

Christ and Counterculture: Churches, Clergy, and Hippies in Toronto's Yorkville, 1965-1970

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Churches and clergy (Catholic, mainline Protestant and evangelical) engaged in various ways with countercultural youth in the Toronto neighbourhood of Yorkville between 1965 and 1970. When examined in the context of Canadian Christianity in the long sixties, these outreach efforts to hippies highlight the cultural changes underway in Canada's leading denominations, particularly the growing divergence between mainline Protestants and evangelicals. These endeavours are significant, too, as examples of liminal spaces—middle grounds where two cultures meet. They constituted part of the broader context of churches' engagement with youth in this period.

Dans le quartier torontois de Yorkville, entre 1965 et 1970, les Églises et les membres du clergé (catholiques, protestants traditionnels ou évangélistes) sont entrés en relation de bien des façons avec les jeunes des mouvements contre-culturels. Dans le contexte du christianisme canadien des longues années 1960, ces efforts d'interaction avec les hippies mettent en lumière les changements culturels en cours au sein des principaux groupes confessionnels du pays, notamment l'écart de plus en plus marqué entre protestants traditionnels et évangélistes. Ces initiatives sont aussi importantes en ce sens qu'elles illustrent certains espaces frontières, c'est-à-dire les points de rencontre entre cultures. Au final, elles s'inscrivent dans le contexte plus large de l'engagement des Églises auprès des jeunes au cours de cette période.

“THOSE WORKING at Teen Challenge believe that the area that offers the greatest challenge is YORKVILLE, better known as ‘The Village.’ A boiling pot where thousands of young people congregate for kicks—The Greenwich Village of Toronto—where drug addicts, beatniks, gangs, dance clubs, night spots, gay

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clubs, French shops, taverns and coffee shops are to be found.”¹ So read a bulletin sent out by the Toronto branch of Teen Challenge (a Pentecostal ministry aimed at reaching inner-city youth) to its supporters in early 1966. These missionary-minded evangelicals shared the widely held perception of Yorkville as a foreign space, where vice had free reign, and they were anxious to establish a foothold in the neighbourhood.²

Teen Challenge was only one of many religious groups doing outreach work in Yorkville throughout the sixties, and far from the largest. In Toronto and across the continent, churches (Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, and evangelical) reached out to countercultural youth for many reasons, primarily because it was difficult to ignore them. During the 1960s, North Americans were reminded continually—in popular songs, movies, academic studies, and the news media—of the demographic and cultural importance of youth. Moreover, in the mid-sixties, Canada’s largest denominations, both mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic, faced crises of declining social authority and declining attendance,³ and one of the key reasons for this state of decline was the churches’ inability to retain young people.⁴ In these years, church leaders were not oblivious to the absence of young people, and some of these leaders made the connection between the membership crisis and the defection of youth.⁵ Convinced that youth were an important revitalizing force in the church (and in society more broadly), both Catholic and Protestant churches intensified their focus on youth ministry in the mid-to-late sixties. The churches’ decision to engage with hippies in Yorkville and other countercultural communities must be understood in this broader context.⁶

While hippies constituted only a fraction of young people, they garnered a disproportionate share of media attention in the late sixties, and they were perceived by some to be the cultural vanguard of their generation. There was a measure of truth in this perception; throughout the late sixties and into the early seventies, the values and practices of the hippie counterculture would permeate the larger culture of white North American youth.⁷ Consequently, to engage with hip youth was an

- 1 “A Summer Project in the Yorkville Area” (1966), records of the Harshman Fellowships Society (Toronto, Ontario).
- 2 On the construction of Yorkville as a foreign space, particularly in the media, see Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 100-107.
- 3 Mark Noll, “What Happened to Christian Canada?” *Church History*, vol. 75, no. 2 (June 2006), pp. 245-273. On the declining fortunes of Christian churches across North America and western Europe, see Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 4 Benton Johnson, “Religion and Politics in America: The Last Twenty Years” in Phillip E. Hammond, ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 308.
- 5 See Ernest E. Long, “The Truth About the ‘Crisis’ in the Church,” *United Church Observer*, November 15, 1967, pp. 12-5, 30; N. Bruce McLeod, “Why Won’t They Go to Church?” *United Church Observer*, November 1, 1969, pp. 20-2, 40.
- 6 It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore fully the ways in which Canadian churches engaged with youth culture in the sixties. For a more detailed examination, see Bruce Douville, “The Uncomfortable Pew: Christianity, the New Left and the Hip Counterculture in Toronto, 1965-1975” (PhD dissertation, York University, Toronto, 2011).
- 7 Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), pp. 1-41; Charles Reich, *The*

important step for the churches in their engagement with the new youth culture of the “long sixties.”⁸ However, in this period, the nature and purpose of Christian outreach to hippies varied from church to church. Fundamental differences in theology among Catholic, liberal Protestant, and evangelical churches were evident in the way these groups engaged with the young residents of Yorkville and, more broadly, in how they engaged with what appeared to be a generation of youth in revolt.

The past decade has witnessed a blossoming of scholarship on the history of religion in 1960s Canada.⁹ All of these works recognize that the period was an era of profound and wrenching change for institutional Christianity in Canadian society. They identify a crisis in Canadian churches, evident in their declining social influence and in prolonged institutional soul-searching. Some of these studies focus on churches and their engagement with youth; most notably, Michael Gauvreau's *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution* gives considerable attention to the response of Quebec Catholics to “the spectacle of youth countercultures.”¹⁰ However, in his analysis, Gauvreau uses the term “counterculture” broadly to denote many manifestations of youth in revolt against the values of their parents' generation. While his study offers valuable insights into the youth-centred cultural shift of the sixties, it has little to say specifically about youth in hippie communities. In short, although much has been written concerning the intersections between American religion and the American youth counterculture,¹¹ none of the recent works on Canadian Christianity satisfactorily explores the specific interactions between Canadian churches and countercultural youth.¹² Likewise, there is a growing body of scholarly work on countercultural

Greening of America (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 217-263; Peter Braunstein, “Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation” in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 243-273.

- 8 Arthur Marwick identifies the “long sixties” as an era stretching from 1958 to 1974. While some might quibble with Marwick's precise delineation, many scholars have embraced the concept of a “long sixties,” beginning in the late fifties and extending into the early seventies, because it is more useful analytically than a strictly decadal approach. See Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 7.
- 9 For example: Catherine Gidney, *A Long Eclipse: The Liberal Protestant Establishment and the Canadian University, 1920-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Gary Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations, and the Re-Making of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Kevin Flatt, *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013)
- 10 Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins*, pp. 138-174 (the specific quotation is from p. 138).
- 11 For example: Robert S. Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Mark Oppenheimer, *Knocking on Heaven's Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
- 12 Flatt briefly mentions one United Church official's admiration for the hippies and New Left student radicals (*After Evangelicalism*, p. 198). In *A Long Eclipse*, Catherine Gidney has much to say about interactions between Protestant churches in English Canada and university students, including the Student Christian Movement's engagement with Canada's New Left in the 1960s, but hippies and hip communities were outside the parameters of her study.

youth in 1960s Canada. The most thorough and relevant here is *Making the Scene*, Stuart Henderson's history of hip youth in Yorkville.¹³ Henderson devotes several pages to the outreach efforts of two Christian coffeehouses. His focus is on the significance of these coffeehouses for Yorkville's hip youth, as well as mainstream perceptions of hippies,¹⁴ rather than the divergent theological contexts of these ministries or the significance of the ministries for the churches themselves.

This essay explores the ways in which churches and clergy engaged with hip youth in the Toronto neighbourhood of Yorkville between 1965 and 1970. It draws on church periodicals, church archival records, interviews, and correspondence,¹⁵ as well as some of the sources used by Henderson.¹⁶ In contrast to previous studies, my purpose is to place these churches' endeavours in the broader context of Canadian Christianity (Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, and evangelical) in the 1960s and to seek a deeper understanding of the significance of these interactions, not only for hip youth, but also for the churches and clergy. As mentioned above, the long sixties were years of upheaval and transformation for many Canadian denominations; in particular, the Roman Catholic Church redefined its relationship with the modern world, and the United Church of Canada publicly repudiated the theology and practices of evangelicalism. For social and cultural historians, the churches' engagement with Toronto's hippies is significant because it illustrates the changing nature of Canadian Christianity, especially the widening gap between liberal Protestants and evangelicals, who held fundamentally different conceptions of mission. These divergent understandings of mission are central to assessing the success or failure of the churches' outreach efforts in Yorkville, as well as the efforts of Canadian churches to engage with youth in the long sixties.

This essay analyses these various encounters between hip youth and "straight" Christians as examples of "liminal spaces." Victor and Edith Turner use the term "liminal" to describe those threshold spaces that are "betwixt and between," where the social rules that apply on either side of the threshold are either contested or set aside. Likewise, the social status and authority that apply in the "normal" worlds outside the liminal space are suspended. Consequently, liminal spaces

13 Henderson, *Making the Scene*. In addition to Henderson, see Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 185-215; Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 203-209; Marcel Martel, "'They smell bad, have diseases and are lazy': RCMP Officers Reporting on Hippies in the Late Sixties," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 90, no. 2 (June 2009), pp. 215-245; Erika Dyck, "The Psychedelic Sixties in North America: Drugs and Identity" in Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey, eds., *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 47-63.

14 Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 65-72, 104-108, 129-135, 266-268.

15 In addition to church periodicals and other published church sources, I used the Records of St. Paul's Avenue Road Church (Toronto) from the United Church of Canada Archives. Also, I carried out oral interviews with three participants in evangelical outreach ministries to Yorkville youth; a fourth opted for e-mail correspondence.

16 As did Henderson, I make extensive use of articles from the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* concerning Yorkville, as well as Frank Longstaff, "Yorkville: An Observational Report" (Toronto, Interim Research Project on Unreached Youth, 1966), and United Church of Canada Archives [hereafter UCCA], booklet, James E. Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish: A Search for Live Options in Yorkville* (Toronto: Yorkville Area Community Services Organization, 1972).

are characterized by ambiguity, indeterminacy, and equality.¹⁷ While the United Church's outreach work best fits the model of a liminal middle ground, elements of liminality were also evident in Roman Catholic and evangelical encounters with hip youth. In many ways, Yorkville itself was a liminal space in the sixties, a site of transformation and shaping of identities.

Yorkville: The Stage for Hip Performance

Throughout 1965 and 1966, the countercultural identity that came to be known as "hippie" took shape, gradually replacing the "beatnik" as the public face of the youth counterculture. In North American cities such as San Francisco and New York, young people gravitated to eclectic neighbourhoods where they could find new ways to express themselves outside the cultural mainstream.¹⁸ In Toronto in the mid-sixties, the place to "make the scene" was Yorkville, the neighbourhood bordered by Bloor Street on the south and Davenport Road on the north, between Yonge Street and Avenue Road. By 1966, Yorkville was inhabited by a core of 200 to 300 Villagers,¹⁹ whose numbers were greatly augmented on weekends and in summer months by young people who flocked to the area to listen to live music in the coffeehouses, to buy drugs, and, in general, to take part in the spectacle.²⁰

Although "Villagers" did not constitute the majority of Yorkville's non-conformist youth, they were the object of the most media scrutiny and academic study. While they were never a homogeneous group, and while Yorkville's composition would evolve throughout the late sixties, observers noted some widely shared characteristics. As Frank Longstaff explained in a 1966 report on Yorkville, Villagers were 17-to-20-year-olds from middle-class backgrounds,²¹ but they rejected the values and practices of the middle class. Many were high school dropouts, who, according to Longstaff, saw themselves as refugees from "the society in which they grew up, the parents and schools and the conformity of suburbia."²² They eschewed materialism and chose lives of voluntary poverty. In addition to the Villagers were the "Weekenders," who shared the philosophy of their Villager friends, but continued to live at home.²³ A much larger contingent of the Yorkville scene was the group called "teeny-boppers," middle-class teenagers from the suburbs who came downtown for the Village's coffeehouses

17 Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 2-3, 249-250. Since Victor Turner reintroduced the concept of liminality (a term coined in 1909 by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep), it has gained wide currency in the social sciences and humanities. See Bjørn Thomassen, "The Uses and Meanings of Liminality," *International Political Anthropology*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2009), pp. 5-27.

18 Barry Miles, *Hippie* (London: Cassell Illustrated, 2003); Charles Perry, *Haight-Ashbury: A History* (New York: Random House/Rolling Stone Press, 1984); Helen Swick Perry, *The Human Be-In* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970).

19 Yorkville was often referred to as "the Village," a label that evoked New York's Greenwich Village scene. As well, in the mid-sixties, the youthful denizens of Yorkville were identified—by themselves, observers, and the media—as "Villagers."

20 Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 113-120.

21 My generalizations about Yorkville's hip youth in this paragraph are drawn from Longstaff, "Yorkville" pp. 7-20. I am thankful to the Harshman Fellowships Society for making this unpublished report available.

22 Longstaff, "Yorkville," pp. 7-8.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

and discotheques.²⁴ Other groups present in Yorkville included the “greasers” (working-class youth who were antagonistic towards the Villagers) and biker gangs.²⁵ Both the Villagers and the suburban teens saw Yorkville as a site for rebellion and hip performance, but the Villagers (and, to an extent, the Weekenders) were the ones who performed the countercultural identity that would come to be known as “hippie.”

As Stuart Henderson has documented in his study of Yorkville, public reaction to the Village scene was a mixture of fascination and horror, with the balance shifting towards the latter by the mid-sixties. A growing chorus of critics saw the community as a site for youth violence and riots and as a drug den.²⁶ Drug use was a particular source of concern, and the mid-sixties marked the beginning of a growing moral panic over marijuana and LSD. These public concerns were reflected in the substantial presence of police in the Village. Their presence was resented deeply by all youth who had flocked to Yorkville to escape from systems of power, authority, and regimentation.²⁷

Both positive and negative public attention and press coverage generated interest in Yorkville. The Yorkville scene reached its peak in the spring and summer of 1967 as new arrivals flocked to the Village, and to address this situation several prominent hippies established the Diggers. Like their San Francisco namesake, the Yorkville Diggers aimed to meet the needs of incoming hippies and to advocate on their behalf when they encountered mistreatment by police and civic officials.²⁸ When hippies and city officials clashed over competing visions of Yorkville, the Diggers led the Villagers in protests inside and outside Yorkville throughout the late summer of 1967.²⁹

As needy youth descended on the Village in increasing numbers, the neighbourhood took on a darker, more desperate tone, particularly in 1968 and 1969.³⁰ Unlike the Villagers of the mid-sixties, the new arrivals were genuinely poor, and as the Rev. James Smith of the Community Services Organization noted, they “were younger, they were early drop-outs, they had no real philosophy, they were pretenders. They dropped pills by the handful and they didn’t seem to care what they took.”³¹ It was not just the new breed of hippies that was worrisome, but also the presence of the Vagabonds (a biker gang) in the Village, in the summer of 1968. Bikers were an important part of the drug trade, which increasingly included speed and heroin.³² The drug problem in Yorkville and the ensuing health problems associated with intravenous drug use alarmed observers. As the newspapers drew attention to a supposed “epidemic” of hepatitis in the summer of 1968 and to

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 20-24.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27.

26 Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 80-86, 123-129.

27 Longstaff, “Yorkville,” pp. 29-40.

28 On the San Francisco Diggers, see Charles Perry, *Haight-Ashbury*; Helen Swick Perry, *Human Be-In*.

29 Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 150-157, 163-171. Henderson notes that some hippies expressed reservations about the “hierarchy” of hippie leaders such as David DePoe and the Diggers (p. 153).

30 Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 174-182, 210-216; Nicholas Jennings, *Before the Gold Rush: Flashbacks to the Dawn of the Canadian Sound* (Toronto: Viking, 1997), pp. 179-182.

31 Smith, *I Wish I Was a Fish*, pp. 13-14.

32 Jennings, *Before the Gold Rush*, p. 179.

incidents of violent crime in 1969, a growing number of Torontonians began to see the neighbourhood as a menace.³³ City planners responded by permitting high-rise construction in Yorkville—in part to “clean up” the neighbourhood. As Henderson writes, by 1970, “noise, debris and dust dominated the Avenue Rd portions of Cumberland and Yorkville, effectively keeping people (read: Villagers) from congregating in those areas.”³⁴ By the end of the sixties, the Village ceased to be the central site for hip identity.

Anti-Establishment Spirituality vs. Establishment Religion

Although hippies eschewed all forms of established authority, including religious authority, spirituality was a central component of hip identity. Many contemporary observers of the counterculture were struck by this overt spirituality and compared hippies to the first-century Christians—a community of marginalized believers who chose a way of life that was at odds with the prevailing culture and with the empire.³⁵ Indeed, there were numerous parallels between hippies and Christian believers; they shared similar values (love, peace, authenticity) and a similar passion for the transcendent. However, it appears that most hippies were either hostile or indifferent to institutional Christianity. While many of them adopted elements of Christianity, they rarely identified with the institutional structure of their parents' religion. Instead, they gravitated towards or incorporated elements of Eastern mysticism and the occult into a more “inclusive” approach to spirituality.

Lewis Yablonsky argues that hippies viewed organized religion as one of the “plastic institutions” of America. According to hip youth, churches and temples had lost “the spiritual and emotional quality of the religious experience” and had “become materialistic mockeries of an affluent society.”³⁶ It was not simply religious hypocrisy that bothered hippies, however; they were impatient, too, with rigid social constraints. Churches upheld traditional prohibitions against pre-marital sex, drug use, and filial rebellion. As young people came to see these prohibitions as oppressive obstacles to personal growth, they rejected the churches—just as they rejected other institutions of the “Establishment.”

In November 1969, members of Toronto's hip community were reminded of institutional religion's capacity for oppression. That month, *The Harbinger* (a Toronto underground paper) featured a controversial work of art on its front cover. The drawing depicted a naked, long-haired woman holding the sun in one clawed hand and the moon in the other, her feet on two planets, giving birth to a baby. The caption read: “The heavens stand in awe, as the satanic bitch bears the bastard son of God.”³⁷ The cover was shocking even for some hip readers,³⁸ but it was especially jarring for Leslie Tarr, a Baptist minister and journalist. Tarr alerted the Toronto Police Morality Squad, who arrested the paper's editors (including

33 Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 248-257.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

35 Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, pp. 43-44; Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip* (New York: Pegasus, 1968), pp. 320-321.

36 Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip*, pp. 320-321.

37 Front cover of *The Harbinger* [Toronto], vol. 2, no. 11 (November 1969), p. 1.

38 Letter to the editor, *The Harbinger*, vol. 2, no. 12 (December 1969), p. 2.

Hans Wetzel, who had belonged to the Yorkville Diggers) on charges of “having obscene material for the purpose of circulation.” Tarr testified at the trial for the prosecution, and the cover artist, Roger Greco, testified for the defence, explaining “that he felt the drawing depicted the struggle of good and evil, with man as the product of this struggle.” The prosecution won the case, and the defendants were fined \$1,500. Furthermore, according to the account of the trial in *The Harbinger*, “The judge specified NO TIME to pay the fines ... and had the Harbinger people handcuffed and led off to jail, presumably for haircuts and 90 days of Don Jail harassment and hospitality.” Supporters quickly raised the money to pay the fine, and the editors were released within two hours. Nevertheless, this episode reinforced their impression of institutional religion as working hand in hand with the state “to silence opposition by ‘hippies’ ... to the Sunday School and War as Usual morality of the uptight Protestants.”³⁹

In spite of their antipathy to institutional religion, hippies often accepted individual Christians, especially sympathetic, open-minded clergy. Nevertheless, the path that they chose was a different one. Hippies were drawn to spiritual alternatives to the North American religious mainstream (such as astrology, *I Ching*, Zen Buddhism). Their approach to religion was eclectic and syncretistic; hippies tried out a variety of spiritual paths, consecutively or simultaneously. Most of all, hippie spirituality was mystical and experience-based, often with the assistance of marijuana or LSD. They disdained religious disciplines that placed too much faith in rationality and the intellect.⁴⁰ For all that hippies had in common with Christians, hip religiosity was significantly different, and, for many in Canada’s churches, it was also mystifying and alarming.

For Canadian churches and clergy, hip religiosity was not as alarming as the fact in Yorkville that so many youth from middle-class families found themselves alienated from society and in a growing state of confrontation with the police and the municipal government. After 1967, church officials were alarmed also by the growing numbers of runaways and the increasing presence of harder drugs. The churches’ heightened awareness of Yorkville—especially in 1967 and 1968—owed much to the international media spotlight on hippies and the Canadian media spotlight on the Village. Church periodicals echoed the secular media trend; in the late sixties, denominational publications such as *The Canadian Register* (Roman Catholic), *The Canadian Churchman* (Anglican), *The Pentecostal Testimony* and *The United Church Observer* all carried features on hippies in general, and Yorkville in particular.⁴¹ While some of these articles portrayed Yorkville’s hippies in a sympathetic light,⁴² almost all drew attention to the dark side of the

39 “Insanity in the Courts: The Story of the Harbinger Obscenity Bust Trial,” *The Harbinger*, vol. 3, no. 2 (March 1970), p. 4.

40 On the eclectic and experiential nature of hippie spirituality, see Kent Gooderham, “Come Live With Us” in Peter Turner, *There Can Be No Light Without Shadows* (Toronto: Rochdale College Publications, 1971), pp. 355-356, 383-384; G. Reginald Smart and David Jackson, *The Yorkville Subculture: A Study of the Life Styles and Interactions of Hippies and Non-Hippies* (Toronto: Addiction Research Foundation, 1969), pp. 13, 31-32; Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 100-104.

41 Coverage was best in the *Canadian Churchman*, and weakest in the *Pentecostal Testimony*, which did not carry a feature on Yorkville until November 1969 (“Coffeehouse Ministry,” pp. 8, 28).

42 One of the more sympathetic was a three-part series in the *Canadian Register* (“‘Flower’ Generation

Village: drug abuse, disease, and the moral perils encountered by teenaged girls who had run away from home.⁴³ At best, the church press presented Yorkville as a community of “confused and troubled” but well-intentioned youth, who had some Christ-like qualities.⁴⁴ At worst, Yorkville was portrayed as “a serious health, moral and crime hazard.”⁴⁵ Consequently, churches officials believed that they had a duty to engage with these young people, and they did so in ways that reflected the shifting religious contexts of the 1960s.

Dialogue with the Modern World: Roman Catholics and Villagers

The 1960s was a decade of profound change for Roman Catholics. In 1959, Pope John XXIII had called for a council of bishops to meet in Rome, and the resulting Second Vatican Council, held between 1962 and 1965, was an opportunity for the Catholic hierarchy to re-examine fundamental assumptions about the nature of the Church and its relationship with the world.⁴⁶ As a consequence, the Roman Catholic Church of the 1960s showed a greater willingness to engage with those outside the denomination in a positive, conciliatory manner. “Dialogue” and “renewal” were the watchwords of the day, and, in progressive Catholic newspapers such as *The Canadian Register*, vocal lay members and clergy expressed their desire for dialogue with the contemporary world and radical renewal of the Church.

This theological shift had a direct impact on the way in which Catholics engaged with hippies. Michael Gauvreau has argued that reform-minded clergy and laity in Quebec found much to admire in countercultural youth—particularly their disdain for their parents’ materialism and shallow religiosity.⁴⁷ Catholics in Ontario expressed similar views, arguing that the youth revolt was actually a search for a deeper spiritual life and that God could be speaking to Catholics through hippies.⁴⁸ At the same time, they readily acknowledged their unfamiliarity with the new youth culture. “I see myself as an immigrant going into a new land, who isn’t ever going to be adept at this new language,” observed one long-time priest.⁴⁹ For this reason, many priests welcomed opportunities for dialogue with these youth.

Confused ... Troubled,” December 9, 1967; “Hippies Are Products of Well-off Families,” December 16, 1967; and “Suggest Careful Look at Hippie Generation,” December 23, 1967). The author was Tim Elia, a musician who had performed in Yorkville’s coffeehouses. The most sympathetic pieces, written by Stephen Lane (a former Villager), appeared in the *Canadian Churchman* (“This Thing Called Yorkville Village,” May 1967; “People Just Being People,” April 1968).

43 See, in particular, “Yorkville,” *United Church Observer*, February 1, 1968, pp. 11, 45; Jim McKibbin, “Runaway Kids,” *Canadian Churchman*, January 1968.

44 Elia, “Flower’ Generation Confused.”

45 “Yorkville,” *United Church Observer*, February 1, 1968, p. 11.

46 For a general overview of Vatican II and its significance for Roman Catholics throughout the world, see James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Ltd., 1971), pp. 491-497. For a Canadian Catholic perspective, see Terence J. Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 278-302.

47 Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins*, pp. 159-174.

48 “Youth: Rebels With Cause,” *Canadian Register*, February 17, 1968; T. J. Raby, “The Hippies May Have Something,” *Canadian Register*, December 9, 1967.

49 Michael O’Meara, “Psychedelic Shockers: Priests Tuning-in, to Turn on the ‘With it’ Crowd,” *Canadian Register*, February 15, 1969.

Sometimes, such opportunities presented themselves serendipitously. In late August 1967, over 2,000 Roman Catholics from across North America and Europe gathered at the University of Toronto for the Congress on the Theology of Renewal in the Church. The conference coincided with an adjacent protest in Queen's Park, where "hundreds of young people also congregated to say by their songs and silence that they wanted people to listen and to support their cause."⁵⁰ They wanted Yorkville Avenue closed to automobile traffic and had engaged in a sit-in on the avenue to draw attention to their demands. After police forcefully removed protestors from the road and arrested more than 50 of them, these youth took their protest outside Yorkville. So it was that the Catholic conference delegates encountered Toronto's hippies at Queen's Park over the space of several days.⁵¹

Some of the priests praised the hippies for their idealistic commitment to love all people and for rebelling against "an affluent society [and] ... warring society." According to the *Register*, one priest "spent an evening sitting at the core of the widening circle of hippies, listening to them, talking with them, singing with them. And they spoke simply and quietly about their problems, their confusion, about love and Jesus and their need for leadership. They were almost ready to take him (the minister) as their leader because they felt he could relate to them and also relate their needs and desires to an adult generation."⁵² This encounter, as described in the newspaper, is significant for several reasons. First, it illustrates the willingness of Catholics to see Christ-like qualities in hippies. Furthermore, it is an example of liminality: the priest and young people met each other in a space outside their usual domains, in an atmosphere of equality. In this environment, the priest could not rely overtly on his clerical authority. At the same time, a careful reading of this account betrays the author's ambivalence towards hippies and his fundamentally traditional view of the priesthood. The young people spoke of "problems," "confusion," and "need for leadership." We are told that they were "almost ready" to accept the leadership of this priest. In other words, hippies were portrayed as needing the structure and guidance of the Roman Catholic Church.

Similar paternalistic sentiments were expressed in the fall of 1967, when Jesuit seminarians from Regis College "invaded the hippie-world of Yorkville" to "dialogue" with the Villagers. As Father Wilfrid Harris (national director of the Jesuit Seminary Association) explained to an audience of Toronto Catholics, "We are interested in the Yorkvillites. We cannot let them pass by, the long-haired, the shoddily outfitted, and the unwashed youth of today." Harris added,

[D]ialogue would seem to be the proper way to enter into and to solve the problems with youth today. We are living in a very changing world, in an age ... of a youth that certainly does not seem to know just where it is going. Youth has a potential of tremendous excellence; if we could harness the energy of the Yorkvillites, the

50 Don Lizzotti, "Hippie Group Sessions Provide Foil for Theological Discussion," *Canadian Register*, September 2, 1967.

51 Don Delaplante, "Hippies Hold Love-in to Welcome Jailed-in Leaders," *Globe and Mail*, August 21, 1967; Gary Dunford, "'Jail-in' for 46 after Yorkville's 'Worst' Brawl," *Toronto Star*, August 21, 1967.

52 Lizzotti, "Hippie Group Sessions."

beatniks, we could run our organizations, but it's running riot today, just like Niagara Falls before it was harnessed to convey power into our homes.⁵³

One is struck by the condescension of Harris's remarks. Even more striking is his ignorance of the fact that being "harnessed" was precisely the fate that the "Yorkvillites" were anxious to escape. Their independence from the culture of management (what Roszak called "technocracy"⁵⁴) was central to their identity as "free people," and they had no desire for somebody else to dictate solutions to their perceived problems.

Undoubtedly, clergy who worked with countercultural youth on a more continuous basis understood that they would not accept a priest as an authority figure. As a Toronto priest who volunteered at a drop-in centre explained, working with hip youth was about "learning why Roman collars can be signs of love and understanding, and care, and not imposing, impersonal, machine-like bulldozers forcing submission."⁵⁵ In Toronto, it is noteworthy that the priests and laity most active in youth work in the long sixties were also among the most eager for reform and innovation and the most accepting of the new youth counterculture.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, these accounts betray the tension that existed in the Church in the long sixties, between newer, democratic understandings of Catholicism (articulated by reform-minded clergy and laity) and the pre-Vatican II heritage of a hierarchical, authoritarian institution.

Social Service or Evangelization? The United Church and Yorkville

Canadian Catholics were not alone in experiencing tensions between older and newer understandings of faith. In the long sixties, Canada's mainline Protestant churches were engaged in similar processes of institutional soul-searching and theological redefinition. As Kevin Flatt has argued in *After Evangelicalism*, the process was most thoroughgoing and transformative in the United Church of Canada. Although Canada's largest Protestant denomination had evangelical roots, many of its leaders and clergy were theological liberals, who questioned traditional Christian doctrines. Before the 1960s, they held these views quietly, while maintaining many of the public practices of evangelicalism, such as evangelistic crusades and moral reform activism.⁵⁷ By the sixties, however, new United Church leaders openly challenged key tenets of Christianity such as the divinity of Jesus and repudiated traditional evangelistic and moral crusades.⁵⁸ Instead, they embraced the "new evangelism" articulated by the directors of the United Church's Board of Evangelism and Social Service.⁵⁹ United Church clergy

53 "Invade Yorkville: Jesuits Dialogue With the Hippies," *Canadian Register*, October 7, 1967.

54 Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, pp. 5-22.

55 George Annett, "Here's What a Drop-in is all About," *Canadian Register*, July 6, 1968.

56 These included Father Tom McKillop, who founded the Youth Corps; Father Stan Kutz, who directed the Newman Centre at the University of Toronto; and Ted Schmidt, who taught high school and wrote a column on youth issues in the *Canadian Register*. See Douville, "The Uncomfortable Pew," pp. 167-169, 288-296.

57 Flatt, *After Evangelicalism*, pp. 17-73.

58 *Ibid.*, pp. 166-172, 188-224.

59 Kenneth Bagnell, "What's All This So-Called New Evangelism?" *United Church Observer*, April 15,

(and other mainline Protestants) embraced the challenge of Pierre Berton's *The Comfortable Pew* to become relevant to the secular world.⁶⁰ They also embraced the ideas of "secular theologians" such as Harvey Cox, who argued that religious affiliation and dogma were not of primary importance. What mattered was that Christians go "where the action is" and do the work of Christ.⁶¹ As Flatt has observed, this "new evangelism" was not readily distinguishable from secular social work.⁶²

The United Church's liberal theological orientation in the sixties was evident in its encounters with Yorkville's hip youth. Rather than trying to convert hippies, the United Church's ventures in Yorkville supported Villagers as they sought solutions to the challenges they faced. In 1967, the church's Board of Evangelism and Social Service provided funding for the United Church to hire Brian "Blues" Chapman, a prominent hippie and member of the Yorkville Diggers, as a community worker. His primary function was "to give counsel and assistance to drug-using youth" in Yorkville.⁶³ The denomination had other dealings with Diggers; when June Callwood worked with the Diggers to establish Digger House as a hostel in Yorkville for "dispossessed young people," the United Church's Committee on Experimental Ministries granted the project \$5,000.⁶⁴ Clearly, the United Church was willing to overlook the Villagers' indifference or hostility to institutional religion and to support them as they sought to address the needs of their community.

The best example of this approach to hip youth was the Drop-In Centre, operated by the Community Services Organization (CSO), at St. Paul's Avenue Road United Church. While the Centre was an inter-denominational project, supported by Anglicans, Baptists, and Catholics,⁶⁵ most of the financial support came from United Church congregations, and its director was a United Church minister, the Rev. James Smith. In essence, the United Church set the tone for this endeavour. Located in Yorkville, the church was well situated to minister to a hippie clientele, but, even as late as the fall of 1965, Villagers did not appear interested. Until then, the Centre had catered primarily to working-class greaser youth in the neighbourhood, and it had achieved a measure of success with them. Smith, the CSO's director, was lukewarm about the idea of reaching out to hip

1966, pp. 16-19, 40.

60 Pierre Berton, *The Comfortable Pew: A Critical Look at Christianity and the Religious Establishment in the New Age* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965).

61 Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 109.

62 Flatt, *After Evangelicalism*, p. 205.

63 *United Church of Canada Yearbook – Volume II* (1968), pp. 128.

64 "Church Digs Diggers," *United Church Observer*, March 1, 1969, p. 33; June Callwood, "Digger House" in W. E. Mann, ed., *The Underside of Toronto* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), pp. 123-128; Henderson, *Making the Scene*, pp. 235-241.

65 The project involved several inner-city churches, "namely St. Paul's-Avenue Road United Church, Bloor Street United Church, Walmer Road Baptist Church, The Church of the Messiah (Anglican), and St. Basil's Roman Catholic Church." See UCCA, Records of St. Paul's Avenue Road United Church (Toronto), Box 5, File 5 (Official Board, 1951-1970), "Submission on Unreached Youth to the Select Committee on Youth: Community Services Organization" (n.d.). Catholic participation is noteworthy, because it reflected the ecumenical spirit of sixties Catholicism.

youth and doubtful that they would make suitable clients. In an article published in *The United Church Observer* in the fall of 1965, Smith told a reporter that, in theory, he would “like to get some of the beatniks in.... But if they came, they wouldn't accept the discipline that's inevitable when you're running a youth centre.” He believed that they “merely want a place to strum guitars and eat,” and it “would be a question of how long the Church could play landlord to them.”⁶⁶

Perhaps the article's author overstated Smith's disdain for hippies, for, at the time of publication, Smith was endeavouring to bring them into the Drop-In Centre. He had a good reason to reach out: according to his own account, by 1964, most of the greaser clientele who had frequented the Centre “had settled down, many of them were married and raising their own children. The attendance at the centre had dropped to a mere handful of hangers on.”⁶⁷ At the same time, it became clear to Smith and his associates that “Yorkville had become the Mecca of the Hippies.”⁶⁸ In an effort to draw out the Villagers, Smith and the Rev. William Berry (the senior minister at St. Paul's Avenue Road) “had tried every gimmick that they could think of, but the Hippies were uninterested.”⁶⁹ For example, Berry held “a series of Church-On-The-Spot services, designed to pull in the agnostics.” He advertised extensively, circulating “2,000 printed leaflets among the coffee houses, talking to youths, inviting them along.” The results were disappointing; as Smith told *The United Church Observer* in 1965, “not one so-called beatnik” chose to attend.⁷⁰

Smith realized that, to succeed in connecting with hippies, the CSO needed to adopt the same strategy that it had used previously with the inner-city gang youth—to establish a rapport with the “natural leaders.” Smith found such a leader in Mike Waage, a 17-year-old “with sixteen-inch hair, a grade XII education and a command of English worthy of a professor.”⁷¹ Waage began conducting art classes at the Drop-In Centre, and soon the Villagers began to frequent the Centre on a regular basis. Several months of tension ensued between hippies and inner-city gang youth, the latter seeing the Centre as their turf. Writing in the early seventies, Smith recalled that the tension was resolved when Waage led a large group of Villagers to the Centre and confronted the working-class youth with the threat of force. As Smith writes, the “Greasers were in no way prepared to handle 100 determined Hippies who needed a meeting place more than they did. So began the long process of co-existence.... There was cross-fertilization between the two groups from then on.”⁷²

It is open to question how much “cross-fertilization” actually took place, for, in short order, the hip youth essentially took ownership of the Drop-In Centre. Smith claimed that attendance “at the centre rose steadily from 150 to 300 and even

66 Adrian Waller, “A Look at Life in Toronto's Bohemia,” *United Church Observer* (October 1965), p. 46.

67 Smith, *I Wish I Was a Fish*, p. 9.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*

70 Waller, “A Look at Life in Toronto's Bohemia,” p. 46.

71 Smith, *I Wish I Was a Fish*, pp. 9, 15.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

went up to 600 or 700 per night in 1965 and 1966.”⁷³ While these numbers may be inflated, Mike Waage “recalled that, by early 1967, the church hosted ‘maybe hundreds, some nights’.”⁷⁴ The Villagers raised the money necessary for expansion and renovation of the church basement and carried out much of the work. Writing in 1966, Stewart Crysdale related how they “dug out tons of clay” and converted an unused coal-bin into the “Cross-Beat Coffee Cave.” He described the resulting space as follows:

[It was] equipped with record player, microphone, amplifier and speaker. The Kingsway Kiwanis Club put up \$1,000 to partition the large club-room and provide a pool table. A Disc Jockey’s room was built into the main club-room like a miniature radio station. In another part of the dungeon, they created the “Lazy U,” a cozy social centre, fitted out with booth-seats and tables, ranch-type lamps and décor, and television. Nearby is the “Wells-Fargo Supply Depot,” a snack counter for pop and light refreshments.⁷⁵

The Drop-In Centre became a site for recreation, free meals, showers, employment counselling, and other practical services. It also became the principal hang-out for Yorkville’s hip youth, a place to dance and listen to music. Not only was the Drop-In Centre a site for recreation; it also became a centre for community organizing. As Stuart Henderson writes, “for the Diggers in 1966-7, the Church basement served as a managerial base, a place in which ideas could be presented to the community, volunteers could be gathered, marches and sit-ins could be designed and orchestrated.”⁷⁶ In the story of sixties Yorkville, the central role of the Drop-In Centre cannot be overstated; in the words of prominent Digger David DePoe, the Drop-In Centre became “like our community centre.”⁷⁷

There were other ways in which the hip youth took ownership of the Centre: a significant number of the workers associated with the Centre were Villagers. In addition to Mike Waage, Villagers on staff included “four or five Detached Workers,” who would “encourage Villagers to go up to the Church and make use of the facilities there” and “also act as middlemen between Smith and the Villagers.”⁷⁸ By entrusting much of the Centre’s operation to these young people, Smith and his colleagues displayed exceptional faith in Villagers’ potential to address the challenges of their own community. In effect, the adults at the CSO acted as facilitators and community organizers. Rather than presenting ready-made adult solutions to perceived youth problems, they assisted the youth in ascertaining their problems and finding their own solutions.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

74 Mike Waage, interview by Henderson, March 3, 2005, cited in Henderson, *Making the Scene*, p. 132.

75 Stewart Crysdale, *Churches Where the Action is: Churches and People in Canadian Situations* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1966), pp. 11-12.

76 Stuart Henderson, “Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto, 1960-1970” (PhD dissertation, Queen’s University, 2007), p. 396.

77 David DePoe, cited in Henderson, *Making the Scene*, p. 135.

78 Longstaff, “Yorkville,” p. 43.

However, Smith's attitude towards hip youth was ambivalent. On one hand, he praised hippies for living "the life of a servant community,"⁷⁹ and, as they faced an often hostile society, he defended their rights to self-determination and self-expression. On the other hand, he often appeared to endorse the traditional, middle-class value system that they had rejected. For example, he encouraged Villagers to find work to support themselves, even if this necessitated a visit to the barber. Not surprisingly, his views on this matter were not well received.⁸⁰ Smith's ambivalence was intrinsic to his middleman role, as a liaison between the counterculture and the "Establishment." As Longstaff observed in his 1966 report on Yorkville, "Reverend Smith's success must be limited, if only because he is caught in the middle between Villagers on one hand and the organized Church on the other. Part of the problem is that neither he nor the kids can ever forget that they are in a church, and someone else's church at that. This seems to place something of a damper on the spontaneity hoped for."⁸¹

At the same time, the fact that the Drop-In Centre was a middle ground was also its strength. As a liminal space, the Centre bridged both the generational and the cultural divide. The encounters that took place at the Centre between hip youth and representatives of "straight" society were often fraught with tension, but it is remarkable that they could encounter each other at all and sometimes even reach mutual understanding. For example, when Yorkville's youth were concerned about police harassment and violations of their rights (particularly following the "near-riot" in May 1966 when police arrested five of them), the CSO facilitated two meetings: first, between the Villagers and the director of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association; second, between Villagers and the police.⁸²

The Centre's mediating role was also exemplified by its efforts to reconcile families. According to Smith, "hundreds of distressed parents sought the aid of C.S.O. to find their runaway young people."⁸³ In his memoirs, he relates the tale of a husband and wife from Vancouver who came to Toronto in search of their 15-year-old daughter. "Within the hour," Smith wrote, he "was trying to play referee in a bout between the industrial tycoon and his irate daughter who was more than a match for her father." Mike Waage reluctantly agreed to speak with both father and daughter in separate rooms: "How do you introduce an industrial tycoon to a long-hair who chain smokes and never has been any respecter of persons so to speak[?] You don't, you just shut them in a room together and hope that the glass will still be in the windows when you return." In the end, Waage was able to persuade both father and daughter to reach an agreement: "More nights out, use of the family car and some promises from her to hit the books a little more did the trick. The solutions were usually simple but they required some personal surrender on the part of both parent and daughter." From these examples,

79 Smith, *I Wish I Was a Fish*, p. 22.

80 Longstaff, "Yorkville," pp. 43-44.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

82 Crysdale, "Churches Where the Action is," pp. 13-14.

83 Smith, *I Wish I Was a Fish*, p. 10.

we see that the CSO functioned as a liminal space between the social milieu of the Villagers on one hand and “straight” society on the other.

Because they are characterized by ambiguity, liminal sites have different purposes for different participants—even contradictory purposes. This divergence of purpose was true of the Drop-In Centre, which also functioned as a space for drug deals. Toronto’s Chief of Police referred to it as a “dope-dealer’s post,” and a neighbouring minister derided it as “the Church that sold dope.” As Smith recalls, “the whole mass media got into the action.... C.S.O. staff took O.D.’s out of the centre on stretchers nightly while others ‘talked down’ their friends on acid. The Press grooved on getting pushers to sell them dope on the steps of the church. The staff spent much of its time policing the crowds.”⁸⁴ While staff members were vigilant in their efforts to prevent drug use on the site (or at least drug deals), it is undeniable that drug use was present and pervasive—even among the hip staff members themselves.⁸⁵

Drug deals and drug use were not the only illicit activities taking place at the Drop-In Centre. Non-hippies in the vicinity of Yorkville complained about drugs, but they also complained about prostitution.⁸⁶ The centre also harboured its share of non-monetary sexual activity. Jearld Moldenhauer (a gay American student who regularly visited Toronto in the late sixties) recalls:

I tended to drift around various Yorkville hangouts but took a liking to the “drop-in centre” which seemed so similar to the many coffee houses which were very popular at Cornell. So I met a kid, perhaps a year or two younger than myself.... At any rate, my young friend and I started making out and of course wanted to “do it.” So we simply slipped through [a] doorway, went up some stairs and found ourselves in the main church. The altar provided just the right atmosphere and privacy to make love in. I probably chose it consciously and still think the altar is a good place to make love!⁸⁷

Clearly, this was not how Smith intended the church to be used.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the “congregation [was] divided on whether the drop-in centre should be permitted in the church,” as the *Toronto Star* reported in the spring of 1967.⁸⁸ At a meeting of the church’s official board the following November, a committee was struck to examine the relationship between the CSO and the church, “including an assessment of the work being done by the C.S.O. on the one hand and on the other hand difficulties which are encountered in connection with the maintenance of the normal affairs of the congregation.”⁸⁹ At a subsequent meeting in January 1968, the board decided that, while “the association of St. Paul’s-Avenue Road United Church with the C.S.O. will continue,” the church would discontinue its financial support of the

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

85 Henderson, “Making the Scene,” p. 394.

86 David Allen, “Now Yorkville’s Non-Hippies Want Action,” *Toronto Star*, April 8, 1967.

87 Jearld Moldenhauer, e-mail message to author, March 2, 2010.

88 Allen, “Now Yorkville’s Non-Hippies Want Action.”

89 UCCA, Records of St. Paul’s Avenue Road (Toronto), Minutes of the Official Board, 1951-1970, Minutes recorded November 1, 1967.

organization.” It also resolved that “our congregation suggest to Mr. Smith that further specific attempts be made to induce the youth to take greater care of the premises both inside and outside of the building.”⁹⁰ There were also complaints about unauthorized use of church space and about noise.⁹¹ Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the church did finance the controversial Centre up until 1968. After 1968—even after all of the negative press given to the Yorkville scene—it still permitted the CSO to continue operating in the basement of St. Paul’s. Whatever its difficulties, the Centre was carrying out needed work.

The success of the Drop-In Centre owed much to the fact that the Rev. Smith advocated on behalf of Yorkville’s youth and affirmed their ability to speak for themselves. In the early sixties, Smith had succeeded in his work with greaser youth in the neighbourhood because he had been willing to recognize gang members *as gang members*, to establish a rapport with their “natural leaders,” and to defend these delinquent youth when it appeared they were being unjustifiably harassed or penalized. In the same manner, he accepted hippies *as hippies*, forged a relationship with leaders like Waage, and defended the Villagers in the face of harassment by police or vilification by the media. In doing so, he favoured a new model of social work, which recognized the agency of the youth themselves, over a more traditional model, with its airs of middle-class benevolent condescension.

The success of the mission must not be measured in terms of increased youth church attendance. Although the work of the Drop-In Centre was supported by area churches and led by clergy, there were no attempts to proselytize the youth. The work of the CSO appears quite secular, especially in comparison with evangelical Christian outreach efforts in Yorkville. For liberal Christians such as Smith, and presumably for the Centre’s co-workers and supporters from several other denominations, the goal was not to convert young people, but to assist them, respect their agency, defend them against unjust attacks, and seek to effect reconciliation between them and their parents. By these standards, the Drop-In Centre was successful. Social work and social activism of this nature were consonant with the United Church of Canada’s repudiation of conversion-oriented outreach and its embrace of the “new evangelism.” As Kevin Flatt has observed, many United Church laypeople were deeply unhappy that the denomination had abandoned evangelical approaches to outreach in the sixties.⁹² Yet the Drop-In Centre demonstrated the effectiveness of the “new evangelism,” and the congregation supported it until 1968 and at least tolerated it afterwards. They did so, according to William Berry (the minister at St. Paul’s), “because they love the young people.”⁹³

Furthermore, it is possible that the Drop-In Centre’s “new evangelism” reached beyond the youth of Yorkville; it may have helped suburban churches in the Toronto area to retain their young people. As Mike Waage recalled:

90 UCCA, Records of St. Paul’s Avenue Road (Toronto), Minutes of the Official Board, 1951-1970), Minutes recorded January 10, 1968.

91 UCCA, Records of St. Paul’s Avenue Road (Toronto), Letter, Rev. Francis Stevens to Rev. James E. Smith, November 1, 1968, found in the Session Minutes, 1963-1970.

92 Flatt, *After Evangelicalism*, pp. 205-215.

93 Crysedale, “Churches Where the Action is,” p. 19.

[Mainline churches] were losing ground with the public. They were trying to come up with innovative ways to engage a new generation of people. This was part of it, in a way, if for no other reason than because even if the Drop-In Centre wasn't keeping suburban runaways connected with the Church, they can always send groups of us out there to talk to kids. Go to the little churches and give a presentation about Yorkville, with hopes that they'd stay put.... Churches were very concerned about playing to empty houses in those days—it looked like [religion] was on its way [out].⁹⁴

Waage's remarks are speculative, but they do point to the broader context of the churches' engagement with youth in the sixties. While the goal of the "new evangelism" was not to be measured in terms of "filling the pews," church leaders nonetheless expressed anxiety about the declining relevance of the church to young people. Across Canada, many United Church congregations ran youth groups, coffeeshouses, and drop-in centres.⁹⁵ Undoubtedly, Smith and his colleagues were aware of this context; however, it was not their immediate priority. Rather, their primary focus was on Yorkville's youth, and it appears that the latter were appreciative. According to Smith, the hippies "have said on behalf of all alienated youth that of all the agencies, the Church has responded the most."⁹⁶

Coffee, Cookies, and Christ: Evangelism in Mid-Sixties Yorkville

The CSO was not the only Christian entity to respond to Yorkville's "alienated youth." Fast-growing evangelical groups such as the Pentecostals were also engaged in the community, just as they were becoming more engaged and visible in Canadian public life in the long sixties.⁹⁷ Evangelical outreach efforts in Yorkville illustrate the deep differences between liberal Protestants and evangelicals in how they understood mission. The liberal theology of the sixties, which rejected distinctions between "sacred" and "secular" and de-emphasized dogma, was evident in the Drop-In Centre's non-proselytizing approach and its hiring of ostensibly non-Christian hippies as detached workers. Evangelical Christians (unlike Catholics or liberal Protestants) did not undergo any theological reorientation in the sixties. They continued to maintain a clear dichotomy between the "saved" and "unsaved" and believed that everyone required an experience of personal Christian conversion for salvation.⁹⁸ Consequently, liberal Protestants and evangelicals in Yorkville approached outreach work with significantly different priorities.⁹⁹ However, while priorities and message were substantially different, some evangelical Christian efforts in Yorkville were similar to liberal Christian outreach in their actual function in the community and in their liminality.

94 Waage, interview cited in Henderson, "Making the Scene" (PhD dissertation), pp. 397-398.

95 For an example of a similar church-sponsored youth centre in Edmonton, see Patricia Clarke, "Heads-Up, Drop-In, Crash-Pad," *United Church Observer*, March 1, 1970, pp. 18-20.

96 Smith, *I Wish I Was a Fish*, p. 31.

97 Miedema, *For Canada's Sake*, p. 33.

98 On evangelicalism, see Flatt, *After Evangelicalism*, pp. 7-11.

99 For an example of the contrast between liberal and evangelical outreach, see Miedema's study of the two Christian pavilions at Expo '67, in *For Canada's Sake*, pp. 161-192.

As stated in the introduction, the Pentecostal ministry Teen Challenge was active in the area, though it did not end up securing a location in Yorkville.¹⁰⁰ However, the Pentecostals had already established roots in Yorkville in the Stone Church, a thriving congregation situated on Davenport Road between Yonge and Bay. As the church grew in numbers, it also purchased a house on nearby Scollard Street. The Stone Church was thus well situated for outreach to hippies when 25-year-old Albert Vaters arrived as the new pastor in the mid-sixties.¹⁰¹ As Vaters recalls, he discovered the Yorkville scene immediately: "I was aware of what was happening in the world. I've always been very news-conscious. And they were all around us. So I ended up putting on jeans and a t-shirt and walking the streets and seeing what was happening." Vaters claims that he walked the streets of Yorkville three nights a week, in an informal ministry of personal outreach. Out of the church's house on Scollard Street, "we would feed and talk with [the Villagers].... And then a number of them started coming to the church." Initially, the Villagers did not trust him, because they suspected that he was an undercover police officer:

I had difficulty. I'm tall, I'm 6'4, and that time I was fairly well built, and even in jeans and a t-shirt, I'd hear them say, "oh, fuzz." They thought I was a cop. I got a lot of that—a *lot* of that. Eventually, some of them would come over to find out where we were and that's when we [would] all end up eating kielbasa, a stick of French bread and some coffee in the back. And we did that almost every day.¹⁰²

Vaters identifies one of the key features in evangelistic outreach to Yorkville's residents: free food and free coffee. In spite of their predominantly middle-class background, the Villagers were poor. As Frank Longstaff observed, it was "not a grinding or insecure kind of poverty," for "few, if any of these kids have ever been neglected materially, and there is almost always security in the knowledge that the poverty and the stay in the Village are only short-run." Nonetheless, cash was always in short supply.¹⁰³ Any ministry offering free sustenance was therefore welcome, especially when one considers that Yorkville's coffeehouses were prohibitively expensive. When the cover charge was two dollars and a cup of coffee cost 40 cents (in modern figures, \$13.99 and \$3.00 respectively), one can understand why teeny-boppers were the ones who flocked to the coffeehouses, not the cash-strapped Villagers.¹⁰⁴

As an example of the Stone Church's ministry to Villagers, Vaters recalled a draft-dodger from New Jersey named Andy. According to Vaters, Andy was "the stereotypical hippie, hair going every which way, and clothes terrible, dirty,

100 Longstaff, "Yorkville," p. 41.

101 Vaters arrived in Toronto at the end of 1963, or the beginning of 1964 (Albert Vaters, phone interview by author, May 12, 2009).

102 *Ibid.*

103 Longstaff, "Yorkville," pp. 15-16.

104 On the cover charge in coffeehouses, circa 1967, see Henderson, *Making the Scene*, p. 301 n40. On the cost of a cup of coffee in a Yorkville coffeehouse, circa 1965, see Waller, "A Look at Life in Toronto's Bohemia," p. 27. To calculate these figures in present-day equivalents, see Bank of Canada, "Inflation Calculator," http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/rates/inflation_calc.html (accessed June 19, 2014). On the clientele of the coffeehouses, see Longstaff, "Yorkville," p. 18.

smelly, spaced out.” One Sunday morning, a couple from the church noticed him in the parking lot. (Andy was “probably just hanging around because [he had] made contact with us,” presumably through Vaters.) They invited him in, and Andy sat with them in the service. Like many of his fellow Villagers, Andy hated the police; consequently, he was quite surprised when Vaters informed him that he was sitting with a police officer. Andy continued to visit the church, because “he liked us and we liked him.”¹⁰⁵

While the idea of a policeman extending a warm welcome to a draft-dodging hippie might seem unusual, Andy’s experience was not exceptional at Stone Church. As Vaters explains, strangers “never came in the door without somebody going sitting by them, inviting them out to lunch, putting their arm around them, and this is what blew them all away.” However, it seems that the congregation was not unanimous in welcoming hippies. Vaters remembers a shouting match between Andy and Fred Potter (an older associate minister at the church who “was of the old school”). Potter was shouting at Andy, “for God’s sake, cut your hair!” The incident did not scare Andy away, because eventually he did “surrender his life to the Lord and did get his hair cut.” Eventually, he also decided that his choice to dodge the draft was not honourable, so a church member volunteered to bring Andy down to the Rainbow Bridge and turned him over to the American authorities. In a storybook ending to Andy’s conversion narrative, the Americans had no file on him; consequently, he walked free and returned to Canada.¹⁰⁶

There are some salient features in Vaters’ narrative of Andy’s conversion. One is that the Stone Church’s outreach to Villagers had two counter-balancing features. First, many in the congregation were warm and welcoming; second, some were frankly judgmental of the hippies’ appearance and lifestyle. While unconditional love and judgment may seem to be contradictory features, evangelical Christians do not see them as mutually exclusive. Rather, they believe that all humans are sinners who fall under God’s judgment and, simultaneously, that all humans are offered God’s love and mercy through Christ.¹⁰⁷ This paradox shapes the way in which evangelicals respond to “the lost.” There is a high degree of tolerance for individuals who are evidently “lost” by conventional Christian standards; yet it is made very clear that they *are* lost and that they need to accept God’s grace. In the mid-sixties, few hippies accepted the premise that they were spiritually “lost”; if they did, they did not see Christianity as the exclusive path to enlightenment. Furthermore, the fact that, for Andy, becoming a Christian also entailed getting his hair cut suggests that he had been getting the message that “Christian” and “hippie” were mutually exclusive identities.

Finally, Vaters claimed that draft-dodgers in the church were not pressured to return to the United States, insisting that “we just never involved ourselves in their situation in the United States. If they talked about it, we listened. If they didn’t talk about it, we didn’t ask.” However, the fact that Andy felt it necessary to turn himself in suggests that there were cues, subtle or unsubtle, that a Christian should

105 Vaters, interview.

106 *Ibid.*

107 See, for example, the oft-quoted Bible verses, Romans 3:23 and John 3:16.

not oppose the Vietnam War or shirk his duty.¹⁰⁸ In many respects, it seems that the church reinforced the dominant norms of society that the Villagers had been so eager to escape. This attitude could explain why few hippies converted through the outreach of the Stone Church.

While the ministry of Vaters and the Stone Church was informal, there were more formal evangelical ventures in Yorkville. One of these was The Fishnet, a coffeehouse that opened in January 1966, under the direction of the Rev. Kenn Opperman, in a rented basement below a fashion shop on Yorkville Avenue.¹⁰⁹ The Fishnet was a ministry of the nearby Avenue Road Church (affiliated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination), where Opperman was senior pastor. Throughout the summer of 1966, the manager at The Fishnet was Deane Downey, a 26-year-old graduate student at the University of Toronto, and his assistant was Phyllis McIntyre, a businesswoman who had worked in management for *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Unlike the CSO's Drop-In Centre, which included hippies as prominent staff members, The Fishnet's volunteer staff consisted primarily of youth from the College and Careers group at Avenue Road Church.¹¹⁰ As with other missionary ventures in Yorkville, the drawing card for The Fishnet was free admission, free coffee, and free cookies. Because of these enticements, Villagers were willing to put up with the fact that staff might eventually sit down with them "and casually try to steer the conversation toward religion."¹¹¹

Many Villagers were spared these "casual" conversations, because volunteers were kept busy serving coffee and cookies.¹¹² As Deane Downey explains, "It was often a little awkward to break into conversations with already established groups of young people sitting at the tables. It was also not all that easy to steer conversations around to 'spiritual' topics. We put no pressure on our volunteers to do so."¹¹³ Nevertheless, these evangelistic conversations were central to the purpose of The Fishnet. Interviewed in the summer of 1966, Downey informed the *Globe and Mail* that the primary purpose of the coffeehouse was "to provide a place where we as Christians can present our beliefs concerning Christ."¹¹⁴ At The Fishnet, they presented these beliefs in "casual" conversations with the Villagers, but also through performances by gospel singers¹¹⁵ and the regular screening of religious films.¹¹⁶

The evangelism that took place at The Fishnet was "very soft-sell."¹¹⁷ Writing four decades after the fact, Downey explains, "The principal aim of The Fishnet was to introduce young people to Christ—but in a low key way. I saw our work

108 Apparently, this was Vaters' view; in the interview, he claimed that he had never met a draft-dodger who had come to Canada because of genuine conscientious objection to the war.

109 Webster, "Village's Nowhere People Face Identification Crisis," *Globe and Mail*, July 4, 1966; and Ron Haggart, "How to Throw Kids Back to the Streets," *Toronto Star*, September 29, 1966.

110 Deane Downey, e-mail message to author, March 15, 2010.

111 Webster, "Village's Nowhere People," *Globe and Mail*, July 4, 1966.

112 Longstaff, "Yorkville," p. 41.

113 Downey, e-mail message.

114 Webster, "Village's Nowhere People."

115 Longstaff, "Yorkville," p. 41.

116 Downey, e-mail message.

117 Webster, "Village's Nowhere People."

as more pre-evangelism than evangelism.”¹¹⁸ As Phyllis McIntyre told the *Toronto Star*, “we never forced religion on any of them.... We tell them we haven’t come here to give them religion, but to try to help them sort out their problems.”¹¹⁹ The volunteers at The Fishnet often provided counselling and assistance that were not specifically religious in nature. The *Toronto Star* article provides an example of a young man persuaded to return to high school by volunteers at The Fishnet. Aside from this isolated example, it is uncertain how successful they were at this kind of counselling.

What is certain is that there were only about three or four conversions in the nine months that The Fishnet was in operation.¹²⁰ The paucity of evangelical conversions is striking, especially when one considers that, in the summer of 1966, The Fishnet was a central gathering place for the Villagers. One possible explanation is that, for most of the Villagers in the mid-sixties, Christianity was the religious expression of the dominant culture, which they had rejected. The Villagers sought inspiration and wisdom wherever they could find it, including from Jesus. As one young Toronto hippie told the *Globe and Mail* in 1966, “I dig Christ. I dig him as a person. He must have been beautiful.”¹²¹ Nevertheless, it is one thing to “dig Christ,” and it is another thing altogether to dig Christianity. To do so would have meant converting back to the socio-cultural world that they had sought to escape. The Rev. James Smith, director of the Drop-In Centre at St. Paul’s Avenue Road United Church, later recalled that during “the so-called Hippy years it seemed like the Hippy’s desire was to be an honorary member of every religion except Christianity. ...[T]hey often said that they did dig Jesus Christ’s way of life but not all of ‘that other garbage’.”¹²² Consequently, the Villagers tolerated the films and gospel music at The Fishnet, regarding them, in Longstaff’s words, “as a necessary evil they have to put up with.... Their proselytizing attempts are listened to politely by the Villagers, almost like commercials in a television show, and they seem to have about the same impact.”¹²³

If the Villagers were indifferent towards the evangelistic “commercials,” they still liked the coffeehouse itself, which, as Longstaff observed, provided “a haven of security and warmth.” The Fishnet was important, he explained, because it was “a gathering place for Villagers—a place where they can sit and talk. It is also a contact point for new people coming into Yorkville from out of town, and ... newcomers can quickly make friends and find a place to stay. Here villagers plan their entertainment for the night, [and] set up parties for after The Fish Net closes.... All of this kind of action is unplanned and informal and in fact the Church workers have nothing to do with it.”¹²⁴ In essence, The Fishnet’s clientele

118 Downey, e-mail message.

119 Haggart, “How to Throw Kids Back to the Streets.”

120 The Fishnet was closed after nine months of operation because the property owner evicted the ministry. She argued that the large crowds of young people attracted to the coffeehouse intimidated customers at the ground-floor *haute couture* shop (Haggart, “How to Throw Kids Back to the Streets”).

121 Webster, “Village’s Nowhere People.”

122 Smith, *I Wish I Was a Fish*, p. 21.

123 Longstaff, “Yorkville,” p. 42.

124 *Ibid.*

transformed the short-lived coffeehouse into a community centre. In this respect, the coffeehouse functioned much like CSO's Drop-In Centre, even though these two outreach endeavours had fundamentally different purposes, rooted in different theological orientations. In both the Drop-In Centre and The Fishnet, hippies received counselling that was not necessarily religious in nature, even though the coffeehouse's directors had neither the intention nor qualifications to do social work.¹²⁵ Both the centre and the coffeehouse served as community hubs for Yorkville's hippies. While The Fishnet's purposes were evangelistic, the needs and wishes of the Villagers shaped the functioning of the coffeehouse.

The Fishnet resembled the CSO's Drop-In Centre in another important respect: it was a middle ground, where "straight" church members could establish a mutually respectful relationship with Yorkville's countercultural youth. The volunteers' evangelical theology, with its clear distinctions between "saved" and "unsaved," may have mitigated the liminal quality of these encounters, but it was a liminal space nonetheless. According to the *Globe and Mail*, Downey claimed that an important secondary purpose for The Fishnet was "to expose Christian Missionary Alliance staff, whose ideas could become ingrown in a pure church environment, to the ideas and concepts of the Yorkville hippies."¹²⁶ This exposure was not without its risks: one of the volunteers, the daughter of a prominent couple in the Avenue Road congregation, "ran off with one of the young hippies."¹²⁷ Nevertheless, it allowed evangelicals and hippies to meet in a climate of mutual toleration—perhaps even mutual understanding. In particular, Phyllis McIntyre established an exceptional rapport with the Villagers.¹²⁸ Workers at The Fishnet were more successful in doing so than in their "primary purpose" of evangelism. Clearly, Yorkville's residents readily accepted the hospitality that these ministries provided, especially if it came with free food and free coffee, but born-again Christianity was one product that few Villagers were willing to sample. Wrapped up as it was in cultural baggage that they disdained, this was one free offering they decided they could not stomach.

"We're Pushers for Christ": The Stepping Stone

By the late spring of 1969, another evangelical Christian coffeehouse was in operation, one block north of the Drop-In Centre on Avenue Road. The Stepping Stone was a small coffeehouse operated by a Pentecostal minister who described himself and his volunteers as "pushers of Christ."¹²⁹ As a clean-shaven man in his late thirties, with short hair and a receding hairline, George LeRoy did not look anything like a pusher, but his choice of words reflected his desire to appropriate the language of the Yorkville hippies. (As well, it may have reflected the fact that

125 Downey, e-mail message.

126 Webster, "Village's Nowhere People."

127 Downey, e-mail message.

128 "If I can include an additional, unforgettable episode by way of illustration. She allowed one of the young hippies to butt out a live cigarette in the palm of her hand on one occasion—to persuade that young man of her sincerity in her expression of concern for him. She showed me the blister—I think it was that same evening or perhaps the next day" (Downey, e-mail message).

129 Arthur Moses, "Coffee House Reaches Out to Youth," *Globe and Mail*, September 5, 1970.

he had previously worked in Washington, DC, ministering to heroin addicts.) In media interviews, LeRoy was keen to point out that, unlike other “pushers” in the Village, he was not trying to make any money.¹³⁰ Like The Fishnet, The Stepping Stone offered free coffee and baked goods and a free space to hang out. The atmosphere was inviting; the name of the coffeehouse appeared in hip lettering on the front window, and the interior décor was colourful.¹³¹ The Stepping Stone was inviting for other reasons too: according to Juanita Craig, who began volunteering at the coffeehouse when she was 18, “there was an arrangement, supposedly, with the police that they would not come in and bother there ... because they knew that we ... were pretty strict about not letting anything happen in there.”¹³² For all these reasons, the coffeehouse “was always packed, absolutely packed—people coming and going. There was rarely an empty seat.”¹³³ As the *Toronto Star* reported, the doors opened every evening at 8:30, and the establishment continued “doing a roaring business until 3 or 4 a.m.”¹³⁴

Unlike The Fishnet (which was associated with Avenue Road Missionary Alliance Church), The Stepping Stone was an independent ministry, not sponsored by any one congregation or denomination.¹³⁵ Like The Fishnet, however, its primary purpose was evangelism, and LeRoy and his volunteers employed similar evangelistic methods. They would “sit with the customers, discuss their problems and try to convince them that more meaning could be injected into their lives through love of God, Christ and their fellow man.”¹³⁶ Even though LeRoy described himself as a “pusher for Christ,” news reports also emphasized that nobody was compelled “to listen, to accept or to even try religion.”¹³⁷ As he recalled 40 years later, “I tried not to push salvation on them all the time. I just shared what Jesus Christ could do with their life, and then I preached on Sunday night. And then if they had questions, they’d come and ask, and if they needed counselling, we’d give them the counselling they needed.”¹³⁸ However, the evangelistic pitch at The Stepping Stone was definitely more “hard-sell” than the “soft-cell” approach of The Fishnet three years earlier. By LeRoy’s own admission, his Sunday night preaching at the coffeehouse was “pretty heavy,” and he would always follow up with an “altar call” (an invitation to receive Jesus Christ as saviour and be “born again”).¹³⁹ He also endeavoured to adopt Villagers’ lingo in an attempt to appeal to them. As Juanita Craig recalls, “he learned to talk like them so much he would often do that during his sermons and not all the church people appreciated it.”¹⁴⁰

It is noteworthy that in September 1970, in an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, LeRoy estimated that “20 or 30, maybe more” had “been convinced by

130 *Ibid.*

131 Leslie Tarr, “Minister Beards the Hippies on Their Home Ground,” *Toronto Star*, September 6, 1969.

132 Juanita Craig, interview by author, Mississauga, Ontario, June 10, 2010.

133 *Ibid.*

134 Tarr, “Minister Beards the Hippies.”

135 George LeRoy, Skype interview with author, June 17, 2010.

136 Moses, “Coffee House Reaches Out.”

137 *Ibid.*

138 LeRoy, interview.

139 *Ibid.*

140 Craig, interview.

his evangelism since they started coming to the Stepping Stone when it opened in May 1969.”¹⁴¹ These are not large numbers, and the depth and durability of such conversions are open to question.¹⁴² Even so, 30 professed conversions is substantially more than the estimated three or four conversions that The Fishnet obtained in the mid-sixties. To explain The Stepping Stone's success at proselytizing, one needs to consider two factors. First was the changing clientele in Yorkville. By 1968, most observers of the Yorkville scene acknowledged that the earlier hippies (who were relatively stable and often came from middle-class backgrounds) were being replaced by a new kind of hippie: often more desperate, truly poor, and likely to use harder drugs such as speed or heroin. To convert is to make a substantial change in the direction of one's life, and it is often precipitated by a state of crisis, by a realization that the old ways of being no longer work. It seems plausible that the new kind of Villager was more likely to find herself or himself in this situation and, consequently, to be more receptive to the evangelistic message of people like George LeRoy.

The other factor was the emergence of the Jesus People Movement, as growing numbers of hippies across North America turned to evangelical, charismatic Christianity. The movement, which ultimately included many young people from “straight” Christian homes (generally with the blessing and support of their parents and pastors), was the most successful manifestation of evangelical engagement with youth culture in the long sixties. By negotiating a liminal identity that was both countercultural and Christian, the movement's youthful adherents rendered the prospect of evangelical conversion more palatable.¹⁴³ By late 1970, the movement was present in Toronto,¹⁴⁴ and it is possible that, when some hip youth encountered “Jesus Freaks,” their curiosity was piqued, and they were more open to evangelical Christianity.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of visitors to The Stepping Stone showed no interest at all in conversion. As one teenaged visitor explained in the *Globe and Mail* article, “I come here when I'm hungry and I think it's really beautiful what they're doing,” but, as for the proselytizing aspect, “I don't like it being shoved down my throat.”¹⁴⁵ Undoubtedly, her response was typical of many hip youth: she accepted the hospitality offered by LeRoy and his volunteers, and she respected their spiritual journey, but it was not *her* journey. As we observed earlier, most hippies resented any attempts by the straight world to solve their problems. The Drop-In Centre succeeded because it worked with the Villagers in their endeavour to address community problems and because James Smith saw some merit in their way of life. In contrast, George LeRoy offered a solution from outside the community, and he saw little or no merit in the hippies' lifestyle. He adopted hip lingo, dressed casually, and purchased a more modest Volkswagen to replace

141 Moses, “Coffee House Reaches Out.”

142 Craig, interview.

143 Larry Eskridge, *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

144 Bruce Douville, “‘And We've Got to Get Ourselves Back to the Garden': The Jesus People Movement in Toronto,” *Historical Papers – Canadian Society of Church History* (2006), pp. 5-24.

145 Moses, “Coffee House Reaches Out.”

his larger car,¹⁴⁶ but he did these things for the purpose of ministering to the Villagers, not because he was adopting their value system. LeRoy's fundamental attitude towards the hip youth culture was negative; he compared the hip scene in downtown Toronto to a "boil" that eventually "burst and ... spread out all over Ontario."¹⁴⁷ Apparently, in his dealings with the hippies, there was no mutual exchange of ideas, no possibility that the hip world could offer anything of value to the straight world.

Such was not the case with one of his volunteers. Juanita Craig, who had been raised in a Pentecostal home, began to see that some of her values were culture-specific:

I did begin to see that some things didn't matter, in general. [It was] culture and a particular cultural bubble that made them important. Just dress code, for crying out loud.... Who cares if you don't have special clothes? Like somebody off the street, they should be welcomed whether they're dressed appropriately for church or not. In my church where I go to now it doesn't matter ... but growing up it mattered a lot. And I began to see certain things for what they were because of associating with the counterculture people.¹⁴⁸

More importantly, it was at The Stepping Stone that she "learned that race didn't matter":

The hippies were very much into "what's the big deal about race? What's the matter with you people? Everybody's the same." And I learned that from them instead of my church and my family. And I always kind of resented the fact that I had to learn it there at the time. Because I had seen a lot of racism in our church—appalling, actually.... And it made me really angry, and I learned what was right from a counterculture group of people.... I knew it anyway, but I began to see it in the Bible. I knew it was there, but I began to see specifics in there when I began to learn it from these other people. Because you know where it says, "we're one in Christ, there's no gender, no Jew or Gentile." ... It didn't stand out to me, I guess.... But yeah, I learned what I should have outside the church on that issue.¹⁴⁹

As with the CSO's Drop-In Centre and The Fishnet, we see elements of liminality in The Stepping Stone. When two cultures encounter one another on a middle ground characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty, "conversion" can be a two-way street. Craig's experience in Yorkville reminds us that evangelicals who venture into foreign missionary fields with the intention of giving and proclaiming often find themselves sharing and listening.

146 "I learned very, very fast to change the way I dress. I remember we had ... not a Lincoln, but it was a larger car, and once the kids saw that, even though we were giving food out ... they thought that we were ripping them off. So we got rid of that and got a Volkswagen, because we felt that was more in line, I guess, with the kids we were trying to reach. But it's an amazing thing how they have their own opinions, and if you're going to try to reach them and be on their level to a degree, I think there are certain things that you [must] ... give up" (LeRoy, interview).

147 *Ibid.*

148 Craig, interview.

149 *Ibid.*

Conclusion

While previous studies have focused on the significance of religious outreach endeavours for Yorkville's youth, these ministries are equally important for what they tell us about Canadian Christianity in the long sixties and how different churches responded to the new social and cultural realities. Moreover, they highlight the growing fractures between older and newer understandings of Christianity in this era. For Roman Catholics in the heady environment of post-Vatican II renewal, their encounters with Yorkville's youth demonstrated their eagerness to "dialogue with the modern world." At the same time, coverage of these encounters in the local Catholic press betrayed the tensions that existed between the spirit of reform and the weight of institutional tradition. The tensions between competing paradigms were most evident in the differences between liberal Protestant and evangelical ministries. Liberals, particularly in the United Church of Canada, saw Yorkville as an opportunity to engage in social work and activism, while evangelicals saw it as an opportunity to save souls. Both ministries perceived their outreach as intrinsically Christian, but they were operating from different understandings of what "Christian" meant. In the sixties, the gap between conservative evangelicals and liberal Christians was wide and growing.

Furthermore, these outreach ministries were significant as sites where two cultures collided: "straight" culture on one side and the youth counterculture on the other. To a greater or lesser degree, they were liminal spaces, characterized by equality, ambiguity, and uncertainty. This liminality was most evident at the CSO's Drop-In Centre at St. Paul's Avenue Road United Church. While the liberal Christians who ran it occasionally betrayed their allegiance to traditional middle-class values, they still endeavoured to support the Villagers in their attempt to face the challenges of life in Yorkville. While the evangelicals ostensibly maintained a clear dichotomy between the "saved" and "unsaved," their ministries still demonstrated a degree of liminality, characterized in some cases by mutual respect and even mutual learning. The Catholic encounters demonstrated liminality too, as priests met with countercultural youth in an environment of openness and apparent equality.

How are we to assess the success or failure of these ventures? Their goals were not identical. While many clergy and laity within the United Church were anxious about declining youth attendance in the sixties, this was not the immediate priority of the liberal Christian directors of the Drop-In Centre. Propelled by the prevalent "secular theology" of the sixties, their aim was not to proselytize or fill pews, but to make the church relevant by meeting the needs of the community. Conversely, the primary purpose of evangelical outreach was saving souls. Thus we should measure success or failure in terms of their specific goals. We also must consider factors such as duration.

If the success or failure of these ministries can be measured by duration and by the number of clients served, then the Drop-In Centre was the most successful religious outreach effort to Yorkville's hip youth in the sixties. Its years of operation spanned the decade and continued into the early seventies. During the peak years of the Yorkville scene, the centre served countless youth in a variety of ways:

job counselling, mediating in conflicts with family and the police, and providing a space for recreation and community organizing. In contrast, Roman Catholic outreach to the Villagers was the most ephemeral, most likely due to the absence of a Catholic church in Yorkville to serve as a base of operation.¹⁵⁰ Assessing the success of the evangelical outreach efforts is more difficult. One cannot compare Albert Vaters' ministry at the Stone Church to the work of Smith and the CSO at St. Paul's Avenue Road; while the latter was a sustained, concerted attempt to reach disaffected youth, the former was informal and *ad hoc*. The evangelical coffeehouses had a shorter lifespan than the Drop-In Centre, largely because they only rented space in Yorkville. The Fishnet was in existence for less than a year, and The Stepping Stone did not appear until the end of the decade, when the Yorkville scene was in decline. Nevertheless, it appears that both were well attended by hip youth eager to take advantage of free space and nourishment, and in both cases the evangelicals who staffed the coffeehouses successfully established a rapport with the youth of the community. In contrast to The Stepping Stone (which ministered to a different clientele at the end of the sixties), The Fishnet did not secure more than a handful of conversions. Its leaders had not expected a large number of conversions and saw their work as "pre-evangelism" or "low key" evangelism.

Another way of measuring the success of these ministry efforts is in the impact that they had on churches themselves. These outreach efforts in Yorkville must be seen as part of a larger project, in which Canadian churches engaged with youth throughout the long sixties. This process of engagement did not always succeed in retaining or gaining youthful adherents in Canada's churches; evangelicals fared much better in this regard than mainline Protestants or Roman Catholics.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, the denominations' engagement in outreach was a key component in their efforts to remain relevant in what Pierre Berton called "the new age." Regardless of whether they gained or lost youthful adherents, this process could not help but colour the way they worshipped and engaged with the wider world. The reverberations of the interaction between churches and hip youth in the long sixties can still be felt in the churches and Christian organizations of the twenty-first century.¹⁵²

150 As noted above, Catholics did participate in the operation of the Drop-In Centre at St. Paul's. However, there does not appear to have been a specifically Roman Catholic ministry in the Village.

151 On the relative weakness of United Church youth groups and the strength of evangelical youth ministry at the end of the long sixties, see Muriel Duncan, "Youth Work: Beginning to Bounce Back?" *United Church Observer*, October 1975, pp. 10-13.

152 Douville, "The Uncomfortable Pew," pp. 510-541.