

The Politics Of The Righteous: A Religious And Political History Of Conservative Neo-evangelicals In Central Florida

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THE POLITICS OF THE RIGHTEOUS: A RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF
POLITICALLY ACTIVE CONSERVATIVE NEO-EVANGELICALS IN CENTRAL
FLORIDA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

In 1953 a small, seemingly insignificant, church was founded in Winter Park, Florida. By the early 1970s, Calvary Assembly of God, a church that had started with a dirt floor, was declared one of the fastest growing churches in America with membership easily reaching over several thousands.¹ In the late 1970s and 1980s, it became a major religious and political force in central Florida so much so that it had received visits from then presidential hopefuls Pat Robertson and Vice President George Bush. The changes that took place at Calvary Assembly, both politically and religiously, provided a microcosm of the rest of the nation, while at the same time, these changes made Calvary a leader within the charismatic neo-evangelical subculture. The incredible growth of Calvary Assembly is part of a larger narrative on the expansion of neo-evangelicalism, and more specifically, the charismatic movement in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as, the growth of central Florida. As a result of their growth Calvary was able to launch, and participate in, many programs on both the local and national level. Religious orthodoxies seeped into the political and social thought of those at Calvary, which influenced, and helped to explain, how the church became politically active.

Part I examines the growth of Calvary within the context of the growth of Central Florida and the growth of the charismatic movement, This section will include the founding of *Charisma*

¹Stephen Strang, "Calvary Assembly-Fastest Growing Sunday School in the U.S.," *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 30, 1978, 6.

magazine, major national events such as the Jesus Festivals, and the impact of charismatic revivalists. The impact of Calvary on the local community is another part of the story.

Part II addresses the political bloc Calvary produced in central Florida. The church participated in and influenced national rallies such as “Washington for Jesus.” It shared its political views with central Florida through bulletins like *Insight*, which addressed moral issues like pornography, homosexuality, education and abortion. Calvary also used events like Freedom Celebration, and articles in *Charisma* to promote its views on American freedom. As a result local and national politicians and political groups recognized Calvary Assembly as a political powerhouse. Another part of the story is that Calvary and central Florida represented the local side of a national story on evangelicalism and national politics.

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INTRODUCTION

Evangelicalism

Since its founding America has had a unique merging of Christianity, culture, and politics. However, over the last fifty years this role has changed dramatically as evangelicals reentered the world of conservative politics. In particular American evangelicals have experienced a growth in recognition among mainstream Americans. Many confuse fundamentalist Christians and evangelical Christians although they are two distinct groups. When referring to American evangelicals it is important to define what “evangelical” means.

Evangelicalism is not like other Christian “isms” such as Catholicism or Pentecostalism because it does not have many well-defined boundaries. “All discussions of evangelicalism, therefore, are always both descriptions of the way things really are as well as efforts within our own minds to provide some order for a multifaceted, complex set of impulses and organizations.”² One of the best-known definitions of evangelicalism centers on conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. These four elements were part of a “quadrilateral” that created the foundation for evangelicalism.³ In other words evangelicalism is centered on actively

²Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 3.

³David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, New Ed (New York: Routledge, 1989); Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 26. The historian of British evangelicalism, David Bebbington, created the above definition of evangelicalism. While many similarities exist between

transforming the lives of others using the teachings of the Bible and stressing the importance of Christ's crucifixion. "Evangelicalism,' however, does not refer simply to a broad grouping of Christians who happen to believe some of the same doctrines; it can also mean a self-conscious interdenominational movement, with leaders, publications and institutions with which people from many subgroups identify."⁴ The question must be asked how does fundamentalism differ from that of evangelicalism?

Richard Niebuhr provides a simple explanation of the difference between evangelicals and fundamentalists. Fundamentalists seem to hold the view "Christ against culture" while evangelicals hold the view of "Christ the transformer of culture." His understanding of these two groups influenced the way in which the next generation of scholars understands these differences.⁵ George Marsden offers more detail on fundamentalism by describing it as the "militant" side of religious conservatives.⁶ They gained widespread attention in the 1920s, but within a few years retreated from participating in mainstream society to focus on themselves until the 1950s when neo-evangelical voices such as Billy Graham and Harold John Ockenga advocated for a change in perspective.

It is important to understand how an evangelical Christian sees their faith because it is through that lens that the motivations for their activism (political or otherwise) becomes clear.

evangelicals in Britain and American evangelicals it must be noted that differences exist as well, and that this definition is meant to be broad in nature.

⁴George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 5. Marsden, one of the most prolific historians of evangelicalism in North America, adds a fifth element to Bebbington's quadrilateral—the real historical character of God's saving work recorded in scripture.

⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 45–82.

⁶Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 3.

“American evangelicalism is a tradition saturated in narratives of personal experience, testimonies that echo biblical stories of conversion and rebirth, recounting events that have irrevocably changed one’s life.”⁷ This idea of a transformative experience bleeds through the religious experience of neo-evangelicalism and is seen the desire to change society through the political process.

Neo-Evangelicalism

Mid-to-late twentieth century evangelical Christianity, known as neo-evangelicalism⁸, was a diverse and complex movement. After the Scopes trial on evolution in the late 1920s fundamentalists retreated from mainstream culture and focused inward. They formed their own networks such as bible training institutes and independent churches. Fundamentalists sought to improve themselves and not engage with the larger society.⁹ Beginning in the 1950s neo-evangelicals such as Billy Graham adopted a new mindset. Fueled by anti-communism and fear over the perceived moral decay of America, neo-evangelicals used revivals, and other forms of evangelization, to transform the religious experience for Americans. This perceived moral decay was brought on by the violation of evangelical trust by the government and the larger American

⁷R. Marie Griffith, *God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 16. Although Griffith’s work focuses on women she provides insight into the charismatic experience that proved to be helpful in providing context.

⁸Neo-evangelicalism is also known as New Evangelicalism. Many historians do not delineate between neo-evangelicalism and evangelicalism in their work. In the case of this thesis the term neo-evangelicalism will be used to add more clarity surrounding the post-WWII era; however, the term evangelical is used as a general descriptor most often referring to neo-evangelicalism.

⁹ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.)

society. One of these violations included the de-stigmatization of abortion connected to changes in sexual mores, and the negative influence of mass media. The encroaching secular society threatened the sanctity of the evangelical community.

By the 1970s the Supreme Court rulings banning school prayer (1962), legalizing abortion (1973), and debates on tax exemption caused neo-evangelicals to mobilize as a political force.¹⁰ Neo-evangelicalism, to put it succinctly, was a movement away from the fundamentalist's mentality of being separate and aloof from secular culture to a mentality, while still being against secular culture, that chose to try and transform it instead of merely abstaining and distaining secular culture.

There is a tendency among historians to interpret this subject as a homogenous monolith—a movement characterized as just another extremist religious group in America.¹¹ However, neo-evangelicalism is fragmented by political, cultural, and theological intricacies that leave many outsiders perplexed. The rise of neo-evangelical conservatism in the 1970s caught

¹⁰“Engel V. Vitale - 370 U.S. 421 (1962),” *Justia US Supreme Court Center*, accessed March 18, 2013, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/370/421/case.html>; “Roe V. Wade - 410 U.S. 113 (1973),” *Justia US Supreme Court Center*, accessed March 18, 2013, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/410/113/case.html>; “United States V. Christian Echoes Ministry, Inc. - 404 U.S. 561 (1972),” *Justia US Supreme Court Center*, accessed March 18, 2013, <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/404/561/>; “Diffenderfer V. Central Baptist Church - 404 U.S. 412 (1972),” *Justia US Supreme Court Center*, accessed March 18, 2013, <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/404/412/>; “Bob Jones Univ. V. United States - 461 U.S. 574 (1983),” *Justia US Supreme Court Center*, accessed March 18, 2013, <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/461/574/case.html>; Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God*.

¹¹ Daniel, Bell, *The Radical Right: The New American Right*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963.) Bell and other scholars write on the radicalism of American conservatism that they say was dominated by religious extremism. This work is an example of how neo-evangelicalism was marginalized as an extremist faction of the New Right. Sara, Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*, (Boston: Black Rose Books Ltd., 1990.) Diamond offers some insight on the Religious Right's motivations in domestic and foreign policy; however her work is mostly filled with fears about the true intentions of religious extremists. Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The New Right and the Politics of Resentment*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.) Crawford does a great job at exploring the growth of cultural conservatism, but he minimizes the role of religious conservatives in this transformation.

many journalists and scholars by surprise. When then presidential hopeful Jimmy Carter announced to the world that he was “born-again” it left those unfamiliar with the term confused about its significance.¹² Newsweek magazine declared, in the words of famous pollster George Gallup Jr., that 1976 was the Year of the Evangelical—their cover story stated,

In two weeks, Jimmy Carter, the best-known Baptist deacon in American, may be elected President of the United States. Even if he loses, Carter's dramatic capture of the Presidential nomination has already focused national attention on the most significant - and overlooked - religious phenomenon of the '70s: the emergency of evangelical Christianity into a position of respect and power.¹³

Many scholarly works dedicated to the rise of religious conservatism have been published since then. Historians have debated the political transformation of southern neo-evangelicals from populist Democrats to conservative Republicans. Scholars have written on the power of grass-roots movements in the neo-evangelical subculture, and how this power was used to change domestic policy. Even the business practices of neo-evangelicals have been explored.¹⁴ Scholarship analyzing the Religious Right has expanded dramatically. Evangelicalism has been

¹²Matthew Avery Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents*, First Edition (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012), 19.; M.D. Hammond, 2009, “Twice Born, Once Elected: The Making of the Religious Right During the Carter Administration.” PhD, University of Arkansas. Hammond explores the significance of evangelical participation in politics starting with the election of Jimmy Carter.

¹³Kenneth L. Woodward, John Barnes, and Laurie Lisle, “Born Again!,” *Newsweek*, October 25, 1976, 1.

¹⁴ A few examples of this includes: Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.) Dochuk is one of the latest historians to write on the grass-roots movements that contributed to the rise of evangelicalism. John G. Turner, *Bill Bright & Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2008). Turner examined neo-evangelicalism in a unique way by displaying how evangelicals can transform the culture through para-church organizations like Bright's—which indirectly influence evangelical political stances. Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.) Moreton is one of the only historians to explore the business practices of evangelicals. Eileen Luhr, *Witnessing Suburbia: Conservatives and Christian Youth Culture*, (Los Angeles: University of California, 2009) Luhr has dedicated a whole book to exploring the evangelical youth subculture in America.

portrayed in popular culture and in academia with much more familiarity than it was in the 1970s; however, increased media coverage and scholarship demonstrated that important elements of the American evangelical subculture have not yet been explored.

Pentecostal Movement

Pentecostals, since their budding movement in the late 19th century, have been on the margins of society, and in many ways, have been marginalized in their own evangelical circles for being too radical in their faith.¹⁵ “These spiritual adventurers went by a variety of names—including premillennialists, holiness folk and, from the lips of outsiders, holy rollers. But we might call them all radical evangelicals, for they commonly insisted that the only true gospel was the ‘four-fold’ gospel of personal salvation, Holy Ghost baptism, divine healing, and the Lord’s soon return.”¹⁶ These four axioms informed the worldview of Pentecostals and therefore deserve more attention before proceeding.

Personal salvation was only the starting point for Pentecostals. It was however, an essential part of the Christian story, which evangelicals have embraced since the Great Awakening, if not before, when it was known as the new birth. What delineates a Pentecostal from an evangelical is that after one accepts Christ as savior, one must be baptized in the Holy Spirit. It was the idea of the intimate connection with the Holy Spirit that set Pentecostals apart

¹⁵Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God*, 93–94. Other evangelicals and fundamentalists disagree with the inclusion of Pentecostals during the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1943. Harold John Ockenga, one of the founders of the NAE and leaders in the neo-evangelical movement felt that Pentecostals could change from an isolationist mentality to one of cooperation. Interestingly enough, even the general secretary of the Assemblies of God, J. Roswell Flower had reservations about this course of action was wise, 94–95.

¹⁶Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), Kindle edition, 73.

from evangelicals concerning notions of authority, power, race, and gender, especially in the South. The third member of the Trinity empowered the traditionally marginalized, and the idea was powerful enough to transform religion in the Jim Crow south.¹⁷ The doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit can be traced from three different historical/theological movements.

In the mid-1700s John Wesley preached that the new birth was a starting point for Christians, but that sanctification of the sinner was a lifelong process. By the mid-nineteenth century the Wesleyan tradition in America came to regard sanctification as less of a process and more of a specific moment in time known as the Second Blessing. This moment in the Christian walk allowed the believer to rise above the power of sin in their life. Another stream that influenced early Pentecostal thought on the baptism of the Holy Spirit can be found in Charles G. Finney and other Reformed thinkers after the Civil War. Much like the Wesleyan tradition, Finney's followers believed in a definable moment after the new birth that helped believers overcome sin, but they went further to say that this moment was part of a continual process throughout the Christian life. The third and final stream was out of the higher life movement in Keswick, England. Leaders of this movement taught that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the starting point in the Christian journey that consisted of continual experiences that equipped Christians for a life of service. To put it succinctly, "But where holiness Wesleyans spoke of purity, Oberlin perfectionists and Keswick higher life advocates more often spoke of power.

¹⁷ Randall J. Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Stephens provided a different perspective on Pentecostalism in that he claimed Pentecostal transformation of the south was a part of northern revivals instead of solely from the west.

Grass-roots believers typically blurred those lines and talked about purity and power in a single breath."¹⁸ The baptism of the Holy Spirit led to the Pentecostal tenet of divine healing.

Pentecostals felt that since divine healing, and other spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, took place in the first century both during and after a believer was baptized in the Holy Spirit, then there was no reason why these acts should not still be experienced. As dispensationalism, or the Second Coming of Christ, gained wide spread acceptance these evidences (especially speaking in tongues) became a requirement for those being filled with the Holy Spirit. Biblical prophecy surrounding the End Times was another important tenet to Pentecostals.

Relying heavily on the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelations found in the Bible many Pentecostals had an almost hopeful glee in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ. The Second Coming consisted of varying definitions surrounding different dispensations in human history and how it related to God's intervening in the world. For the purpose of this work dispensationalism was defined as "God's final in-breaking upon human history," centered on, "... literalism in which great care is taken to arrange passages of Scripture from throughout the whole Bible...to establish biblical truths, especially truths concerning the end of the world."¹⁹ The Second Coming, as it related to the life and mind of the American evangelical, particularly Pentecostals, cannot be overstated. It was this worldview that painted their retreat from mainstream American culture. "Evangelicals might have been losing their once-dominant role in

¹⁸Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 93–95; John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues*, Anniversary (Ada, MI: Chosen Books, 1964).

¹⁹Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 119.

American society, but because they studied their Bible, they knew where history was headed; because they ‘laid there all on the altar of sacrifice,’ they were protected from tumults of the day.”²⁰ It is important to realize that dispensationalism did not disappear as accepted orthodoxy when neo-evangelicals entered the American political scene and therefore must be kept in mind when analyzing their response to political agendas.

Well-known evangelical, Hal Lindsey, committed historicism when using dispensationalism to describe current political events as fulfillment of biblical prophecy. His book, *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, was the bestselling book in the 1970s that offered a literal interpretation of current events such as the Cold War and the formation of the European Economic Community. Lindsey feared that the European Economic Community would lead to the formation of a world controlled by one governing body, and a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. His fear was amplified with the founding of the European Union.²¹ Lindsey’s work was most successful, but certainly not one of a kind. Evangelical emergence into the world of mass media brought ways of disseminating information of biblical prophecy of the End Times through programs on Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and Paul Crouch’s Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). TV shows (*Back to the Bible Hour*), books (*Destined for the Throne* and *Armageddon Oil*), bumper stickers (“Warning: If The Rapture Occurs, This Car Will Be Driverless), movies (*Thief in the Night*), wrist watches (“One Hour Nearer to The Lord’s Return”), magazines (*End-Times News Digest*, *Bible Prophecy News*, *Omega Letter*, and *Rapture Alert Newsletter*) and even children’s books (*Book of the New Testament for Children*) on the

²⁰Ibid., 121.

²¹Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

End Times flooded the evangelical market in the 1970s and 1980s offered historians a point of reference to see how pervasive dispensationalism was in the evangelical subculture.²² These, theological intricacies and orthodoxies of the Pentecostal movement, including, but not limited to, dispensationalism informed their worldview and political stance.²³

The doctrine of the Second Coming ultimately begged the question of why neo-evangelicals became politically active when the world could end at any moment. Harold John Ockenga, the famous Boston preacher, and first president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), responded to this predicament by concluding that evangelicals should engage society as if Christ would not return soon, but should live as if he could return any minute. This perspective allowed for evangelicals to be flexible when interpreting their political wins and losses. If they lost it meant that Christ was coming back soon, but if they had a political win it meant that they were blessed by God in their righteous victory.²⁴ Neo-evangelicals knew without a doubt that they were right, and they were going to use the American political system to prove it.

²²Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), Kindle Edition, 145–147; Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne: How Spiritual Warfare Prepares the Bride of Christ for Her Eternal Destiny* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2005); John F. Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis: What the Bible Says About the Future of the Middle East and the End of Western Civilization*, Revised (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1991); Donald W. Thompson, *A Thief in the Night [VHS]* (Mark IV Pictures Video, 1986); Julianne Booth, *BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR CHILDREN* (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1981).

²³For more information of dispensationalism and current events see Angela M. Lahr, *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007); Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

²⁴Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 18.

Religious Right

The Religious Right, much like dispensationalism, or evangelicalism, for that matter, meant different things depending on who was asked. In light of the differing understandings it becomes necessary to define what this term means in this work. The Religious Right is often used to encompass politically active conservative Christians in America, but the term is broader than that. Technically the term should be used to describe anyone who had a religious faith that influenced their conservative political activism. A more appropriate term would be the Christian Right, but even that term assumes too much because not all Christians in America are evangelical, however, it is assumed, by many, that those in the Religious Right are evangelical in their belief. Other problems exist with the terminology used as well.

By labeling something as Religious Right it could refer to formal political organizations like the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, or Focus on the Family. However, Religious Right could also be populist movements formed by local churches over a variety of issues that often get overlooked by historians. As noted, in the section on neo-evangelicalism, many historians saw evangelicals as a marginalized voice that occasionally was loud enough to be heard; however, more recent scholarship pointed to the understanding that evangelicals had no desire to participate in the political game from the sidelines. “As power brokers and rank-and-file citizens, mediators and activists, they were invested in a much larger project to create a moral geography—a Sunbelt landscape attuned to all their scripture truths about self, community, government, money, and society.”²⁵ The Religious Right was more than a confluence of factors

²⁵Dochuk, xxii.

by big name individuals like Falwell and Robertson speaking on the “evils” of abortion and homosexuality. Political activism of evangelicals in post-WWII America was about creating and sustaining sanctity of local community and shaping the moral geography of the nation.²⁶ Calvary Assembly will be used to engage the theological life of the evangelical/Pentecostal in central Florida as to better understand the political activism present in the 1970s and 1980s. The theological and political changes at Calvary will then be compared to their national counterparts in order to show how central Florida became a microcosm for the neo-evangelical movement.

²⁶Ibid., xx–xxii; Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 1–26. Sutton provided an succinct overview of the rise of the Religious Right in the 1970s and 1980s by examining event from the start of the 20th century; William Martin, *With God On Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Random House Digital, Inc., 2005), 1–23. Martin traced the origins of the Religious Right back to the Puritans. He looked at how religious revivals, the Revolution, and other American wars transformed religious thinking that aided in the formation of the Religious Right. All three scholars wrote on the complexities of the Religious Right have a long and rich history.

PART I-AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

The Church with a Dirt Floor

In 1953 a man name John Hall founded Orlando Gospel Tabernacle on a one-fourth of an acre plot off of Miller Avenue in Winter Park Florida.²⁷ The church had a congregation of thirty-five people, and the building in which they met had a dirt floor that needed to be raked after every service to keep some semblance of cleanliness.²⁸ In 1961 when John Hall left the church and Dale Zink became the pastor the congregation totaled around 125. Rev. Zink renamed the church to Calvary Assembly of God. During his pastorate Zink invited revivalist Eddie Barg to hold a 13-week revival. As a result of this revival, church attendance grew to 275, and a new building was constructed that could seat 500.

In 1966 Dale Zink left Calvary to pastor a church in Jacksonville, Florida, and Eddie Barg became the pastor. All three men, according to Dennis Shear a former leader at Calvary familiar with its history, were “Assemblies of God—traditional, old school thinkers.” Eddie Barg had a lot of energy and the congregants were connected to his “fire and brimstone” preaching style after the 13-week revival that he led.²⁹

²⁷Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*, mp3 (Winter Park, FL: Calvary Assembly, 2012).

²⁸“Florida Church Dedicates Site for 5,000-seat Sanctuary,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 13, 1985, http://ifphc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=research.showPeriodicalDetails&ArticleGUID=66a84c7d-ef9b-4974-95e3-98d501099933&PeriodicalsToSearch=1%2C8%2C12%2C11%2C13%2C10&FullTextIndex_SearchType=all&numberOfRowsToReturn=25&SortedBy=Title&search_Title=calvary%20assembly%20of%20God%20&search_MonthFrom=1&search_DayFrom=1&search_YearFrom=1965&search_MonthTo=12&search_DayTo=31&search_YearTo=1995&search_referrer=search.submitPeriodicalAdvancedSearch.

²⁹Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

Under Barg, Calvary became recognized in central Florida for its music. When Barg became pastor he formed a traveling choir of 40 people known as the Calvary Choir. The choir was known not only for its musical talent, but it also represented the fundamentalist mentality by being very legalistic. The women did not wear any makeup or powder and men could not wear shaving lotion. They did not participate in any “worldly” amusements such as bowling.³⁰ The choir represented Calvary to central Florida through live and radio performances. By 1970 Calvary was 17 years old, successful in numbers, with a congregation of 270, but still insular and fundamentalist. However, in 1970, a series of events came together that would make Calvary the main character in narrative on the rise of the Religious Right in central Florida.

Married to the Mouse³¹—Walt Disney and the Growth of Orlando

By the 1950s Orlando was on the verge of transforming from a small city, which many passed through on the way to more prestigious destinations like Tampa and Daytona Beach, to a thriving destination of its own. During 1940s population in Orange County increased from 70,000 to 114,000 and by 1960 the population had tripled to 263,000.³² Those numbers reflect residency; the tourist count is much higher. In 1933 about a million tourists came to Florida. In 1940 the tourist count was 2.8 million, increasing rapidly to 5 million in 1950, 20 million in 1980, and 40 million in 1990.³³ Many who visited central Florida ended up staying there.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Professor Richard E. Foglesong, *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003). The subheading was borrowed from Foglesong’s work.

³²Joy Wallace Dickinson, *Orlando, City of Dreams* (Mount Pleasant, NC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 135.

³³Michael Gannon, ed., *The New History of Florida* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2012), 436–437.

The growth was due to several factors. Retirees, thanks to the New Deal, now had an income that they took with them into retirement. Florida looked enticing with its balmy breezes and relaxing persona. The nation's newly revamped road system allowed for a greater ease of travel. "It was time to roll down the top on the convertible—maybe an aqua one with big fins in the 1950s. It was time to take to the highway and have some fun. Orlando was ready and waiting."³⁴ Many of those vacationing decided to stay. The construction industry boomed trying to keep up with the influx of residents. "The tin-can tourists of the 1920s and 1930s, with travel-trailers hitched behind their cars, had a postwar counterpart: the mobile home retirement village. They were fast, easy, and cheap, although rarely mobile."³⁵ Retirement was not the only element changing the landscape of central Florida.

By the 1960s central Florida was center stage for the coming Space Revolution. Florida's landscape and weather provided the perfect testing ground for the space age. The government constructed a missile testing facility at Cape Canaveral and Lockheed Martin, the main suppliers of the government's missiles, built a manufacturing facility near Orlando. The Russians launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth, on October 4th, 1957, the same day *Leave it to Beaver* premiered. Journalist Joy Wallace Dickinson commented,

It was an appropriate juxtaposition for the times: in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Americans and Orlandoans experienced a sometimes surreal blend of the serious and the wonderfully silly, the scary and the comforting, the familiar and the unknown. Sputnik certainly had its frightening aspects. With the launch of the 'first earth satellite ever put in

³⁴Dickinson, *Orlando, City of Dreams*, 135.

³⁵Gannon, *The New History of Florida*, 437.

globe-girdling orbit under man's controls, the Soviet Union claimed a victory over the United States,' the *Sentinel* said. That was serious business in the Cold War days.³⁶

The “surreal blend” was the perfect way to describe the founding of Disney World in Orlando. Central Florida grew, in many ways, due to the defense and space industry, as well as, the longing by tourists to experience the fantasy of the Disney theme parks.

Disney, of course, played a major role in the rise of population and the urban development of Orlando. After the opening of Walt Disney World, the population in Orange County doubled from 344,000 to 846,000. By 1994 Orlando became the fastest growing urban area in the nation with more than one million in population and 17 million coming through Orlando International Airport making it the fastest growing airport in the nation.³⁷ Disney transformed Orlando from a small pass-through city, for tourists and northern transplants en route to Miami and other cities, into one of the top destinations in the world.

When Walt Disney began to buy up land in central Florida it was kept a strict secret. Companies with different names, which were not easily connected to Disney, bought the land because Disney did not want people knowing what was happening. One, if not the only, reason for doing this was to keep land prices down. As a result of the secrecy rumors began to spread among central Florida residents. The “mystery industry” that set the Orlando rumor mill ablaze with stories of buyers ranging from Howard Hughes and Boeing to the Rockefeller family, produced corny jokes about Ford needing the land so they could feed hay to their Mustangs,

³⁶Dickinson, *Orlando, City of Dreams*, 144.

³⁷Foglesong, *Married to the Mouse*, 4-5.

while at the same time cultivated fear of communism.³⁸ Walt Disney's hope to resuscitate a city with his resort ended up remaking the small City Beautiful into one of the fastest growing, politically contested, and diverse cities in the nation. With its founding in 1953, nestled on a small plot of land that hugged the soon-to-be-constructed Interstate 4, Calvary Assembly was poised for the influx of people.

Brother Harthern—We Don't Bowl—We're Holiness People

In May of 1970 a businessman named Alex Clattenburg began to teach a young adults class at Calvary. Clattenburg gained a reputation as a successful real-estate agent through his company, Florida Ranchlands, by selling land to Walt Disney during the animator's acquisition of land for the soon-to-be-famous Walt Disney World Resort. When the pastorate at Calvary became vacant it was Clattenburg that suggested the church consider Roy Harthern to fill the opening. Roy Harthern was the pastor at Cathedral of the Pines, in Belmont, Texas. Before leading that church Harthern also led churches in Jacksonville and West Palm Beach, Florida. He was known for his ability to inspire and his passion to work with young people.³⁹ The church had indeed struggled in the early 70s, but the struggle was not in attendance, but in the tension between fundamentalism and neo-evangelicalism.

Calvary was a church divided when Harthern came to the pastorate. Some members wanted to continue on the path of fundamentalist Pentecostalism while others sought new ways to engage the outside world. Dennis Shear recalls a story that reflects this tension,

³⁸Joy Wallace Dickinson, *Remembering Orlando: Tales from Elvis to Disney* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2006), 108.

³⁹George Clouse, "Harthern's Celebrate Five Years at Calvary," *Calvary News*, July 6, 1975.

I would say that the first two years there [for Harthern] were pretty difficult because you had a divided church and a choir director who ran the church really. And then there was a lady in the Sunday school class that monitored all the social activities of the church—what were the worldly amusements, what the church was doing, whether the pastor's wife wore lipstick, what they did for amusement with their families—and in early 1972 it became apparent that if Roy was going to stay there he would have to confront that head on. That confrontation came in a Sunday school class when Roy was making an announcement to the adult Sunday school class that their young people were going bowling. At that time the dear sister stood up and said, 'Brother Harthern—we don't bowl because we are holiness people.'⁴⁰

As the story goes Harthern told this woman that he was the spiritual leader of the church and she was not to meddle in the lives of the congregation. This, according to Shear, was a turning point for Harthern and Calvary as a whole. Harthern gained the respect of the church and the confidence to do something new.

By 1973 Sunday morning attendance reached around 1,000 people. A number of elements contributed to this growth. First, Calvary had found a gifted speaker with leadership skills in the person of Roy Harthern. Second, Harthern challenged the status quo of fundamentalism at Calvary at the time when neo-evangelicalism was becoming more accepted nationwide. The third factor was the coming of Walt Disney to central Florida, and the growth of Orlando. The fourth element was the continued momentum of the charismatic movement.

Something's Happening Here

In the early 1970s Calvary started to grow rapidly and part of this growth was due to the charismatic movement. Pentecostalism had been on the margins of mainstream religion for much of its existence; however, by the 1960s the charismatic movement brought this marginalized sect of Christianity closer to the center. The movement started within the high church tradition—

⁴⁰Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

Lutheran, Episcopalian, and Roman Catholic congregations experienced what Pentecostals had close to a century prior—the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This nationwide movement was also taking place in central Florida. One example was St. James Cathedral, a Catholic church, in downtown Orlando—their weekly charismatic prayer meetings would have 700-900 people in attendance. Calvary became the natural “feeder” for charismatics, of all backgrounds, in central Florida because the charismatic movement was able to bridge the gap between different denominations. Doctrinal distinctive still existed between these denominations, but it was an unique encounter with the Holy Spirit that had woven these different people together, and doctrines became secondary to the experience.⁴¹ The encounter not only broke down barriers between High Church and Low Church denominations, but it also created emotion filled services.

Beginning the early 1970s Calvary began running creative ads in the *Sentinel Star* and other local newspapers. These well-drawn ads depicted Roy Harthern speaking, trumpets blaring, and people in the services raising their hands up in contemplative worship. The ads also contained phrases such as “I will lift up my hands in Thy name,” or “Be filled with the Spirit...speaking, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”⁴² Calvary’s services, like many Pentecostal/charismatic churches of the time, were filled with emotional highs and lows. Aglow, one of the largest charismatic women’s ministries in the world, had similar services, and ethnographer Marie Griffith described a service she attended below,

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²“Calvary Ads,” 1975, Calvary Assembly of God.

The opening worship service started at seven o'clock and went past midnight. Nearly five hundred women were packed into the large conference hall, creating a drama that seemed to mix the ecstatic rhythms of contemporary charismatic worship with the therapeutic language of popular culture. Belting out lively praise songs to Jesus, the women originally appeared rapturous: many danced up and down the aisles, most waved their arms elatedly, and nearly all intoned the name of Jesus or shouted out their love toward heaven. Two hours later, however, more than half of the same women were sobbing heartbrokenly and seemed racked with agony as the evening speaker called them to focus on the pain in their lives and to pray for healing. Finally, the tears gave way to renewed joy, as participants found themselves miraculously released from their sorrows, many testifying aloud to experiences of restoration.⁴³

Those at Calvary during the 1970s felt that something new was happening there. A feeling existed that the church was on the verge of something great. The church, because of the Holy Spirit, had the power to transform, not only central Florida, but also the entire nation.⁴⁴ This thought also influenced the way in which members of Calvary interpreted the history of the church with one article from the church magazine stating that a “prophecy” was given from God shortly after the church was founded that said “God had selected this place and would do a mighty work through this church.”⁴⁵ Indeed, the construction of Interstate 4 right next to the church can be seen as a blessing. As one journalist for the *Orlando Sentinel* pointed out I-4, by the mid-1980s would be home to several mega churches that had seen tremendous growth since the 1970s.⁴⁶ It was in this context that, in 1975, Steve Strang, writing for the *Orlando Sentinel*,

⁴³Griffith, *God's Daughters*, 3–4.

⁴⁴“Something’s Happening at Calvary Assembly,” *Charisma*, October 1975; Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Debbie Carrey*, mp3 (Winter Park, FL: Calvary Assembly of God, 2010); Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*; Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Gene Pelino*, mp3 (Lake Mary, FL: Good Life Broadcasting, 2010); Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Jack Norman*, mp3 (Winter Park, FL: Calvary Assembly of God, 2010).

⁴⁵“Calvary Assembly’s History: Rich in Faith and Obedience,” *Calvary People*, Spring 1987, 10.

⁴⁶John Gholdston, “Superhighway to salvation: Big churches along I-4,” *Orlando Sentinel*, November 18, 1984, Sunday Edition, sec. A, A-1.

then the *Sentinel Star*, approached the board about starting a magazine with the primary purpose to inform central Florida about the growing charismatic movement. The Calvary board agreed and *Charisma Magazine* was born.

Charisma

By 1975 Calvary had several thousand people attending weekly services or listening to the radio program. The church was also home to a large music ministry led by nationally recognized musician Thurlow Spurr, but there was a desire by those like Steve Strang, who wanted to find more ways to reach people that would not be limited by the walls of a church that was already bursting at the seams.⁴⁷ Although funded by Calvary, *Charisma* was not a low budget church bulletin meant solely for the congregation, it was a “first-class” publication with colorful layouts. They did not want to be like the “boring publications many ‘religious’ journals are” because they wanted to reach a “secular” society in a contemporary way.⁴⁸

Making *Charisma* into a first class publication cost the church much more money than evangelical tracks or church newsletters. When it started its first year, 1975-76, it lost money every month. The church could not support the magazine on its own, and so, advertisements also were included to reduce the cost burden.⁴⁹

The advertisements found in the early years of *Charisma* revealed much about the readership and goals of the magazine. The editor’s introduction of *Charisma* states that the title

⁴⁷Stephen Strang, “Introducing Charisma Magazine,” *Charisma*, August 1975, 4.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

was chosen because charisma originally referred to the Holy Spirit, but it also had been given a secular meaning. The hope for the ministry was to write about people who not only had secular charisma, but also, “are filled with the charisma of Christ.” Each issue was to contain information about charismatic beliefs to those outside the church, and “...articles that teach believers and edify the Body.”⁵⁰ While not mentioned specifically in the introduction of the magazine, Charisma had both religious and *political* motives. This section is dedicated to the religious themes found in the early years of Charisma, including, but not limited to, Pentecostalism, dispensationalism and the history of evangelism; Part II will address the political side of Charisma.

The second issue of *Charisma* in October 1975 was a special issue dedicated to the topic of physical healing. Kathryn Kuhlman was featured on the front cover. Kuhlman was a well-known charismatic faith healer, and the mentor of current faith healer, Benny Hinn. She held revivals around the United States where she was led by the Holy Spirit to perform miracles. “Almost glamorous in a gold-collar white sheath dress with her rust-colored hair, the evangelist would extend her arm skyward, close her eyes and then reveal a healing in progress.”⁵¹ In her article for *Charisma* she discussed the idea of faith being more than belief in what is unseen—it is the understanding that God can heal. “To many people, however, faith is still their own ability to believe a truth, and is merely based on their struggles and their ability to drive away doubt and

⁵⁰Strang, “Introducing Chrisima Magazine,” 4.

⁵¹The New York Times/Gary Settle, “Kathryn Kuhlman, Evangelist And Faith Healer, Dies in Tulsa,” *New York Times*, February 22, 1976, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ucf.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/122835242/abstract/13BC8C8542711C7C923/1?accountid=10003>.

unbelief through a process of continued affirmations.”⁵² Kuhlman wrote that faith is a gift and with faith a believer will be healed by the Great Physician. During their healing services Pentecostals put an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Roy Harthern, in his regular column for *Charisma*, wrote on a number of theological issues. One such topic that appeared in numerous issues of the magazine was the importance of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Harthern described to his readers that being filled and baptized by the Holy Spirit are two different aspects of the same experience. He proceeded to list two paragraphs of Bible verses that supported his argument, which in and of itself displayed the centrality of the bible to the intellectual life evangelicals. Water became a central element when Pentecostals attempted to describe the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In his column Harthern used a person standing below a waterfall to illustrate his point. “As the water comes down upon the person he is baptized and completely immersed in the water. Now, let us imagine the person standing in the water and drinking the water until he is filled.”⁵³ The water symbolized the Holy Spirit covering, and then, filling a believer, which in turns, empowered him/her to perform acts, healing, prophecy, even speaking out against evils in the world that others ignored, that would otherwise seem impossible. Why is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit important to what we are exploring?

In Pentecostal circles it was the Holy Spirit that empowered a believer to do things that they would never otherwise do. This experience made them feel special, unique, or even chosen to perform the will of God. The Holy Spirit transformed an average person into something more

⁵²Kathryn Kuhlman, “Faith Is More Than Belief,” *Charisma*, October 1975, 9.

⁵³Roy Harthern, “The Baptism in the Holy Spirit?,” *Charisma*, January 1978, 8.

because they now had the God of the universe dwelling within them and guiding them. This spiritual experience was often carried into the world of politics. Evangelicals, and more specifically, Pentecostals, believed that God continually spoke his will into the believer. To a neo-evangelical this meant that the Holy Spirit would guide them as reformers of a morally bankrupt society. The believer was now not only aware of God, but they had *experienced* God. This was essential to Pentecostal belief and it was why Harthern ended his column warning, “It is possible to understand intellectually the relationship between being baptized in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit and still not have the *experience*.”⁵⁴ It also enabled them to prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ; as the leading charismatic magazine, *Charisma* also addressed the popularity of the Rapture.

By January of 1980 many evangelicals were discouraged by the outcome of the Carter administration. In 1976 many hoped that the born-again president would have implemented policies that conservative evangelicals saw as morally upright. Instead by the end of the 1970s they had the oil crisis, the Islamic Revolution, and the Iranian hostage crisis. Evangelicals seemly had two choices: the hope in the Lord’s Return, a fundamentalist tradition, or to face the future with the hope of transformation, a neo-evangelical tradition. In the first issue of 1980 *Charisma* addressed both perspectives.

Those who study Christian Eschatology, the study of the end times, have discovered that in addition to the debate on the Second Coming of Christ, many evangelicals study the associated event known as the Rapture. Most evangelicals who focus on the end times agreed that the Second Coming would be accompanied by the destruction of the world, but the conversation

⁵⁴Ibid., 11.

went deeper than that. The “great escape” or the Rapture was described as “a time when Christ will call all believers up to meet him in the air.”⁵⁵ The article in *Charisma* proceeded to go into great detail on the differences between pre-Tribulationists, those who believe the Church will be called up to meet the messiah before destruction of the Earth begins, mid-Tribulationists, in the middle of the destruction, and post-Tribulationist, after the destruction. The arguments for each are surprisingly complex; however, the point here is not to analyze the argument, but rather to analyze the time of the publication along with another article published in the same issue.

In 1977 a group of evangelicals convened together in Atlanta, Georgia to discuss how Christians could do a better job at preparing for the future instead of relying on prophecies concerning the end of the world.⁵⁶ In January 1980 *Charisma* published an article that reinforced the points made during the four-day conference. Evangelicals had been part of the Terminal Generation mentality—meaning that many believed that they were part of the last generation to live on Earth. This mentality, according to the popular charismatic leader and *Charisma* journalist Bob Mumford, had been fueled by biblical prophecy and produced three symptoms that were seen in the evangelical subculture.

The first symptom of the Terminal Generation mentality was progressive pessimism. Evangelicals with this perspective saw history and current events with “doom and gloom” with everything “descending in to a diabolical abyss.”⁵⁷ This led to the next symptoms either present

⁵⁵Sherry Andrews, “The Rapture-Not If, But When,” *Charisma*, January 1980, 32.

⁵⁶Donald E. Hoke, ed., *Evangelicals Face the Future: Scenarios, Addresses, and Responses from the “Consultation on Future Evangelical Concerns” Held in Atlanta, Georgia, December 14-17, 1977* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978).

⁵⁷Bob Mumford, “Facing the Future,” *Charisma*, January 1980, 27.

escapism or future escapism. Present escapism focused on signs and dates with a negative perspective on current events. “The full extent of escapism is running to a cave in the mountains with our freeze dried food to weather out the Great Tribulation.”⁵⁸ While proponents of future escapism saw the Church as weak and dying in an ever more evil world with the only hope being the Lord’s return. Mumford made seven points on the pressure the Church was feeling, but he summed his points up nicely stating, “Preparing to meet the future must not be motivated by escapism or fear, but by a desire to accurately manifest the care of God’s government before a secular, unbelieving generation. In a world that finds no practical answers from secular governments, the people of God will stand out.”⁵⁹ These two articles showed the tension being felt, in the charismatic world—the tension between fundamentalism and neo-evangelicalism. Calvary Assembly had a reason to be hopeful in the future, not because of the Lord’s Return, but because of the perceived blessing they were receiving from God in the form of growth.

Roy Harthern stated that he was not making Calvary into a successful church, but God was. “My approach to church growth used to be setting goals, attendance contests, gimmicks, give-a-ways, promotions, and programs. Now I understand that I was trying to promote spiritual ministry with carnal methods.”⁶⁰ Harthern claimed that he was not running a business, but if he were, business would be booming. In 1976 Calvary had more than 3,000 in attendance each Sunday with an average growth of around 100 per month. The annual budget for the church

⁵⁸Ibid., 28.

⁵⁹Ibid., 29.

⁶⁰Roy Harthern, “Facing the Challenge of A Changing Church,” *Charisma*, May 1976, 25.

reached 1.5 million dollars, and \$200,000 of the budget went toward missions. By 1977 the average Sunday school attendance was 2,436 and by 1978 it was up to 3,118 making Calvary the fastest-growing Sunday school in the nation according to the International Christian Education Association.⁶¹ Before this growth began Harthern along with a few other pastors in central Florida noticed the potential of the Charismatic movement that was taking place in California and decided to fly out and learn about them.⁶² The emphasis on the Holy Spirit was to be an expected explanation for why a Pentecostal church is doing well, but Harthern also took away other applications from his experiences in California as well.

In 1951, when Harthern came to the United States from Britain, he ministered at Angelus Temple in Los Angeles. Aimee Semple McPherson, the celebrity preacher, started the church, and founded the Foursquare Church. Although McPherson died in 1944 her influence was still seen at the church when Harthern arrived, and in turn influenced the ideas he would bring to Calvary. Dennis Shear recalled, “The fact that she had a 50 piece silver orchestra, a 100-voice choir that marched out to music; that she was socially and politically active, fed the poor and hungry...a lot of that really did influence Roy and in recent years, when I would talk to him about it, he told me that he didn't know how much it did, but he knew someone was doing something that touched a whole city—and that was his dream.”⁶³ Between the years 1976-1980

⁶¹Stephen Strang, “Three Churches on the Grow,” *Charisma*, May 1976, 9; “Florida Church Is Fastest Growing,” *Charisma*, January 1979, 17.

⁶²Stephen Strang, “Three Churches on the Grow,” 10.

⁶³Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

Calvary Assembly transformed into a mega church that influenced central Florida in several ways.

The Dream

Roy Harthern had the desire to impact central Florida through his church and because of the rapid growth and growing annual budget he did. Since the formation of a traveling choir in the 1960s Calvary left its mark on the people of central Florida, but this was only the beginning. Alex Clattenburg, the pastor of the Rock House youth group, approached the board about having a Christian music festival, similar to Woodstock, but without the “drugs and sex.” The festival was called Jesus Fest, and thanks to Clattenburg’s business connections, it would be held on a plot of land that is now part of Disney World.⁶⁴ Before expanding to central Florida, Jesus Fest was a popular event in the northern United States, growing substantially within its early years.

The first three Jesus Fests were called simply Jesus, 73,74, 75—each number corresponding to the respective year—and were held on a 250-acre farm in Morgantown, PA. Jesus ’73 had 10,000 in attendance and that doubled each of the next two years. At this point the organizers decided to expand to central Florida, with the help of Calvary Assembly, where it would be held on a 105-acre tract of land off of U.S. 192, next to Disney. From the first advertisement one can see that Calvary was proud of the business connections they had at the church. “The men who are putting together Jesus 76 are some of Central Florida’s most highly respected business men. They are giving their time and talents through a genuine love for

⁶⁴Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Debbie Carrey*.

Christ.”⁶⁵ This connection to the business community seems to be the first step toward a more politically active neo-evangelicalism.

The founding of Pepperdine University, John Brown College, and Harding College all started with connections to local businessmen. These men like George Pepperdine had a desire to help protect the sanctity of their communities from the encroaching secularism of the time. Pepperdine wanted to use his influence and wealth to make an impact for Christ. Evangelicals in Southern California were transplants from the other parts of America. This was also true for evangelicals in central Florida. Some retired here, some sought employment at Disney, while others found a livelihood in the defense and space industry.

Intuitively, they sensed that the lessons from the bible that governed their microeconomic behavior should also determine their macroeconomic dynamics. Practically, they knew that evangelicalism was wedded to a political order that privileged voluntarism over state welfare as the best answer to society’s problems. To their formula for outreach, in which more money was sought for more ministries southern evangelicals thus added a third element: less government.⁶⁶

Central Florida had a post-WWII boom, similar to that of southern California that brought poor evangelicals looking for work and transformed them into wealthy businessmen who had the desire to influence the younger generation. The conservative businessmen in central Florida may have seen Jesus 76 as a way to positively influence the next generation with conservative ideals.

Jesus 76 attracted nearly 15,000 people, half of what was expected, but that did not deter Calvary from holding Jesus 77. An article from the *Orlando Star* compared Jesus 77 with

⁶⁵“Jesus 76,” *Charisma*, October 1975, 16; Edward Stephens, “A Look at Jesus 75,” *Charisma*, October 1975, 15.

⁶⁶Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 186, Chapter Seven.

Sunfest, a rock festival that took place in Lakeland, Florida the week before, which drew almost 90,000. “Promotion for the religious event here has been even slicker than the rock happenings. ‘Our message is different but the medium’s the same,’ said one Jesus ’77 promoter. There was plenty of pot and there were flashes of nudity at Sunfest; a brochure for Jesus ’77 warns about immodest attire.”⁶⁷ Harthern announced in the church bulletin the week before Jesus ’77 that they were expecting at least 10,000. The event had 36 different speakers and music groups including future presidential candidate Pat Robertson. The following week an estimated 15,000 attended 2,000 of which received counseling from the “counseling tent,” and Harthern thanked Florida newspapers, TV, and radio stations for giving “excellent” coverage for Jesus 77.⁶⁸ Calvary decided to continue the event for the next year.

Jesus ’78 was attended by an estimated by 25,000 who heard featured national speakers such as Hal Lindsey, author of the bestselling end times book *The Late Great Planet Earth*. A church bulletin stated, “As in past years, a sense of unity and harmony prevailed, as people from dozens of different denominations put aside their differences and came together to worship Jesus for three days. Strangers quickly became friends to share a piece of blanket with or join in singing around the campfire late at night.”⁶⁹ The interdenominational hope expressed in this quote indicated that the Pentecostal doctrine of the Holy Spirit allowed Pentecostals/charismatics to cross doctrinal boundaries that traditionally separated Christian denominations. This breakdown between historically opposed Christian communities has clear implications to

⁶⁷Barbara Webb, “Jesus ’77 Opens Today,” *Sentinel Star*, April 7, 1977.

⁶⁸Roy Harthern, “Jesus 77 Is Here,” *Calvary News*, April 4, 1977; “Jesus 77,” *Calvary News*, March 28, 1977; “Jesus 78,” *Calvary News*, 1978; Roy Harthern, “Pastor Harthern Writes...,” *Calvary News*, May 11, 1977.

⁶⁹“25,000 Attend Jesus 78,” *Calvary News*, 1978.

spiritual formation, but it also hints to a more subtle implication, and that is, within a growing community of shared religious beliefs comes a strengthening of political power within the wider community.

One indirect result of the Jesus festivals was that Calvary was making a name for itself in both the church world and the political world. Speakers from all over the country recognized the name of the church, people like Arthur Blessit, Hal Lindsey, and Amy Grant spoke and performed at Calvary numerous times. Benny Hinn was the best known of these speakers. Hinn was at the infancy of his ministry when he was introduced to Harthern in the 1970s. He had a healing ministry in Toronto, Canada and wanted to begin his ministry in the United States. When Harthern learned that Hinn performed healing services he invited him to Calvary to hold one of his services. Those at Calvary accepted Hinn, and his services became so popular that he was invited to speak during the main church services. Before these services a church bulletin was printed that gave a brief background on Hinn. He was born in Israel to Greek Orthodox parents, educated as a Roman Catholic, and, in 1968, “came into a personal experience with Jesus Christ and was filled with the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁰ Harthern continued to invite Hinn back to Calvary and Hinn started to date, and eventually marry, Harthern’s daughter, Susan. In 1980 Hinn moved his ministry from Toronto to Orlando and, for about a year, ran it out of Calvary before starting his own ministry after the departure of Harthern from Calvary.⁷¹

⁷⁰“Benny Hinn, Evangelist Will Be Speaking at Calvary Assembly Sunday, September 3rd in All 4 Services,” *Calvary News*, 1978. This description of Hinn showed the importance of an experience with the Holy Spirit to Pentecostal life.

⁷¹Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Gene Pelino*; Russ White of The Sentinel Staff, “CONGREGATION KEEPS THE FAITH WITH SPELLBINDING BENNY HINN: [3 STAR Edition],” *Orlando Sentinel*, October 11, 1987, sec. STYLE. Pelino was the church administrator at Calvary and later became Hinn’s business administrator when Hinn started his healing crusades.

As the Jesus festivals continued in popularity year-after-year, Calvary became more prominent in the central Florida community. For a number of years the church held plays, musicals, live radio broadcasts, and created *Charisma* as a way of reaching out to the local community. Now they dreamt of expanding even more with a television ministry and building campaign.

In 1977, Harthern and the newly appointed elders decided that they needed equipment for their own television ministry. Since the advent of popular radio in the 1920s Christians used radio waves to broadcast the Good News around the world.⁷² However, beginning in the 1950s evangelists utilized television as the new way to effectively spread the message of Christ. The 1970s and 1980s saw a rapid uptake in evangelical involvement in television. Pat Roberson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and Paul Crouch's Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) formed a large base of loyal evangelical viewers longing to here a message of propriety.

Calvary was not immune to the prosperity theology found in the televangelism at CBN and TBN. "Believe that God's prosperity is for you, and tap into that source which shows us that God's prosperity is truly for YOU!"⁷³ The central idea of prosperity theology, hopefully without simplifying it too much, was if you were loyal to God and gave money to ministries that preach the Word of God, then you would be blessed with even more money to give. With this theology in mind Calvary started their campaign to form its own television ministry.

⁷²Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion, & Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁷³Frances Hunter, "God Wants You to Prosper: Don't equate Poverty with Piety," *Charisma*, June 1978, 14.

In May of 1977 Harthern announced to the congregation that \$5,000 has been given to the church toward the equipment necessary to start a TV program. “We request you pray for this project and if you would like to give to make this ministry possible, make your check payable to Calvary Assembly and mark it ‘TELEVISION.’”⁷⁴ The cost of the project was estimated to be between \$70,000 and \$80,000. The “request” would have been seen as more of a requirement in the eyes of the congregants who accepted the prosperity gospel. The more they gave, in addition, to the 10% tithe, the better they would have felt, and they would live with a hopeful expectation of God’s blessing on their lives.⁷⁵

The television ministry grew fast. Within the first year “Life Begins at Calvary” was airing for one hour each week on three different cable systems. In fact the ministry was so successful that Calvary hired a T. V. director to oversee the production of shows and other teaching programs. By 1979 their program was being seen in New York and Pennsylvania with the average viewership being 20,000 with each airing. The program aired in 37 outlets—24 in Florida and the rest throughout the eastern United States. The tenets of American evangelicalism center on the importance of the individual soul, and the T.V. ministry was no exception at Calvary. The leadership made sure to tell the congregation stories about individuals who had benefited from the program. One example was a person from Charleston, West Virginia, “Tonight on T.V., I really enjoyed and received so very much from the service. I will be tuning

⁷⁴“\$5000 Given for Television Ministry,” *Calvary News*, May 2, 1977.

⁷⁵Frances Hunter, “God Wants You to Prosper: Don’t equate Poverty with Piety,” 16–17.

in from now on, Lord willing.”⁷⁶ Calvary continued growing, not only on T.V., but also as a physical presence in central Florida.

Shortly after Calvary started to produce its own television program it was approached about an opportunity to help buy a television station that went on the market for Orlando and Cocoa. The hope was to raise enough money to make it into a Christian television station that would serve central Florida. The church’s business administrator, Gene Polino, gathered several businessmen in the congregation together and put forth a plan to raise money for the station. This group of businessmen formed a non-profit foundation. One reason for this foundation was due to a Federal Communication Commission regulation, which stated a church could not own a TV station. Soon after, Calvary helped to raise enough money to move the station to Orlando, and pay its initial bills. The Orlando station was named Channel 52 Good Life Broadcasting, its original location was on 29th street, and consisted of a 2,000 square foot studio and counseling center big enough to host live studio audience broadcasts. Channel 52 was the first full time Christian television station in east central Florida. Brock Lesperance, the General Manager of the station at the time, and former Media Director at Calvary, remembered the day the station opened, “It was an exhilarating time...Thousands of feet of wire, conduit, and wave guide had to be installed before the ceremony could be broadcast. Those first pictures brought rejoicing after all we had been through.”⁷⁷ Calvary became the first program to air on the new station. Calvary also had a hand in running another Christian station in Orlando for a number of years. This

⁷⁶“T.V. Ministry,” *Calvary News*, 1979; “Calvary’s Television Ministry Is Growing,” *Calvary Life*, 1978; “Television Ministry,” *Calvary News*, 1979. Good Life Broadcasting continues to air throughout central Florida.

⁷⁷“Good Life Broadcasting: TV 52 WTGL,” *Calvary People*, Autumn 1984, 12; “Channel 52 Celebrates First Anniversary,” *Calvary People*, Autumn 1983; Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Gene Pelino*.

station was known as channel 45 and was meant for educational purposes. When Paul Crouch, the founder of Trinity Broadcasting Network, wanted to bring his operations to Orlando channel 45 was sold to his company.⁷⁸ Calvary continued to grow in Florida, not only in membership, but also in influence.

One indication of the growth in numbers and in influence was the formation of Calvary Day at Disney in 1980. Alex Clattenburg approached his connections at Disney and asked them if they would consider closing the park on their slowest day just for Calvary and its related ministries in central Florida. Disney agreed to the idea as long as Calvary could guarantee 10,000 tickets and \$160,000 in food and concessions. Calvary ended up selling 13,000 tickets and \$260,000 in food and concessions. Dennis Shear fondly remembered the 200-voice choir at Cinderella's Castle and the thirty minute message given my Harthern on the steps of the castle.⁷⁹ Calvary Days at Disney helped to solidify, in the minds of those at Calvary, that they were becoming major players in central Florida, and if they were going to continue to grow and be influential they needed a new building.

Harvest 81

By the end of the 1970s Calvary had experienced year after year of tremendous growth and it had been nationally recognized for that growth, as well as, the widespread impact of its

⁷⁸Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Gene Pelino*. Although no other source could be found to verify this story. It is included to note the influence Calvary had on shaping the religious subculture of central Florida even to the extent of bring one of the biggest tele-evangelist networks in the world to Orlando.

⁷⁹Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

ministries like Jesus Fest and *Charisma*.⁸⁰ At that time the sanctuary, despite being the third one built since its founding, could only hold a couple hundred people. Calvary was holding four jammed pack services on Sundays when Harthern approached the elders about starting a building campaign.

Harthern's original vision for the church was grand, and considering it was the 1980s, ahead of its time. He envisioned a multi-campus church scattered throughout the city. Each campus would theoretically serve about 2,000 in attendance with the main campus reaching two Sunday services of 5,000. Due to the financial reality that the church faced this vision was scaled back to include just one, main, campus that would seat 5,000, but it also included a professional recording studio, an education building, a 14 story building that provided housing for the elderly, and an outreach building for the homeless. To put this into perspective a 5,000 seat sanctuary would be almost twice the size of the newly renovated Mayor Bob Carr Municipal auditorium, one of Orlando's largest, if not the largest, gathering spaces at the time.⁸¹ Although, this vision was very ambitious for a church that was under 30 years old, some questioned why the plan didn't include a bigger sanctuary that would fit 10,000. Dennis Shear recalls, "By 1980 I felt like Calvary appeared unstoppable. It was like it was going to be a huge force."⁸² The general feeling was that Calvary would never stop growing. This is why there were disagreements about the size of the new building, after all this would be the fourth sanctuary build in less than 30 years, but

⁸⁰"Calvary Assembly Recognized as the Fastest Growing Church," *Calvary News*, 1978. On a side note it Charisma magazine would one day grow large enough that it would buy Christian Life magazine, the original publication that named Calvary the fastest growing church in America.

⁸¹April Kupfer, "Church to Build Hall Seating 5,000," *Sentinel Star*, October 11, 1978, Metro edition, sec. C, 1-C.

⁸²Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

Harthern and the elders seemed to understand that if the church were to stop growing it would be easier to maintain a 5,000 seat building than a 10,000 seat one. So in 1978 the Harvest 81 campaign began.

On the first day of the campaign 1,200 families pledged to give \$4,000,000 with the goal being \$5,000,000, and by the end of the year the (pledged) goal was reached with a total of \$5,027,884.⁸³ The money would be raised over the next three years. Now Calvary had to buy land around the current property to make room for the building and parking expansion. This proved to be one of the biggest challenges for the church considering that houses surrounded it.

The Controversy

The local newspapers latched on to this developing story and created a narrative that resulted in the first widespread negative press for Calvary. Representatives for the church began inquiring about available property for sale within an 18-block radius of the church that was needed for parking. Residents became concerned that Calvary would be randomly building parking lots throughout the neighborhood, which would drive property values down. Georgann Neff, a Winter Park resident living near the church in 1979 said, “They’re scaring people by saying ‘you’re going to be surrounded by a parking lot.’ This is the tactic they’re using.”⁸⁴ Gene Pelino, the church administrator, claimed that church had no intention of pressuring people if they did not want to sell. However, in order for the contracts, for those who wanted to sell, to be

⁸³“1200 Families Gave \$4,000,000.00 on the First Day of Harvest ‘81 Praise the Lord,” *Calvary News*, 1978; “Hallelujah Goal Reached!,” *Calvary News*, 1978.

⁸⁴Nancy Long, Geri Throne, and Randy Uhl, “Residence Accuse Calvary Assembly of Blockbusting,” *Sun Herald*, March 30, 1979, 1.

fulfilled the church had to have a clear and continuous path to build on. This meant that if someone in the construction path refused to sell the church would have to abandon the project indicating that Polino must have known the importance and used at least some pressure in getting homeowners to sell.

A petition containing 400 signatures opposing the church's expansion was submitted to the Orange County Commission in April 1979. Resident Robert Rumpf, along with other residents, formed the Lawndale Survival Association to fight the expansion of Calvary. Rumpf claimed that Calvary was harassing residents who would not sell their land, an accusation the church denied. Polino admitted that there could be some misunderstanding about the church's plans among the residents.⁸⁵ With the continuing negative press about the church Harthern addressed the congregation.

By now you have read the newspaper account of our attempt to purchase property around the church. We have been buying property for over eight years and we have never had any problems until recently. Our position is that we are contacting our neighbors to determine if they wish to sell their property. If they do we enter into a contract with them...there are all kinds of rumors being circulated concerning Calvary Assembly right now. Some of these rumors are almost unbelievable. I am asking all out members and friends not to retaliate but to pray and express love.⁸⁶

The building program at Calvary could have produced negative press because the rapid growth was becoming more than a traffic problem and an abstract idea of a mega-church in Winter Park. Shear remembered, "So interesting to note, in my perspective, of Calvary history

⁸⁵Nancy Long, "Lawndale Survivor Association Forms to Oppose Church Growth," *Sun Herald*, April 6, 1979, 2. The article basically contains a back and forth debate between Rumpf and Polino. Rumpf, did indeed offer to sell his home of a specific price not mentioned in the article, but he continued to oppose Calvary's expansion, and told the reporter that he never planned to actually sell his property to the church.

⁸⁶Roy Harthern, "Roy Harthern Writes..." *Calvary News*, 1979.

that was the first time it got negative press because now we were seen as this weird spiritual force taking over Winter Park. If you look today at those back articles it kind of bleeds through, that ‘These aren't nice people because they're forcing people out of their home.’”⁸⁷ This seemed to be the train of thought among people like Rumpf who said, “Calvary has grown beyond the scope of a neighborhood church.”⁸⁸ The church eventually got all the land that they needed for the expansion but they used much more money than what was estimated—most of the \$5,000,000 raised was gone, and they had to rally the congregation to raise more, but then, in the midst of the building campaign, a shocking event caused Calvary to lose their leader.

The history of Calvary was similar to many evangelical churches across the country. This church, and its ministries, tied into the larger national narrative of how small churches and organizations grew from small unnoticeable gatherings to big, seemingly unstoppable, spectacles, which attracted not only other Christians, but also politicians who looked to court the congregations for votes. However unstoppable Calvary seemed to be, it was about to be hit with shocking news.

The Tragedy⁸⁹

On a Wednesday night in October of 1981 Harthern announced to a stunned congregation that he would be resigning from Calvary due to “gross errors.” Dennis Shear clearly recalled the events of that night,

⁸⁷Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

⁸⁸Nancy Long, Geri Throne, and Randy Uhl, “Blockbusting,” 2.

⁸⁹Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*. This was the best descriptor used to describe the events that led to Roy Harthern’s departure from Calvary.

The night that Roy resigned—it was a Wednesday night—I stayed outside by the old Johnson Hall till 1 in the morning—sitting under a tree just crying like a baby. There were probably 50-60 people still in the parking lot at 1 in the morning just sitting by their cars just crying. It was as though something had died. The following Sunday when Alex got up...yeah everything was still going, but you also realized something's happened here and we will never be the same again...you felt that.⁹⁰

Rumor mills had sprung up in churches across central Florida with everyone wondering the same question: What were these “gross errors”? It soon came to light that Harthern had committed the “Sin of David”, or, in other words, adultery.⁹¹ As devastating as this was to the people of Calvary the church recovered and continued, and so did Harthern.

As part of the consequences for his actions, the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal denomination that Calvary was a part of, banned Harthern from preaching for one year. After two years the denomination granted him permission to speak in Orlando again, although he declared to his former congregation, that he no longer wanted to be called pastor, and would never lead a church again. “I deserved everything I got. I think I could have handled what happened to me but when I saw what happened to my family, my friends, that innocent people had to bleed for what I had done—that was more than I could handle. That was the real torture.”⁹² Harthern had several offers for work, including one from Paul Crouch of TBN, but he

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹John Gholdston, “Penitent Pastor Returns with a Spiritual Limp,” *Orlando Sentinel*, July 1, 1984, Sunday Edition edition, sec. A-1, A-1; Jim Leusner, “Church Leader Quits Calvary Assembly,” *Sentinel Star*, October 23, 1981, sec. C.

⁹²John Gholdston, “Pastor,” July 1, 1984, A-15.

turned the offers down and decided to stay in Orlando after his resignation from Calvary. He returned to speak and ask forgiveness from the church several times in subsequent years.⁹³

Wounded, But Not Defeated

When Harthern stepped down as pastor, Alex Clattenburg, the pastor of Calvary's successful Rock House youth ministries, became the lead pastor. Clattenburg came to Calvary in May of 1970 to teach a young adults class of about 18 people. By 1976 Clattenburg was leading a youth ministry of several hundred every week with an annual budget of \$100,000. In fact many of the early advertisements in *Charisma* were for Rock House as well as Calvary.⁹⁴ The idea of holding the Jesus festivals in Orlando on Disney owned land was also the idea of Clattenburg and, because of his connections to Disney, he was able to secure the use of the land. Both Harthern and Clattenburg saw Rock House as a church within a church.

It should have been no surprise that Clattenburg was offered the senior pastorate in 1981. If he had any desire to become lead pastor at this soon-to-be megachurch this was not the way he wanted to do it. As much as Harthern wrote and preached about not having a church centered around one charismatic person, Calvary in many ways was that church, and the congregation was tremendously shaken by the fall of their leader when Clattenburg took the reins. He had to find a way to bring the church back together, while at the same time, feeling the pressure to maintain the growth experienced under Harthern.

⁹³ John Gholdston, "Ex-Pastor Returns, Asks For Forgiveness," *Orlando Sentinel*, June 15, 1984, sec. B-1.

⁹⁴ Alex Clattenburg, "Building a Youth Ministry," *Charisma*, July 1976, 23; "Something's Happening at the Rock House," *Charisma*, July 1976; "The Rock House," *Charisma*, September 1977. These are two examples of the early ads for Rock House. Both containing graphics and language that would appeal to young women and men.

One way Clattenburg sought to bring the congregation together was by starting a new quarterly publication called *Calvary People*. Like the early issues of *Charisma*, this magazine was meant to be a ministry at Calvary, but unlike *Charisma* this magazine was meant specifically for those within the church—as a way to bring them together. The introduction of the magazine stated,

There's a new wind blowing at Calvary Assembly these days. You can feel it in the services. You can sense it in the church offices. You can hear it in people's conversations. There's an excitement about what God is doing in our fellowship, a feeling that we've been given a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵

It would seem that this publication was a way of shaping the culture within the church after the leadership change. With 85 staff members and several thousand adherents *Calvary People* had the goal of connecting everyone together and making them feel that they were still part of something unique and bigger than themselves.

Clattenburg felt that the congregation needed to be “stirred up” and experience “a greater depth of praise and worship, genuine, authentic prayer and the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁶ Some, like Dennis Shear, felt that Clattenburg was bringing the church back to more Pentecostal roots. The church had always been Pentecostal, but now the tone had changed and it put some people on edge. This could be sensed in some of the more leading questions in the interview with Clattenburg. “You seem to be moving the church in what many might consider a more ‘Pentecostal’ direction. Is that an accurate reflection of your intentions?” His answer to that question was essentially yes,

⁹⁵Sherry Andrews, “Introducing Calvary People,” *Calvary People*, 1982, 3.

⁹⁶“A New Beginning: An Interview with Alex Clattenburg,” *Calvary People*, 1982, 4.

but that the term Pentecostal had more negative associations.⁹⁷ Clattenburg's goal was to keep the congregation unified, for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the building project.

The congregation lost its beloved leader in a devastating way. After raising \$5,000,000 for a state-of-the-art building the money was gone and more needed to be raised. Many were losing hope. In 1982 Clattenburg thought of several ideas that would increase morale. First, he formed official church membership so that the congregation felt like they were part of the church. With membership he hoped that people would be more committed to the church as a whole. Clattenburg hoped that official membership would give the congregation pride in the fact that they were part of something new impactful. Second, he had church leaders meet people at the door, and made himself available to talk after services. Third, he wanted members to become part of small groups as the church continued to grow so, while the church had thousands in attendance they could still have the intimacy of a small church. This was something unique at the time—most big churches did not have small groups. Most importantly Clattenburg wanted people to know that the church was destined to be great,

There's no question in my mind that the hand of God is in this church. There is no reason for us not to be successful. We are not living in an economically deprived area. We are in one of the country's biggest growth areas. We are located on the interstate that divides the state, with access to two interchanges. We are a resource center here. We have one of the finest music departments in the country, as well as incredible youth and education departments. The only way we can fail is if we fail to apply ourselves spiritually and are not sensitive to the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸

⁹⁷Ibid., 3–4.

⁹⁸Ibid., 5.

Clattenburg understood that the church had the secular resources, but he wanted to work on the spirituality of the church. This was most likely due to the moral failure of Harthern, and the fear that the congregation would become cynical toward the goals of the church. However, it could also be because the church needed to come together united under the same purpose—to build the church building of the future.

In 1982 the church had spent the initial five million dollars buying land around the church. The construction had yet to start, and the congregation was confused about where the money had gone, and why it was going to cost more than what was originally proposed. Clattenburg soon became consumed with the church building. This caused disagreement among some of the leaders at the church, and despite the call for unity, divisions grew. By the years 1981-1982 the church was in good financial standing with a budget of five million dollars, but that did not last long. Building the new sanctuary put the church in debt and led to Clattenburg's resignation.

Although the church eventually began to buckle under their own rapid growth, during the seventies and early eighties they were on the cutting edge of not only the church world, but also in the blossoming of a new breed of conservative politics informed by religious orthodoxy. Calvary represented this new blend of politics and religion in central Florida.

With the growth and transformation of Orlando from a small pass-through city into a world-renowned destination, the city's religious landscape changed as well. Calvary Assembly became recognized as one of the fastest growing churches in America. In a short span of 30 years it had grown from a small gathering in a building with a dirt floor to a campus housing and sponsoring national television ministries, a magazine publication, and musical/theatrical

performances. Many of their ministries contained political undertones that were directly influenced by their deeply held religious beliefs. These beliefs such as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Second Coming of Christ, and the empowerment they felt from God led many evangelicals to become politically active. These doctrines not only caused evangelicals to become active in politics, but it gave them the steadfastness to pursue politics at all cost, which led outsiders to believe that evangelicals put politics before religion.

Part II of this thesis will explore the transition many evangelical churches went through from the 1970s-1980s that led them into political activism. The narrative surrounding the awareness of politically active conservative evangelical is mostly told from a national perspective, but often local examples are overlooked. Calvary will be used as a local example of national trends. Examining the political actions of conservative evangelicals in this way will more effectively show how the Carter and Reagan administrations failed and succeeded in recognizing the importance of evangelical voters particularly in the light of the changing moral geography that their children faced.

PART II-POLITICS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Part II will use both the Carter and Reagan administrations to show the growing influence and involvement of neo-evangelicals in the political arena, and how the shift from Carter to Reagan displayed, not only the tension, but also the merging of neo-evangelical faith and conservative politics into a more organized movement. It does not mean to focus on the individual, but to use them as a symbol of transition within evangelical political involvement.

The Crook and The Strategist

It was a crisp fall night on November 17, 1973 when a crowd of 400 newspaper reporters gathered at the newly constructed Walt Disney Contemporary Resort in Orlando to hear a nervous, but composed, Richard Nixon talk about his involvement in the Watergate Scandal. “People have got to know whether or not their President is a crook. Well, I’m not a crook. I’ve earned everything I’ve got.”⁹⁹ This now famous press conference took place in Orlando; the significance of this is not to be overlooked. With Orlando’s rapid growth, and Disney’s grand vision, the decision to have the “much-heralded question-and-answer period” in Orlando indicated the region’s growing political influence.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Carroll Kilpatrick, “Nixon Tells Editors, ‘I’m Not a Crook’,” *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2012, sec. Politics, 1, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/nixon-tells-editors-im-not-a-crook/2012/06/04/gJQA1RK6IV_story.html.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.; Special to The New York Times By R. W. APPLE Jr, “NIXON DECLARES HE DIDN’T PROFIT FROM PUBLIC LIFE: Predicts Both Haldeman and Ehrlichman Will Eventually ‘Come Out All Right’ Tells A.P. Managing Editors ‘I’ve Earned Every Cent, I’m Not a Crook’ DISCUSSES MILK DEAL Reputation Damaged’ Impressed by Skill Nixon Tells Editors He Has Never Profited From Public Service and Emphasizes, ‘I’m Not a Crook’,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1973, sec. GN; “Orlando, FL Weather History File for November 17th, 1973,” *Farmers’ Almanac*, accessed March 6, 2013, <http://www.farmersalmanac.com/weather-history/search-results/>.

Kevin Phillips, a young strategist for Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign, accurately predicted the emergence of the Right in his book appropriately entitled *The Emerging Republican Majority*. As one might have derived from the title of the book, not only did Phillips predict the entrance of conservatives into the mainstream, but also he also boldly declared that they would win a majority and reverse Democratic policies that dominated the nation since Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

More importantly Phillips was one the first to predict that the Republican base would shift from the northeast United States to the southern and western sections of the country. One reason for this change, according to Phillips, was the construction of the suburbs and the migration of the middle class into more urban environments. Another reason given for the rise of Republicanism in the South was the disillusionment felt by Southerners toward government welfare programs.¹⁰¹ When considering trends of the South, it is rare to see Florida mentioned in the results, but it must be keep in mind that, while many Southern transplants migrated to Southern California in the 1940s and 1950s, many Southerners also traveled further south to Florida. Phillips predictions turned out to be remarkably accurate, but he did not foresee the role American neo-evangelicalism would play in the rise of conservative politics, and while more and more works have been written on conservative/religious activism in places like southern

¹⁰¹ Michael Hammond, *Why Did the Right Fight: A Review of Histories of Late Twentieth Century American Conservatism* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas, nd), 2–3; JAMES BOYD, "Nixon's Southern Strategy 'It's All In the Charts'," *New York Times*, May 17, 1970, sec. The New York Times Magazine; Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New York: Arlington House, 1969).

California, few, if any works have explored the dynamics of religion and conservative politics in central Florida.¹⁰²

“Pray for America, America”

Watergate left a bad taste in the mouth of Americans. Scandal was not something that should take place in the most powerful and respected office in the world. The scandal hit American neo-evangelicals even harder. Billy Graham had a strong friendship with Richard Nixon, which began when Nixon was the vice-president under Dwight Eisenhower. In 1970 Graham even let Nixon speak to 45,000 attendees during one of his crusades in East Tennessee.¹⁰³ This was a rare occurrence that displayed the growing relationship between neo-evangelicals and conservative politicians. Watergate would put a strain this relationship.

In an interview with *Christianity Today*, during 1974, Graham condemned the actions of President Nixon. “I can make no excuses for Watergate. The actual break-in was a criminal act, and some of the things that surround Watergate, too, were not only unethical but criminal. I

¹⁰²Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001); Eileen Luhr, *Witnessing Suburbia: Conservatives and Christian Youth Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Turner, *Bill Bright & Campus Crusade for Christ*; Clyde Wilcox and William Clyde Wilcox, *God’s Warriors: The Christian Right in Twentieth-century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Tom Sitton and William Francis Deverell, *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); Michelle M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹⁰³Randall E. King, “When Worlds Collide: Politics, Religion, and Media at the 1970 East Tennessee Billy Graham Crusade,” *Journal of Church & State* 39, no. 2 (Spring97 1997): 27.

condemn it and I deplore it. It has hurt America.”¹⁰⁴ Watergate put a cloud over the growing hope that evangelicals had for the revival of America through political action. Roy Harthern, during a trip to Washington D. C., commented on how he felt flying in to the capitol. “As the plane made the final approach to the airport, I looked down over the city and I thought about the tragic events of the past months. The day was damp and cold, the weather seemed to reflect my mood as I thought of Watergate and all of its ugly implications.”¹⁰⁵ Evangelicals still had hope in the future of America this was evident in the words echoed by Harthern in the same article. “I thought of the events of the past seven days and I had a new faith and optimism for America (sic) because of what God is doing in Washington.”¹⁰⁶ Harthern had just spent a week attending various prayer meetings with numerous political figures, and he could see the light in the midst of the political darkness.

The Peanut Farmer

Evangelicals were tired of the scandals that seemed to continually hover over Washington. It was time for something or someone new—someone who would represent the biblical principles upon which the country was founded. A *Charisma* article stated, “A post-Watergate Society has become cynical and disillusioned toward those in high places. God has

¹⁰⁴“Billy Graham on Watergate: The Evangelist Speaks About His Relationship with Nixon and the Implications of the Watergate Scandal.,” *Christianity Today*, 1, accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/octoberweb-only/144-214.0.html>.

¹⁰⁵Roy Harthern, “I Found Spiritual Renewal in Washington,” *Charisma*, August 1975, 3. The timing and placement of this article is significant. This is the first article, in the first issue of *Charisma* magazine. Showing that Watergate indeed weighed heavily on the minds of evangelicals.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

spoken through Watergate.”¹⁰⁷ The article continued by informing the readers that Watergate and Vietnam were like “slaps in the face,” indicating that God must be speaking through these failures. The author reprimanded Christians for assuming that Americans would always be God’s chosen people regardless of the moral failures of the people.¹⁰⁸ Evangelicals were stressed and confused about their place in the political process. How can they be certain which politicians respected and shared their values? After all, didn’t Richard Nixon stand with Billy Graham during some of his crusades? “Am I to pray that a Christian win? But almost all the candidates are thumping Bibles at this point. And what if the one quoting the Bible most is committed to political principles I like the least?”¹⁰⁹ Then, as if in answer to prayer, a Baptist Sunday school preacher from Georgia, threw his hat into the presidential race.

Jimmy Carter was seen by many as an answer to prayer—evangelicals wanted to know more about how this miracle came to past. This explained the advertisements found in *Charisma* like this one for a pocket side booklet on the spiritual life of Carter. “Where did he come from? How did he soar so quickly to national prominence? The newest book about Jimmy Carter was a chronicle of faith—the spiritual odyssey of a man who rose from farmer to presidential candidate.”¹¹⁰ While evangelicals were enthralled with Carter, it left many outside of this subculture confused on what made this candidate different from the other Christian candidates and also what the significance of being “born-again” meant. Enough confusion existed for

¹⁰⁷Dave Gable, “God Is Talking to America,” *Charisma*, March 1976, 35.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 36.

¹¹⁰“The Miracle of Jimmy Carter,” *Charisma*, July 1976, 29.

Newsweek to publish an in-depth article on what it meant to be “born-again” or evangelical, it stated, “Evangelicalism is the religion you get when you ‘get’ religion. Its substance and style vary by region, denomination and theological tradition. But all evangelicals are united by a subjective experience of personal salvation, which they describe as being ‘born again,’ converted or regenerated.”¹¹¹ This article was remarkably detailed in its history and the description of the dilemma faced by evangelicals regardless of political party or church affiliation. “This year, evangelicals in the South may buck this tradition out of regional pride and religious identification with a Southern Baptist Sunday-school teacher who says his life has been changed by Jesus Christ.”¹¹² Evangelical advancement into the political limelight was so great that Newsweek would later declare 1976 the Year of the Evangelical—that declaration rang loud and clear in central Florida, thanks to Calvary Assembly.

Cause For Celebration—One Nation Under God

Jerry Falwell represented the ideal political activism many neo-evangelicals hoped to cultivate. Fear of moral decay in America brought on by the Supreme Court decisions on the banning of school prayer and legalization of abortion concerned many evangelicals. While secular Americans were gaining more freedom, evangelicals felt as though they were being marginalized. Freedom was being stripped away from American Christians, and it was now time for neo-evangelicals to make Americans remember the importance of preserving freedom. Jerry

¹¹¹Kenneth L. Woodward, John Barnes, and Laurie Lisle, “Born Again!,” 75.

¹¹²Ibid., 76.

Falwell was one of those evangelicals who sought to bring awareness to the threat of secularism to American freedom, and in 1976, he decided to do something about it.

Falwell, along with seventy students from Liberty Baptist College, embarked on a 141-city musical tour known as, *I love America*.¹¹³ This tour was one of the first times that Falwell gained national attention for his conservative political activism—Time Magazine reported on the mission of the national tour,

The figure is imposing—tall, a bit jowly, dressed like a businessman in a dark three-piece suit. The backdrop, massed American flags and a 33-member choir of attractive college kids scrubbed to a sparkle, is Fourth of July inspiring. The words are measured out in an avuncular bass. God loves America above all nations, the preacher says, but the U.S. is sure giving heaven a hard time. Amens come from the crowd as the pastor inveighs against all the "infidels and in-for-hells." He scourges the Federal Government for fostering socialism, the public school system for making "humanism" its religion and Hollywood for making the nation think dirty. Holding up a Bible, he admonishes: "If a man stands by this book, vote for him. If he doesn't, don't."¹¹⁴

Falwell thought of the *I love America* tour as the first attempt of neo-evangelicals to call the American people back to God and help awaken them to the moral crisis that the nation was facing.¹¹⁵ The tour contained a blend of American patriotism and evangelical orthodoxy that seemed, in the mind of evangelicals, to fit perfectly with the bicentennial of America. While Falwell was touring the country with his musical, Calvary prepared to bring its own celebration to central Florida.

¹¹³Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 18. Falwell founded Liberty College in 1971 as an alternative to secular public schools. It is now one of the largest Christian universities in the world.

¹¹⁴"Politicizing The Word The Rev. Jerry Falwell Says God Has a Message for Caesar," *Time* 114, no. 14 (1979): 1.

¹¹⁵Jerry Falwell, *Falwell: An Autobiography* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Tab Books, 1996), 365.

Since the days of Calvary's traveling choir, the church had become well known in the community for its plays and musical performances—in fact, the music director during the 1970s was Thurlow Spurr, a nationally recognized music director and television producer, who left Calvary to join the TV network Praise the Lord.¹¹⁶ In 1976 Calvary produced a musical performance called *Freedom Celebration*, which was held at Orlando Municipal Auditorium to a sold out crowd of 3,000. Roy Harthern stated the purpose of the celebration in a welcome letter,

200 years ago 56 men signed the birth certificate of America and it became a death warrant for all those who signed it. It was called the Declaration of Independence. In a real sense the men who signed that document knew that freedom could only be obtained in the price of blood and what is true of our national freedom is also true with our spiritual freedom. The price of our salvation was the precious blood of Christ.¹¹⁷

This celebration was seen as a chance for evangelicals, who were concerned with the direction of the country, to raise their voices in “freedom and worship” as part of a “sacred responsibility” to put God at the center of one's life.¹¹⁸ Those who attended the celebration experienced a high level of emotion with one account describing it as “a star spangled, razzle-dazzle, put-a-tear-in-your-eye, and a lump-in-your-throat salute to the grandest nation in the

¹¹⁶“Thurlow Spurr Accepts Position at PTL Television Network,” *Calvary News*, 1978; Thurlow Spurr, “Thurlow Spurr,” *Biography*, accessed March 18, 2013, <http://www.thurlowspurr.com/biography.html>. Spurr had a successful career, both in the evangelical world and the secular world. He preformed for four presidents: Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Regan; He produced the Dove Christian Music Awards, and he produced over 20,000 shows, mostly on Christian TV, but also including NBC shows like the Bob Hope Special.

¹¹⁷Roy Harthern, “Pastor's Message,” June 17, 1976, 1, Calvary Assembly of God.

¹¹⁸Thurlow Spurr, “Freedom Celebration,” June 17, 1976, 1, Calvary Assembly of God.

world.¹¹⁹ In very much the same way as Falwell's *I love America* Calvary's *Freedom Celebration* combined nationalistic pride with a spiritual mandate to put America back on the right path.

Evangelicals and Carter: The Creation of Hopeful Cynics

Jimmy Carter was going to be the president that preserved freedom and the evangelical way of life, or so most evangelicals thought. Others were unsure as to what he would bring. His interview for *Playboy* during the 1976 campaign raised some eyebrows among evangelicals. It "was highly controversial in conservative circles, and admitted that he had problems with lust. And Jerry Falwell, on his television show, mentioned that in passing and ended up getting a call from the head of Jimmy Carter's committee, asking him to back off."¹²⁰ Falwell, according to Ed Dobson, was taken aback that his comments on Jimmy Carter would be given so much attention, and it was at this point, that Falwell began to think and speak more politically.

Another example of how evangelicals became politically active in 1976 occurred at the Southern Baptist Convention, where Rev. Bailey Smith endorsed Jimmy Carter. "This country needs a 'born again man in the White House'" said Smith. The more conservative members did not like the up front political endorsement and they were in complete shock when he said, "And his initials are the same as our Lord's!"¹²¹ To one reporter, this incident exposed the present tension between fundamentalism and evangelicalism, by displaying how members like Smith,

¹¹⁹"A Celebration of Freedom," *Charisma*, August 1975, 8.

¹²⁰"God In America - Interview: Ed Dobson," *God in America*, 1, accessed March 20, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/interviews/edward-dobson.html>.

¹²¹Myra MacPherson, "Evangelicals Seen Cooling On Carter," *Washington Post*, September 27, 1976, sec. A1, 1.

who had the same conservative theological beliefs as others in the convention, differed so greatly with others on Christians becoming politically active. However, even neo-evangelicals like Smith, who was so excited about the prospect of having an evangelical in the Whitehouse started to become discontent with Carter as his term progressed.¹²²

This uneasiness felt by evangelicals as the 1976 election kept inching closer. It was the result of several political issues such as Carter's view on social programs, fear of him not being strong enough on communism, even his openness to the idea of having an ambassador appointed to the Vatican. Ultimately the root cause for much of the discontent between Carter and other neo-evangelicals was Carter's strong commitment to the principle of the separation of church and state. Neo-evangelicals wanted to use politics as a tool to transform society for Christ, and in their view, Carter prevented Christian transformation through the political system. The event that hurt his citability with neo-evangelicals the most was Carter's interview with *Playboy*. Smith could not reconcile the memory, of Carter's genuine prayer with Smith before speaking to his 10,000 member congregation, with the words "shacking up" and "screw" that Carter used in *Playboy* interview. "We're totally against pornography," he said. "And well, 'screw' is just not a good Baptist word."¹²³ Carter, it would seem, did not understand the growing power of the evangelical vote.¹²⁴

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid., 2.

¹²⁴Michael D. Hammond, "Twice Born, Once Elected: The Making of the Religious Right During the Carter Administration" (Ph.D., University of Arkansas, 2009), 11,

Between 1976 and 1980 Calvary was recognized as a political force in central Florida.

Pauline Harthern, Roy Harthern's wife, started a group called Intercessors for America, which, at its core, was a political prayer group. Shear recalled,

By 1979 Calvary had become a recognized political force in Central Florida. By that I mean most of the time, around election time, candidates were there on Wednesday nights—they greeted the people, they were out in the parking lot—they wanted Calvary's vote and support. Calvary became politically active, I think, through Pauline Harthern's monthly Intercessors for America prayer meeting. Friday mornings at 6:30 the old auditorium would be packed by 6. If you didn't get there by 6 you couldn't get in. I remember the largest attendance we had in there, before the fire marshal closed the doors, was 1620. But we had them in and chairs, on the platform, and it probably wasn't safe.¹²⁵

Calvary was careful not to endorse a particular candidate for president, but most of the congregation openly supported Carter. *Charisma*, in fact, allowed an obscure presidential candidate, Arthur Blessitt, to use the magazine as a way to speak about his desire to run for president.¹²⁶ Blessitt was only on the ballot in Florida and New Hampshire—he was not a serious contender and was not involved in any of the debates—yet the willingness of *Charisma* and Calvary to provide him with a platform suggested that they were open to more outspoken evangelicals than Carter. The hopeful cynicism toward Carter in 1976 had turned to rejection by 1980.

In 1980 Carter understood, maybe for the first time, that the evangelical vote was more important to his reelection than he realized. As a result he gathered a group of media savvy

<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ucf.edu/pqdtft/docview/304846118/abstract/13C0AFDE3B8104B38F8/1?accountid=10003>.

¹²⁵Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

¹²⁶Stephen Strang, "A Preacher for President," *Charisma*, January 1976, 4.

evangelicals together for a conversation over breakfast with each guest allowed to ask one question. Topics included military preparedness and Carter's willingness to fight back, Carter's interpretation of the traditional family, abortion, FCC and IRS treatment of religious organizations, prayer in public schools, placement of evangelical Christians in the presidential cabinet, and the overall spiritual and moral climate of America. The seven questions, preserved in a White House memo, accurately displayed the major concerns evangelicals had over the direction of America, as well as, the foundational issues on which the conservative revolution of the 1980s rested.¹²⁷

The 1980s saw an increase in political awareness and activism among evangelicals. They felt betrayed by Carter's liberal stance on both domestic and foreign issues and his refusal to bend on philosophy of Separation of Church and State. Conservative evangelicals wanted someone who would not only align with their religious beliefs, but also with their political values—they found that person in Ronald Reagan.¹²⁸

The Reagan Transformation

¹²⁷Bob Maddox, "Memo: Questions for the President at the Breakfast," January 21, 1980, National Religious Broadcasters Breakfast folder, box 107, Public Outreach Files, Robert Maddox Papers, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library in Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 129–131. The seven guests invited were all well-known evangelicals representing the entire spectrum of orthodoxies from Pentecostal to Southern Baptist. The invited evangelicals included: James Kennedy, Tim LaHaye, Jerry Falwell, Jim Bakker, Robert Dugan, Morris Sheats, and Oral Roberts.

¹²⁸Michael D. Hammond, "Twice Born, Once Elected: The Making of the Religious Right During the Carter Administration" (Ph.D., University of Arkansas, 2009), 8, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ucf.edu/pqdtft/docview/304846118/abstract/13C0AFDE3B8104B38F8/1?accountid=10003>.

Ronald Reagan was a member of the Presbyterian Church—his father was Roman Catholic while his mother was a member of the Disciples of Christ. Reagan was a religious man, but he was not evangelical.¹²⁹ However, Reagan, unlike Carter, decided to court conservative evangelicals, and although evangelicals were not a unified force, Reagan understood the benefits of having them on his side.

Known as the Great Communicator, Reagan had a way with words. He was able to effortlessly blend conservative political language with evangelical religious ideals. In fact, political historians often point to the Evil Empire speech as a turning point in U.S. foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, but they fail to mention the importance of where the speech took place—the annual conference for the National Association of Evangelicals. Reagan spent the majority of his speech speaking against the evils of social engineering in Washington, abortion, promiscuity, freedoms set forth by the Founding Fathers, and the danger of communism. The speech was saturated with the redemption of God against these evils. One example includes,

Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness -- pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual

¹²⁹Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan : A Spiritual Life*, 2005; John Patrick Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008); Bob Abernethy, *Ronald Reagan and the Religious Right*, vol. no. 741, Perspectives (PBS, 2004), <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week741/perspectives.html>. The debate surrounding Reagan's faith continues today. Some like Washington Post political analyst E.J. Donnie and Professor Diggins cite that Reagan rarely attended church and was just knew the right words to say to evangelicals. While NAE president Richard Cizik and Professor Kengor cite statements made by Reagan pointing to sincere belief. In light of how evangelical is defined in this thesis it would seem accurate, without conducting in-depth research on the Reagan's faith, that he was a protestant Christian, but not an evangelical.

man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world.¹³⁰

The Evil Empire speech clearly displayed the black and white contrast between good and evil for which Reagan was known. This contrast is one of the reasons many conservative evangelicals were drawn to him. Evangelicals believed in absolute good and evil. In a world of increasing relativism and changing social mores many pined for someone like Regan who would stand up and fight against the moral depravity that seemed to be taking hold of the American culture.

While not reading too far into this fact, the NAE held their 1983 annual meeting, which Reagan attended, in Orlando, Florida. Like Nixon's press conference at Disney, the decision to hold the NAE national conference in Orlando pointed to the continued importance of central Florida on the national scene; all the while Calvary continued to grow in both members and influence.

Although many evangelicals had doubts about Jimmy Carter, the majority still voted for him to be president, but after four years, evangelicals, like any other social group when their ideals were not upheld, became discouraged, and then found hope in Ronald Reagan.¹³¹ Dennis Shear recalled this shift that took place at Calvary,

In 1980 it became apparent that Calvary was Republican, and that became apparent by the way we prayed, the way we looked at the culture, and it was pretty apparent, without

¹³⁰“Reagan, ‘Evil Empire,’ Speech Text,” 8, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/reagan-evil-empire-speech-text/>.

¹³¹ “National Exit Polls Table,” accessed June 19, 2013, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/national-exit-polls.html>.

saying it, that we were voting for Ronald Reagan—and that was a very significant thing in those days—I mean, for that awareness to be felt as it was, that Calvary was, in effect, Republican. We did not support Jimmy Carter—his botching of the hostages, etc.—it became apparent that Ronald Reagan's conservatism would be where we were going.¹³²

It is important to reiterate that the evangelical political movement was not a monolithic force that had the power to sway elections. Neither was it fair to say all theologically conservative evangelicals were politically conservative. This false dichotomy was also present in the minds of evangelicals. Dennis Shear retold a story of how he was “shocked” to find out that he upset members of a Baptist convention that he was preaching at when he referred negatively to Democrat presidential hopeful Michael Dukakis. However, the transition of Calvary from Democrat to Republican allegiance made some like Florida State Representative Bill Nelson nervous about losing some of the Christian vote¹³³ Nelson, who represented Florida in the House of Representatives, was raised Baptist and continued to be a committed Christian, but like Carter he tried to separate his religious beliefs from his political actions.¹³⁴ The fact that Nelson remained in his elected position should be a realization that, although conservative evangelicals at Calvary were voting Republican, they were not strong enough to swing an election.

¹³²Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴“Nelson Doesn’t Act Like Christian, Harris Says,” *Orlando Sentinel*, accessed April 8, 2013, http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2006-10-06/news/SENRELIGION06_1_nelson-true-christians-christians-and-non-christians. Nelson still faces criticism from conservative evangelicals as this article from 2006 shows the tension between individual faith and political action.

Washington for Jesus

Politically active conservative evangelicals at Calvary were not discouraged by political losses—if they lost it was a sign of the Lord’s return—if they won God was on their side. In April of 1980 Calvary supported a national event in Washington D.C. called Washington for Jesus. It was co-chaired by three well-known evangelicals John Gimenez, Bill Bright, and Pat Robertson. The co-chairs insisted that the rally was not meant to be political, but to be a call for America to turn back to God. “For once,” Gimenez stated, “the city of Washington will not be the site of a demonstration, a march, or a protest. Instead, it will be blessed with a once-in-a-lifetime celebration of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”¹³⁵ This claim, however, was met with jeers and skepticism from more liberal Christian organizations.

Since 1943 a growing tension existed between the National Council of Churches (NCC)¹³⁶ and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The NCC represented liberal Protestantism whereas the NAE represented conservative Protestantism. The NAE feared the growing influence of modernism on Christian orthodoxy and wanted to slow its growth, but the NCC controlled much of the radio waves.¹³⁷ In response the NAE was formed to give a voice to Protestant evangelicals. When the NAE was formed there was much debate over who was allowed to join. Fundamentalists such as Carl McIntire were distrustful of modern Pentecostalism and called it “obnoxious.” The decision was made to include Pentecostalism,

¹³⁵“Washington for Jesus,” *Charisma*, March 1980, 22.

¹³⁶Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God*, 92. Formerly known as the Federal Council of Churches.

¹³⁷Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial*. See for more information on the story of radio ministry.

and other groups that were formally denied in fundamentalist associations.¹³⁸ The tension between the NCC and the NAE continued to exist, and was evident in, the opposition toward Washington for Jesus.

The National Council of Churches released a statement in response to the rally, which claimed, “It is arrogant to assert that one’s position on a political issue is Christian and all others are un-Christian.”¹³⁹ The NCC was one of 20 religious groups that issued a statement denouncing the event. Gimenez, who was shocked by the reaction stated, “it’s almost as if no one believes that a group of Christians would come here and pray for their country.”¹⁴⁰ One blind spot in the objections and newspaper articles is that both liberal and conservative Christians took part in the political arena. Senator Mark Hatfield and Jim Wallis had a liberal political agenda based off of their evangelical beliefs.¹⁴¹ The question was not, should Christians participate in politics; rather, it was what perspective should Christians take on, which Jerry Falwell bluntly pointed out, “Nobody’s ever accused the National Council of Churches of mixing religion and politics,” furthermore, “when ol’ Jerry gets into it, that’s violating separation of church and state. The

¹³⁸Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism Volume 2 - Since 1941*, First Edition (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub House, 1989), 13–52; Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God*, 92–95. See for more information on the disagreements on membership to the NAE.

¹³⁹“Religious Rally on Mall in the Capital Draws Support and Criticism: Political Focus Denied Organizers Are Listed,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1980, 64, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/121227573/abstract/13D507A397412D7FC92/3?accountid=10003>.

¹⁴⁰BEN A. FRANKLIN Special to The New York Times, “200,000 March and Pray at Christian Rally in Capital: Lobbying on Capitol Hill 200,000 at Washington Mall Join March and Prayer Rally Cast Into ‘A World Aflame’ Rally Denounced as Right-Wing,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1980, A–20.

¹⁴¹Fendall, *Stand Alone or Come Home*; Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*.

problem isn't violating anything. The problem is that we don't agree with those buzzards—and that we outnumber them."¹⁴² While Washington for Jesus displayed the growing dissent between liberal and conservative evangelicals, it also contained a growing relationship between non-charismatic and charismatic evangelicals.

When the NAE was formed debate persisted over whether to allow Pentecostals to join the conservative organization. Since then the tension continued, and not everyone was unified. Evangelical preacher James Robinson was nervous about the prospect of attendees' speaking in tongues, a prominent, albeit controversial Pentecostal tenet.¹⁴³ Later, Robinson announced that Washington for Jesus was "one of the first times that mainline denominations joined hands with charismatics and Pentecostals and said, 'Let's stand up together.' This was significant. This was a sort of coming together for a lot of different groups."¹⁴⁴ In fact both historians of religion and political historians have pointed to Washington for Jesus as the foundation for what many today consider the Religious Right.¹⁴⁵ Historian John Turner recalled an interview with Gimenez that reflected evangelical attitude during the rally,

According to Gimenez, the organizers of WFJ only invited one politician to pray at the

¹⁴² Allan J. Mayer et al., "A Tide of Born-Again Politics," *Newsweek*, September 15, 1980, 28.

¹⁴³ John G. Turner, "Selling Jesus to Modern America: Campus Crusade for Christ, Evangelical Culture, and Conservative Politics" (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame, 2006), 374.

¹⁴⁴ Edward E. Plowman, "Washington for Jesus: Revival Fervor and Political Disclaimers," *Christianity Today*, May 23, 190, 46, found in Martin, *With God On Our Side*, 212.

¹⁴⁵ David Manuel, *The Gathering: The Story Behind Washington For Jesus* (Rock Harbor Press, 1980); Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997); Martin, *With God On Our Side*, 211–212; Turner, *Bill Bright & Campus Crusade for Christ*, 196–197.

rally, Jimmy Carter. Carter demurred, probably not wanting to lend credence to jeremiads about the state of the country under his watch. “Carter refused to even acknowledge [us],” complains Gimenez. “In fact we had a lot of problems trying to get permits, and his [Carter’s] man was against us.” Reagan, who missed few opportunities during the campaign to solidify his evangelical support, asked to speak or pray at WFJ but did not receive permission to do so. Gimenez recalls that when Carter left town during WFJ, his plane flew over the rally, which for Gimenez symbolized how much the relationship between Carter and evangelicals had decayed in only four years.¹⁴⁶

Calvary and *Charisma* promoted Washington for Jesus through advertisements and articles.¹⁴⁷

Calvary continued to be more politically active in central Florida and the moral issues such as abortion, sex education, and school prayer that concerned Washington for Jesus were a focus for Calvary and *Charisma* as well.

In August 1980 evangelicals again reached out to Carter and asked him to attend a “national affairs briefing,” sponsored by a group dedicated to organizing evangelicals for political action called the Religious Roundtable, but again Carter turned down the invitation. However, unlike the Washington for Jesus rally, Reagan received an invitation to speak at the Religious Roundtable and he accepted it. Evangelicals still felt like a marginalized voice, a feeling reinforced by the Carter administration, but a feeling that would change with Reagan. While Carter failed to appear in front of 15,000 evangelicals in Dallas, Reagan gave a speech that helped to endear him to conservative evangelicals.¹⁴⁸

Since the start of my presidential campaign, I—and many others—have felt a new vitality

¹⁴⁶Turner, “Selling Jesus to Modern America,” 374–375.

¹⁴⁷“Washington for Jesus,” 23. This is continued evidence pointing to the growing relationship between charismatic and non-charismatic evangelicals.

¹⁴⁸Turner, “Selling Jesus to Modern America,” 381.

in American politics. A fresh sense of purpose, a deeper feeling of commitment is giving new energy and new direction to our public life. You are a major part of the reason. Religious America is awakening, perhaps just in time for our country's sake. I have seen the impact of your dedication. I know the sincerity of your intent. And I am deeply honored to be with you today.¹⁴⁹

Reagan continued his speech by referring to the moral decay facing America as a result of the secularism in government. He stated that those in power had “forgotten both ‘that old time religion’ and that old time constitution,” and, as a result, those in government continued to reshape the education and “family” values.¹⁵⁰ Reagan’s speech was filled with biblical and hopeful language that contrasted the negative “malaise” in Carter’s earlier address to the nation. It would seem that Reagan understood the importance of empowering and organizing the individual evangelical and in his speech he effectively included them in the political process with statements starting with “*We* [emphasis added] can” and later in the speech transitioning to “*You* [emphasis added] can.”¹⁵¹ Reagan was able to capture the conservative evangelical vote that Carter failed to see, and Gerald Ford failed to grasp in 1976.¹⁵² With Reagan as president conservative evangelicals felt empowered and not marginalized. Evangelicals were becoming better organized and politically active on both the national and local levels. Many causes that Calvary took up in the late 1970s and 1980s were not clearly seen on the national level and were connected to the education of the next generation.

¹⁴⁹Ronald Reagan, “Address By The Honorable Ronald Reagan” (Dallas, Texas, August 22, 1980), 1, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 5–11.

¹⁵²Jeffrey L. Brudney and Gary W. Copeland, “Evangelicals as a Political Force: Reagan and the 1980 Religious Vote,” *Social Science Quarterly* (University of Texas Press) 65, no. 4 (December 1984): 1072–1079, found in Turner, “Selling Jesus to Modern America,” 381. Although the evangelical vote alone was not powerful enough to swing an election it contributed to the margin of victory that Ford failed to receive in 1976.

A Cautious Hope

In many ways Calvary became politically active before many evangelical political organizations were formed. It is often claimed that the birth of the Religious Right started in the 1980s with the formation Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. While, it is true that these large national organizations put a spotlight on political active conservative evangelicals, it must be said and understood that places such as Calvary Assembly in Orlando laid the foundation for a populist national movement.

This argument was supported by the political focus of *Charisma* during 1976. The house organ of Calvary contained articles like "God and the Ballot Box," "Pray, America for America," "If My People," "America Needs Christians to Run, Win, and Serve," "Here's Life America: A gift that is needed for America's 200th Birthday," "Charisma Salutes The Bicentennial: Celebrating Freedom," and even political advertisements such as "The born-again Christian's Political Action Kit."¹⁵³ *Charisma* informed the evangelicals of central Florida that it was their duty as Christians and Americans to become politically active. This call into politics was an accurate example of the core tenets of neo-evangelicalism. At the center of the articles published in *Charisma* was the presumption that it was the duty of evangelicals to become active in the political process because they were followers of Christ who was not against the world, but was the transformer of the world.

¹⁵³"God and the Ballot Box," *Charisma*, July 1976; Derek Prince, "Pray America, For America," *Charisma*, July 1976; John Conlan, "If My People," *Charisma*, March 1976; "America Needs Christians to Run, Win, and Serve," *Charisma*, May 1976; Wanda Dugan, "Here's Life America: A Gift That Is Needed for America's 200th Birthday," *Charisma*, July 1976; "Charisma Salutes The Bicentennial: Celebrating Freedom," *Charisma*, July 1976; "The Born-again Christian's Political Action Kit," *Charisma*, March 1976.

Pessimism still persisted in the pages of *Charisma*, and within church newsletters—whispers of the Rapture and the end times remained.¹⁵⁴ More often than not the message from *Charisma* and other Calvary publications were cautiously hopeful. The focus was still negative, evangelicals at Calvary and elsewhere still felt marginalized, but they believed in the power of prayer, and, for Pentecostals, the intervention and power of the Holy Spirit overshadowed all fears.¹⁵⁵ One of the fears that threatened the future of America was the education of their children.

The Right Education

The banning of school prayer in the 1960s by the Supreme Court had always been a hot button issue for evangelicals. To them it proved to be another stepping stone to a secular atheistic society that would take away their freedom. Bill Bright echoed these concerns in his speech during the Washington for Jesus rally,

It's no mystery. We've turned from God and God is chastening us. Laugh if you will. The critics will laugh. And they'll make fun. But I'll tell you, this is God's doing. You go back to 1962 and 3 [when the Supreme Court banned school-sponsored prayers and devotional exercises] and you'll discover a series of plagues that came upon America. First, the assassination of President Kennedy. The war in Vietnam accelerated. The drug culture swept millions of young people into the drug scene. The youth revolution. Crime accelerated over 300 percent in a brief period of time. Racial conflict threatened to tear

¹⁵⁴Sherry Andrews, "The Rapture-Not If, But When"; Marc Lawson, "Signs of the End Times," *Calvary Life*, January 12, 1982.

¹⁵⁵Stephen Strang, "A Spiritual Revolution," *Charisma*, August 1975; "Are We God's Chosen People," *Charisma*, September 1977; Sherry Andrews, "Evangelists: What Are They Saying to the Body of Christ?," *Charisma*, March 1978; Bob Mumford, "Facing the Future"; Roy Harthern, "God Bless America," *Charisma*, July 1976; Dave Gable, "God Is Talking to America"; "Prayer Changes Nation," *Charisma*, July 1976; "April Prayer Emphasis," *Calvary News*, 1978; "January Prayer Focus," *Calvary News*, 1979; "Men's Prayer Breakfast," *Calvary News*, 1979; "Pray and Vote," *Calvary News*, 1978.

our nation apart. The Watergate scandal. The divorce rate accelerated. There were almost as many divorces as marriages. And there was an epidemic of teenage pregnancies, an epidemic of venereal disease, an epidemic of drug addiction, an epidemic of alcoholism. And now, we are faced with a great economic crisis ... God is saying to us, 'Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!'¹⁵⁶

Evangelicals felt that the public education system in America was becoming an ideology shaped by a progressive method of teaching that brainwashed their children.¹⁵⁷ One of the first uproars after the ban on school prayer was the revision of sex education in public schools.

Tim LaHaye, former pastor, founder of the Institute for Creation Research, and co-founder of the political organization Moral Majority, wrote a booklet in 1969 warning parents about the "Radical Sex Education Program" taking place in public schools across America. He warned his readers: "Be sure of this, the RADICAL SEX EDUCATION program is an anti-God, anti-Christian, and anti-Bible movement. It is time for Christians to stand up and lead our nation in a vigorous fight against this threat to our society."¹⁵⁸ Evangelicals like LaHaye feared that sex education taught by a secular school system would lead to children being exposed to pornographic material, which would lead to a higher pregnancy rate, and in turn an increase in abortions.

Almost twenty years after LaHaye raised concern over sex education the battle still raged. In 1988 Calvary began to publish a newsletter called *Insight* that examined a variety of moral

¹⁵⁶ Bill Bright found in Turner, "Selling Jesus to Modern America," 371.

¹⁵⁷ Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 300.

¹⁵⁸ Tim LaHaye, *A Christian View of Radical Sex Education* (San Diego: Family Life Seminars, c. 1969), found in Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 75.

issues that it felt needed to be confronted in central Florida and across the country. One of those issues was sex education in Orange and Seminole counties. As a result of the AIDS epidemic and high pregnancy rate Seminole and Orange county decided to form committees to propose expanding the sex education programs to elementary school. The report urged parents to contact the school board telling them to “support a pro-abstinence approach, and to call for equal treatment of pro-life and pro-family points of view in all aspects of the proposed curricula.”¹⁵⁹ Sex education was not the only topic that caused concern among evangelical parents—history was another subject under attack.

Evangelicals had a view of history that centered on God’s plan for America. The moral crisis that America faced in the 1970s and 1980s was a result of the nation turning their back on God. Looking at the history of the country one could see God’s plan. It was the duty of evangelicals to ensure the next generation would see God’s hand in the formation and greatness of America. Peter Marshall and David Manuel were popular authors who supported the notion among evangelicals that God had chosen America to be a witness to humanity. As historian Matthew Sutton pointed out their books found their way in to many conservative schools. In the introduction of *The Light and the Glory* Marshall and Manuel stated,

In Truth, this book is not intended to be a history textbook, but rather a search for the hand of God in different periods of our nation’s beginning. We feel, due to the extreme gravity of America’s present spiritual and moral condition, that it is imperative that we Americans rediscover our spiritual moorings...Our basic presupposition—that God had a

¹⁵⁹*Sex Education Studies Continue*, education, Insight: A Look at Moral Issues in Central Florida (Orlando, Fla., United States: Churches for Community Values, May 25, 1988), 1, Calvary Assembly of God.

definite and extremely demanding plan for America—was confirmed, albeit in a number of surprising ways.¹⁶⁰

Calvary and *Charisma* took a similar view of American history. In the first issue of the magazine editor Steve Strang wrote an article on the spiritual revolutions that took place in the country that brought Americans back to God. In a later issue Marshall and Manuel took out a full-page advertisement.¹⁶¹ In the weekly church bulletin distributed before Sunday morning service Clattenburg wrote that the founding fathers had understood and followed the will of God, that George Washington submitted to God, and that God guided Christopher Columbus to the New World.¹⁶² Clattenburg used these examples to make statements about the future of America such as, “God has always had a distinct purpose for our country.” In another he wrote, “Our vision must be rekindled for the future. We must believe there is hope.” Hope in the transformation of America was the key to understanding the need of neo-evangelicals to become politically active. Clattenburg continued, “In my evaluation, there is probably no greater influence in America than those who control our educational courses. The school boards in each county are pivotal to what happens in the classroom.”¹⁶³ This growing concern over the education of their children prompted many evangelical churches to form their own elementary and secondary schools.

¹⁶⁰Peter Marshall; David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1977), found in Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 86.

¹⁶¹Strang, “A Spiritual Revolution”; “Are We God’s Chosen People.”

¹⁶²Alex Clattenburg, “Calvary Life- George Washington,” *Calvary Life*, October 1, 1986; Alex Clattenburg, “Calvary Life-Christopher Columbus,” *Calvary Life*, July 9, 1986; Alex Clattenburg, “Calvary Life-Founding Fathers,” *Calvary Life*, August 16, 1986; Alex Clattenburg, “Calvary Life-restore America,” *Calvary Life*, July 6, 1988.

¹⁶³Clattenburg, “Calvary Life-Christopher Columbus”; Clattenburg, “Calvary Life-Founding Fathers.”

Many evangelical leaders founded their own universities to provide conservative education to young evangelicals. Some of them like Liberty University gained national attention, and even some scholarly works has been completed on the history of evangelical higher education, but not much has been written on churches forming elementary and secondary schools.¹⁶⁴

Lynchburg Christian Academy was founded 1967 by Jerry Falwell as a ministry of Thomas Road Baptist church. Falwell's church has a similar history to that of Calvary. It started as a small church in the 1950s and by the 1970s it had been one of the fastest growing churches in America. However, due to Falwell's continual presence as pastor and his enthusiasm for political action, Thomas Road Baptist gained national attention in the political arena whereas Calvary remained regionally influential. Dennis Shear recalled one possible reason for Calvary's limited influence was the departure of Roy Harthern and the "regrouping" done by Clattenburg. When Clattenburg took over as lead pastor of Calvary, he had to pick up the pieces of a congregation that was wounded by the dramatic departure of their charismatic pastor, that had led the church through so much change. Shear continued,

¹⁶⁴William C. Ringenberg, *Christian College, The: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Charles W. Pollard, *May It Always Be True: Educating Students in Faith* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2011); Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004); Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*; D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Melinda Bollar Wagner, *God's Schools: Choice and Compromise in American Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Joan DelFattore, *The Fourth R: Conflicts over Religion in America's Public Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Hanna Rosin, *God's Harvard: A Christian College on a Mission to Save America*, Reprint (Boston: Mariner Books, 2008).

I think the spiritual and psychological reaction to Roy Harthern's departure was much greater than a normal departure of a pastor, because had Roy left for ill health, had Roy resigned to take another pastorate, I think things could have continued on that course, but because he resigned with a moral issue it was a blatant distraction from the agenda that was being set by the Moral Majority... I think Alex was faced with what he saw as three things: 1. I have to keep a church together and reinstall a spirit of holiness, wholeness, spiritually. 2. We have a building to build. 3. We now have a reputation to live down.¹⁶⁵

Calvary lost some of its steam when Harthern left, however, it by no means stopped Calvary's political agenda. Politics was now part of their identity for neo-evangelicals, and Calvary's size had enabled them to be more organized than many evangelical churches at the time. They continued to mix spirituality with politics in events like Intercessors for America, Minute Men meetings, political education courses, and, like Thomas Road Baptist, they founded their own school.

In 1975 Lynchburg Christian Academy (LCA) published pamphlets to advertise the benefits of enrolling children at their school. The first was quality education. The school was accredited, but its curriculum was more advance then most public schools. The school had no drug problems. Even more importantly the Academy had, "Bible reading and prayer are legal at Lynchburg Christian Academy." Other benefits included, "We have no hippies," "Our students are taught to love America," and "Our students are taught to take orders and respect authority."¹⁶⁶ Calvary also formed their own school and, they made sure the community knew about the benefits.

¹⁶⁵Rustin Lloyd, *Interview with Dennis Shear*.

¹⁶⁶"Five Things We Think You Will Like about Lynchburg Christian Academy," 1975, Lynchburg Christian Academy folder, Liberty University archives, found in, Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 80-81.

Calvary School was founded in 1985, as a way to bring education back to a Christian focus, as defined by Noah Webster in 1828 and elaborated by Rosalie Slater in 1965. “The Principle Approach is America’s historic Christian method of Biblical reasoning which makes the truths of God’s Word the basis of every subject in the school curriculum.”¹⁶⁷ Calvary school wanted to make sure that students were able to think critically and recognized their dependence on God. Public schools, said Dixie Thompson, the school principal, focused on creating a group mentality that made children feel entitled and created socialists that would depend on the government and not on God. Thompson’s view on the education of America’s children was the common negative perception, that without the development of the individual, America was doomed. Thompson still had hope, as long as evangelicals attempted to transform the culture.

I really believe that this may be the last generation we have to turn things around in our country. Before I heard about this program, I didn’t see how it could be done, but now I see some genuine hope. I know that this is what God has raised up in response to those who have prayed so faithfully for so long.¹⁶⁸

Historian Darren Duchuk has written on the migration of white evangelicals to Southern California. His work identified why evangelicals felt it important to form their own schools. The movement was caused by a number of things, but most importantly, it was caused by a commitment to the sanctity of the local community, which, according to Dochuk, gave white southerners, and in-turn southern evangelicals, a sense of guardianship over their society. As

¹⁶⁷Rosalie Slater, *Teaching and Learning America’s Christian History*, 1ST ed. (Chesapeake, VA: Fndtn for Amer Christian Educ, 1965), 88, found in, “Calvary School: Using Godly Methods to Teach God’s Message,” *Calvary People*, winter 1984, 4. Noah Webster is considered by many evangelicals to be an early advocate for an American Christian education because of the importance he placed on the Bible in education. Slater would later take Webster’s ideas to form the organization called the Foundation for American Christian Education in 1965. The mission of the organization was the “restoration” of America by placing the Bible back in the center of education.

¹⁶⁸“Calvary School: Using Godly Methods to Teach God’s Message,” 5.

they moved west, and in the case of Florida, south, this feeling of guardianship grew stronger and southern evangelicals felt more at odds with the liberal society leading them to set up separate systems. “Southern evangelicals began constructing an alternative system of churches and schools, and proclaimed their brand of Christian nationalism as a counterweight to progressive notions of citizenship.”¹⁶⁹ Forming alternative institutions was rooted in fundamentalism, but unlike fundamentalist, neo-evangelicals formed organizations like Calvary School not to disengage society; rather to transform it.

Within the first academic year of Calvary School enrollment increased to one hundred students forcing the school to add three more teachers. The school was developing evangelicals that, although sheltered from the world as children, would not retreat from the world later. “By teaching **self-government**, the internal control of the individual by the power of the Holy Spirit, as opposed to the **Self-control** through external forces, the school aims to build such strong characters in the children that they can stand against the forces of the world and humanistic philosophies.”¹⁷⁰ Another pamphlet emphasized that the classical education received at Calvary School would raise up a generation, like that of the Founding Fathers, which had the power to transform America for many generations to come.¹⁷¹ Clattenburg wrote a message to Calvary that summed up the hope found among neo-evangelicals in the 1980s,

¹⁶⁹Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, xix–xx.

¹⁷⁰“Calvary School: Providing an Education and a Way of Life,” *Calvary People*, Summer 1985, 8.

¹⁷¹“Calvary Assembly School: Education for Life” (Calvary Assembly, n.d.), 3, Calvary Assembly of God, accessed October 24, 2012.

Some leaders today believe we will be judged for our ungodliness. We certainly warrant judgment. But we can stand on a Scriptural principle of God. Jeremiah had a word of prophecy concerning Israel. That Word applies to any people in any nation...In Jeremiah 18:8 the Scripture says, 'If the nation which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent the calamity I planned to bring on it.'"¹⁷²

¹⁷²Clattenburg, "Calvary Life-Christopher Columbus."

CONCLUSION

Calvary Assembly represented the growth of Orlando, the charismatic movement, and the political activism of evangelicals in relation to the rest of the nation. Its history can be seen as a microcosm for the rest of the nation. A confluence of factors such as the arrival of a charismatic leader in Roy Harthern, the popularity of *Charisma* magazine in the charismatic movement, and the population increase in Orlando all contributed to Calvary's impressive increase in size. However, it was more than just size that contributed to Calvary's growing influence in the political scene.

Theological concepts centered on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, prophecy, and the Second Coming of Christ had been part of Christian orthodoxy long before neo-evangelicals became political actors in America. Christians in the first century thought that Christ would return in their lifetime, and without trying to be too general it is safe to say that many Christians in each generation since have felt the same way. Still many engaged in society hoping that helping people see the moral obligations of a society would bring people to Christ. With the advent of Darwinian evolution many Christians felt under attack by an encroaching and increasingly secular society. Christians, who were known as fundamentalist, preached the "fundamentals" of the Christian life, but instead of engaging society they decided to focus on themselves and wait for the imminent coming of Christ.

Beginning around the 1950s a new trend in American Christianity was taking place known as neo-evangelicalism. Fundamentalism was not working the way many believers hoped. American society, in their eyes, was falling apart, and Christ had yet to return. Neo-evangelicals were tired of retreating and being on the margins of the society—they wanted to transform society and lead the repentance back to God. Neo-evangelicals were going to speak loud enough so that all Americans would hear what they had to say. No longer would they be counted as a group who did not matter, and like many other social movements before them, they would use politics as a megaphone to be heard.

Unlike fundamentalists, neo-evangelicals used the Christian doctrines mentioned above, not as reasons to retreat from society, but as reasons to transform society. This change in mentality could be seen when Harthern became pastor at Calvary. Instead of building a church that would focus on abstaining from secular events like bowling, Calvary would begin to use those events as a way to engage the community. Television ministry, musicals, and publications were a way to bring “lost souls” to the church, and transform the city around them. As churches like Calvary increased in size and influence they became recognized as a political voice receiving visits from local and national politicians. No longer on the margins of society neo-evangelicals attempted to influence public policy. This brought renewed hope that Calvary was following the will of God and being led by the Holy Spirit, but many still felt that they were being persecuted by the larger secular society. Fear that their sanity of community was being violated many wanted their children to be educated the “right” way. The hope, that they were raising the next generation of evangelicals who would stand up for the will of God and save America from certain destruction, was the hope that kept many evangelicals from retreating once

more into the shadows of society. The history of Calvary Assembly is important, not only because it provides a rich local history of a church whose impact can still be seen today, but also because it helps to explain a larger national narrative that is often overlooked or oversimplified.

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