH AND ON YOUR PEOPLE?"**

The rich and resonant voice inherited from the old man filled the Tabernacle with a ripe and startling sound, perfectly amplified.

**"What do we see around us?"**

**"We see a sickness, a cancer, a corruption on every side.**

**"Through the same wondrous technology which allows us to send this service up to the satellite and back to the cable stations and into your homes, filth is being broadcast across the land. Squalid garbage, rated with X's, showing exposed genitalia, scenes of rape and incest and torture. Any child who can reach the dials on the television set can be immersed in this soul-stunting dirt.**

**"And we see this same seeping corruption in the books on the shelves of our libraries, paid for with public monies, with the tax money they demand from you as your ticket of admission to this wonderful culture around us! Cynical men in universities, in national magazines and newspapers, and on talk shows, praise novels which contain scenes that would gag a hyena.**



“Perhaps we should be grateful that our public education system has been so gutted by the bureaucrats and unions, national and local, that the teachers no longer have time to teach reading. They are too busy turning out reports no one ever needs or reads. They are so busy our children can graduate without ever being able to write a sentence in acceptable English, or being able to read anything more difficult than comic books. Rejoice that much of the filth in our libraries is well beyond their abilities to comprehend.

“Perhaps teachers are being paid not to teach in the same way farmers are paid not to farm, able-bodied men paid not to work and politicians paid to pass legislation favoring themselves and the special-interest groups which bribe them.

“Once upon a time our nation was great. Now we sag into despair. The climate changes, the acid rains fall, the great floods and droughts impoverish millions, taking the savings of those who thought they could be provident in these times. We see all our silent factories, all the stacks without smoke, like monuments to a civilization past. Selfish owners refused to spend for modernization. Selfish unions struck for the highest wages in the world.

“We see rapists and murderers and armed robbers turned loose after a short exposure to that prison environment which gratifies all their hungers and teaches them new criminal arts.

“We see an endless tide of blacks and Hispanics entering our green land illegally, taking the bread out of the mouths of those few of us still willing to do hard manual labor.

“We see the abortionists slaying the people of the future.

“We see what little remaining wealth we have, squandered by the huge costs of maintaining lazy and overfed armies in distant lands where they are

hated by the populace, and squandered by the Pentagon thieves who waste four dollars out of every five appropriated.

“Our air, rivers, lakes, land, bays and oceans become ever more toxic as the wastes of a plastic culture are dumped into them without authorization or control.

“We are afraid to walk our own streets at night, knowing that our police officers do not dare leave their cars to patrol on foot the shadows where hide the hoodlums, muggers, whores, addicts, drug vendors and maniacs.

“Rich men get richer in businesses which produce nothing tangible or useful—only bits of paper. Documents. Bonds and warrants and options and money management accounts. Mergers and spinoffs and liquidations.”

He stopped and let the silence grow. He leaned forward and clasped his hands around the front edge of the lectern on the pulpit. His hands and wrists were outsized, larger than one would expect on a man of such leanness. He glanced down at the script and saw the margin notation indicating an extreme closeup, meaning that at that moment one of the cameramen was slowly zooming in on him using the longest lens on the TK-47 RCA computerized color camera.

“Do you think this is all something new in the world?” John Tinker Meadows asked in a half-whisper that carried to the remote corners of the Tabernacle. “Do you really think we live in exceptional times?” The sarcasm was clear.

“In Habakkuk’s vision, the oracle proclaimed, *Outrage and violence, this is all I see, all is contention and discord flourishes. And so the law loses its hold, and justice never shows itself. Yes, the wicked man gets the better of the upright, and so justice seems to be distorted.*

*“And the oracle said, Trouble is coming to the man who amasses goods that are not his and loads himself with pledges. And the oracle said, Trouble is coming to the man who grossly exploits others for the sake of his house, to fix his nest on high and so evade the hand of misfortune.”*

Beginning with the hoarse whisper, he had been slowly increasing the volume and resonance of his voice as he straightened, knowing the long lens was slowly, slowly backing away from the extreme closeup.

*“Trouble is coming to the man who builds a town with blood and founds a city on crime.”*

He looked at them from on high, gazing from side to side at the thousands before him. In a striking change he switched to a conversational tone of voice. With a troubled look he said, “So what do we do, my friends? Here we are, decent God-fearing people in a culture, in a world, going right down the tube. Do we pray and hope to inherit the earth? Do we grab guns and head for the hills? Do we tell ourselves things have to get better?”

After a pause he shouted, “NONE OF THE ABOVE!” He saw some of them jump. You could tell if you had them by the way some of them jumped. This was one of the good Sundays. Sometimes it worked better than other times. He had never achieved the consistency of the old man, who always made it work.

“We do not really live out there amid all that garbage. We live in the great peaceful country of the spirit. We live in the love of God and His only begotten son, and we live in the confidence that beyond that transition we call death there is eternal life for us who BELIEVE!

“You can turn your backs on the feckless, stinking, stubborn garbage of the world, its crimes and passions, its stench of victims and predators. I am

not saying you cannot be touched in physical ways. You can. And those dear to you can be victims. I am telling you that you cannot ever be touched in that place where life means the most. This brute world can never touch your spirit, your soul. It can never defeat those who love God. You are weighed down by the burden of fear and apprehension as this physical world goes downhill in a hand basket. You can shrug off that hideous burden. You can live in a state of joy. Come down to the rail. You there, way in the back, you start it. Get up and walk down here. My father and my sister and I will receive you here, into the arms of Jesus Christ. And evil will never touch you. Never!"

He stared back and saw a few beginning to get up, to edge their way out of the long pews.

"That's right! Come down now! Acknowledge your God. Give Him a chance to heal you. To be saved means to be safe. When a drowning man is saved, he is brought to the shore, safe from the wild waters. Don't hang back. Don't tell yourself you'll think about it, and maybe try it next time. Will there be a next time? Will you have another chance? This is your chance. Now! Come on along. Move down the aisles to me, to us."

The Meadows Angels had begun to hum a cap-pella a medley of old familiar hymns. On cue they increased the volume as he stepped around the pulpit and followed his father and his sister down the few broad stairs to the level of the rail. All three aisles were reasonably full now, and all the familiar expressions were there. On some the beatific smile, on others the sidelong look of self-consciousness. On some a protective smirk. Others were without any expression, as though walking in a dream.

To John Tinker's dismay and annoyance, the old man was not taking part. He stood on the second broad stair from the bottom, looking up at the big

curtains of woven glass fiber on the side windows, his lips moving as, with his right hand, he scratched the side of his neck. Mary Margaret gave John Tinker a glance and shrug of exasperation. She tugged at her father's arm and he pulled away and went back up. John Tinker thought at first that he was going back to his high-backed ornate chair, but instead the old man opened the narrow door under the choir loft and left. As this was not the first time it had happened, Nurse Minter had been posted at the other end of the underground corridor that led from the Tabernacle under the Garden of Mercy to the basement of the Manse.

There were a couple of hundred saved. The staff would take care of getting the names and addresses and other identifying information to feed into the master data base. John Tinker and Mary Margaret worked their way back and forth along the inside of the rail. Mary Margaret, from the pulpit, thanked God for those saved with a prayer which John Tinker felt ran five minutes longer than required. The collection was taken, swiftly and deftly. John Tinker gave a short and appropriate Bible reading, and Mary Margaret gave the benediction. They then stood side by side, high above the congregation, out of the reach of those who might want to approach and chat, until the Tabernacle was almost empty.

Then they went back through the narrow door and down six steps to the concrete tunnel which led for one hundred and fifty yards back to the Manse. The Manse, behind the Tabernacle and the Garden of Mercy, was on the rise of a limestone knoll. The corridor was lighted by fluorescent tubing which, in its effort to simulate daylight, gave off an odd pink glow.

"We should beef up that choir volume after the benediction," John Tinker said. "That many people



always make too much noise leaving. All that shuffling and yammering."

"They can do that in the booth, can't they?"

"Of course they can. Provided somebody tells them to."

"Look, please don't get nasty with me just because he got out of control."

"What was he trying to do?"

"How could I possibly know? I don't think we can keep including him much longer, John. Maybe we should call a halt right now."

"All the old-timers expect to see him. And you have to admit, he really does look good, Mag."

"The doctor said Thursday that right now he's in better physical condition—blood pressure and pulse and respiration—than he was before his mind started to go. He said that's a fairly common phenomenon."

He pushed the door open and they went into the basement of the Manse. Willa Minter was waiting for them over by the elevator. She was a small square person, and John Tinker thought that in her uniform she looked like some sort of historical marker or monument. She had round pink cheeks, hair of a chemical yellow, and when she was upset she wore a servile grin that looked like some variant of guilt.

"He's settled down now," she said quickly. "He's taking a bath."

"With his celluloid duck?" John Tinker asked.

"John, please!" Mary Margaret said.

"Minter, does he realize he behaved badly?"

"Yes, of course. He was very upset about it. You see, he had a tummy upset and cramps and he had to go so bad he was afraid it would happen right there. It happened right after we got off the elevator, and the poor darling cried like a child he was so ashamed."

"Well, you better get back to him before he drowns," Mary Margaret said.

"Oh, he's awfully good in the tub. He really is. He loves to be clean. Squeaky clean."

She hesitated, still grinning, and headed for the stairs.

Once they were in the elevator, Mary Margaret said, "I thought you were very good today, John. As good as I ever heard."

"I had the feeling it was going well. This time Fred Stubbs did the first draft and then Spencer McKay and I worked it over. We'll use the original long version in *PathWays*, I think."

"John, could you get off at the third floor with me? I have a problem."

"Can't I get out of these clothes first?"

"Just a minute or two, please."

They got off at three, Mary Margaret moving with her characteristic lightness, agility and grace. She was a big woman, six feet tall, and he knew she outweighed him. Her fatness was a ripe, billowy, almost intrusive presence. In cassock and surplice she was as imposing as an oversized statue in a public park. She wore her dark gold hair in a glossy braid, curved and pinned into a regal tiara. Even with her strong features and with no makeup at all, at thirty-eight she gave off a flavor of total femininity, both fragrant and lusty.

He leaned wearily against the wall beside the elevator door and said, "Okay. What now?"

"It's Joe Deets again. Or should I say the Reverend Joseph Deets? I know you won't fire him. I really don't know how he does it, he's such an ugly little man. But now he's nailed another one of my Angels. Doreen Purves. She's been with us six months. She just turned eighteen. She's from a farm family near Waycross."

"You've talked to her?"

"Of course I've talked to her!"

"Don't get edgy, Mag. How'd she react?"

“First denials, and then she got very sloppy. Tears and hysteria. She claims she’s in love with him. If we send her home she’ll kill herself. She knows that she and the Reverend Deets are committing a sin, but she says they can’t help it.”

“Background?”

“She quit high school and went to work in a McDonald’s. She got mixed up with a motorcycle gang and got pregnant and miscarried at five months. Her mother brought her to me. They’ve been church members for twenty years. She miscarried after her boyfriend got killed sliding under a truck on his cycle. She was in deep depression when she got here. She’s been coming out of it nicely. Pretty little thing. Lovely untrained voice. And now this.”

John Tinker Meadows sighed. “I’ll tell Joe to cool it, for whatever good that might do. I’ll threaten him.”

“Thanks. I guess it’s too much to hope to ask him to stay away from her. Just please make sure he keeps it very, very quiet. And there are a couple of other things, as long as we’re talking.”

“Mag! Later. Okay? God is love.”

“Bless His holy name,” she said obediently, and he got back into the elevator and went up to his suite on the fourth floor. It was refuge, a place of blues and grays and clean surfaces. A place of silence. There was a study, but he seldom used it, preferring either his office over in the Administration Building or, less frequently, the old man’s office, over beyond the conference room, which he could enter directly from the living room of his suite.

He went straight to the bathroom, peeling off the sweaty white surplice with the broad gold trim and the sky-blue cassock. He kicked the garments toward the hamper, and before he turned on the shower he lowered himself to the floor and did his twenty fast push-ups, a routine so deeply embedded he sel-

dom gave it any conscious thought. He was breathing deeply as he stepped into the steaming needles, and as he lathered himself with the pine soap he thought ahead to the private Sunday conference with Finn Efflander, going over the items Finn would bring up.

After he had dressed in sandals, tan slacks and a white knit shirt, he went into the study and accessed his schedule for the week on his personal terminal. The most important item was the weekday breakfast with the Senators.

Though he knew that Finn was next door in the conference room, waiting for him, he went over and stood at the big windows for a little while, looking out at a slice of the Meadows Center. He could see, beyond an angle of the Tabernacle, a portion of the giant, landscaped parking lot, and beyond it the divided boulevard that led toward the Lakemore interchange five miles away on the north-south Interstate. On the far side of the highway he could see, in the distance, a segment of the Meadows Mall and the large parking areas. Directly ahead of him were several of the University buildings—Administration, the Library and the Student Center.

Remembering that someone had mentioned the possibility of adding a wing to Administration, he turned idly to look at the colorful rendering of the whole Meadows Center, done in pastels from an aerial photograph taken for a magazine article. He experienced a moment of disorientation when he saw the blank wall near the fireplace where it had hung. He remembered that several weeks ago he'd had it taken down and rehung over in the lounge in Administration.

Over the past two years he had disposed of so many decorations and memorabilia, the suite had begun to look almost completely impersonal, like a suite in an elegant residential hotel. He did not care