Calvary Church: A Defense of Community Amid the Onslaught of Urbanization.

David Lee McMullen
"Calvary Church: A Defense of Community Amid the Onslaught of Urbanization"

a Master's Essay by

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Introduction

This essay is a continuation of my studies into the impact of urbanization and the role of the church in response. I was first attracted to this topic by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum in their book *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Later, my fascination was heightened by a comparison of their work with Charles Tilly's *The Vendee*.

Separated in time by almost a full century; divided geographically by a major ocean; one Catholic, another Protestant; it was easy to assume that the witch trials of Salem, Massachusetts and the counterrevolution of the Vendee region of France had little or nothing in common. Yet, as I compared these two works of social history, I discovered several important similarities between the two events. Of particular interest was the role of the church in responding to the encroachment of urbanization. In my opinion, the similarities between events in the Vendee and Salem Village have
occurred countless times throughout history, continue to occur today, and will occur again and again as the process of global urbanization further shrinks our planet. (1)

These three scholars have focused their attention on more than historical events. They examined social, cultural, political and commercial forces. Tilly, in the 1975 preface to his work, explains that the purpose of *The Vendee* was to trace "the development of the counterrevolutionary movement from 1789 to 1793, and relate its pattern to the social structure of local communities in western France." (2) In *Salem Possessed*, Boyer and Nissenbaum, point to the fact that they have "exploited the focal events of 1692 (the witch trials) somewhat as a stranger might make use of a lightning flash in the night: better to observe the contours of the landscape which it chances to illuminate." (3)

As my studies at Northwestern began drawing to a close, chance brought me to Charlotte, North Carolina -- a Sunbelt city that has been dramatically impacted by the rapid growth of the Southeastern United States during the second half of the 20th Century -- and past Calvary Church -- a local, non-denominational church that had just completed a $39 million sanctuary. It was this set of circumstances that gave me the topic I will explore in this master's essay: What role does Calvary Church play in a community so rapidly changing as a result of the forces of urbanization?
Now, before I proceed with my exploration of Calvary Church, I would like to draw some parameters around a term that is difficult, if not impossible to fully fence. What do I mean when I use the term urbanization? Tilly understood the problem, writing "...the reader will undoubtedly recognize in the discussion of urbanization a reformulation of many themes -- the growth of large-scale, centralized activities, increasing differentiation, the development of rationalized, impersonal rules of conduct and so on -- that he has noticed elsewhere under the headings of 'industrialization,' 'modernization,' 'centralization,' 'rationalization.' or 'the growth of the nation-state.'" (4)

For this exploration of Calvary Church, I suggest that urbanization is a never-ending process in the modern world and that this process is an intrusion of the outside world, either through greater dependency by or control upon a smaller community -- a community that was, at least partially, isolated, independent and in many ways self-sufficient. This intrusion generally imposes the economic, political and social structures of the larger world upon a smaller community. It is more than simply an increase in population and population density. It is more than the geographic sprawl or diversification of a town. It is a forced union that threatens and often destroys the established institutions of the smaller community. This is what occurred in Salem and the Vendee region of France, and it is what is now occurring in Charlotte.
Finally, I would like to review several commonalities that I discovered between Salem and the Vendee. These similarities provide a model for investigating Calvary Church.

Central in the response mustered by Salem and the Vendee was a leadership role for the church; leadership in the defense of the status quo; leadership in the attack upon those seen as the threat to established values and systems; those leading the charge for urbanization. In both cases the church played a primary role in solidifying the conservative response to outsiders. In both cases it was the church around which the community circled the wagons.

According to Tilly:

The fact is that religious belief, organization, and affiliation all became consuming concerns of political life in southern Anjou during the early Revolution. Disagreements over religious issues contributed heavily to both the formation and the conflict of the major parties. The extent that the rebellion of 1793 can be said to have had articulated aims and ideology, they were cast primarily in religious terms. Can this be very surprising, considering that peasants everywhere have so rarely been familiar with any systematic view of the world, or any rhetoric, that was not religious? (5)

Independence for the local church was an extremely important issue in both Salem and the Vendee, although they approached it from different directions. In Salem Village, the farmers were trying to maintain their independence by establishing their own church. In the Vendee, they were defending the established church against changes forced from outside the district.
Further, the more affluent residents of Salem Village, comparable to the bourgeoisie of the Vendee, were well connected to Salem Town and the world beyond. Their continued success depended upon their ability to remain connected with the outside world. These same battle lines were drawn in rural communities throughout the Vendee.

Residents of both communities felt uneasy, fearful of the changes that were impacting their world. As the Salem villagers felt removed from a religious worship that was central to the Puritan world, so the farmers and townspeople of the Vendee felt equally cut-off. "Among a people for whom the weekly reunion at the parish church had been such a regular and significant ritual, this disruption of the usual order was a continuous reminder that they lived in disjointed times." (6) By comparison, in Salem, "...always hovering in the background were the fundamental questions of the Village's own legitimacy and its right, as nothing more than a parish district (of the Salem Town church), to assume in this way some of the prerogatives of an independent town." (7)

In my comparison of the two communities, I found many differences between Salem and the Vendee; differences caused by time, distance, and the age of the two communities and their various institutions. However, I remain convinced that the similarities are significant. Here were two communities struggling to maintain their autonomy; struggling against the intrusion of the outside
world. In both places, the church provided the strongest and most viable institution around which the community might rally in defense of the status quo. And, in each case, although they represented a smaller segment of the community, those allied with the outside world, the world of commerce, were ultimately victorious because their resources proved to be far greater. Regardless, not the examples provided by Salem and the Vendee, nor the lessons learned in countless other communities caught in a similar set of circumstances, have lessened the struggle of the smaller, more isolated communities as they fight to preserve themselves from the intrusion of urbanization.

As Tilly explained it in his discussion of the French counterrevolution, "The intensest conflicts arouse at the junctions of rural and urban life. And, most concretely, the struggle of city and country informed the whole development of the counter revolution." (8) But, Boyer and Nissenbaum tied it all together very neatly when they wrote:

When Cotton Mather preached a sermon in 1689 in response to a Boston witchcraft case of that year, he chose a Biblical text which made this point: "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." The rebellion Mather had in mind here was surely not the political sort -- not in the very year that he had supported the successful overthrow of Governor Andros! -- but the even more menacing variety implicit in both the spiteful turbulence of those who were sliding down the social ladder and the pushy restlessness of those who were climbing up. The feeling that Mather articulated in this 1689 sermon was one shared by many people in Salem Village three years later: the social order was
being profoundly shaken by a superhuman force which had lured all too many into active complicity with it. We have chosen to construe this force as emergent mercantile capitalism. Mather, and Salem Village, called it witchcraft. (9)

As I begin my examination of Charlotte and Calvary Church, I would like to outline the approach I will be taking. First, I will discuss Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, both historically and as a modern Sunbelt city. Second, I will provide an overview of the local religious community. Third, I will focus on Calvary as the most noticeable church in the area. Finally, I will offer the observations and conclusions that I have developed during my research.
Charlotte

Charlotte, North Carolina is a city "on the make," seemingly ready to do anything in the name of economic growth and development. In many ways it is a classic model of urbanization in the post Civil War South -- the ultimate "mill town."

Historically, the Carolina Piedmont has been inhabited by Native Americans for more than 10,000 years. Although white traders from Jamestown and Petersburg, Virginia first began to visit the area in the 17th Century, permanent settlers did not start arriving until the 1730s, when poor Scotch-Irish and German immigrants began coming South along the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road.

Today, the business center of Charlotte sits at the crossroads of two ancient Indian trails. It was here, more than 250 years ago that the first white settler, Thomas Poke, built his home on the Southeast corner of this intersection; where today a 60-story skyscraper is under construction, the new home of NCNB National Bank, the nation's sixth largest bank.
These early settlers, seeking to win the favor of the English Crown, named their town after England's German Queen Charlotte. They named their county after her home town of Mecklenburg and they named one of the two Indian paths after the colonial governor, William Tryon. Even today, Charlotte, despite its claim as a "hornet's nest" of anti-British sentiment during the American Revolution, continues to proclaim itself as the "Queen City."

Far more insightful, however, was the name these early settlers choose for the other Indian path -- Trade Street. Trade, commerce and economic growth have always been the essential elements of Charlotte. University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) History Professor Dan Morrill, comparing the city to Old South centers such as Charleston, says "Charlotte doesn't care who your mother and father were. What matters is how much power you have to make money." (1)

Money was the first thing that helped to distinguish Charlotte from the numerous other farming villages throughout the area. Gold was discovered in the Piedmont during the late 18th Century and in 1837 the first branch of the U.S. Mint was opened here. Charlotte was the gold capital of the nation until the California Gold Rush of 1849. By that time, cotton had become the money crop of the South and the wagon roads that had replaced the Indian paths were themselves soon replaced by the railroad.
Like most of the South, Charlotte and the Carolinas were crushed economically by the Civil War. From the ashes of this defeat, Charlotteans began building one of the leading business centers of the New South. As the great cities of the antebellum -- port cities like Charleston and Savannah -- began to crumble after the trading ties to England were cut; new cities, joined by the railroad to the industry of the Northeast, provided the foundation for rebuilding the economic strength of the old Confederacy.

Charlotte was a railroad city, and by the start of the 20th Century, it had become the capital of the southern textile industry. In 1903, Mecklenburg County was home to 21 cotton mills, and "within a 100-mile radius of Charlotte were approximately 300 cotton mills, possessing one-half of the looms and spindles in the South." (2)

As it nears the 21st Century, Charlotte has grown to become the most populous city in the Carolinas. In 1960, the population of Mecklenburg County, including Charlotte, was 272,111. In 1970, the population had grown by 30.3 percent, to 354,656. (3) Growth slowed in the 1970s to 14 percent, with the 1980 census reporting 404,270 residents within Mecklenburg County. (4) Then in the 1980s, the pace increased to 26 percent, producing a county-wide population of 511,433 in 1990, a population that is projected to increase another 30 percent in the next decade. (5) During the 1980s, the City of Charlotte grew by more than 25 percent, to 395,934 (6)
Charlotte's business successes and potential for future expansion are extravagantly touted by the local Chamber of Commerce and the forces for the economic development of the state with PR "hype" such as:

- "Charlotte is a city on the fast track. Those associated with Charlotte in the past probably would not recognize this ever growing, booming city today." (7)

- "Charlotte is part of the global connection -- we have entered the global age." (8)

- "Charlotte is the center of the nation's fifth largest urban region."

- "During the past ten years, over 2,500 new firms have invested more than $2.6 billion in new Charlotte facilities."

- "Charlotte is the sixth largest financial center in the nation, and the largest between Boston and Los Angeles with control of nearly $80 billion in headquartered bank holding company assets." (9)
Economic growth has been the single goal of the Charlotte business community for more than a century. It started with the cotton and textile industries that began to flourish in the late 19th Century and, as Historian Morrill says, "Charlotte hasn't had a new idea in 120 years." (10)

Today, this single overriding theme remains a primary focus of governmental and business research and analysis. Recently, the city's Economic Development Department hired a Chapel Hill, North Carolina consultant to evaluate the area's strengths and weaknesses. In an article published on the front page of the "Perspective & Business" section of the local newspaper, he concluded:

The strengths, weaknesses and prospects for Charlotte are impressive. It is blessed with a superb location, an enviable transportation network, great corporate leadership, a wonderful living environment, an exemplary record in meeting crisis, a good record in the public schools and a seemingly harmonious feeling among various groups in the metro region.

Like the rest of the South, if faces the consequences of its history -- primarily its failure to develop its own people educationally and economically. It is experiencing the challenges of growth as it participates in and contributes to the metropolitanization of the South's economy. It is also striving to address the consequences of a rapidly and profoundly globalizing economy.

From all of this comes an opportunity for Charlotte to become a leader among major metropolitan areas. It should strive to become the most progressive city in the region, a city of entrepreneurial energy, a flexible city which can pounce on market opportunities as they emerge, the international financial center of the South, and the most livable city in America. (11)
Except for the brief recognitions of the South's failure to achieve the educational and economic standing of other regions of the United States, the consultants paints yet another rosy picture of a business community committed to continued economic growth.

Despite this quest for "world class" standing, many residents would probably agree with John Kilgo, a prominent media personality with more than 30 years of news experience in the area, when he pointed to Charlotte's "spirit of community" and identified the city's greatest asset as "still being a small town, where the power structure remains accessible." (12)

By accident I suspect, Kilgo's comments cut to the heart of Charlotte's dilemma -- will it continue pushing to become a major business center or will it shift to a slower-growth policy in response to the negative impact of urbanization? More importantly, who will make the decision? Even as a relatively new observer of this conflict, I suspect the smart money will remain with continued growth, aggressively pursued by an elite power structure that has guided the city for generations.

In 1949, political scientist V.O. Key labeled North Carolina a "progressive plutocracy."
Industrialization has created a financial and business elite whose influence prevails in the state's political and economic life. An aggressive aristocracy of manufacturing and banking, centered around Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Charlotte and Durham, has had a tremendous stake in state policy and has not been remiss in protecting and advancing what it visualizes as its interests. Consequently a sympathetic respect for the problems of corporate capital and of large employers permeates the state's politics and government. For half a century an economic oligarchy has held sway. (13)

Paul Luebke, an associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a freshman legislator, takes Key's idea further, dividing contemporary North Carolina into two power groups -- the traditionalists and the modernizers.

North Carolina has a reputation as a progressive state. This is true within limits. The most powerful political forces in North Carolina today represent two economic elites with differing interests. One group, the modernizers, consists of bankers, developers, retail merchants, the news media, and other representatives of the business community who expect to benefit from change and growth. The second group, the traditionalists, includes traditional industries (in textiles, furniture, and apparel), tobacco farmers, and others associated with the state's agricultural economy who feel threatened by change and growth. (14)

Luebke's modernizers are concentrated in an area of the state that he defines as the metro Piedmont, six, non-contiguous counties along Interstate 85 that include the state's three major metropolitan areas -- Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, the Triad cities of Winston-Salem, Greensboro and High Point, and the Research Triangle of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill.
The essence of modernizer values -- that economic prosperity requires an activist state government prepared to invest in transportation, education, and the like -- permeates the thinking of political and economic leaders in these counties. North Carolina's most influential daily newspapers are published here; these newspapers circulate, of course, in less metropolitan counties whose leaders are less sympathetic to a big-budget government. The metro Piedmont is also the home of the state's most prestigious research and liberal arts colleges and universities. Thus, although only 30 percent of all Tar Heels live in this area, its influence on state politics is disproportionately high. Growth-oriented corporations, such as banking, insurance, the media, and high-technology firms, have joined with academics and state government leaders in efforts to modernize North Carolina's economy. (15)

In sharp contrast to the modernizers, the traditionalists reflect the rural, small town, conservatism of the majority of North Carolina's residents. If the traditionalists have a champion, it is certainly the state's senior United States Senator, Jesse Helms. In Luebke's words, "Helms affirmed the values of traditionalism. He provided North Carolinians with the vision of a society that should not change." (16)

Traditionalism's ideal community is based on fundamentalist Protestantism, especially Baptist denominations, which permeates North Carolina. A deferential relationship should exist both between employer and employee and between husband and wife. Traditionalists consider labor unions and collective bargaining as disruptive of the workplace. Even though high percentages of North Carolina women are in the low-wage labor force, the ideology of patriarchy, not feminism, remains paramount. Ideally, for traditionalists, blacks would not challenge white authority. Gains of the civil rights movement have forced traditionalist ideology to tolerate racial desegregation. Yet affirmative action programs, for either blacks or women, are unacceptable. (17)

These conflicting philosophies, according to Luebke, have created two states within the boundaries of one. "Consequently, North Carolina increasingly resembles a dual economy, in which
economic prosperity seems predictable in the metro Piedmont but much of the rest of the state is left behind." (18) This drastic difference between Charlotte and its semi-rural neighbors can be seen in a report by another economic development consultant, this one working for Catawba County, a county less than 35 miles from the Charlotte skyscrapers. The study compared the average annual salary for manufacturing workers. In Charlotte, the worker earns $25,546. In Catawba County, the same worker earns $18,336. (19) The Catawba Chamber of Commerce is using this information to help attract new industry to an area that has the reputation for being the most polluted county in North Carolina.

A second comparison can be made within the corporate walls of the Charlotte-based NCNB Corp., the nation's sixth largest bank, where the president earned 54 times what the average NCNB employee earned in 1989. According to Robert Bennett, editor of U.S. Banker, this was widest difference of any of the nation's top 100 banks. Commenting on the difference, Bennett said, NCNB's president "got paid like a New Yorker, but his average employee got paid like a North Carolinian." (20)

There is no question that Charlotte's business leaders -- the progressive plutocracy described by Key and Luebke -- have benefited from the economic growth and development of the Carolinas, often at the expense of the average citizen.
UNCC psychology professor James R. Cooke, in an Op-Ed article published in the local newspaper expressed the views of many local residents when he wrote: "Growth continues to clog our streets and place greater demands on utilities and waste disposal. Schools and jails are bursting at the seams. Our air quality is marginal and our water supply is threatened by encroaching development. Taxes rise, but we can barely keep up."

Pointing to increases in local crime, Cooke's fear is evident as he continued, "Look ahead, and it isn't hard to imagine a serial killer in our midst or youth gangs in control of our neighborhoods. Dead children, innocent victims of street violence, are increasingly common in large cities."

Calling for more public participation in the urban planning process, he challenged the arguments of local business leaders.

"...now the big business interests in Charlotte say they want $1.5 million of tax dollars in economic growth. Calling it 'economic development,' they want taxpayers to pay now, but we will really have to pay much more in the years to come. While we used to hear that 'growth pays for itself,' growth only pays some of us, such as developers, banks, utilities, newspapers."
Cook concluded that "Before we celebrate growth and pay to fuel growth in this community, we need to seriously ask how we are growing. Do we really like the changes that we are seeing? Let's put some brakes on our growing bigger, so we can put more effort into growing better." (21)

Why has business been given such a free hand? Why hasn't the opposition had a stronger voice? The answer can be found in almost any local church. Organized religion -- especially conservative Protestant denominations -- has been one of the strongest supporters of business in North Carolina. Preaching the old Puritan work ethic, fundamentalists have long gloried the capitalist system, attacked organized labor and encouraged workers to humbly accept their place in society.
The Religious Community

Charlotte is an amazingly homogeneous city of Protestant Christians. Religion played a key role in bringing the first white settlers to the area and it is today an essential part of almost every aspect of life. For most Charlotteans, their religious beliefs, their patriotism, their sense of community, and their attitudes toward things new and different are woven tightly together.

Charlotte is, of course, not unique. Many social and political historians recognize the interconnection between things religious and things secular. Garry Wills calls the supposed separation of church and state "the riddle of American politics," explaining:

Neither Jefferson nor Madison thought that separation would lessen the impact of religion on our nation. Quite the opposite. Churches freed from the compromises of establishment would have greater moral force, they argued -- and in this they have proved prophets. The first nation to disestablish religion has been a marvel of religiosity, for good or ill. Religion has been the center of our major political crises, which are always moral crises -- the supporting and opposing of wars, of slavery, of corporate power, of civil rights, of sexual codes, of 'the West,' of American separatism and claims to empire. If we
neglect the religious element in all those struggles, we cannot understand our own corporate past; we cannot even talk meaningfully to each other about things that will affect us all (and not only the 'religious nuts' among us). (1)

When I began observing the conservative Protestant religious groups in Charlotte, I was reminded of Flannery O'Connor's character Onnie Jay Holy in her novel *Wise Blood*. Preaching outside a movie theatre in some unnamed southern city, this sidewalk minister proclaimed:

Now I just want to give you folks a few reasons why you can trust this church...In the first place, friends, you can rely on it that it's nothing foreign connected with it. You don't have to believe nothing you don't understand and approve of. If you don't understand it, it ain't true, and that's all there is to it. No jokers in the deck, friends. (2)

The intensity of belief within Charlotte's religious community is so firmly established that it is even promoted as a reason for visiting the city. One travel book stressed Charlotte's "City of Churches" image and labeled the community "the buckle of the Bible Belt." (3) This piety is also an intrinsic part of the local business community. Bea Quirk, author of *Charlotte, City at the Crossroads*, a coffee table book recently published in cooperation with the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce and underwritten by local businesses, explained that "In 1953 there were 240 churches, or one for every 556 people. A writer at the time waxed eloquent: 'Charlotte is recognized as the greatest church-going city in the world next to Edinburgh, Scotland.'"(4)
Regardless of the accuracy of that statement, it identifies the foundation for Charlotte's fundamental Protestant faith -- the Calvinism of 17th Century Scotland.

The Scotch Presbyterians made up the predominate population of the area which became Mecklenburg County in 1762. Their distinctive character and values determined the shape of life here for at least the next 100 years. They were farmers who had been pushed out of Scotland as "dissenters" under James II and Oliver Cromwell. Coming to the English colonies, after a 100-year "exile" in Ireland, put these Scots in still another dissenting role -- this time from the Church of England. These early Presbyterians successfully refused the government's attempt to impose Episcopalism by law. So, though the Church of England became the well-established church in the seaboard areas of North Carolina, the Presbyterian Church was the dominate church in Mecklenburg. (5)

As the community grew, other Protestant groups became active in the community. The Methodists came in the 1770's, the Lutherans and Reformed in the 1820's, and the Episcopalians in the 1830's. The Baptists, the largest single denomination in contemporary Charlotte, did not begin arriving until the decade before the Civil War. (6)

Today, according to the local telephone directory (7), Charlotte/Mecklenburg County has 537 churches or synagogues. Among these, 188 churches identify themselves as Baptist; including 84 as simply Baptist, one as American Baptist, two as Free Will Baptist, 19 as Independent Baptist, one as Missionary Baptist, 76 as Southern
Baptist and five as Primitive Baptist. Baptist churches represent 35 percent of the total number of churches in the area. Other major Protestant denominations, include 100 Presbyterian churches, 63 Methodist churches, 27 Pentecostal/Holiness churches, 23 Lutheran churches and 16 Episcopal churches. Combined together, churches representing these six denominations represent more than two-thirds of the area's congregations.

The lack of religious diversity can be seen when you compare these numbers with the 15 Catholic churches, three Jewish synagogues, two Unitarian churches, one Anglican church, one Eastern Orthodox church, one Greek Orthodox church, and one Mormon congregation in the area. Only token non-Judeo-Christian representation can be found in Charlotte.

Of course, church memberships may vary from a few dozen individuals to several thousand. By comparison, a recent national survey conducted by City University of New York also documented the same conservative Protestant bias. That study (8) found the following division among residents in the two Carolinas, as compared with national percentages.
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Religion in Charlotte is probably more diverse than North Carolina as a whole, but it is doubtful that it is significantly more varied than the diversity indicated by my survey of local congregations.

Charlotte's standing in the evangelical Protestant world is equally well established. "Charlotte has always loved rousing preachers and has had more than her share of good ones," according to Mary Norton Kratt, author of Charlotte: Spirit of the New South, another coffee table history sponsored by local businesses. "Word spreads in drugstores, markets and over lunches that someone is especially remarkable, and a following begins. Such historic ground swells of area religion are incredibly diverse and regularly reach national proportions." (9)

Billy Graham, America's best known and most respected modern day evangelist, was born and raised in Charlotte. "He rose from local tent revivals to become a world-wide evangelist and preacher to presidents." (10)
"In the 1930s, an itinerant evangelist named A.G. Garr began a highly successful revival in Irwin's pasture on the outskirts of town. In the fall of 1930, he and his supporters built a wooden tabernacle to seat 2,500." Later, Garr purchased the old city auditorium for an even larger and more permanent sanctuary. "After his death, his wife and son continued the ministry on radio shows throughout the South and aboard." (11)

In the 1940's more than 25,000 wood stand in the streets to watch the annual arrival of Bishop C.M. "Daddy" Grace. Based in Washington, and the spiritual head of 180 United Houses of Prayer for All, Charlotte was "one of his strongest houses."(12)

In the 1970s and 1980s, the national spotlight focused on Charlotte during the rise and fall of contemporary America's most infamous evangelical couple -- Jim and Tammy Bakker. In his book Forgiven: The Rise and Fall of Jim Bakker and the PTL Ministry, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Charles E. Shepard offers an insightful view of the Charlotte religious community.

Amid the social turmoil and antiwar protests of Richard Nixon's first term as president, a quiet awakening of religious fervor set the stage for Jim and Tammy Bakker's ascent. Members of mainstream denominations -- from Catholics to Presbyterians to Baptists -- began embracing the Pentecostal tradition. These neo-Pentecostals or charismatics, as they would later be called, were dissatisfied with the detached style of worship and distant relationship with God they found in their home churches. In the charismatic experience, the newcomers found a God who seemed
more real in their daily lives. Buoyed by their discovery, many turned enthusiastically to evangelism, hoping to share the good news of their new Christian faith with family, friends, and strangers.

By 1972, the charismatic renewal had blossomed in Charlotte, North Carolina, as it had in Tidewater Virginia (the home of Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcast Network -- CBN). Each Friday morning, 150 men met for breakfast, sang, and shared prayer at a restaurant downtown. One of these men was Bill Flint, thirty-eight, a regional sales supervisor for a food manufacturer who had been transferred to Charlotte from Portsmouth four years earlier. In the Tidewater region, with its population of nearly six hundred thousand, Flint had seen the power of Christian television and radio. He told his friends in Charlotte, "I want you all to agree we're going to bring Christian television and radio to this city." (13)

In less than two years the Christian television station was a reality and Jim and Tammy Bakker, veterans of CBN, moved from California to begin their climb to religious stardom. By 1987, Bakker "had a position of prominence in the charismatic-Christian world. His ministry claimed six hundred thousand supporters and reported revenues of more than $120 million in a year." (14) Today, Jim Bakker is in federal prison for misuse of PTL funds and his wife Tammy has moved what remains of their ministry to Orlando. The PTL Network was purchased by another minister from California, who is also attempting to reopen Bakker's half-finished Christian amusement park, Heritage USA, despite significant financial problems of his own.

In Charlotte, religious issues are a frequent topic of conversation and debate. Many local churches are conservative and do not easily accept new and more liberal interpretations of church dogma. Late last year, the 1,300 member Forest Hill Presbyterian
Church made front page news when it debated if it would remain a member of the 2.9 million-member mainline church or move to the 40,000 Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The newspaper article began "In a battle over the wrenching issues of abortion, homosexuality and biblical inerrancy, congregations scattered across the South are debating whether to leave the tradition-rich Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." Buried near the end of the story was a second issue of perhaps equal importance. "The church owes $4.5 million on the 25-acre Park Road campus that once housed Jim Bakker's PTL television ministry. The church paid $6 million to buy and renovate the complex and moved there in 1987, after explosive growth..."

Money, and raising more money, are often very important issues for Charlotte's largest churches. Telling his congregation that he was not accepting an offer from an Alabama church with 8,600 members, Joe Brown, pastor of Charlotte's third largest church, said, "Realizing it is the destiny of Hickory Grove Baptist Church to take the city of Charlotte for Jesus Christ...I hereby recommit myself to be your pastor." The final paragraph of the story also mentioned that "The congregation closed last week on a $3.8 million permanent loan to pay off the remaining cost of its $10 million sanctuary and education building."
Competition for church members and their weekly tithes has created an environment where, according to The Charlotte Observer's religious writer, Kathleen McClain, "...churches are rushing to capitalize on Mecklenburg's explosive growth. Denominational planners are targeting demographic hot spots, snapping up prime suburban property and starting new congregations." McClain goes on to explain that "Like other marketers eager to meet changing needs, today's church planners come armed with sophisticated population studies and packaged marketing campaigns. They're racing to reach a generation of church "consumers" willing to shop for what they want."

Included in the article were the comments of the Claude Kayler, a 28-year-old graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Duke Divinity School. A United Methodist minister, Kayler helped found a new church in the suburbs of Charlotte. He told McClain that they "used a telephone marketing package from California, which is what the vinyl-siding people do. The big difference is that it's very low-pressure, and we always ask first if they are involved at another church. We don't want to be stealing sheep."

According to McClain, this market research and planning approach is being used by Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans and Episcopalians. She noted only one exception, "'Southern Baptists usually start with people, then search for property,' says Dale Harlan, church extension director for the Mecklenburg Baptist Association." (17)
Perhaps the most thoughtful examination of religion in the area took place in the early 1970s, when a diverse group of citizens joined together and drafted a series of essays on community life and activities, publishing their findings under the name Dimensions for Charlotte Mecklenburg. This group recognized that "It is evident that we live in a community consisting largely of persons who profess an allegiance to God. While that professed ultimate commitment (what we say) is not always validated with our lives (what we do), it does seem to provide us with a common base from which certain values emerge." (18)

The group listed four basic values that they believed were shared by local religious groups and helped to provide a foundation for the community. These included: working for the "enhancement of man" and the worth of the individual; recognition that in order to be fully human, men and women must live in a meaningful relationship with others; understanding that the "indispensable virtue of integrity...should be cultivated and pursued even more diligently than 'success' or 'security;'" and commitment to "equal justice for all." (19)

Unlike many citizens groups, these individuals did not stop with the good, they were also willing to explore the less positive aspects of their community.
Our findings and feelings are filled with ambiguities and ambivalences for there is often conflicting evidence regarding just how well we "practice what we preach." Obviously, there is much positive evidence that our community does embrace to a large degree many of the above mentioned values in its corporate life. Because of that, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is a good place to live, a community of which we are all justly proud. Most of our residents would rather live here than anywhere else. It is tempting to accentuate just those positive factors and indulge in such a self-congratulating corporate ego-massage. But little will be gained. (20)

The group then offered what they termed an "overlay of actual religious values," (21) addressing each of the points previously identified as attributes. Perhaps the most important section of their analysis, at least with respect to this study, can be found in their evaluation of Charlotte in terms of "what we do," rather than "what we say."

Yet, there are also many negative factors which jeopardize our value of community, some of which we would underline in the following clusters: (a) While order (as opposed to anarchy) is essential for a community, we sometimes maintain it at the expense of justice and the protection of individual rights, which are equally essential. While "clinched fist" violence and lawlessness are abhorred by all, the "velvet glove" violence and lawlessness of the wealthy and powerful are too often accepted as "the way things are." (b) Stable family life structures are being fractured as an increasing number of marriages end in divorce. Increasing transience of residents is limiting the establishment of deep community roots and involvement. More tragically, instead of establishing relationships with persons from a wide variety of racial, social, economic, and geographical circles and divergent life styles, we have a tendency to limit our relationships to those who are like us. (c) Community conflict too often polarizes us and alienates us one from another. Instead of genuine reconciliation of persons in spite of differences, we have a tendency to reject the person whose ideas or convictions or behavior we oppose. Our capacity to listen to one another and to grow in honest conflict is too
often destroyed by the walls of resentment, misunderstanding, indifference, and hostility we build between us. (d) Many of our residents lack any genuine sense of stewardship for civic responsibility... It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit the most able leadership to run for public office; some are simply no longer willing and many are just not able to make the major sacrifices of money and time for such civic involvement. We thereby produce the dangerous situation in which many qualified persons are discouraged from running for public office. (e) And, finally, while our concern for the environment has increased in recent years, it is often subordinate to our concern for economic growth and personal convenience. (22)

Although nearly two decades have transpired since this analysis was prepared, very little seems to have changed. Even though the early 1990's are calm in comparison to the 1970's when this was written, I suspect that these issues remain just under the glitzy veneer that the Charlotte business community continues to polish.

Finally, no overview of the Charlotte religious community would be complete without some mention of the issues that concern the most conservative religious groups. Opposition to abortion and gay rights is strong and highly vocal. Anti-alcohol activities and defense of corporal punishment make headlines in the local newspaper regularly. Letters to the editor cite biblical references (believing firmly in its inerrancy) to justify conservative positions on almost every social and political issue. There is a universal distrust for anything associated with the "New Age" movement and an extremely strong belief among fundamentalists that the devil is real, the force of evil in their daily lives.
In September, 1990 a 15-year-old boy committed suicide in a small town outside Charlotte. Two months later, The Charlotte Observer, the state's largest newspaper, told the story in a full page-and-half feature story, complete with a color photograph of the grief stricken mother and stepfather standing beside the boy's grave. The headline read: "Fallen Angel, That demonic music he played. The late-night phone calls, the voices he heard. David Wiseman, 15, was into Satanism. But nobody caught him in time." Included in the article were a list of "warning signals of satanic involvement." The reporter ended the story with a description of how the parents now spend their Sundays.

He and Gail (David's stepfather and natural mother) have never been churchgoing people. But they are now.

Each Sunday morning since David's death, the couple put on their best clothes and climb the steps to a nearby church. They sit close on the hard, wooden pews, reading the Bible and praying for David.

Praying comforts them, especially at night.

"It's hard to go to sleep because you feel like he's here," Billy says. "It's kind of funny, but I just keep saying over and over, "I love you, God. I love you, Jesus." (23)

Only a few weeks before this article was printed, evangelist Jerry Johnson, author of the book The Edge of Evil: The Rise of Satanism in North America, addressed students at all of Mecklenburg County's 11 high schools and seven junior high or middle schools. According to newspaper accounts of the event, all students were required to attend the events where Johnson made no "references to
his religious beliefs during his half-hour talks against drugs, alcohol and sex." He did, to the displeasure of some parents, offer the students free Cokes and pizza if they would come to his religious crusade at the local coliseum. An invitation that carried the blessings of one of the school board's most conservative members. Interestingly, the first four nights of Johnson's five night Charlotte crusade were held at Calvary Church, (25) a church that has, since the departure of Jim Bakker and the PTL Ministry, become Charlotte's most talked about congregation.
In any study of religion or urban growth in Charlotte, Calvary Church is impossible to ignore. It is a giant pink temple, located in the heart of Mecklenburg County's fastest growing suburban quadrant. It is the church everyone talks about, but the local architectural critic said it best, when he wrote:

You don't spend $36 million ($39 million was the final figure) on a building without wanting to make a statement.

You don't build one of the largest churches in America if you want to hide your light under a bushel.

You don't paint it pink if you don't want to be noticed.

Calvary Church has done all these things with its new building in southeast Charlotte. Now that it's open, the question is: What kind of architectural statement has been made?

The Answer: A confusing one that expresses the 3,600-member Church's vast ambitions, but not its highest hopes.

Its architectural problems go deeper than surface glitz.

The building lacks any real connection with history or a central focus to tie together its several parts. Without these, and some sense of religious symbolism, it seems unreal, a piece of Disneyland plopped in the suburbs. (1)

In a community of churches, Calvary stands as one of the most distinctive in the Southeastern United States. According to an
information flyer available to church visitors, Calvary is situated on a 100 acre tract of land. The building is 310,000 square feet and includes a sanctuary seating more than 6,000, a chapel seating 400 and a banquet/meeting room that offers space for more than 1,000 people to have dinner together. Near the entrance to the main sanctuary, the church has its own bookstore and a ticket office, both open throughout the week. They also have a smaller banquet room, a gymnasium, a preschool, two large restaurant-size kitchens, a counseling center and more than 100 classrooms. The church has 13 ministerial staff members and 55 operational staff members.

Calvary's prized possession is the new church organ, said to be the twelfth largest in the world. (2)

Based on church membership, Calvary is the fourth largest church in Charlotte/Mecklenburg. In a compilation prepared by The Business Journal of Charlotte, Calvary had 4,600 members (this includes non-members who attend regularly) and an annual budget of $5 million. By comparison, Charlotte's largest church was listed as the Northside Baptist Church with 6,424 members and an annual budget of $1.8 million. Second place belonged to St. Gabriel Catholic Church with 6,000 members and a budget of $1.7 million. Third place belonged to Hickory Grove Baptist with 5,500 members and a $3 million annual budget. Calvary's major outreach activities were listed as missions, music school, food baskets, the Crisis Pregnancy Center, Child
Evangelical Fellowship and the Charlotte Christian School (the area's second largest Protestant private school, founded in 1950, it currently has 700 students.) (3)

Like many fundamentalist churches, Calvary was born when a group of discontented members left one church to start a new one. In 1939, "Concerned with the liberal theological drift of his church and the denomination, Reverend (Arthur E.) Dillard summarized his concerns in a sermon entitled 'Facing the issue'" and ... stated his commitment to the authority and historical accuracy of the Bible..." (4) According to Calvary's account of this event, "A substantial number of the congregation shared Rev. Dillard's convictions and left with him to begin holding services at Bethune School and later at the Chamber of Commerce Auditorium." (5)

The new church was first named Bible Presbyterian and then Calvary Presbyterian Church (Independent). In the early 1970s, the church began positioning itself as "a community church with a strong Presbyterian heritage." (6) Today, the Presbyterian reference has disappeared and, according to the church fact sheet, "Calvary is an inter-denominational church whose members believe in salvation through Jesus Christ alone, in the inerrancy of the Scriptures, and in living a life of commitment to our Lord with the inspired Scriptures being a guide in faith and in life." (7)
The current Highway 51 site is Calvary's third permanent location. Each new location moved the church further south, away from the center city, following the expansion of the community's white, middle class neighborhoods. According to a church background sheet, written just as they started preparation for their most recent move, Calvary's leadership explained:

Based on extensive studies of Calvary's growth history and of Charlotte's neighborhood population growth projections, the greatest growth potential for the church is in the new location area -- Highway 51 -- the fastest growing area of Mecklenburg County. Without the expansion restraints that Calvary is experiencing at the present location, the new church will provide ample area for a projected 15% growth potential from 1988 to 1990 and a 49% increase from 1990 to 1995. (8)

Calvary's growth projections were backed-up by governmental planners who, in a plan published at approximately the same time as the Calvary document, projected:

In just fifteen years, since 1970, the net population growth in the South (quadrant of the county) has been nearly 50,000 persons -- increasing from 60,819 to 109,169. According to current forecasts, the total population could reach as many as 153,492 persons by the year 2005. If present trends hold, the South will remain Charlotte-Mecklenburg's fastest growing area over the next twenty years. (9)

Calvary Church is located almost dead center in the southern quadrant of the county -- near the junction of Providence Road and Highway 51, site of a major mixed-use development and the county's newest middle and upper middle income residential developments.
However, the growth projected for Calvary at the Highway 51 site has not materialized. This seems odd for a church that had a proven track record for growth in the 1970s and early 1980s. Much of the credit for Calvary's earlier growth belongs to the man who has ministered to the congregation for the past 18 years -- Ross Rhoads.

When Ross Stover Rhoads was approached by Calvary Church in 1973 to become their pastor, he called a meeting with the church officers to outline goals for the church. Together they made a commitment to growth in God's will and divine love. It was then that they decided to sell the church on Fourth Street (their first permanent home), which seated 400 people, and to build a new church on Sardis Road, which would seat 1,700.

In 1973, the average attendance to the Sunday morning service was 300 people. In May of 1974, it spilled over into two services. By Easter of 1978, 950 people were attending Sunday services and in October of that year, attendance rose to 1,300.

By the end of 1986, recorded members numbered 3,613, a little over half of the total congregation of Calvary. When non-members are counted the numbers in Calvary's church family rise to 7,074.

In the last six years, church membership has grown steadily with an overall growth rate of 64%. Attendance has also experienced steady growth, (49% overall), especially during church expansions. For example, in 1982-83, after the completion of the Family Life Center and the parking lot expansion, the growth in attendance rose 12%. (10)

By comparison, when the church presented its most recent financial report, membership remained at 1986 levels. According to the church's current fact sheet, it has 3,500 members and 1,500 non-members who are regular attendees. (11) Combined together, these two groups are not enough to fill the more than 6,000 seats in the sanctuary.
This lack of growth has caused significant financial burden for Calvary. The new facility ultimately cost $39 million, forcing church leaders to sign a $22.4 million financing agreement with NCNB National Bank. The loan costs the church and its members $240,000 a month -- more than the average monthly offerings. According to Kathleen McClain, "Calvary's dream began in March, 1985 when (now bankrupt) Charlotte developer Steve Walsh offered the congregation 100 acres." (12) Since writing this article, McClain says she learned that the property was not an outright gift. It involved financial considerations that have never been fully disclosed. (13)

After taking possession of the land, the "church made plans to sell its $6 million complex at Sardis and Randolph Roads and move into the county's hottest area." As construction dragged, "costs rose from $12 million in early discussions to $28 million in 1987 to $34 million this summer (1989). When dedication ceremonies were finally held, they were conducted in much the same manner as a developer might open a new shopping center -- with balloons, speeches by public officials, free food and on-site tours for those who attended. One local woman told reporters, "I don't believe I would want to join because it's too big. The balconies remind me of the Grand Ole Opry." (14)

Why hasn't the church been able to sustain its growth at the new site, especially considering all those optimistic projections? McClain points to delays in construction. By the time they had
moved into their new facilities, all the major denominations had built churches in the area. "They had plenty of competition by the time they were up and running." (15)

This inability to grow has kept the church on the hot seat to raise funds. In May, 1990 Calvary announced plans to pay off its mortgage within eight years. Rhoads called the effort "probably one of the greatest endeavors of any congregation in the history of the American church." To accomplish the task, church members will "have to raise an extra $2 million a year over current operating expenses and debt service." If they are successful, it will save them $29 million dollars in interest over the life of the loan. (16) When the first annual "Love Gift" was taken, the church raised $1.5 million. (17)

According to Calvary's 1989 financial report, hardships have forced Rhoads to voluntarily cut his salary by 15 percent, to $77,482. "That figure doesn't include such benefits as housing allowance, Rhoads' donated car, expense account, insurance or pension. Such extras can equal or exceed the pastor's base salary." In addition, the church's contributions to missions and evangelism was cut by almost 20 percent, to $352,000. (18)

Leading the special fund-raising effort is one of the most influential lay leaders in the congregations -- John Sykes. McClain
says Sykes is "very much Ross's man." Sykes is "the sole owner of Sykes Enterprises Inc., a multifaceted computer services, engineering and telecommunications firm. Company sales will rise by 60 percent to $55 million this year (1990), with plans to reach the $100 million mark in 1995." (19)

Rhoads told a local business reporter that "John is a catch -- a prize for volunteerism. I count on him heavily." No doubt about it. "Sykes chaired the Committee on 51, which oversaw the church's move from Sardis and Randolph roads to N.C. Highway 51." A Charlotte native, Sykes attended two small colleges in North Carolina before joining the work force. He has spent almost all of his business career in the area, and one prominent Charlotte attorney attributes Sykes success to his working class roots. "John and I were born at the end of the Depression, and we came from families that came through hard times. He remembers where he came from. He still exhibits the traits and personality that got him through those hard times." (20)

One popular rumor in Charlotte concerns why NCNB lent Calvary the more than $20 millions it needed to build the new church. Lots of local folks speculate that it was because the bank required a multi-million dollar life insurance on Rhoads before granting the mortgage. Although this may not be the case, the popularity of the rumor demonstrates the importance of Rhoads to Calvary's success.
When Rhoads became pastor of Calvary, it was his first church. Prior to joining the church, he "had been involved in an evangelism training ministry called 'Church Centered Evangelism' for than 20 years, as well as administering a Christian camping ministry in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania for a number of years." (21) He attended Pennsylvania Military Academy and holds several college degrees. According to one biography:

Dr. Rhoads graduated from the Philadelphia College of Bible and graduated as a philosophy major from Wheaton College. In addition, he has completed the residence requirement for Masters (sic) Degree at Wheaton Graduate School, Wheaton, Illinois. He received his Masters Degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He also received a Masters of Science Degree from the National College of Education in Evanston, Illinois.

On the occasion of the Eightieth Commencement of Greenville College, Greenville, Illinois, he received a Doctor of Divinity Degree. (22)

Rhoads has written several religious books, has a radio program, and offers audio tapes of his sermons for sale in the bookstore. "He appeared for three years on a nationwide television program, Youth On The March, including occasional dramatic roles. He was associated with the late Dr. Charles E. Fuller and the featured speaker on the worldwide "Old Fashioned Revival Hour" broadcast." (23)

Today, Rhoads directs a church that offers a full range of social and religious programs. A quick glance at one weekly bulletin makes it clear that Calvary is far more than just a Sunday morning
service and a Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Calvary offers activities every day of the week, events that target most age levels and many areas of interest. There are family dinners, teenage beach parties, marriage enrichment seminars, vocal concerts, organ recitals, luncheons for senior citizens, special speakers for the men in the church, mother-daughter programs and sports teams. All of these are interwoven into an ongoing program of Bible study for all ages and many special interest groups.

Nationally known individuals often participate in Calvary's programs. Since the new facilities opened, the list of guest speakers, dignitaries and performers has included Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole, ministers Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard and Franklin Graham (Billy Graham's son), and performers such as singer Sheila Walsh (Pat Robertson's co-host on the "700 Club" television program). Special programs for the businessmen of the church have included Adolph Coors IV talking about "his life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ." (24)

Another unusual program occurred when Mack Vines, a former Charlotte police chief and Calvary Church member, returned to tell members about how he was fired from his position as Dallas police chief after he was accused of lying to a city investigating board. Later acquitted of the charge, his presentation to Calvary made the local news. (25)
The church advertises its programs and often charges for these events. As McClain commented, "Calvary was the only church in Charlotte to charge money for its Christmas concert." (26)

Calvary remains a topic of conversation and interest in the Charlotte community. Individuals outside the church often focus on the glitz, the commercialization and the need to make the mortgage payment. Individual members of the church talk about their feelings of comfort and safety at Calvary Church. They often point to the many activities that allow church members to attach themselves and their families to small groups within the church, helping to overcome the large impersonal aspect of membership in Calvary Church.
Observations and Conclusions

Calvary Church offers an excellent point of contemporary focus for studying the impact of urbanization upon a community and the role that the church plays in responding to change.

Charlotte is one of the leading cities of the Sunbelt. Like 17th Century Salem, it is driven by a business elite seeking to build its own power, wealth and influence. Opposition from traditional groups such as organized labor, academia and minorities is minimal. Like Salem and the Vendee, Charlotte has an exceptionally strong and influential religious foundation that supports the efforts of the business elite and enforces the traditional values of the community.

Unlike other Sunbelt cities, such as Tampa or Phoenix which have attracted a far more diverse assortment of new residents, much of Charlotte's growth has come from like-minded individuals. After more than thirty years of rapid growth, Charlotte has only limited religious and ethnic diversity. Charlotte is extraordinarily homogeneous. This lack of diversity allows the long-established
power structure of the community to maintain control. For the student of urbanization, Charlotte provides an excellent case study. Change is occurring more slowly in Charlotte and it offers more time for a thoughtful examination of the community forces that are brought forward in defense of the status quo.

In this master's essay, I have used Calvary Church as a focal point. It has been a part of Charlotte for more than fifty years. It has grown with the city, moving South with the expansion of the city's more affluent suburbs. Although it has adapted basic business techniques, it has steadfastly clung to conservative religious beliefs, building a protective environment that helps to shelter its members from the forces of urbanization.

Using the model I offered in the introduction -- from my earlier comparison of Salem and the Vendee -- there are several observations that I would like to make concerning Charlotte/Mecklenburg and Calvary Church.

1. Central in the response mustered by Salem and the Vendee was a leadership role for the church; leadership in the defense of the status quo. (p. 4)

Clearly, fundamentalist Protestant religions play an important role in solidifying and vocalizing the community's response to the
forces of urbanization. This is true for Calvary, as well as for many congregations within the local religious community.

2. Independence for the local church was an extremely important issue in both Salem and the Vendee. (p. 4)

The independence of local churches has historically been very important in Charlotte: from the early Presbyterian settlers who rebelled against the Church of England; to the members of the Forest Hill Presbyterian Church that broke from the large national church and allied themselves with a much smaller, far more conservative organization; to Calvary's move from mainline Presbyterian, to independent Presbyterian, to interdenominational.

3. Affluent residents of Salem Village, comparable to the bourgeoisie of the Vendee, were well connected to Salem Town and the world beyond. (p. 5)

Charlotte's business leaders see many advantages in building stronger ties with the outside world. This is evident in the tremendous emphasis placed on economic development and the enhancement of a supporting infrastructure. They have demonstrated time and time again that they are willing to accept change, but only when it is to their own economic advantage.
4. Residents of both communities (Salem and the Vendee) felt uneasy, fearful of the changes that were impacting their world. (p. 5)

Many of Charlotte's residents are uncomfortable with change and are frightened by the impact it is having on their lives. They have seen their community grow and change rapidly. Many life-long residents find these changes disconcerting. They are afraid of what the future will bring. Those individuals who have moved to the area, many from rural areas of North Carolina, find change doubly threatening. Individuals within both groups seek the comfort provided by local churches, especially those that promote traditional values. Calvary's own growth record in the 1970s and early 1980s is witness to this, as the church attracted many new members from Mecklenburg's fastest growing suburbs.

Fundamentalist churches like Calvary stress their conservative religious values and offer their members a broad range of secular activities and special events that allow churchgoers to live much of their lives in the safety and security of a small, non-threatening environment. These conservative churches often attempt to isolate themselves and their members, refusing to make concessions to the forces of change.
Charlotte is clearly the site of a bitter battle between the forces of urban and rural North Carolina -- Luebke has called the two groups modernizers and traditionalists. (p. 14) Charlotte may be the modernizer capital, but it is also home to a significant number of traditionalists. Beyond that, in the ring of rural counties that surround Mecklenburg, is some of the strongest support for traditionalist ideals. Based on other studies of urbanization, as the community continues to grow and the voices of diversity increase, the powerful business elite will eventually lose full control of the community; dividing like an amoeba into multiple power groups, competing with each other for control. This will offer traditionalists the opportunity to regroup and mount another push to reestablish their conservative values, as the modernizers feud among themselves.

Like Charlotte, Calvary Church appears to be caught in a similar struggle, although it has approached the conflict from a different direction. Calvary has begun to adopt the same basic strategy as the local modernizer community -- building the necessary infrastructure, aggressively pursuing growth and accepting some change. It has imitated business as it searched for the market with the greatest potential, planned and executed a major expansion, developed new and broader-based services to offer its members, and employed a variety
of high profile techniques to market itself to the community. It has, however, underestimated the competition and, as a result, failed to maintain the same rate of growth it achieved in the past. This has presented major financial problems for the congregation and fueled internal conflict. Many long-time church members did not make the move to the new site. The size of the church and its mortgage makes many prospective members apprehensive. Funding for outreach programs has been significantly reduced. As a result, the church has taken an inward focus, isolated itself from its critics and recommitted itself to its traditionalist values.

Finally, one point of comparison that I find especially fascinating -- the intense fear, among fundamentalist Protestants in Charlotte and the surrounding rural Piedmont, of Satanism, witchcraft and the devil. The similarities to the witch trials of 17th Century Salem Village are unmistakable. One cannot help but recall the comment of Boyer and Nissenbaum as they discussed a sermon on witchcraft by Cotton Mather. "...the social order was being profoundly shaken by a superhuman force which had lured all too many into active complicity with it. We have chosen to construe this force as emergent mercantile capitalism. Mather, and Salem Village, called it witchcraft." (p. 7)

Unlike Salem and the Vendee, which can be studied from an historical perspective, Charlotte/Mecklenburg and Calvary Church are
still caught in the midst of massive change. This master's essay can offer only a single snapshot, focused on one moment in time. However, after developing this one photograph and comparing it with similar photographs from Salem and the Vendee, I am even more thoroughly convinced that organized religion has and continues to play a central role in rallying the community in defense of the status quo, in building walls to protect a community from the forces of change, and in leading the counterrevolution against the revolution of urban change.
NOTES

Introduction


5. Tilly, page 227.


Charlotte


10. Morrill, Leadership lecture.


The Religious Community


20. Ibid, p. 34.

21. Ibid, p. 34.

22 Ibid, p. 36.


Calvary Church


2. "Did You Know...," information sheet published by Calvary Church, approximately 1990.


8. "Our Growth."


10. "Our Growth."

11. "Did You Know."


14. McClain, "We Have Been Guided by God."

15. McClain, telephone interview.


18. McClain, "Church Plans Loan Payoff."


20. Ibid.


23. Ibid.


26. McClain, telephone interview.

Conclusions

1. All citations in this section are to earlier parts of this master's essay. Material quoted from other sources have been indicated.