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Bobby-sox to Bach: Charles Templeton and the Commodification of Popular Protestantism in Post-World War II Canada

KEVIN KEE

Strolling down Carlton Street on a Saturday evening in the spring of 1946, a passer-by would have been struck by the crowd jostling outside the doors of Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto's celebrated hockey arena, and one of the largest entertainment venues in the city. Inside, 16,000 young people waited in anxious anticipation for the show to begin. Soon enough, the National Anthem was sounded, and young men marched into the hall in twos, carrying the flags of the Allied nations and placing them in front of a stage decorated in red, white, and blue. From here the production shifted to a rapid-fire set of jazz music, punctuated by acrobatic and juggling acts, while the evening's host, a pink carnation in his lapel, bounded through the stands with microphone in hand and bantered with members of the audience. In some ways the event looked like a concert by Frank Sinatra; in other ways it resembled a patriotic review. It was neither. This, in fact, was a Youth for Christ (YFC) meeting organized by Canadian evangelist Charles Templeton, and designed to reach young people with his "old-fashioned gospel message" of "conversion to Christ."¹

Less than a decade later, a passer-by at Vancouver's Exhibition Forum would have been similarly impressed by another crowd. In this case, however, the bobby-soxers were few and far between. Most of the 11,000 people in attendance were young married couples enjoying a rare night out. The city's mayor and other local dignitaries opened the event with words of welcome, and then took their place on the platform. The host, clad in business attire and speaking with an air of comfortable informality, moved the service along at a moderate pace. The entertainment was almost entirely musical, with pieces drawn from Malotte, Handel, and Bach, and delivered by a classically-trained

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1 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 17 June 1946, 3.

soloist clad in concert gown and pearls. Was this a concert of classical music? The symphony orchestra? A touring soloist? No. This was an evangelistic meeting of the United Church of Canada organized by Charles Templeton, and now repackaged to reach middle-class adults with his message of conversion and Christian living.²

In both cases, Templeton's primary goal was to bring Canadians into what he called "a personal relationship with Jesus Christ". But how could he convince men and women to give up their leisure time to attend his revivals and hear this message? Templeton discovered that the most effective way to attract English-speaking Canadians to his meetings was by drawing on the strategies of the contemporary entrepreneurs of commercial culture.³ In doing so, the evangelist sought to make religion personally relevant to his audiences, not unlike other products and services advertised in the press or other forms of media.

During the 1940s, Templeton preached what observers called an "old-fashioned gospel" emphasizing "repentance," "conversion," and "holy living." But there was nothing traditional about Templeton's methods. The target audience for his meetings consisted of young people who had suffered through the Depression and the Second World War, and who were now finally enjoying the benefits of peace-time. To attract them, the evangelist conducted fast-paced religious extravaganzas that drew upon the latest fads in entertainment. In the late 1940s, Templeton left evangelism to study at Princeton Theological Seminary. Following a brief hiatus there, he re-emerged in the early 1950s as an evangelist for the United Church of Canada. While the message that Templeton delivered on behalf of Canada's mainstream establishment was in many ways similar to that which he preached while with YFC, his presentation style was altogether different. In an effort to appeal to middle-class adults who were enjoying the fruits of post-war prosperity, he substituted classical music for jazz, and the quiet techniques of modern salesmanship for jive-talk. It was a successful formula: from 1950 to 1955 audiences in towns and cities across English-speaking Canada responded positively to Templeton's new approach.

2 *Vancouver Province*, 14 June 1954, 5

3 Commercial culture, as expressed in the pages that follow, designates the consumption of goods and services, not only to fulfill basic needs, but also to enhance feelings of well-being and social standing. During the nineteenth century, this culture became entrenched in English-speaking Canada as the rise of mass media brought Canadians into contact with a host of consumer goods that promised happiness. See Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 2-3; Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 12-13; Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3-16; and Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 107-163.

Templeton's use of contemporary cultural forms for religious purposes, and his successful transition from bobby-sox to Bach, is one of the untold stories of Canadian history. Once a scholarly backwater, Canadian religious history has recently become a hot and contested property. Nevertheless, certain areas of research have attracted more interest than others. The existing historiography has, for example, focused considerable attention on the manner in which mainstream Protestant churches and their leaders engaged aspects of Canadian culture, and less has been written concerning popular religion outside the churches.⁴ Moreover, much of the work done so far has explored change between the late nineteenth century and the Second World War, whereas comparatively little has been written on the post-1945 period.⁵ This paper attempts to begin to fill in these lacunae through historical biography, focusing on the transformation of Charles Templeton's public expression of religion from the 1940s to the 1950s.

Templeton's entertaining revivals, and specifically his use of "worldly" (i.e. not overtly "religious") resources such as jazz music, could be viewed as evidence of religious loss. But the evangelist's utilization of ostensibly "worldly" techniques did not necessarily mean that his "religion" suffered. Historians of religion in Canada have sometimes worked with "either/or" concepts such as "secular" and "sacred," while the people that they have studied

4 Charles Lippy points out that, as a result of a lack of attention from scholars, a generally accepted and concise definition of "popular religion" is hard to come by. To my mind, a useful definition of "popular religion" can be arrived at by placing religion within the context of culture. In his definition of "popular culture," theorist Raymond Williams defines "popular" as "well-liked" or "widely favoured," denoting an attempt to gain favour, a meaning that was entrenched by the early nineteenth century. In a similar vein, George Lipsitz sees "popular culture" as engaging in active and familiar processes and emphasizing a sense of familiarity, so that an audience can appropriate it easily. He approvingly cites French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, for whom popular forms "satisfy the taste for and sense of revelry, the free speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and proprieties." See Charles Lippy, *Twentieth-Century Shapers of American Popular Religion* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), xx; Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana/Croom Helm, 1976), 236-238; and George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 15.

5 A partial list would encompass Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators, Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); David Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). However, two recently-published exceptions to this rule include Robert Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia, 1917-1981* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); and John Stackhouse, Jr., *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction to its Character* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

lived in what sociologist Nancy Ammerman has called a “both/and” world.⁶ Examining religion in its context, we see that the mixing of the sacred and profane was commonplace. In her path-breaking study of late nineteenth-century small-town Ontario, Lynne Marks, for instance, traces the manner in which Christian belief and action took place within the context of other aspects of experience like class and gender.⁷ Religious piety, therefore, did not exist in isolation; it both shaped and was shaped by its surroundings.

This impulse to adjust demonstrates the adaptive capacity of Christianity, an impulse which has allowed it to survive and expand for two thousand years. Indeed, according to one observer, Christianity has persisted in North American life because it has undergone a constant “restructuring,” responding to and shaping individuals’ responses to societal change.⁸ In other words, although Christianity has not controlled cultural change, neither has it been overwhelmed by the socio-cultural environment.

Surveying American history, historian Lawrence Moore has concluded that popular religious leaders had to energetically enter into the market-place of culture in order for their activity to have a major impact. For Moore, the choice was clear, because “either religion keeps up with cultural life or it has no importance.”⁹ Drawing on some of Moore’s insights to better explain religious change in Canada, this paper will examine the manner in which Charles Templeton accommodated his revivalism to a commercial culture that was well established by the end of the Second World War. It argues that, in an attempt to appeal to his audiences, Templeton commodified religion by packaging it in the shape of commodities, such as evangelistic services that were made to resemble jazz or classical concerts, and by making use of the methods of modern-day advertising and publicity, such as posters, radio advertisements, and other promotional techniques.¹⁰ As a result,

6 Nancy Ammerman, “Organized Religion in a Voluntaristic Society,” 1996 Presidential Address, *Sociology of Religion* 58:3 (Fall 1997), 213.

7 Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

8 Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 5.

9 R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 65.

10 Karl Marx began his analysis of capitalism by focusing on the “commodity,” which he defined as a product that had been repackaged so that it could be sold in the marketplace. According to Marx, the genius of the capitalist system lay in its ability to invest goods with powers that distanced the goods from the labour of the workers that created them. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume I (London: Penguin, 1976), 125, 163, 729-30. Templeton did not “commodify” religion so that it could be exchanged for something else in the marketplace. Nor did he share Marx’s conviction that religion was a commodity that was created to mask a real system of power relations. The evangelist did, however, repackage religion in forms borrowed from commercial culture, creating something new, and it is this aspect of Marx’s notion that I point to in my use of the term “commodification.”

he was thereby able to present his message in new ways that were congruent with the needs of people in changing socio-economic circumstances. During his career of twenty years, the manner in which Templeton marketed what he called “the gospel message” changed significantly. What did not change was Templeton’s deliberate appropriation of contemporary cultural forms to draw English-speaking Canadians to the Christian faith.

The Evangelist: Charles Templeton

Charles Templeton was born in Toronto on 7 October 1915. He grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan, where his father worked as a manager for the Robert Simpson Company department store, and then back in Toronto, Ontario, where his father took another job with Simpson’s. His father left the family in 1929, and in the dark days of the Depression, the Templetons struggled to make ends meet. According to his own testimony, Templeton majored in athletics during school. Unfortunately, his accomplishments on the field were not matched in the classroom, and, after his second attempt at Grade 10, he dropped out. In addition to his penchant for sports, he was also a gifted artist, and after leaving school he decided to use his passion for drawing to help support his family. With a confidence remarkable for someone of his age, he took several of his sketches of athletic celebrities to the sports editor of the Toronto *Globe*, and won a job drawing a daily cartoon. Templeton’s work was soon syndicated in newspapers across the country, putting him on a first-name basis with Canada’s premier athletes. It was an exciting and rewarding life for a teenager. His days were spent with the hard-drinking writers in the smoky back room of the *Globe* sports department, and his evenings with his girlfriend. She was only two years older, he recalled later, but “much more sophisticated.”¹¹

Then, in 1936, Templeton “got religion,” and everything changed. His mother had joined Toronto’s Parkdale Church of the Nazarene and encouraged her children to accompany her. The others acquiesced, but Charles had little interest in going to church. Finally, lured by the news that a southern gospel quartet would be providing special music, he attended the service. Later that evening, while lying in bed, he was overcome by feelings of guilt. Weeping, he began to pray, “Lord, come down. Come down. Come down.” Then, he later recalled:

In a moment, a weight began to lift, a weight as heavy as I. It passed through my thighs, my belly, my chest, my arms, my shoulders and lifted off entirely.

11 Charles Templeton, *Charles Templeton, An Anecdotal Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 25-32. Templeton Interview, 19 July 1996. Information regarding Templeton’s youth comes from Templeton himself. I conducted several interviews with Templeton, at his home in Toronto, on 19 July 1996, 24 July 1996, and 27 August 1997. The transcripts of these interviews are in my possession.

I could have leaped over a wall. An ineffable warmth began to suffuse every corpuscle. It seemed that a light had turned on in my chest and its refining fire had cleansed me. I hardly dared breathe, fearing that I might end or alter the moment. I heard myself whispering over and over, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you. Thank you."¹²

He immediately woke his mother, and they talked at length. At dawn, he crawled into bed and "began to laugh softly, out of an indescribable sense of well being at the centre of an exultant, all-encompassing joy."¹³

Charles Templeton had been "born again" – he had met Christ in a personal way. This conversion experience was what anthropologist Clifford Geertz has called a religious "model" – an aspect of a symbol system that provides a framework both *of* and *for* reality. To Templeton, conversion was a way *of* explaining a feeling of emotional and psychological release. At the same time, it provided a framework *for* how his life should be lived from that moment forward. Geertz calls on scholars to take seriously how religious models colour an actor's understanding of the world.¹⁴ In Templeton's case, conversion fundamentally changed his view of reality. "Jesus was so real to me," he recalled later. "Nothing was more real."¹⁵ His conversion would determine the next twenty years of his life: from this moment on he would devote himself to bringing about the same event in the lives of others. One of his first acts as a new Christian was to quit his work with the *Globe*, giving up a steady pay-cheque, the acquaintance of sports celebrities, and the recognition that resulted from the national syndication of his work. God was calling him to other things, and he was determined to follow.

The first stop was his mother's church, and in 1936 he joined the humble Nazarene community. Templeton was fascinated by the evangelists who preached sin and salvation from the Parkdale pulpit. He studied their techniques and practised at home before a mirror. From his bedroom he graduated to street corners, he recalled, which "led to my speaking to young people which led to being invited into pulpits which led to better pulpits each time. The Nazarene Church was loose at that time, they liked guest preachers, and I soon got a reputation."¹⁶ After hearing Templeton speak at a youth conference, sev-

12 Templeton, *Charles Templeton, An Anecdotal Memoir*, 33-34. Templeton's conversion has been described frequently by himself and others. I have relied on three different accounts for the basic details of his experience: the earliest published story of his conversion, in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 21 October 1942, 6; *Maclean's*, 15 May 1947, 8; and Templeton, *Charles Templeton, An Anecdotal Memoir*, 31-34.

13 Templeton, *Charles Templeton, An Anecdotal Memoir*, 34.

14 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 125.

15 Templeton Interview, 19 July 1996.

16 *Ibid.*

eral American church leaders invited him to bring his presentation south of the border. Beginning in 1938, he preached his way through 44 states, evangelizing in churches, halls, tents and the open air. Though born and raised Canadian, his preaching style was formed in the United States.¹⁷

While leading a revival campaign in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1939, he met Constanci (Connie) Orozco, the soloist for the meetings. Born in California of Mexican parents, she had studied opera and won the “California Hour” vocal contest in 1935. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer offered her a scholarship in preparation for a movie career, but she left the studio for the revival circuit after being converted at a Nazarene service. In Grand Rapids, she struck up a friendship with Charles. He proposed ten days after they met and they married two months later.¹⁸

The young couple eventually settled in Toronto in 1941, intent on forming their own church. The vacant St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church on Avenue Road caught their attention. Templeton emptied his bank account to pay the rent for the first three months, took out advertisements that announced “Toronto’s New Centre of Evangelism,” and held the first service that October. One hundred twenty-six people sat in the cavernous sanctuary on the opening Sunday, but in a few short months the building was full. In 1944 an extra gallery was built to seat the overflow crowds.¹⁹

They came for Templeton’s up-beat presentation of the basic evangelical message. Templeton’s Avenue Road Church of the Nazarene was a “Gospel Tabernacle,” organized by a charismatic and independently-minded leader who used catchy melodies, clubs, programs, and radio to draw crowds to his “old-fashioned gospel.” Worldly-wise after years in a newspaper sports department, Templeton adapted the techniques of the merchants of “secular” culture to his religious purposes. The same entrepreneurial spirit that won him a job at the *Globe* was now employed to attract people to Christianity. Frank Sinatra’s bow ties were the talk of teen magazine columnists in the 1940s, so Templeton adopted a similar look. In this and many other ways, the handsome evangelist made church fun.²⁰

Templeton’s considerable success was also the result of his cooperation with those who shared an interest in the evangelism of young people. In July 1945 Templeton became a founding member of the YFC, the brainchild of Chicago minister Torrey Johnson. The organization brought together clergy and evangelists from across the continent, providing them with an opportunity to make contacts and share strategies. Just months after he attended his first

17 *Maclean’s*, 15 May 1947, 54.

18 *Ibid.*, 55.

19 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 21 October 1942, 6. *Maclean’s*, 15 May 1947, 55.

20 Templeton Interview, 19 July 1996; *Maclean’s*, 15 May 1947, 7, 8, 54-57; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 21 October 1942, 6.

YFC meeting in Chicago in 1944, Templeton became Chair of the Budget and Planning Committee and Regional Vice President for Eastern Canada. The Canada-US border was all but ignored at YFC: the state of New York was included in Templeton's jurisdiction.²¹ As a 1945 YFC leaders' conference came to a close, Templeton was singled out for his outstanding contribution.²² The following year, he was appointed to the Executive Committee post of "Promotional Director," and conducted "Leadership Training Schools" on "Publicity." Among these marketers of religion, he was a stand-out.²³

He was also leading some of the largest YFC gatherings in North America. In 1944, Templeton began to organize meetings that drew as many as 2,800 young people to Toronto's Massey Hall auditorium on Saturday evenings. An enthusiastic reporter for the *Toronto Star* noted that the rallies were "said to be among the largest gospel gatherings in the world."²⁴ Advertised as "a pulsing program slanted for youth,"²⁵ the services combined wholesome entertainment, patriotism, and evangelism. And although critics dismissed them as "a mixture of old-fashioned revival methods and amateur night entertainment," the crowds were enchanted. It was "fundamentalism in a new dress," Templeton told a reporter, "a distinctively new approach to religion."²⁶ Templeton's flashy evangelism, emphasizing a conversion like the one that changed his life, continued to draw such crowds for four years.

"In Tune with the Times, but Anchored to the Rock" – Templeton and the YFC, 1944-1948

Templeton's ultimate goal was to bring young men and women into, in his words, a "personal relationship with Jesus," whose portrait looked out over the Massey Hall audience. The evangelist's understanding of Christianity was centred on the New Testament figure. "The first intimations I got in religion," he recalled later, "was of staying with a boyfriend overnight, and picking up Goodspeed's translation of the gospel, and being absolutely bowled over by the persona, in plain English, of Jesus of Nazareth. And I was so excited by it that I couldn't go to sleep. I borrowed the book and read it in a single reading."²⁷

21 Billy Graham Center Archives [BGCA], Youth for Christ Papers [YFCP], Collection 48, Box 17, File 9, "Welcome to Second Annual Youth for Christ International Convention, July 22-29, 1946."

22 BGCA, YFCP, Collection 48, Box 13, File 36, "Youth for Christ Winona Lake Conference Minutes, 26 July 1945, 1:15 pm.

23 Ibid., File 37, "Welcome to Second Annual Youth for Christ International Convention, July 22-28, 1946."

24 *Toronto Star*, 8 June 1946, 15.

25 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 6 May 1946, 4.

26 *The Standard Magazine*, 6 April 1946, 3.

27 Templeton Interview, 19 July 1996.

Templeton was enamoured by the notion of a forceful, dynamic Jesus who was both man and God, and it was this image of the divine that he presented to his audience. Jesus wanted to live day-to-day with men and women, Templeton told his listeners, if only they would let him. Too often, however, people allowed sin to get in the way. The evangelist chipped away at the morals of his listeners in order to point out their need to start over again with Christ. Templeton knew whereof he spoke; he had done wrong as a young man. While sounding a note of judgement, his tone was compassionate. The just punishment for your sin is death, he told his listeners, but through Jesus' death on the cross, which miraculously acted as a substitutionary atonement for your sins, you could have new life. Christ rose from the dead, and if you accepted Him into your heart, He would act as your advocate before Father God. Furthermore, Jesus would send His Holy Spirit, who would dwell in you, helping you to live a life pleasing to God. He contrasted the sins of youth with the sense of peace and satisfaction that came with walking day-to-day with Christ. Soloists and choirs sang "Jesus Can Satisfy the Heart" and "What A Friend We Have in Jesus." Only life with Christ could provide ultimate fulfilment.

Templeton emphasized that Christian living was not boring; it brought excitement and satisfaction. The life stories presented to Templeton's listeners by accomplished Christian men (and they were always men) underscored this point. The 1944 year-end YFC Toronto meeting, for example, featured testimonies by a policeman and a war veteran.²⁸ Being a Christian thus did not necessitate removing oneself from the world, but rather living life on the edge.

Young men and women answered Templeton's call, and "came forward" at the end of his rallies. To those who were troubled by guilt, the evangelist promised a new beginning of hope and promise. Not everyone was burdened by a heavy conscience, of course. Others were searching for answers to the eternal questions, as life and death were not abstractions to a generation that had just come through the horrors of war. Many were also deeply concerned for their future careers, relationships, and families. Christ had the answer to their questions, said Templeton, if they would only listen.

The style of Templeton's rallies, which mixed entertainment, patriotism, and revivalism, also struck a chord with the audience. In contrast to the "old-fashioned" message, the manner of these meetings followed the latest trends in entertainment. Reporters who covered YFC rallies had to remind themselves that they were at a religious function. That was the point – the meetings, Templeton told a journalist, were "meant to inspire interest rather than reverence."²⁹ This is what young men and women wanted, and they would get it. The only questions were from whom and where? Certainly, there were plenty

28 *Toronto Star*, 30 December 1944, 25.

29 *Maclean's*, 15 May 1947, 57.

of options. The 1940s witnessed a growing consciousness of youth among merchants of commercial culture. *Seventeen* magazine began publishing in the autumn of 1944. The word “teenager” came into popular use, denoting a demographic group that had developed its own style, typified by the “bobby-soxers,” and musical tastes, typified by “swing” music. Young people even seemed to speak their own language, in the form of “jive talk.” When the war ended, these young people had money, and the time and proclivity to spend it. Merchants attuned to this growing market responded with consumer-oriented fashions, music, movies, and soft drinks.³⁰

Templeton marketed Christianity through YFC meetings. His strategy was made explicit in *Reaching Youth for Christ*, a “how-to” manual for those organizing young people’s evangelistic rallies, penned by Torrey Johnson and his brother-in-law Robert Cook. Independent evangelists could not take their authority for granted. They were competing directly with secular offerings. If they wanted to be successful, therefore, they would have to flawlessly mimic the style of popular entertainment. “Your young folk can hear, if they wish, worldly music, *perfectly produced*, any hour of the day or night,” observed Johnson and Cook. “They have found out what good production is, and brother, they’ll hold you to it. Dare to offer them something shoddy, and they’ll shun your meeting. ... They want the best.”³¹

This is precisely what Templeton gave them. Having been transformed by conversion, he was determined to bring about the experience in others, and if that required drawing on the trappings of contemporary commercial culture, so be it. He had no qualms about using the “devil’s means” for “God’s purposes,” because he was convinced that the supernatural message of conversion could not be altered by temporal means of communication. In keeping with Johnson and Cook’s advice to hold his meetings in “a neutral spot, one that will appeal alike to saints and sinners,” Templeton staged his rallies at Massey Hall or Maple Leaf Gardens.³² The 1946 Maple Leaf Gardens rally, observed a reporter for the *Globe and Mail*, was “as elaborate and as varied as a professional revue. ... With colourful costumes, fanfares of trumpets and effective colored lighting.”³³ The main entertainment was presented from “a stage surmounted by seven huge crosses and spotlights slashing the whole scene.”³⁴ On this platform, jugglers and acrobats performed their tricks, while Templeton moved through the crowd with microphone in hand. In a manner “similar to

30 Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 50-51, 53, 90.

31 Torrey Johnson and Robert Cook, *Reaching Youth for Christ*, 36, in Joel Carpenter, ed., *The Youth for Christ Movement and Its Pioneers* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).

32 *Ibid.*, 36-37.

33 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 17 June 1946, 3.

34 *Maclean's*, 15 May 1947, 57.

radio quiz programs with interviews and testimonials on the P.A. system,” Templeton chatted and joked with young people in the audience.³⁵ By providing young men and women with an opportunity to be theatrical, Templeton ensured that they found, within the confines of YFC, an outlet for their desire for recreation. In the process, he gave these new forms of leisure a religious stamp of approval. Jazz rhythms belonged not just to shadowy speakeasies, the evangelist seemed to say. They also belonged to God.

But the men and women in the stands at Templeton’s meetings were more than spectators – they were part of the production. In the words of Geertz, these rituals were “a drawing near, not a standing back.”³⁶ Quite simply, the show could not go on without them. The broadcasting of young converts’ “testimonials” provided to others a model of the process that could lead to a similar change in their lives. And each of these first-hand accounts stressed the joy and peace that came with conversion.

The audience singing pushed the point home. “Isn’t it grand to be a Christian, isn’t it grand?” young men and women asked one another. “It is truly wonderful,” another song seemed to reply, “It is truly wonderful what the Lord has done.”³⁷ The repetition of the lyrics kept the pace moving – participants could throw all of their energy and emotion into singing without being hampered by the words, generating an excitement that could not have been duplicated if the music came from the platform alone. By making audience members temporary players in the production, Templeton heightened the sense of community – their participation in these religious events created in young people the feeling that they were part of something bigger than themselves. Their church, led by a fundamentalist version of a popular culture celebrity such as Frank Sinatra, met at Massey Hall on a Saturday night to hear contemporary pop music delivered at a lightning pace. This was not their parents’ religion.

The spectacle also closely resembled a patriotic review. Canadians had been preoccupied by the war, and the renewal of patriotism that followed the defeat of Germany and Japan permeated all aspects of life. In keeping with the nationalistic spirit, Templeton decorated his platform in red, white and blue, and opened his meetings with marchers – Boy Scouts in twos – carrying the flags of the Allied nations to the stage. At the Gardens rally, members of the choir wore white, except for those in the centre, who wore black, forming a “V” for “Victory.”³⁸

35 Templeton Papers, Newspaper Clippings File, *New World*, April 1946. *New World* was a Toronto version of the American *Life* magazine. Templeton gave me access to his personal collection of material concerning his evangelistic career. To organize the material, I arranged it in a series of files.

36 Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 116.

37 Templeton Papers, Music File, Songfest Sheet, 3.

38 See *Toronto Star*, 17 June 1946, 2; *Maclean’s*, 15 May 1947, 57; Templeton Papers, Photos File; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 17 June 1946, 4.

A typical Massey Hall rally, noted a reporter for *Maclean's* magazine in 1947, "opened with the National Anthem and swung into a fast-paced musical program." The performances were never boring, shifting briskly among piano solos, vocal solos, male quartets, brass quartets, saxophone trios, cornetists, a male chorus, a female chorus, and specialty acts like southern gospel quartets. One Templeton rally at Maple Leaf Gardens, for example, featured a "2,000 voice choir, a five-piano team, trumpeters, [and] a band."³⁹

Most of these musicians were the same age as the audience members. In 1946, Templeton's Toronto YFC team included Ted Smith, the pianist and musical director, who was eighteen, and Gus Ambrose, the song leader, who was twenty-three. His brother, Tommy Ambrose, a crowd favourite who delighted audiences with flawless renditions of African-American religious folk songs, was only four. Attractive young women were also a central feature: Connie Templeton sang solos from center stage, sometimes accompanied by the "Youth for Christ Octette." Even the evangelist got into the act, occasionally singing a duet with his wife.⁴⁰

At the centre of it all stood Templeton. Described by a reporter in Chicago as "dark and remindful of a Hollywood handsome pastor,"⁴¹ his clothes were of the latest fashion, impeccably cut. United Church of Canada leader James Mutchmor remembered that at their first meeting, the "office girls almost swooned as Templeton moved by into my office."⁴² A reporter for the *Toronto Globe* who covered an arrival by Templeton to the Toronto airport caught a glimpse of the revivalist's magnetic appeal. As a result of the surging crowd, "businessmen on their way to Montreal were backed into corners and nearly missed their connections. One such, caught in the doorway muttered ... a string of well-selected phrases not usually uttered at the triumphant homecoming of a gentleman of the cloth." But Templeton was no ordinary cleric. When he finally arrived, "nattily attired in a buff colored sports jacket ... a checked waistcoat and bow-tie" he was "greeted with shouts, sighs, [and] the odd stifled scream. ... As he came in the door from the plane ramp there were howls of: 'There he is,' and wails of: 'Oh, I can't see him.'"⁴³ It was the kind of reception reserved for movie stars and musicians. To his adoring fans, Templeton was a celebrity.

39 *Maclean's*, 15 May 1947, 57.

40 Templeton Papers, Newspaper Clippings File, *New World*, April 1946. Templeton Interview, 19 July 1996. Smith would soon join forces with Billy Graham. Tommy Ambrose went on to a successful career singing secular music.

41 Templeton Papers, Youth for Christ Tour Album, *Chicago Herald-American*, 23 March 1946, 4.

42 James Mutchmor, *The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1965), 115.

43 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 30 April 1946, 8.

Templeton's airport reception also testifies to the evangelist's success at creating a distinct fundamentalist subculture. There was no shortage of stars for young people to adore in post-1945 Canada. But the evangelist's message implicitly counselled young Christians to look away from the world and toward God. From this vantage point, Templeton appeared as someone set apart from the rest of society, and therefore special. Furthermore, among God's people, Templeton was a unique and, therefore, a worthy object of adoring affection. And, in contrast to faraway stars of radio and film, he was close by – a local hero.⁴⁴

He certainly had a knack for self-promotion. His years at the *Globe* had given him first-hand knowledge of the inner workings of a newspaper. He could also draw on the marketing insights of members of the Toronto "Christian Business Men's Committee" – a group of influential businessmen who sponsored his YFC rallies. Templeton knew how to gain a reader's attention, and was perfectly in tune with the advertising strategies of the day. The rise of psychology as an academic discipline provided advertisers with insights into human nature that they attempted to exploit for the sake of sales. Social scientists identified the motivations of consumers, and copywriters articulated the products of businesses that would meet those desires. The introduction of market research changed the world of advertising even further. Advertisers stopped viewing consumers as part of a single mass market with shared interests, and instead as members of segments with particular desires that responded to specific strategies.⁴⁵

Templeton did not attempt to reach all Torontonians with his religious product. He recognized that he would be much more effective if he targeted one segment of the market: young people. Following the insights of advertisers who shifted their focus from the product to the consumer, Templeton put youth front and centre. Where previous evangelists had placed pictures of the speaker in their ads, Templeton included a photograph of a happy young couple. Where other evangelists had highlighted the title of the speaker's presentation, Templeton focused on young people's concerns, and used their own language. A poster advertising a Toronto YFC service asked, "But what's

44 See Jay Dolan's explanation for the heightened status of priests in this era in Dolan, "Patterns of Leadership in the Congregation," in James P. Wind and James W. Lewis, eds., *American Congregations, Volume 2: New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 247-248.

45 Russell Johnston, *Selling Themselves: The Emergence of Canadian Advertising* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 182, 226-7; Merle Curti, "The Changing Concept of Human Nature in the Literature of American Advertising," *Business History Review* 41 (1967), 347, 354; William Leiss, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products and Images of Well-Being* (Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada, 1990), 83-94, 135-155; Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 171.

all this got to do with me?” “Puh-llenty, puh-llenty” came the response. “Get this: Templeton’s coming.”⁴⁶ This was a religious meeting, the publicity made clear, but it was going to be fun – the banners of his posters and newspapers advertisements declared that the services would be both “in tune with the times,” and “anchored to the rock [of Christ].” The evangelist also knew that young people were concerned about the opinion of their peers, so he told them that their friends would be at YFC. A breathless advertisement for the 1946 Maple Leaf Gardens rally, the largest on the newspaper page, declared that “Everybody’s Doing It! Doing What? Why, Preparing for the Gardens!” “All Ontario is athrill with anticipation,” the ad claimed, for the “GREATEST GOSPEL RALLY IN CANADA’S HISTORY.” The insights of psychologists, backed up by intuition, told Templeton that youth were looking for adventure, and his advertisements promised young people that the evangelist would deliver. Another advertisement for the same Gardens rally promised in staccato: “20,000 Expected! – Internationally-known Speakers! – Thrilling Music! – 2,000 Voice Choir! – Colourful Pageantry! Event of the Year!”⁴⁷ The response was overwhelming: according to one headline in the *Toronto Star*, 16,000 people packed Maple Leaf Gardens for the event while “hundreds” of others were turned away.⁴⁸

“Just the quiet techniques of modern salesmanship” – Templeton and the United Church of Canada, 1948-1957

This kind of reaction was in no way unusual, and through the 1940s, thousands of young people “came forward” in response to Templeton’s youth-oriented appeal. On the surface, Templeton had every reason to be happy. Under the surface, however, he was troubled by his work with YFC. There were several problems. “There was a shallowness in what we were doing,” he recalled later, “a tendency to equate success with numbers.”⁴⁹ In addition, his faith was being eroded by doubts concerning many of the central tenets of fundamentalist Protestantism. Particularly problematic were literal interpretations of Biblical events; he recalled later that “I just didn’t find it possible to believe the Bible stories.”⁵⁰ Fundamentalist theology did not seem to have any answers to the questions that Templeton was asking. Convinced that an education would help him to develop a more intelligent theology, Templeton sought out James Mutchmor, the influential Secretary of the United Church of Canada’s Board of

46 Templeton Papers, Leaflets, Pamphlets, Advertisements File, “Chatham Vocational School, Chatham Youth for Christ.”

47 *Toronto Star*, 8 June 1946, 15; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 1 June 1946, 12.

48 *Toronto Star*, 17 June 1946, 2.

49 Templeton, *Charles Templeton, An Anecdotal Memoir*, 67.

50 Templeton Interview, 19 July 1996.

Evangelism and Social Service. He wanted to attend Princeton Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, he told Mutchmor, but the seminary required an undergraduate degree, and Templeton's formal education had ended at Grade 9. Could Mutchmor help him? With assistance from his colleagues in the United States, Mutchmor convinced the seminary's President, John McKay, to accept Templeton into the Master of Divinity program.⁵¹

Templeton's years at Princeton were among the happiest of his life – the seminary proved to be a welcoming place for the evangelist. He spent most of his time in solitary study, reading widely, trying to settle the basic questions that troubled him. He soon began to feel a measure of certainty about his beliefs, “not through enlightenment but through a conscious act of commitment.”⁵² Three years later, he emerged from Princeton a different evangelist; specifically, he severed his ties with YFC and fundamentalism in general. His new colleagues were part of the mainstream establishment, and in 1950 he began leading services for the mainstream churches. The following year, the National Council of Churches (NCC), which represented Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and others, hired Templeton to lead what it called preaching “missions” throughout the United States. Since the turn of the century, NCC denominations had been preoccupied with the social gospel. After the war, however, they rediscovered mass evangelism, declaring 1952 “The Year of Evangelism.” The National Council's Department of Evangelism worked closely with Canada's United Church Board of Evangelism and Social Service, and it was agreed that Templeton would spend from September to December of each year leading campaigns in Canada for the United Church, and from January to May holding meetings in the United States for the NCC. From 1952 to 1954 Templeton served as the Secretary of Evangelism for the National Council. Through 1955-56 he was based in New York City as the Director of Evangelism for the Presbyterian Church of the United States. He coordinated evangelistic campaigns, and hosted a Sunday morning television program for youth, broadcast on the CBS television network, called “Look Up And Live.”⁵³

It was a perfect fit for Templeton. In terms of the message, the mainstream churches' emphasis on conversionist Christianity was not far removed from his fundamentalist roots. At the same time, the churches' theology closely resem-

51 Mutchmor, *The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor*, 115-116. *Maclean's*, 15 May 1947, 56-57. While McKay consented, he stipulated that no degree would be granted.

52 Templeton Interview, 19 July 1996; Templeton, *Charles Templeton, An Anecdotal Memoir*, 75, 79.

53 Templeton, *Charles Templeton, An Anecdotal Memoir*, 79-80; *Toronto Globe*, 28 July 1951, 2; Templeton Papers, Advertisements, Programs and Tracts File, “Christ is the Answer! The Greater Evansville Christian Rally, January 27 through February 11, 1952,” 10; Mutchmor, *The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor*, 115-116.

bled Templeton's post-Princeton approach to matters of faith. In terms of the method, the United Church's careful use of evangelism as an entry-point into church membership seemed to Templeton to be more effective than the stand-alone strategy of YFC. Finally, the mainstream churches wielded an authority in English-speaking Canadian cultural life of which Templeton's former fundamentalist colleagues could only dream. The 1954 New Year's Day edition of the United Church *Observer* made reference to the "over 230 various campaigns of evangelism which have been planned for and promoted this Fall or prepared for the season leading up to Easter, 1954." At the forefront of this renewal was Templeton, the United Church's leading evangelist. According to the United Church *Observer*, Templeton "showed that the day of mass evangelism is not something that belongs only to the past."⁵⁴

Looking back to their own tradition of late nineteenth-century urban revivalism, mainstream circles hailed Templeton as "the Dwight L. Moody of our Day."⁵⁵ His new style of evangelism drew thousands in English-speaking Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Winnipeg, St. Catharines, and Sydney. The mainstream denominational presses boasted conversions in the manner of church presses in the late nineteenth century. In Sydney, for instance, it was reported in 1953 that the city's most notorious bootlegger had attended a Templeton meeting, then walked to a nearby pier and pitched his entire stock of whiskey into the ocean. The attendance and apparent conversion of bootleggers and others led many to believe that North America was entering a period of great revival.⁵⁶

In many ways, Templeton's message in the 1950s echoed what he had said a few years earlier. His primary purpose was to bring about in his listeners a conversion, and then encourage them to take up his vision of Christian life and join – or return to – a mainstream church. Templeton's tract, *Steps to Christian Commitment – How To Become A Christian*, outlined the message that he preached. Templeton noted that "we have all sinned." We can not forgive ourselves of our sins because "we have sinned not only against ourselves but against others and against Almighty God." What was needed was repentance, which was not so much sorrow for past misdeeds but a "change of mind" and a change in behaviour. Through the atonement, which Templeton explained as "Christ becoming one with us and entering into our judgement and we becoming one with Him and thus entering His oneness with the Father," women and

54 *United Church Observer*, 15 December 1952, 1.

55 Templeton Papers, Advertisements, Programs and Tracts File, "1952 Indiana State Pastors Conference."

56 *The United Churchman*, 9 November 1950, 1. The story of the bootlegger is told in Templeton Papers, Newspaper Clippings File, Boyd, "Religion's Super-Salesman," *American Magazine*, August 1953.

men could live in a close relationship with God. The tract concluded with a prayer by which the reader could profess a conversion.⁵⁷

While his basic message, and often his venues, remained the same, the tone of his meetings changed significantly. During the 1940s, Templeton had appealed to young people by presenting himself as an up-beat master of ceremonies, presiding over a religious extravaganza that had ended like an old-fashioned revival service. During the 1950s, he packaged his evangelism in a manner that would appeal to more refined sensibilities, presiding over calm, dignified meetings where listeners were encouraged to live more like Christ. In the process, he thereby distanced his methods from the youth entertainment trappings of his YFC days, as these would have repelled rather than attracted the new audiences that Templeton was now targeting.

The “Manual for a Templeton Christian Mission” that was distributed before each campaign informed supporters that during the services to come, “the excesses that have made evangelism suspect in the past are avoided.”⁵⁸ The tone at the opening service of each of his missions was almost apologetic. “I’m not going to do anything sensational – jump around or gyrate” he announced at the first meeting of his Vancouver revival in 1954, “nor will I make any prophecies like the end of the world.”⁵⁹ The evangelist’s style, “so mannerly and so reasonable,” a reporter observed, helped set the tone for the services.⁶⁰ Seeking an explanation for his approach, a journalist in the United States credited “the discipline of his Canadian background of reserve and poise.”⁶¹ Perhaps. But Templeton’s church sponsors, rather than his country of origin, were more responsible for the mood of the meetings.

The mainstream establishment had returned to mass evangelism in the 1950s, but on its own terms. As the principal evangelist of the United Church, Templeton was no longer free to market evangelism as he pleased – he now had an organization to answer to. At the same time, he was not required to sell evangelism like he had in the 1940s. During his YFC days, the style of Templeton’s services was as much a matter of necessity as choice – he was forced to use the strategies of the marketplace to draw as many young people as possible to his meetings. In the 1950s, however, he could rely on the significant resources of the well-to-do mainstream denominations to bring people to his revivals.

57 Charles Templeton, *Steps to Christian Commitment – How To Become A Christian* (New York: The Division of Evangelism, n.d.).

58 United Church of Canada [UCC], Victoria University Archives [VUA], St. Catharines Templeton Mission, “Manual for a Templeton Christian Mission,” 2.

59 *Vancouver Province*, 31 May 1954, 21.

60 Templeton Papers, Newspaper File, *New York World-Telegram and Sun*, 10 March 1951.

61 *Ibid.*, *The Irvington Presbyterian*, March 1953, 2.

Many of these resources originated in the United States. The NCC and the United Church had been working together on evangelism since the mid-1920s. In the 1930s, James Mutchmor began to form links between his Board of Evangelism and Social Service and the evangelism departments of the Federal (later National) Council of Churches and the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. As a result, the evangelism of Canada's largest Protestant church was very much American: many of the speakers, most of the strategies, and virtually all of the literature originated south of the border.⁶² It did not seem to matter. Canadians responded to this message in a manner similar to that of their coreligionists in the U.S.

Mainstream denominational boundaries were similarly disregarded. In an attempt to return to the city-wide crusades of an earlier era, the United Church invited other denominations to take part in the services. In preparation for the 1955 St. Catharines campaign, for example, the local Salvation Army, Baptist, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Christian Reformed churches were contacted. Many from these assemblies attended the meetings or joined the choir; the Baptists were reported to have been especially cooperative. None, however, shared in the planning.⁶³

Preparations for the mission began a year in advance. In contrast to Templeton's YFC services, these evangelistic campaigns were organized by the host churches. Templeton guided the planning through his "Manual for a Templeton Christian Mission," which provided detailed instructions concerning every aspect of the mission. And although ministers coordinated much of the details, laymen were given the most prominent leadership roles. Early on, Mutchmor realized "that our church's lay leaders were far more venturesome than interested clergy."⁶⁴

Running a church and organizing a revival were two entirely different tasks, requiring distinct sets of skills. If a minister wanted to introduce a change in his church, he had to develop a coordinated strategy. The idea needed to be introduced incrementally, influential leaders brought outside, and the membership persuaded. Many a parson learned the hard way that his congregation was quite happy to leave things as they were.⁶⁵ Evangelistic campaigns, in contrast, demanded entrepreneurial ambition. Organizers had to dream big, and implement decisions quickly in order to make it all happen. Mutchmor realized that lay men and women were willing to take risks, and were more confident in the results than clergy, and he arranged organizing com-

62 Mutchmor, *Mutchmor: The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor*, 110-111.

63 See UCC, VUA, St. Catharines Templeton Mission, Box 4, File 3, Central Committee Minutes.

64 Mutchmor, *Mutchmor: The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor*, 108-109.

65 For more on the peculiarities of congregational life, see Martin E. Marty, "The Congregation as a Culture," *The Christian Ministry* (Jan-Feb 1991).

mittees so that ministers were outnumbered by a ratio of three to one.⁶⁶ As a result, correspondence with churches or the press was printed under the letterheads of well-known firms run by involved laymen. Local businesses often donated necessary items like organs, and bought advertisements in the programme.⁶⁷

The campaign began before Templeton arrived. The NCC developed a marketing blitz approach to evangelism which also proved effective in English Canada. At the very least, the mission was preceded by a week of visitation evangelism by ministers and lay people who notified local residents of the meetings to come. In some cases, communities were saturated with a program of home visitations, Bible classes, young people's events, women's rallies, radio programs, prayer vigils and a pastors' conference, all for the sake of the Templeton Mission. These services were community events. The organizers were convinced that a broad base of support was necessary for the campaign to succeed.⁶⁸

At the same time, however, publicity formed the biggest expenditure in the Manual's "Suggested Budget," and significant expenditures went to advertisements in the local newspaper.⁶⁹ These full page ads were far removed from those that Templeton had used during his YFC days, though the evangelist's marketing philosophy had not changed. Templeton knew from market researchers that his advertising had to be targeted to a segment of the population. And he had learned from social scientists that he had to put the needs of his audience ahead of his evangelistic product. But the audience had changed, and a new marketing style was required to effectively reach middle-class Canadian adults. Where Templeton's Youth for Christ advertisements had been crowded with promises of the "thrilling" services to come, his United Church newspaper ads adopted an air of easy informality. The information conveyed by the ad could have been communicated in an area half the size, but the vast white space seemed to suggest that those sponsoring the revival were not at all concerned about the cost. This was no hard sell – Templeton preferred to supply readers with the information that they required. A portrait of the evangelist, sometimes accompanied by Connie in concert gown and pearls, assured read-

66 Mutchmor, *Mutchmor: The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor*, 108-109.

67 UCC, VUA, St. Catharines Templeton Mission, Box 4, File 3, Niagara Presbytery Committee on Templeton Mission, Minutes, 28 June 1955.

68 Templeton Papers, Advertisements, Programs and Tracts File, "Christ is the Answer! The Greater Evansville Christian Rally, January 27 through February 11, 1952," 11.

69 For example, see the advertisements in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 November 1952, 12, and *St. Catharines Standard*, 1 October 1955, 11. In his "Suggested Budget," Templeton recommended that \$4,000 of an approximate total budget of \$13,000 be spent on "Publicity." UCC, VUA, St. Catharines Templeton Mission, "Manual For a Templeton Christian Mission," 23.

ers that these services would be conducted by the kind of people that any Canadian would welcome as neighbours.⁷⁰

The dignified tone was reflected in the music at Templeton's services. Gone was the all-female octet, the brass band, and the four-year-old belting out "Negro spirituals," all characteristic of his YFC rallies. Templeton's target audience had changed, and his style had changed with them. The only instruments at his United Church meetings were the piano and organ, and the only voices were those of a local church choir or the evangelist's wife. Connie Templeton now limited herself to classical pieces like Malotte's "The Lord's Prayer." Similarly, the choir stuck to highbrow works by composers such as Handel and Bach.⁷¹

Templeton changed the style of his meetings in an attempt to draw men and women who had previously avoided evangelism. He was keen to set himself apart from the variety-show revivals of the past, and the men who led them. Many of these evangelists, he told an audience in Winnipeg in 1952, "had been motivated by sentiments other than a genuine faith."⁷² To distinguish himself from these hucksters of religion, Templeton put himself on a modest salary, and publicized the fact at each mission.⁷³

But Templeton did not stop commercializing evangelism; rather, he commercialized it in a different way. The evangelist left behind the Sinatra-style bow-ties and music of contemporary mass entertainment, but in place of these he substituted an efficient revival operation run by businessmen who spent the largest part of the budget on advertising. There was no pacing back and forth in Templeton's services, noted one reporter in an allusion to the stereotypical evangelist of the past, just "the quiet techniques of modern salesmanship."⁷⁴ Templeton presented audiences with the figure of the trusted owner of an established business, not the slick operator of a fly-by-night operation. And his "techniques" resonated with his target audience – middle-class men and women who were enjoying the biggest economic expansion of modern times.

To post-war suburbanites, he marketed "the gospel" as a central component of modern living. One convert enthused that Templeton's "comparative simplicity of approach, his natural presentation of Christianity as a commodity as

70 See, for example, *Regina Leader-Post*, 4 October 1952, 9; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 November 1952, 12; *Calgary Herald*, 29 November 1952, 9; *St. Catharines Standard*, 1 October 1955, 11.

71 See UCC, VUA, "Manual For a Templeton Christian Mission," 8, 9; *St. Catharines Standard*, 3 October 1955, 9; *Vancouver Province*, 31 May 1954, 21.

72 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 November 1952, 3.

73 UCC, VUA, St. Catharines Templeton Mission, "Manual For a Templeton Christian Mission," 2. In Vancouver, for instance, the press was informed that Charles and Connie's salary was \$150 per week, and that any surplus at the end of the campaign would go to the National Council of Churches to be used for evangelism. *Vancouver Province*, 1 June 1954, 1.

74 Templeton Papers, Newspaper Clippings File, *The Daily Journal*, 30 July 1952, 1.

necessary to life as salt, and his overwhelming belief in its practical value ‘sold’ me.”⁷⁵ In a society that was negotiating its response to an expanding consumer culture, religion was a “commodity” like no other.⁷⁶ This purchase was not “fun” – the days of easy spending on soft drinks and movies were long-gone for these Canadians. Faced with the demands of mortgage and car payments, they were concerned with “practical value.” At the same time, as the evangelist made clear, conversion was more than a washing machine, and this is where religion was different from other commodities – it was set apart by its purpose. Canadians could get by without the latest in consumer goods, but they could not find true life in this world or the next without conversion. For this observer, as for many others, it was a message that “sold” itself to willing buyers.

For most of the 1950s, the United Church made missions of this nature a priority. As the decade drew to a close, however, issues like the new curriculum of Christian education received increased attention, and evangelistic campaigns slipped into the background. Many United Church leaders were no longer convinced of the efficacy of mass evangelism. What was needed, they surmised, was a Christianity that engaged Canada and the world. The emphasis on personal conversion was replaced with a stress on education and social action, and Templeton and the church went their separate ways.⁷⁷

No longer bound to a church, and once again uncertain of his religious convictions, Templeton sought a new career. A year after departing evangelism, he re-emerged as a television journalist, and won the 1958 Maurice Rosenfeld Award as the “brightest freshman in Canadian television by a vote of his fellow performers in the industry.”⁷⁸ He would later serve as the executive managing editor of the *Toronto Star*, and briefly as the editor-in-chief of *Maclean’s* magazine. He hosted a radio program with Pierre Berton, and wrote several best-selling books. He even took a run at the leadership of the Liberal Party of Ontario in the fall of 1964, with an eye to the Premier’s office. His inventive presentation of his political message drew hundreds of party delegates to his meetings, but most were already committed to his rival Andrew Thompson, to whom Templeton lost on the sixth and final ballot.

Charles Templeton made his mark in several areas of Canadian cultural life, but none of these was as indelible as the stamp that he left on Canadian

75 *ibid.*

76 As Joy Parr points out, a wave of consumer culture washed over Canada following World War II, but it came later, and with less force, than the floodtide that surged across the United States. Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 64-83.

77 For changes in Canadian mainstream evangelism, see Mutchmor, *Mutchmor: The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor*, 117 and John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing, 1988), 186.

78 *Maclean’s*, 8 November 1958, 57.

Protestantism in the ten years that followed the Second World War. Templeton was at the forefront of evangelism at a time when Protestantism was growing at a rate unsurpassed in the twentieth century. He contributed to that growth through his revivals and missions. The evangelist underwent a conversion as a young man, an experience that changed his life, bringing him into what he was convinced was a passionate “personal relationship” with Christ. Eager to share the joy and peace that he felt, he dedicated himself to triggering this transformation in the lives of others. Through conversion, he attempted to bring his listeners face-to-face with the eternal questions of life and death, forcing them to contemplate their obligations to family, church, community, and country. By changing men and women, Templeton hoped to transform the world.

But time was short, and his choices were limited. Templeton refused to wait for Canadians to come to him in search of answers to their religious questions. He wanted to get the message out, and that meant marketing “the gospel.” Unlike the United Kingdom, Canada did not have an established church, supported by the state, which could assume popular support and distance itself from the marketplace. Nor did Templeton see any point in withdrawing altogether from the surrounding commercial culture, in the manner of the Mennonites, where few Canadians would follow. Instead, in an attempt to reach the largest number of people in the most efficient manner, this entrepreneur in religion borrowed the secrets and strategies of merchants of commercial culture, or pioneered his own innovations. He adopted a marketing strategy suited to his specific audience: in the 1940s he appealed to young people by drawing on the style of radio and mimicking a patriotic pageant, while in the 1950s he did the same to middle-aged Canadians by speaking in the voice of a respectable businessman. Jazz and flashy soloists were replaced by classical music and robed choirs.

By re-commodifying religion to reflect his time and place and his own changing views, Templeton ensured that Protestant Christianity remained relevant to Canadians who were experiencing changing socio-economic circumstances. His example reminds us, at the very least, that the study of churches, including leadership, attendance and membership, gives only a partial picture of the state of Protestant belief and behaviour. We need to look beyond the churches to understand more fully the manner in which religion has had an impact on Canadians.

But Templeton’s public expression of religion can teach us more than that. His example also prompts us to reconsider the ways in which we explain Protestant change in Canada. Contemporary historiography has tended to work with either/or concepts such as “secular” and “sacred,” and thus has tended to view the encounter of Protestantism and commercial culture as a clash of opposites in which the former was overwhelmed by the latter. Templeton’s example recommends an alternative explanation, and illustrates how an innovative

entrepreneur in religion drew on contemporary resources so that Protestantism could continue to speak to the concerns of English-speaking Canadians.⁷⁹

In the years that followed, the heirs to YFC seem to have drawn on new forms of commercial culture with few misgivings. Convinced, perhaps, that their message was timeless, they boldly experimented with the most effective means of delivery. Their contribution to Expo '67, to cite just one example, coupled conversionist Christianity with the latest in audio-visual technology. In the end, the "Sermons from Science" pavilion proved to be one of the hits of the fair. Championing entertainment industry formats, and providing opportunities for spectators to enter into the performance, they helped render these new forms of recreation and communication safe. Fundamentalist Canadians, as a result, could enjoy everything that the world had to offer, within the bounds of their religious community.

The United Church, in contrast, appears to have entered the 1960s with misgivings about its use of commercial culture. Although the methods of mass evangelism no longer seemed appropriate, few appeared to be sure about what should replace them. As Canada was transformed by new forms of entertainment and communication, the church focused its attention elsewhere: to the creation of a revised service-book and hymn book, the launching of a new Sunday School curriculum, and other priorities. A few years later, it joined in an ecumenical venture to create the Christian Pavilion at Expo '67, where visitors were subjected to graphic images of human suffering, and left to ponder a suitable response. Thoughtful, but in no way enjoyable, the presentation was a fitting symbol of the church's attempt to disengage itself from the entertaining evangelism that it had sponsored just a few years earlier. It also reinforced those critics who were declaring mainstream Protestantism to be out of touch with English-speaking Canadians. And it may be in the mainstream churches' disengagement from the flood-tide of commercial culture, and not in the flood-tide itself, that historians find an explanation for the changing fortunes of fundamentalist and mainstream Protestantism in the decades that would follow.

79 Historians Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau have recently argued that inner piety and social evangelism constituted two streams that fed the United Church in a cyclical manner from the late 1800s to the 1940s. Christie and Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940*, 249. The example of Templeton extends their thesis, and demonstrates that personal pietism remained strong in the church into the mid-1950s.