

## ABSTRACT

A Prophet Unwelcome: *motive* Magazine, the Methodist Student Movement, and Midcentury Methodism

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*motive* magazine (1941-1972) was the official magazine of the Methodist Student Movement and, for several of its final years, for the University Christian Movement as well. Controversial from the beginning, *motive* stood apart from contemporary campus ministry publications with its featuring of avant-garde art, leftist political and social commentary, and engagement with radical theology. The narrative that has accompanied *motive's* legacy tells of a progressive and prophetic publication that succumbed to the censure of an oppressive denominational governing board. This thesis, however, will argue that identity politics, organizational instability, and financial troubles were largely responsible for the magazine's demise. This work will contend that by jettisoning faith as its distinguishing factor, *motive* ceded its unique status as one of the last bastions of faith-based, grassroots liberal activism and social commentary, and will suggest that this space would come to be filled by the evangelical left directly following the magazine's undoing.

A Prophet Unwelcome: *motive* Magazine, the Methodist Student Movement, and Midcentury  
Methodism

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of History

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## DEDICATION

To my grandfather, Raymond G. Smith

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In 1972, college student Warren Blumenfeld wrote, “When I entered college a few years ago, I felt a sense of joy at finding what I considered a more open-minded atmosphere.”<sup>1</sup> He recalled his participation in demonstrations against the Vietnam War, his joy in joining with Black and Chicano students in their struggle against housing discrimination, and his active promotion of ecological education. “All of these activities,” he remembered, “gave me a greater sense of worth.... Something was missing though. There remained within me a great unacceptable void because I was a homosexual on a straight American college campus.”<sup>2</sup>

The vulnerable coming-out narrative and call for gay consciousness that followed did not find expression at a Gay Liberation Front rally or meeting of the homosexual student movement, but rather in the pages of *motive* magazine, a publication that for nearly three decades had served as the editorial face for the Methodist Student Movement.<sup>3</sup> The magazine, published by the Methodist Board of Education, boasted a circulation of over 37,000 copies during its peak years, and received national fame in religious and secular publishing communities alike.<sup>4</sup> In 1966, *Time* magazine quipped that among other religious publications *motive* “[stood] out...like a miniskirt at a church

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<sup>1</sup> Blumenfeld, Warren, “Gays on Campus,” *motive*, 1972, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> *motive* was always spelled with a lower-case *m* as a symbol of nonconformity.

<sup>4</sup> *Ayer Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, vol. 101 (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Sons, Inc., 1969).



social.”<sup>5</sup> The magazine was influential in shaping a generation of future activists and politicians.<sup>6</sup>

The magazine’s first twenty years coincided with the heyday of American Protestant liberalism and mainline influence. *motive*’s first decade saw articles on conscientious objection in the wake of WWII, cooperative living, and the integration of faith and daily life. Prominent topics in following years ranged from the civil rights struggle to worldwide ecumenism, all the while keeping its readers abreast of up-and-coming books, films, and artists. By all accounts, *motive* occupied a space on the cutting edge of culture, while remaining firmly established in the Methodist tradition of mainline liberalism. The avant-garde publication drew criticism from conservatives throughout its lifespan, but this criticism escalated exponentially in the 1960s, as the magazine’s content grew explicitly leftist.

Ultimately, the magazine that began as a campus ministry effort to promote student engagement with the arts, theological discourse, and social activism met its demise in the early seventies. The issue in which the opening account appeared would be *motive*’s last. Dedicated to gay men’s liberation, the issue was the culmination of several decades of controversy and tension between the staff of *motive* and the denomination it represented. The resulting narrative that has accompanied *motive*’s legacy is one of a progressive and prophetic publication that succumbed to the censure of an oppressive denominational governing board as a generation of student activists was stifled by the rising national tide of religious and political conservatism. This study sets out to examine

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<sup>5</sup> “Methodists: A Jester for Wesleyans,” *Time*, October 21, 1966.

<sup>6</sup> Du Mez, Kristin, “Can Hillary Clinton’s Faith Help Her Lead a Fractured Nation?” *Religion and Politics*, July 25, 2016.

the life of *motive* magazine and, by extension, the student movements it was tied to, in order to determine whether or not this narrative is correct and to explore the ways in which the trajectory of the magazine's life speaks to the trajectory of the broader midcentury mainline.

### *Significance and Need*

A study of *motive* not only offers a necessary contribution to mainline histories, denominational histories, and histories of midcentury activism, but speaks to present political, religious, and cultural realities as well. Traditionally, histories of the twentieth century mainline have been characterized by a narrative of rise and decline, eventually culminating in the ceding of ground to the expanding forces of evangelicalism. More recently, however, historians have pushed back against this declension narrative. In her study of *The Christian Century*, Elesha Coffman argues that although mainline churches experienced a decline in attendance in the second half of the twentieth century, *The Christian Century*—and the tradition it represented—continued in many ways to flourish and wield influence among an intellectual elite, retaining its prominence if not its popularity.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, historians such as David Hollinger and Matt Hedstrom have argued that the mainline's perceived decline was actually a product of the establishment's cultural success.<sup>8</sup> They contend that many mainline ideals, such as liberal theology and a commitment to multicultural values, were adopted by American culture at large and increasingly found expression in non-religious outlets, resulting in what these authors

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<sup>7</sup> Elesha J. Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

have called a “post-Protestantism.” Thus, for Hollinger and Hedstrom, the Protestant mainline and mainstream secular culture became virtually indistinguishable.<sup>9</sup>

A study of *motive* magazine contributes to this historiography in several ways. The chronological scopes of the above studies do not extend past the 1950s. Thus, these studies do not include detailed analyses of the mainline response to the drastic changes taking place in the American religious landscape at midcentury. A study of *motive*, its readers, and its contributors can help to fill this gap, and can show how younger adherents—who, at midcentury, could be considered the future of the twentieth century mainline—fit into this history. If, as the aforementioned scholars argue, the mainline did not undergo a complete decline in influence despite its decline in popularity, a study of *motive* provides insight into the mainline’s renegotiation of its relationship to broader American culture in the sixties and seventies.

Additionally, an examination of *motive* and the conversation it produced illuminates the diversity of midcentury Methodism—and the mainline as a whole—by revealing the extremes within the establishment. While the goals and rhetoric of such movements speak to the vanguard and vision of a given denomination, the reactions of lay members to such positions reveal the fears and tensions present in the same tradition. Insider perspectives have dominated histories of Methodism, especially before the 1990s. These histories have either been laudatory reflections or have decried the decline of what they consider a once-great denomination. Even more recent and objective works on Methodism, however, tend to focus on the antebellum period and leave the twentieth century largely unexplored. Furthermore, while histories of midcentury activism,

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<sup>9</sup> David A. Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

especially the Civil Rights movement, have identified the Christian influence and overtones in such movements, they have failed to adequately explore the religious motivation of white and interracial efforts at participation.

Against this historiographical backdrop, an examination of *motive* can further nuance our understanding of the midcentury mainline, and bears both historical and present significance. Indeed, the publication has shown itself to be not only an important entity in the context of midcentury student life, but in modern-day politics as well. Hillary Clinton, who faithfully read *motive* throughout her college and young adult years, has cited the magazine's influence in shaping her political consciousness and facilitating her move to the Democratic Party. B. J. Stiles, the magazine's editor throughout its most turbulent decade, was influential in convincing Robert Kennedy to run for president in 1968, and boasted a successful career in decades following as he founded and led national nonprofit organizations aimed at raising awareness of and eradicating the HIV/AIDS crisis. *motive* contributors also went on to become influential academics; Dr. Tom F. Driver enjoyed a successful career as a renowned academic and theologian, eventually rising to the position of Paul Tillich Professor Emeritus of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary. Thus, a study of the magazine's content can facilitate the understanding of the forces that shaped some of the nation's most influential politicians and theologians of the twentieth century.

### *Methodology*

Although the magazine's significance certainly merits an exhaustive content analysis of its issues, such an examination would exceed the bounds of this study. This thesis draws on a selected number of pieces from *motive*'s early years in order to give

adequate background context, but primarily focuses on issues from the magazine's content during the 1960s and early 1970s. Content analysis alone, however, only illuminates one side of *motive*'s story, and is not sufficient in examining the multi-faceted history of the publication *vis-a-vis* the Methodist Student Movement (MSM) or the Methodist Church. In order to capture the textured nature of such a narrative, this thesis makes use of several oral history interviews with *motive* staff members, contributors, and readers. These interviews help to identify the influences that led these young adults to become involved with both the magazine and the MSM. They also offer a valuable account of the day-to-day running of *motive* and its internal dynamics, and allow for the tracing of *motive*'s institutional and grassroots relationships with secular student organizations, ecumenical student movements, and the Methodist Board of Education. Perhaps most importantly, the reflections of those involved with *motive* reveal much about their perceptions of midcentury religion and culture, and reveal important insight as to the motivations and goals of young participants in Christian student movements.

This thesis also makes use of archival records of the Methodist Board of Education, the Methodist Student Movement, and papers pertaining to the magazine. The Methodist Board of Education records give insight into the ecclesial character of the magazine, tensions between the board and the magazine's staff, and the state of *motive*'s finances. Later records from the Committee on the Future of *motive* reveal crucial details surrounding the magazine's tumultuous last years and the eventual decision to cease publication. While many of these documents speak to the nature of clerical opposition to *motive*, an examination of additional letters from lay individuals and organizations

critiquing the magazine further exposes the controversy and ideological diversity present in midcentury Methodism.

### *Chapter Divisions*

The second chapter of this thesis covers the contemporaneous births of the Methodist Student Movement and of *motive* magazine. It discusses the original vision for the future of the publication, its intended audience of college students, and its early theological and ideological influences. A summary of *motive*'s first two decades underscores *motive*'s progressive, theologically-rooted content, paying special attention to the magazine's unique role among students in the South and Midwest. This chapter also examines B.J. Stiles's background, probing the events and ideas that shaped *motive*'s most influential editor. This portion concludes with an overview of Stiles's election as editor and an analysis of his editorial vision for the publication, which stressed both ecumenism and radical relevancy to culture.

The third chapter focuses on *motive*'s content during Stiles's editorship (1961-1968), a time in the magazine shifted from the official publication of the Methodist Student Movement to that of the ecumenical University Christian Movement and distanced itself more and more from its denominational identity. Here, the thesis will use content analysis to examine the magazine's rhetorical responses contemporary trends in theology, race relations, and politics. This analysis will focus on the ways in which religious rhetoric is and is not employed, and will rely heavily on close readings of articles, reader responses, oral histories, and institutional records of the Methodist Student Movement. In order to demonstrate *motive*'s unique position in the world of

midcentury student publications, this portion of the thesis also engages in comparative analysis with other secular and religious publications of the day.

Chapter four will evaluate *motive*'s tumultuous final years following Stiles's departure, from early 1969 to the magazine's final two issues in early 1972. This portion of the thesis will explore *motive*'s grappling with its religious identity following the publication of two controversial issues in the spring of 1969 and subsequent encounter with censorship. Contemporaneously, the magazine's negotiation of its place in the church plays out in its search for a new ecumenical publisher. Here, the thesis examines *motive*'s ecumenical and secular connections, as well as the waning absence of theological perspective in the magazine's pages. The widening gap between the goals of the Board of Education and the *motive* staff will feature prominently as well. In order to accomplish this, chapter four will employ a similar source base as the previous chapter. Through further content analysis, personal testimony, and records from the Committee on the Future of *motive*, this section will determine the extent to which financial instability, political radicalism, identity politics, and backlash to the magazine's radicalism contributed to the magazine's undoing.

The conclusion summarizes *motive*'s trajectory over the course of its existence, from a publication intended to infuse the university experience with faith, beauty, and meaning to a publication that functioned almost exclusively as an advocate for radical theology and politics. This section counters the dominant narrative accompanying the demise of *motive* and Christian student activism, arguing that while pressure from more conservative Methodists may have contributed to the magazine's undoing, *motive*'s demise cannot be explained solely in terms of reactionary leadership stamping out a

progressive minority. Rather, an examination of the inner workings of *motive*, the Methodist Student Movement, and the Methodist Board of Education during the 1960s shows that financial trouble, organizational instability, and identity politics were largely responsible for the magazine's demise. In terms of a broader contribution to scholarship on the twentieth-century mainline, this study suggests several ways in which a history of *motive* can help scholars think about the experience of midcentury Methodism as a whole, as well as the trajectory of the mainline throughout the twentieth century. Finally, this study concludes that by shedding much of its Christian identity, *motive* ceded its unique status as one of the last bastions of faith-based, grassroots liberal activism and social commentary. The thesis concludes by suggesting that the collapse of *motive* magazine and the University Christian Movement created a space for the evangelical left—a group that combined a progressive political agenda with a relatively unified commitment to evangelical theology.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Coming of Age: The Formation of a Magazine and Its Most Iconic Editor

#### *Toward Regional Unity: The Early Years of the Methodist Student Movement and motive Magazine*

The Methodist Student Movement, out of which *motive* magazine emerged, found its roots in the nineteenth-century Protestant response to the burgeoning number of state universities. In addition to the campus ministry initiatives of the YMCA and YWCA, the contemporary Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions mobilized students on an international scale to facilitate the global spread of Christian missions. The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), founded in 1895, acted as an umbrella institution in the organization of these efforts. The WSCF's North American arm, the National Student Christian Federation (NSCF), brought the international Student Volunteer Movement's creative ministry techniques and push for ecumenicity to university campuses in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Following the rise of these organizations, American Methodists began to envision a movement that would appeal to students of their own denomination. But while the future Methodist Student Movement and its magazine would ultimately seek to unify Christian college students across the nation, its roots lie in an era in which the Methodist church still bore the scars of regional schism. In 1907, Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) minister James C. Baker began a pastoral experiment among students, faculty,

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<sup>1</sup> Robert C. Monk, "United Methodist Campus Ministry and the Methodist Student Movement," in *Connectionalism: Ecclesiology, Mission, and Identity*, ed. Russell E. Richey, Dennis M. Campbell, and William B. Lawrence, United Methodism and American Culture, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 179.

and staff at the University of Illinois. As many state universities had, by this time, undergone a thoroughgoing secularization, Baker sought to create a ministry that would provide students with the foundation needed to integrate their faith into their social and intellectual university experience. Denominational officials were well aware that an increasing number of college students were graduating from secular institutions having left the religion of their youth. They hoped Baker's approach to campus ministry would prove an effective antidote.<sup>2</sup> This format of campus ministry, dubbed "The Wesley Foundation," emphasized theological education, evangelism, and pastoral care. The Wesley Foundation model quickly spread across the state, and would eventually become the dominating model for Methodist campus ministry across the nation.<sup>3</sup>

The MEC was not alone, however, in its student-aimed outreach; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) had simultaneously developed a similar and equally successful model for its college students at both secular and denominational institutions.<sup>4</sup> By the 1930s, the Boards of Education for the MEC and the MECS had established separate staff positions exclusively for the purpose of overseeing campus ministry. The spirit of fellowship and connectedness that characterized student ministry in both of the major Methodist churches soon extended across regional lines. Although these two divisions of American Methodism had existed independently since their break in 1845,

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<sup>2</sup>For more on the church's engagement with the changing American university system and the parallel formation of the Student Christian Movements, see: Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education*, 1st ed (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Monk, "United Methodist Campus Ministry and the Methodist Student Movement," 180–82.

<sup>4</sup> Knippers, Diane LeMasters, "Religion and Society: A Content Analysis of motive Magazine" (Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1974), 43.

their Wesley Foundation leaders became increasingly open to the idea of a nationally unified front of Methodist college students.<sup>5</sup>

In December 1937, two hundred leaders and eight hundred student representatives from North and South met in St. Louis for what would become known as the first quadrennial gathering of the Methodist Student Movement.<sup>6</sup> This meeting predated the official reunion of the Methodist Church by two years, and set the tone for the progressive spirit that would characterize the Methodist Student Movement in the years to come. At the time of the merger in 1939, the new Board of Education established a Department of Student Work, made up of a three-person staff responsible for overseeing the movement.<sup>7</sup> The MSM was structured around a quadrennial national student meeting, an annual business meeting at which student input was taken into consideration, and more frequent gatherings at the local and state level.<sup>8</sup> By 1941, the MSM consisted of more than 100 individual Wesley Foundations and represented more than 100,000 students.<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that at this time the Methodist Church boasted more members than any Protestant denomination in the US. The sheer size and broad regional makeup of

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<sup>5</sup> Monk, "United Methodist Campus Ministry and the Methodist Student Movement."

<sup>6</sup> Clarence Prouty Shedd, *The Church Follows Its Students* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 119.

<sup>7</sup> The 1939 merger of the MEC and MECS that resulted in the formation of the Methodist Church also included the Methodist Protestant Church; discussion of the MPC has been omitted here, as the denomination did not factor as notably into the development of broader Methodist campus ministry.

<sup>8</sup> Shockley, Donald G., "The Methodist Student Movement: A Brief Historical Sketch," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 32, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 478–79.

<sup>9</sup> Monk, "United Methodist Campus Ministry and the Methodist Student Movement," 184.

Methodism contributed to the theological and political diversity within the denomination.<sup>10</sup>

While the organization of the MSM reflected a traditionally Methodist hierarchy, the movement's participants were not the traditional students of yesteryear. These students, who came of age during America's worst Depression in living memory and began their university studies against the backdrop of an escalating World War, knew that the times called for a faith that could withstand the onslaught of modernity and the turbulence it wrought in society. Since the inception of the movement itself, these students had clamored for a publication to inspire and educate their newly formed ranks.

*motive* magazine was the MSM's answer. The Board of Education named theatre and religion scholar Harold Ehrensperger as the publication's first editor. Ehrensperger clearly embodied the fusion of Christian faith, the arts, and intellectual engagement that *motive* sought to promote. At 43, the Harvard-educated editor boasted an impressive resume; in the 1920s, he visited the Soviet Union to study the renowned Moscow Art Theatre and had also studied under famed theatre and film director Max Reinhardt in Germany. A prolific writer, Ehrensperger exhibited a global perspective on faith and the arts that would soon find its way into the pages of *motive*.<sup>11</sup> But despite the magazine's intellectual respectability and operation under the Methodist Board of Education, it was clear from the beginning that *motive* would not be a typical campus ministry publication. Perhaps nothing captures this unique identity as well as *motive*'s "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," from its first issue:

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<sup>10</sup> Mark David Tooley, *Methodism and Politics in the 20th Century from William McKinley to 9/11* (Fort Valley, Ga.: Bristol House, 2011), xiv.

<sup>11</sup> "Dr. Harold Ehrensperger Dies; Active in Theatre and Religion," *New York Times*, November 10, 1973, sec. Obituaries.

This is a magazine for all your life, designed to fit in every moment from the time you rush into your clothes in the morning until you fall back again upon a bed at night. It aims to be a motive going with you all the way, the motive of a well-directed life, filled with meaning, purpose, and concern. That motive takes its origin from the most exciting man who ever lived, a man named Jesus, and is reflected in a thousand brilliant lives from his day to our own. It bases its belief, as he did, upon the value of human personality, upon living that respects all life. This magazine is written for you who have faith, and also for you who have doubt. If creeds and institutions have clouded rather than clarified your vision, then motive still may probe behind the face of things to seek the broader, deeper meanings that are valuable in life. This magazine seeks truth no matter where the search may lead.... It believes that in modern society, organization is necessary, but it also believes that directions and goals can be lost sight of in slavish loyalty to organization. It feels the church as an institution has a chance today that it has never had before, that the success or failure of the church will depend largely on what its members are. This is a magazine which takes its motive from Christ, yet it will not set forth dogma, harbor propaganda, nor try to sell adherence to an institution. Its purpose is to show the clear reflection of one life through every act that we do today. This is the faith for living and the purpose for “aliveness” that will be written through its every page...to go with you and to provide you with a *motive* even in these days of darkness and reaction—a *motive* for constructive Christian living.<sup>12</sup>

The student response to the fledgling publication was undeniably positive; in its first year alone, *motive*'s subscribers numbered more than five thousand, a number that would continue to grow significantly in the years to come.<sup>13</sup> As World War II came to a close, the future of the Methodist Student Movement—and of the mainline as a whole—appeared bright. Both church and college attendance soared as a wave of postwar optimism swept the nation.<sup>14</sup> The movement and its innovative publication were poised to guide college students through this new era in higher education.

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<sup>12</sup> “Apologia Pro Vita Sua,” *motive*, February 1941, [http://sth-archon.bu.edu/motive/issues/1941\\_February.html#2/z](http://sth-archon.bu.edu/motive/issues/1941_February.html#2/z).

<sup>13</sup> Monk, “United Methodist Campus Ministry and the Methodist Student Movement,” 184.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II*, 1. paperback printing, Studies in Church and State (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 35.

### *motive Magazine and the MSM as a Student Experience*

While the publication's most controversial years lay ahead, the *motive* magazine of the forties and fifties was nothing if not avant-garde. While many contemporary student ministry publications, such as Youth for Christ's *Campus Life* and InterVarsity's *HIS*, discussed overtly religious issues and consistently admonished students to avoid the moral pitfalls associated with college life, *motive* challenged societal conventions, urging students to look outside of themselves. Although the topical emphasis of articles shifted somewhat with current events and changing editors, *motive*'s first decade saw pieces on such topics as conscientious objection, cooperative living, world Christianity, and even sex.<sup>15</sup> The magazine published a dynamic variety of writing that was both accessible to and challenging for college students. Prominent topics in the 1950s centered on the civil rights struggle, nonviolent resistance, and worldwide ecumenism, all the while keeping readers abreast of up-and-coming books, films, and artists.<sup>16</sup>

*motive*'s content was certainly unique, but one did not need to open an issue of *motive* to recognize that this magazine was no ordinary student ministry publication. Committed to an engagement with the arts from day one, *motive*'s covers featured incisive and thought-provoking pieces of art in every issue. These features quite literally served as a visual representation of the content within. The uniqueness of *motive* was not lost on its readers; one reader reminisced, "To open *motive* magazine was to be plunged into a discourse—graphic as well as verbal—that pointed toward both mystery and

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<sup>15</sup> Gerald L. Fielder, "Student Cooperatives as a Constructive Force," *motive*, February 1941. Rathburn, Robert. 1941. "Sex—Ain't It Lovely!: A Journalist and Graduate Student Gives First-Hand Information." *motive*, December. Baker, Richard T. "Call to Aggression: The Editor of This Number Interprets the New Sense of Mission." *motive*, January 1942.

<sup>16</sup> Fenstermacher, Marian, "A Survey of *motive* Magazine—1953-4," 1954, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

morality. Espousing a non-dogmatic version of Christian faith, the magazine directed our attention equally to art and to society.”<sup>17</sup>

Both *motive* and the MSM symbiotically reinforced one another’s mission in urging students toward the outward embodiment of Christian ideals in society—even when those ideals and the dominant society seemed to be at odds with one another. Where racist attitudes and structures dominated much of the country, *motive* preached a message of racial equality; while the Cold War engendered intense American patriotism, the magazine taught students to view their own society from the perspective of others around the world; in Southern States, where theological and political conservatism reigned, *motive* gave students access to some of the most prominent liberal thinkers of the twentieth century.

The life of Tom Driver is, in many ways, a microcosm for the influence of both *motive* and the MSM on the lives of students. Born in 1925 and raised in the rural foothills of Tennessee, Driver spent the majority of his growing years in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. As he grew, however, the Methodist Student Movement and *motive* magazine drastically transformed his worldview as a young adult, acting as a countervailing stream to the cultural and theological conservatism so prevalent in his community. The movement was particularly effective in introducing Southern students like Driver to ideologies that they otherwise may not have come into contact with, especially where race was concerned. Driver’s first interaction with African American students at a Methodist Youth Fellowship conference in Ohio left a deep impression in his memory and was the beginning of a series of experiences that would ultimately alter

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<sup>17</sup> Tom F. Driver, “motive Magazine Presentation” (Boston University School of Theology, September 16, 2015).

his attitudes toward race.<sup>18</sup> Driver would go on to be heavily involved with the MSM during his time at Duke University, but not before a life-changing experience of another sort. In 1943, Driver was drafted into the U.S. Army at the height of World War II, and dutifully entered the armed service as an “unquestioning, patriotic soldier.”<sup>19</sup> He returned home three years later entirely opposed to all forms of militarism. He later reflected on the converging forces that contributed to this ideological transformation:

[I]t was not anything specific—that is, nothing dramatic. It was the army milieu itself and its regimentation that was part of it. It was being assigned to replace people who had been killed during the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, and walking through fields in which the slaughtered were still lying unburied in the fields. It was seeing the destruction of war in the bombings of London and then later in Germany. And it was the overwhelming sense of the way in which war has disrupted people’s lives and had caused so much carnage.<sup>20</sup>

When Driver enrolled at Duke University upon his return, he would find that the Methodist Student Movement and its magazine reflected his views on war.<sup>21</sup> “When I made the transition,” he remembered, “from soldier to college student in the aftermath of World War II, trying to put my world together on a new basis, *motive* magazine helped me to continue casting a critical eye upon my culture.”<sup>22</sup> In this way, *motive*’s stance on war not only nudged American college students toward pacifism, but spoke to the disillusionment of many of its readers who were themselves veterans.

*motive* magazine and involvement in the MSM not only broadened students’ social outlooks, but guided them professionally as well. For many students, especially

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<sup>18</sup> The Methodist Youth Fellowship was the national Methodist student ministry for High School Students, often preceding their involvement in the Methodist Student Movement.

<sup>19</sup> Tom F. Driver, phone interview by the author, November 29, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Harold A. Ehrensperger, “Shouts and Murmurs,” *motive*, November 1947.

<sup>22</sup> Driver, “motive Magazine Presentation.”



those who entered college with a desire to pursue some form of ministry, these entities expanded students' ideas of what constituted a "religious" vocation, tearing down the previously accepted categories of sacred and secular. MSM member Frank Lloyd Dent recalled that, during his time at Rice University, many of his fellow students could not envision a scenario in which the arts they loved and the church of which they were a part would have anything to do with one another. Through their reading of *motive* and participation in the MSM, however, many of these students became convinced that the church and the arts could indeed be reconciled.<sup>23</sup>

Driver underwent a similar experience. While he had always possessed a deep passion for the theatre, he felt an intense call to preach while still in high school. Once at Duke, however, he came to the conclusion that his dual passions for ministry and the theatre were not mutually exclusive. He began acting with the Wesley Players drama group and eagerly consumed *motive* articles on Christian involvement with the arts, all the while maintaining involvement in the campus MSM. Following this dramatic shift in career focus, Driver ultimately pursued a career in the academy that modeled *motive*'s dual emphasis on theology and the arts; the blossoming academic studied under Paul Tillich at Union Theological Seminary before completing a doctoral program at Columbia University. During his graduate career, Driver began to contribute theatre pieces to the very magazine that had been so formative in his development as a scholar. In these pieces, Driver brought his firsthand experience during World War II to bear upon dialogue regarding the future of the arts in Europe, arguing that Christian drama had the

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<sup>23</sup> Frank Lloyd Dent, "motive Magazine Presentation" (Boston University School of Theology, September 16, 2015).

potential to speak to the postwar moral vacuum in many European countries.<sup>24</sup> Fittingly, it was his work in *motive* that caught the attention of the editor of *The Christian Century*, where he would remain a theater critic and then contributor for decades.<sup>25</sup> In 1956, Driver returned to Union as a professor of theology and culture, where he taught for the rest of his career. In his later years, the distinguished professor, writer, and activist would credit *motive* as one of the two most important influences on his life as a Christian.<sup>26</sup>

As Driver's experience illustrates, *motive* acted as a tangible manifestation of the MSM's broader mission and message, the incarnation of this movement in the daily lives of college students. During the forties and fifties, *motive* occupied this space on the cutting edge of culture, while remaining firmly established in the Methodist tradition of mainline liberalism. The magazine, its staff, and its readers were the inheritors of the cultural and intellectual capital cultivated by previous generations of mainline adherents and thinkers.<sup>27</sup> While *motive* explicitly prided itself on maintaining this distinctly liberal identity, it would continue to move leftward in the coming decade.<sup>28</sup> In the countercultural zeitgeist of the 1960s, *motive* would harness this intellectual

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<sup>24</sup> Tom F. Driver, "The Drama in Europe," *motive*, March 1952, 19–20.

<sup>25</sup> Driver, phone interview by the author.

<sup>26</sup> The second major influence that Driver identified was the "Personalist Theology" that emerged from Boston University in the first half of the twentieth century, most notably represented in the work of philosophy professor and Methodist minister Borden Parker Browne. This theistic personalism was evident in the pages of *motive* from its first volume, with the magazine reviewing the work of Browne's students.

<sup>27</sup> For more on the idea of the "cultural capital" of the mainline, see: Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline*.

<sup>28</sup> Some historians have recently nuanced this idea of mainline liberalism, arguing that the old ecumenical protestant left espoused a more conservative approach to progress than historians have traditionally realized. See: Mark Thomas Edwards, *The Right of the Protestant Left: God's Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

respectability and authority while simultaneously rejecting the traditional elements of its Methodist heritage.

### *The Formation of an Editor*

The editor who, in 1961, would lead *motive* into its most iconic and controversial era was a Methodist Board of Education intern by the name of B.J. Stiles. In a sense, Stiles was a surprising choice for the editorship. At twenty-seven years old, he was the youngest editor of the magazine yet. While his resume was by no means unimpressive, it paled in comparison to those of the previous three editors. Despite his youth and relative inexperience, however, Stiles was, in another sense, a fitting choice to lead *motive* into the new decade. A closer look into his background is crucial for an understanding of his role at the magazine, revealing the confluence of factors that combined to shape the editor under whom the magazine would come to represent the entire University Christian Movement and would rise in notoriety on the national political stage.

Born to poor tenant farmers in 1933, Stiles spent the majority of his growing years near Midlothian, Texas, attending a small public school and working on the family farm.<sup>29</sup> As with many farming families of the day, Depression-era agricultural programs played a key role in shaping the boy's political outlook. Stiles later reflected that one of the most influential presences in his early life was that of the New Deal agricultural programs, which helped Stiles's parents better care for their family through financial assistance and farming education.<sup>30</sup> "[C]oming out of the Depression economically," he

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<sup>29</sup> B.J. Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 13, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

reflected, “there were so many ways in which the federal government was a friend of everybody in need.”<sup>31</sup>

If governmental benevolence was an overarching theme of Stiles’s childhood, so was the ubiquity of religion. Religion dominated in the home, the classroom, and even rural Texas society in what Stiles considered a “friendly rivalry” between Baptists and Methodists.<sup>32</sup> His first exposure to the world of Christian student movements came in 1948, when the local Methodist church sponsored his attendance of the National Methodist Youth Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. This conference, comprised of black and white attendees, served as Stiles’s introduction to the Christian pursuit of an interracial society. Years later, Stiles recalled the reaction of his church to his experiences in Cleveland:

Inevitably when one goes to a conference you come back to your group and you have to, quote, make a report. I gave a report to my local congregation and mouths were aghast about what I had to share that I had learned. And afterwards, I was taken aside by the elders of the church and severely cautioned—no, reprimanded—for accentuating the things about the conference that excited me.... [I]t was completely interracial and multiracial and I openly spoke about celebrating the conference with other Methodists who were Negroes.<sup>33</sup>

Stiles’s newly transformed views placed him in the minority in his community, a theme that would continue to follow the future editor in years to come. In this way, his experience was representative of thousands of American students whose views on issues

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> B.J. Stiles, “motive Magazine: Methodism’s Icon and Albatross: A Talk by B. J. Stiles,” October 18, 2012.

such as race were transformed via the Methodist Youth Fellowship and the Methodist Student Movement.<sup>34</sup>

Although Stiles's family could not afford to send him to college, he entered Texas Wesleyan College in the fall of 1950 thanks to an academic scholarship and the persistence of a student recruiter. Having experienced a call to preach in high school, Stiles, like many would-be pastors, initially saw his college experience as preparation for a life in ministry. His time at Texas Wesleyan, however, would prove to be a departure from convention. In a break with societal gender norms, Stiles worked as the secretary to a female university administrator to support himself during his college years. The undergraduate dove headlong into involvement with the campus MSM, which would not only transform him ideologically, but academically and professionally as well.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the movement became Stiles's training ground for his eventual future in publishing and activism. At Texas Wesleyan, the campus MSM chapter held a weekly, half-hour meeting, which oftentimes entailed a prayer or meditation service. Once a month, however, the meeting consisted of a student-run program in which students presented on a global topic, such as world peace or Christianity in a third world country. These programs trained Stiles and other participants in independent research, public speaking, and the communication of ideas, all the while opening their eyes to world issues that were often overlooked in the classroom.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> B.J. Stiles, "motive Magazine Presentation" (Boston University School of Theology, September 16, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> "Stiles for President," *Texas Wesleyan Rambler*, April 21, 1953.

<sup>36</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 13, 2016.

This expanding of student horizons was reflected in Stiles's reading of *motive*. In Stiles's opinion, *motive*'s message stood in stark contrast to other religious magazines he encountered, in which articles on liturgy and theology dominated. Where articles on more personal issues did appear in these publications, they tended to cover moral issues such as smoking, drinking, and dating in an effort to hold students behaviorally accountable to their religious faith. *motive*, on the other hand, situated the student in a broader, globally-conscious context. Articles with titles like, "The Syrian Church of Malabar" encouraged students to view their faith in light of global Christianity.<sup>37</sup> Others, such as "Methodism and Social Change," guided students in becoming advocates for social justice.<sup>38</sup> Stiles echoed an entire generation of *motive* readers when he observed that "religion was becoming...a much more holistic experience."<sup>39</sup>

Still, Stiles was in the minority even on his own campus. Among his fellow students and university faculty, he remembers "only a handful" of others who shared his views. "Other people were either explicitly critical or barely tolerant of putting up with our machinations," he recalled. "I think, in a sense, that was when I disliked being narrow-minded. I disliked being a typical Texan. I disliked being called a 'preacher boy,' because a preacher boy connoted a certain kind of lifestyle. It wasn't that I was that different in behavior, but I disliked the conformity that came with that part of religion."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> C.E. Abraham, "The Syrian Church in Malabar," *motive*, May 1953, [http://sth-archon.bu.edu/motive/issues/1953\\_May.html#6/z](http://sth-archon.bu.edu/motive/issues/1953_May.html#6/z).

<sup>38</sup> Russell Bayliff, "Methodism and Social Change," *motive*, March 1953, [http://sth-archon.bu.edu/motive/issues/1953\\_March.html#22/z](http://sth-archon.bu.edu/motive/issues/1953_March.html#22/z).

<sup>39</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 13, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

While Stiles did go the conventional route of seminary following his time at Texas Wesleyan, this preference for nonconformity followed him into his future career in publishing. Although Stiles entered college intent on becoming a Methodist pastor, he was, by the end, convinced that his calling was something other than traditional ministry. Stiles enrolled at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in 1955, yet uncertain as to his ultimate career goals. He was quite sure, however, he would not become a parish minister. In the spring of his final year in seminary, the Methodist Board of Education offered Stiles a part-time job at its Nashville headquarters, and he and his wife made the move to Tennessee.<sup>41</sup>

The late 1950s were years of immense excitement and possibility for the Methodist Board of Education. In racially segregated Nashville, the headquarters building stood out as one of the few integrated public spaces in the entire city. Despite much racial and social conservatism, the work of the board was part of a growing current of liberalism in the area. Home to over a dozen institutions of higher education, the city was sometimes referred to as the "Athens of the South." It was into this milieu of possibility and liberalism that Stiles arrived in Nashville. Stiles's wide array of responsibilities during his time at the board allowed for the formation of a unique and diverse skill set. As an intern, he wrote and edited a monthly newsletter to chaplains nationwide and assisted with board-sponsored conferences, eventually working his way to a full time position in which he was responsible for smaller student publications and served as the manager over the Pacific Northwest regional conference. Through these positions, Stiles continued to refine his writing and editorial skills, learned to navigate the ins and outs of

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<sup>41</sup> "B.J. Stiles Serves on Nashville Board," *Texas Wesleyan Rambler*, November 25, 1958.

board bureaucracy, and established personal connections in the Methodist denomination and beyond.

In April 1961, after only three years at *motive*'s helm, Dr. Jameson Jones resigned from his position as editor. With a new school year looming, the Board of Education scrambled to find a new editor in time to put out the first issue of the upcoming fall semester. Faced with the prospect of what was sure to be a lengthy and costly nationwide search, General Secretary John O. Gross chose instead to nominate an acting editor from within the Board of Education family to oversee production of the magazine until a permanent hire could be made. Stiles was the nominee.

While the offer of an acting editorship for such a prominent magazine was certainly flattering, Stiles countered Gross's offer with another proposal. He had come to the conclusion that an acting editorship—in which he would act as a mere caretaker with no editorial say regarding content—was neither beneficial for the magazine nor the readership. If he were to accept responsibility for publication, it would have to be as full editor. After some consideration, Gross accepted his proposal, offering Stiles a one-year contract as editor, at the end of which both would reassess the appointment. Ever-cognizant of the cooperative nature of magazine publication, Stiles accepted the offer on one condition: that the magazine staff supported him. He did not have to wait long for that assurance. Shortly after hearing of his appointment, art editor Peg Rigg conveyed the staff's enthusiastic and welcoming response to Stiles's hire.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> B.J. Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 15, 2016.



### *A New Vision for a New Era*

With the ardent support of the staff and the green light from the board to proceed as editor, Stiles immediately began implementing his vision to expand *motive*'s impact and ecumenicity. In order to accomplish this, Stiles planned to acquire additional funding, increase circulation by ten thousand readers, and diversify the editorial board.<sup>43</sup> At the outset of the sixties, the Board of Education was contributing tens of thousands of dollars a year to offset the cost that the publication's revenue did not cover. Stiles promptly set out to open new channels of subsidization. In less than a month, the new editor had crafted a successful proposal for five thousand dollars in yearly funding, which would allow the magazine to increase its subscriptions by ten thousand.<sup>44</sup>

As *motive*'s funding base diversified, so did its readership and editorial board. Stiles envisioned a *motive* that was not only directed at the Methodist Student Movement corps, but rather at the entire university community. In keeping with this spirit of thoroughgoing ecumenism, he appointed Michael Novak as the first Roman Catholic to serve on *motive*'s editorial board.<sup>45</sup> As far as the editorial board was concerned, diversity seemed to beget more diversity. Non-Methodist members of the board brought new connections and untapped bases of readership; soon, the staff began receiving requests from prominent individuals interested in joining the board. And while *motive* kept its membership in the Associated Church Press, Stiles also took out memberships in secular

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<sup>43</sup> When Stiles assumed editorship of *motive*, the magazine's circulation hovered at around 23,000. Stiles sought to increase subscriptions by a minimum of ten thousand. *N.W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, vol. 92 (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Sons, Inc., 1960), 968.

<sup>44</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 13, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> "Contents," *motive*, February 1966. Novak's politics and theology swung to the right in the years following *motive*'s demise, and he became a well-known neo-conservative voice for the last several decades of his life. For more on this transition, see: Michael Novak, *Writing from Left to Right: My Journey from Liberal to Conservative*, First edition (New York: Image, 2013).

organizations, such as the Magazine Publisher's Association, in order to maximize the magazine's exposure and to learn from more experienced editors in both publishing circles.<sup>46</sup>

In Stiles's mind, these efforts were not the result of a desire to forsake the magazine's ties to the Methodist Church or to jeopardize the financial support of the Methodist Board of Higher Education. Rather, the new editor and his staff sought to make the magazine more reflective of the ecumenical spirit on the college campuses of the early sixties. Indeed, America's already-diversifying population of college students, which had seen a sharp uptick in the years following the Second World War, would more than double in size between 1963 and 1973.<sup>47</sup> While Stiles desired that *motive* undergo a transformation of sorts, he intended that this transformation be internal rather than external. "I very much wanted to do it methodically," he remembered. "That is, I didn't want to bring the wrath of the Board [of Education] to come to bear on me because of those changes.... It was an orderly process."<sup>48</sup>

Despite his reticence to rock the editorial boat, some of the changes to the magazine met with skepticism and disapproval. The Methodist Board of Education was by no means reactionary in its policies, but General Secretary Gross nevertheless harbored concerns about the decreased Methodist representation that was sure to result from the magazine's diversification in readership, contributors, and editorial board. Yet, Stiles did not interpret this concern as Gross's desire to dull the magazine's progressive

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<sup>46</sup> "The Rev. B.J. Stiles to Address Annual Robing Ceremony Tuesday," *Texas Wesleyan Rambler*, May 13, 1970.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas D. Snyder, "120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait" (National Center for Education Statistics, January 1993).

<sup>48</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 13, 2016.

edge. As the two engaged in dialogue on the meaning and implications of ecumenism in the modern age, Stiles felt that they reached a place of mutual understanding regarding the need for a more open editorial policy. With the financial and ideological support of the board behind it, *motive* blazed ahead into a new decade.

An air of purpose and possibility permeated *motive* magazine at the outset of the 1960s, and the spirit of expansion and ecumenism that emanated from the *motive* leadership was reflected in the content. Under Stiles, the magazine's primary mission was to force students to look outside of themselves, to awaken students to the most pressing world issues of the day. In this, *motive* reflected a trend present in the broader American student Christian movement, as well as the World Student Christian Fellowship.<sup>49</sup> This growing penchant for activism, often at the expense of intellectual engagement with these issues, was in part due to the growing popularity of writers such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose work strongly urged Christians to engage with the world around them.<sup>50</sup>

When Stiles assumed editorship in the summer of 1961, American society—and indeed the world—was ripe for engagement and commentary. The nation's first Roman Catholic president had been inaugurated in January, followed by the Bay of Pigs invasion a mere three months later. The civil rights movement was gaining momentum as the sit-ins that began in Greensboro and Nashville spread across the South, and the Freedom Riders confronted violence and adversity in city after southern city. On the international

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<sup>49</sup> The World Student Christian Fellowship grew out of the earlier Student Volunteer Movement, and maintained a close relationship with American student Christian movements (especially the National Student Christian Federation) throughout the twentieth century. This strain of thinking can be seen in *motive* articles such as: Shiner, Larry E. "Secular Man." *motive*, May 1962.

<sup>50</sup> Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge*, 163–64.

stage, East Germany began construction on the Berlin Wall in August even as tensions mounted on the other side of the globe in Vietnam.

While *motive* boasted its own unique editorial vision under Stiles, the magazine continued to engage with and reflect the broader Methodist Student Movement for the time being. A brief analysis of one 1961 article illustrates this initial vision and its ability to treat cultural engagement within a distinctly religious framework; such an article also provides a marked contrast to *motive*'s vision and content as the 1960s progressed. The magazine devoted its entire November 1961 issue to the 7<sup>th</sup> National Methodist Student Quadrennial Conference. The conference, held in August of that same year, carried the theme "Covenant for a New Creation" and was dubbed the most "creative, significant, [and] challenging" meeting yet.<sup>51</sup>

Each article in the issue delved into a major theme of the conference. In "Creation by Explosion," Los Angeles Bishop Gerald Kennedy used the idea of a divinely-orchestrated Big Bang as an extended metaphor to highlight the shocking nature and methods of God. Through a mixture of exegesis and social commentary, Kennedy drew parallels between his current generation and that of Amos, whose society also "robbed the poor and exploited the weak" while "look[ing] forward confidently to continual success until the coming Day of the Lord."<sup>52</sup> As with many *motive* articles, the tone of Kennedy's critique of American culture danced between the prophetic and the sarcastic. For example, he wrote, "I once said something uncomplimentary about one of the reactionary groups of superpatriots and a lady wrote: 'A Christian is one who, if he cannot say something nice about people, never says anything.' Such a pity that Amos and

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<sup>51</sup> B.J. Stiles, "Words Among Many Words," *motive*, November 1961.

<sup>52</sup> Gerald Kennedy, "Creation by Explosion," *motive*, November 1961.

the Prophets had not heard about that idea!’”<sup>53</sup> Perhaps most vividly capturing the central theme of the conference was professor John Deschner’s piece, “Renewal in the Church.” In this article, Deschner articulated for *motive* readers the MSM’s vision for the new decade: that of bringing about renewal in the church through intercession and witness. For the professor, intercession entailed the representation of one’s neighbor to God in prayer, worship, and life. He defined witness as the reciprocal “representation of God to one’s neighbor who has not heard of him.” This witness however, rested less on what one said about God, but rather what God said through the individual to the heart of another. The goal of this witness was, simply put, “God’s illumination of one man’s cross for another man’s good.”<sup>54</sup> If MSM participants were to be the catalyst for this renewal, they could not remain content with the movement’s past achievements where race, theology, and the arts were concerned. Deschner cautioned students against merely recommending renewal and argued that, as “leaven” in the bread of the Methodist Church, they must prophetically model that renewal for the rest of their denomination.<sup>55</sup>

While Deschner’s message may have appeared presumptuous to some, strands of humility were woven throughout. He recognized that if this student-led renewal were to take place, the movement (and, by extension, *motive* magazine), would have to maintain its covenantal fidelity to God in order to “persevere through thick and thin” and “be ready to suffer, to forbear, [and] to be misunderstood.”<sup>56</sup> It was also crucial that students prize renewal over the verbal complaints against those with whom they disagreed. Complaint,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> John Deschner, “Renewal in the Church,” *motive*, November 1961, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 6.

wrote Deschner, “dissipates spiritual energy which is the power to love realistically but without indulgence. We have much to complain of in Methodism, but no time for complaint.”<sup>57</sup>

Rather than limiting his call to mere rhetoric, Deschner provided readers who were not able to attend the conference with practical courses of action for bringing about this renewal. For the author and the MSM, global and church-wide transformation stemmed from changes at the individual and local church level. First, Deschner encouraged readers to request weekly “interpreted sacraments”—the traditional sacraments alongside “lively preaching” that “proclaimed the good news the sacrament celebrates”—where such practice was not observed. Drawing support for his argument from the depths of the Christian tradition, he continued: “There is no act of worship which penetrates more deeply behind the façade of the sinner. There is no single step which could do more to drive trivia from Sunday worship than to center it again—as the church in all ages has centered it—in the interpreted sacrament.”<sup>58</sup>

Second, Deschner conveyed the MSM’s desire to revive the forgotten Methodist emphasis on the meeting of small groups for lay Bible study, the cultivation of unifying disciplines, the weekly and sacrificial giving of money for those in need, and mutual pastoral care. Deschner and the MSM envisioned a pastoral care “in which no one fights for his spiritual existence alone but together with a band of companions who in mutual openness and honesty, helpfully criticize, admonish, and encourage. The devil’s stranglehold on the church is precisely this curious notion that sin is a private

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 7.

matter!...The MSM could foster a body of living cells, and transplant them into the life of the local congregations.”<sup>59</sup> In line with this exhortation toward community growth, Deschner encouraged the MSM to train church members to understand the gospel and cultivate a theologically sound faith. While such a discussion may have seemed out of place in the pages of a liberal magazine like *motive*, the author framed these topics as part of a larger effort to disrupt the status quo in the Methodist Church in favor of uncovering a more grassroots approach to faith in the world.

Turning his attention back to the centrality of the Christian witness in society, the author urged MSM participants to recover the Wesleyan tradition of laymen’s ministry in the church. “What could happen,” Deschner asked, “if members of the MSM asked a local congregation to ‘license’ them to be witnesses in such areas as law, medicine, or agriculture, to undertake special studies to this end, and to report regularly to the quarterly conference about their witness, as lay preachers must do?” While in the eyes of MSM leaders the mobilization and engagement of the laity was crucial to pervasive church renewal, so was the transformation of church structures and systems. These leaders saw movement participants not only as college students, but future church leaders as well who would one day have the influence to bring about change themselves. Deschner conveyed passionately the MSM’s charge for “a planned, intentional, deliberate infiltration of local official boards.” “If we are serious about church renewal,” he concluded, “we will be serious about that.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 8.

The contributing authors to this issue of *motive* were well aware that the MSM's vision for the future presented a stark and contentious contrast to much of Methodism in 1961. For them, tension was to be expected for a "church in exodus," but should also be taken with maturity and humility. As Deschner put it, "the mere fact of tension with the church does not justify us. It may also be God's warning against our exclusiveness, our wrong loves and hates."<sup>61</sup> While this humble acceptance of tension may have been prevalent in the MSM at the outset of the 1960s, *motive's* relationship with tension in the church would look vastly different as the decade developed.

### *motive Faces Criticism*

Stiles did not have to wait long before experiencing this tension firsthand. While *motive* had always been controversial, its content in the 1960s sparked increasing concern among board members and outright ire among many churchgoers. To be sure, *motive* had never wavered in its mission to challenge the conventions of American Protestant religion.<sup>62</sup> But for Stiles, the primary mission of *motive* was that the magazine speak to the pertinent issues of the day. Thus, as the issues plaguing society and the church became more enflamed, so did the magazine's content, drawing criticism from laity and clergy alike. Stiles vividly recalled fielding criticisms at the annual Methodist Board of Education meeting each January. Here, board members raised questions about *motive's* discussion of controversial issues, especially those their lay constituents found troubling. Still, these criticisms appeared to be rooted in a desire to establish a two-way dialogue

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>62</sup> Frank Dent, "motive Magazine: Advocating the Arts and Empowering the Imagination in the Life of the Church" (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1989). Sloan, Douglas. *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994, 166.



between the board and its magazine. As a result, the *motive* staff were careful not write these criticisms off as the railings of a reactionary contingent of Methodist leaders. In Stiles's perception, many of these individuals introduced their concerns thoughtfully, seeking to truly understand why *motive* made the editorial choices that it did.<sup>63</sup>

Although the board was, for the time being, more generous in its dealings with the magazine, much of *motive*'s content proved too radical for many lay groups. One such group was the Methodist Laymen of North Hollywood, an anonymous contingent of lay worshippers who sought to "bring before [their] congregation facts...concerning the ideological world struggle for the minds of men, especially of youth, and the avowed Communistic plan to subvert their morals and religious faith."<sup>64</sup> In a letter urging their fellow churchgoers to cancel their *motive* subscriptions and to cease use of the publication in educating Methodist youth, the group included a selection of what they believed to be *motive*'s most incriminating articles. Among the selection was one from 1962 titled "The Humanity of Jesus," in which the author wrote:

I can find nothing good to say of the attempt to turn Jesus into a god. From it no good of any kind has ever come and enormous quantities of evil have been its inevitable result. We have, in common with the whole human race, the tendency to see only the good on our side, to divide the world into our side—the good—and the other side—the bad. Thus when we look at the history of the Christian church as an institution we see only the good it has done and stood for. We forget completely that it is equally possible to assert that few institutions have produced such ferocity, such torment to persons, such monstrous persecutions.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 15, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Methodist Laymen of North Hollywood to Members of the First Methodist Church of North Hollywood, May 12, 1962, "Anti-motive" Folder, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>65</sup> John W. Dixon, Jr., "The Humanity of Jesus," *motive*, April 1962.

Another article challenged assumptions behind generally-held Protestant doctrine:

Should we not admit in all honesty that there are parts of the Bible not worth reading, let alone being our authority?...Can the uniqueness of the Christian revelation be maintained in the midst of the renaissance of the major religions of the world—Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism?...Can we...insist on our way as God's Way when others think that their way is God's Way? May not God be calling us this day away from a parochial interpretation of our faith to a vital universalism in our relations with the living religions of the world? Can one be saved only through Christ? Is not such a claim idolatrous? Would it not be more accurate and humble to say that Christ may be the highest revelation for me, but that he may not have to be for everyone?<sup>66</sup>

It should be noted, of course, that views of the authors whom *motive* published were not necessarily those of the *motive* staff. Still, many lay individuals considered *motive*'s content unfit for the pages of a Methodist-affiliated magazine. This backlash increased over the course of the sixties as the issues of the era and the magazine's content grew more controversial.

Controversy surrounding the magazine heightened, but so did *motive*'s ecumenicity and influence, as Stiles increased subscriptions by ten thousand within the first year alone. By the end of the 1961-1962 school year, it was obvious that Stiles's first year as editor was a smashing success. In the sixties, Methodist students continued to reach out beyond denominational and religious boundaries. As the *motive* staff fearlessly offered journalistic and artistic commentary on society's most inflammatory issues, few topics would be off-limits in the pages of the publication.

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<sup>66</sup> Deane Ferme, "Party-Line Theology," *motive*, December 1960, 9–10.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A Content Analysis of *motive* Magazine

Throughout the 1960s, *motive*'s content bore witness to the diversity and intensity of issues facing both the church and the nation. The magazine's dynamic content, however, also reflected the publication's increasingly multifaceted identity. On the surface, *motive* appeared to be a denominational student publication with an emphasis on the arts and social commentary. In reality, however, the magazine also defied such easy categorization, particularly under the Stiles editorship. Where *motive* began as a distinctly Methodist publication, it grew more and more ecumenical during the 1960s, first in practice and then in a more official capacity. Methodist voices were, of course, featured, but by no means constituted a majority among the diverse group of contributors. In the same way, *motive*'s readership grew increasingly diverse as the magazine and the Methodist Student Movement reached out to other denominations and student organizations. While mention of Methodist goings on never featured prominently in the magazine, denominational language became almost extinct by the end of the 1960s.

Even the magazine's characterization as a student publication is not entirely accurate. Undergraduates did make up the majority of *motive* readership, but graduate students, faculty, and clergy constituted a significant percentage of the magazine's audience as well.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the publication's most defining features, such as its

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<sup>1</sup> As of 1968, 57% of *motive*'s readers were students. Of that 57%, around 54% were undergraduates, 32% master's students, and 15% doctoral students.) Of the 43% who were not students, 74% were working professionals, with clergy and educators heavily represented as part of that number. See the discussion of reader demographics in: B.J. Stiles, "Between Bars," *motive*, October 1968, 6.

unique aesthetic and emphasis on art, only captured a single facet of the dynamic organism that was *motive*. In a sense, it was this diversity that made the publication so distinct and so appealing; for every artistic feature there was a piece on space age science, for every article dealing with religion there was another drawing connections between economic theory and its implications in the third world. While *motive*'s broad focus and multifaceted identity would later contribute to its undoing, this dynamism allowed the magazine to speak to a variety of issues facing students and faculty. *motive* may have officially existed in the ecclesial realm, but its unique voice allowed the magazine to occupy a *de facto* space between traditional church circles and secular activist movements.

A cross section of articles dealing with a few common themes offers a telling snapshot of the magazine's stance, style, and function. Comparisons with other religious and secular publications of the day show that *motive* occupied a liminal space in the world of publishing, especially among magazines directed at young adults and professionals. Where other magazine directed at youth—even those with a penchant for sophisticated intellectual content—failed to display a consistently ethical framework in their discussion of current events, *motive* interpreted societal issues through an ethical and theological lens. Furthermore, while other Christian student publications of the day seemed geared toward keeping students in the church, *motive* challenged students to move past traditional definitions of religion and never hesitated to criticize American Christianity. Thus, *motive* found its niche in the space between traditionally religious student magazines and secular student publications that focused solely on lifestyle and

secular social commentary. *motive*'s unique liminality was especially evident in the magazine's coverage of theology, race, and politics.

### *motive and 1960s Theology*

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, *motive*'s theological content reflected a generally neo-orthodox perspective on theology, the arts, and social ethics.<sup>2</sup> Figures such as H. Richard Niebuhr, Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, Emil Brunner, and Paul Tillich contributed regularly to *motive*. Even topical content that did not deal strictly with theology carried distinct theological overtones, especially where art, philosophy, and culture were concerned. In contrast with evangelical student publications of the day, whose discussion of theology tended to serve an apologetic function, *motive*'s treatment of theology appears to have been geared toward exposing the student to new and challenging ideas.

When Stiles stepped in as editor in 1961, he continued to provide readers with theologically-informed and thought-provoking content. In many ways, *motive* remained hospitable to established liberal and neo-orthodox thinkers, bringing their work to bear upon pressing issues of the time. For example, one article titled "The 'What's the Use' Feeling" applied Tillichian theology to the search for meaning among many American college students.<sup>3</sup> However, in line with his vision that the magazine become even more

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<sup>2</sup> Frank Lloyd Dent, "'motive' Magazine: Advocating the Arts and Empowering the Imagination in the Life of the Church" (Ed.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1989), 489.

<sup>3</sup> Jack Harrison, "The 'What's the Use' Feeling," *motive*, April 1962. Articles like Harrison's linked meaning with a Tillichian philosophy of creativity, arguing that true meaning was found in creativity, and creativity in spontaneously acting in and reacting to culture. Thus, any hindrance to this spontaneity ultimately perpetuated meaninglessness. This theology of meaning was reflective of current developments in the world of psychology popular at the time (specifically in the works of Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Reich), which stressed that the need for a reduction of moral or societal demand on the self, as

culturally relevant, Stiles was eager to apply established theology in new ways, as well as to engage with the most recent developments in theology.<sup>4</sup>

Among the most significant and recurring themes present in *motive*'s theological content in the 1960s was that of ecumenism. Ecumenism, of course, was not a new theme in either the Methodist Church or the mainline; both the magazine and the MSM had grown out of the rising tide of ecumenism that began in early-twentieth century efforts at world missions and that continued to grow for decades afterward. Indeed, both entities had espoused ecumenism from the beginning and boasted roots in the broader worldwide ecumenical movement. But while the magazine existed as part of a well-established tradition of ecumenism in the Protestant mainline, Stiles sought to deepen the publication's ecumenical commitments even further.

In the wake of such upheaval as the 1964 Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, the civil rights movement, and mounting tensions in Vietnam, MSM students were eager to lend their energies to the wave of activism sweeping college campuses. In order to do this, *motive* encouraged cooperation with students from outside the Methodist denomination. One 1961 piece by J. Robert Nelson, Methodist theologian and chair of the World Council of Churches's Commission on Faith and Order, urged students to forsake factionalism and to look to the example of the WCC and other church bodies that had recently merged. "The Church has been fragmented into so many pieces," wrote Nelson, "that only an expert can enumerate and describe all the sectarian bodies which are known

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these demands (or "interdictions") impeded the self-expression on which successful self-actualization and happiness hinged.

<sup>4</sup> The *motive* editors and staff never officially espoused one theological stance, and prided themselves on producing a magazine that introduced students to a variety of viewpoints. During the 1960s, however, *motive* would face an increasing number of accusations of one-sidedness, given that the magazine almost exclusively published articles espousing liberal-to-radical theology or leftist politics.

as ‘denominations’.... It is neither impious nor pretentious to assert that after nearly twenty centuries of this strife in his Church, God’s patience wore thin. In the past fifty years there has taken place an unprecedented reversal of the process of division.”<sup>5</sup>

This sentiment prevailed at the local and state levels as well. State chapters of the MSM established partnerships with the interdenominational United Ministries in Higher Education, while local Wesley Foundations in at least twenty-four states boasted official cooperating relationships with interdenominational campus ministries.<sup>6</sup> In a 1965 letter, the Committee on Interdenominational Relations of the Texas Methodist Student Movement urged the Board of Trustees to go on record, by vote, in declaring the true image of the church to be an ecumenical image. Invoking the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, they declared, “The Church is the presence of God in the world. Really in the world, really the presence of God. The church is not a consecrated sanctuary, but the world, called by God to God; therefore, there is only one church in the world.”<sup>7</sup> Employing a rhetoric of self-sacrifice that the MSM would soon adopt, they continued: “We understand the mission of the Methodist Church to be greater than the preservation of the Methodist Church...a mission that, by its nature, calls us to be willing to lose

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<sup>5</sup> J. Robert Nelson, “Unity and Reconciliation,” *motive*, December 1961, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Heil Bollinger, “Letter from Dr. Heil D. Bollinger,” April 19, 1967, Box 1261, File 10, Texas Methodist Student Movement records, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. Curiously, southern states were under-represented in their cooperation with interdenominational campus ministries.

<sup>7</sup> Texas Methodist Student Movement Board of Trustees, “Report of the Committee on Interdenominational Relations,” May 11, 1965, Box 1261, File 16, Texas Methodist Student Movement records, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

ourselves, our structures, our powers, that we might find ourselves part of the truly catholic church.”<sup>8</sup>

The MSM proved more than willing to undergo such a loss. As the relationship between ecumenism and activism became increasingly intertwined in the world of Christian student movements, MSM leaders were eager to join their peers who had already merged into the National Student Christian Federation, which acted as the are of the World Student Christian Federation in the United States. In fact, the MSM had participated in merger talks with other student Christian movements for several years leading up to the Stiles editorship.<sup>9</sup> In order to give themselves fully to an ecumenical expression of unity, MSM students knew that they would need to break free of their denominational constraints. If the movement and its magazine were to take seriously this commitment to ecumenical social action, they would need to sacrifice their denominational identities for the good of the whole. As the national MSM leaders wrote in June of 1965, “we offer our life as our act in the creation of a new civilization. We will direct the force of our own lives into the stream of the revolution and lead it into the new humanity.”<sup>10</sup>

This impulse was not new to the MSM. In 1955, talks had begun among the Disciples Student Fellowship, Methodist Student Movement, Westminster Student Fellowship (Presbyterian, U.S.A.), and the United Student Fellowship (Student Christian Movement of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “Plan of Merger of Several Student Christian Movements and Study Guide,” November 1956, Box 1261, File 14, Texas Methodist Student Movement records, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

<sup>10</sup> “A Student Manifesto: A Motto For Revolutionary Mission,” *motive*, October 1965, 32.



Church) with the goal of forming an organic, ecumenical organization to operate under the National Student Christian Federation. Several additional individuals attended these talks as interested observers, representing the American Baptist Student Movement, Church of the Brethren, National Canterbury Association, Evangelical United Brethren, Lutheran Student Association of America, National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, and Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.

This time, the stream into which the MSM would direct its life was that of the University Christian Movement, of which *motive* became the official publication in October of 1966. The organization was formed earlier that same year when the National Student Christian Federation, under the leadership of recent Duke University graduate Charlotte Bunch Weeks, reorganized into the UCM. This reorganization served to unify existing student movements, as well as to offer a more organic activist approach than the NSCF could facilitate, allowing for cooperation with nonreligious student organizations, such as Students for a Democratic Society and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.<sup>11</sup> *motive*'s audience had, of course, always included readers from a variety of denominations, especially following Stiles's arrival and subsequent efforts to diversify the readership. Association with the UCM, however, gave the magazine organizational access to new pools of readers including Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians, boosting its circulation even further.<sup>12</sup> This shift in structure and focus necessitated a paralleled financial strategy as well. In theory, the denominational movements that

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<sup>11</sup> Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge*, 164. Other secular student groups with which the UCM sought to reach out to included the National Student Association, the Southern Student Organizing Committee, the Northern Student Movement, and the United States Youth Council.

<sup>12</sup> According to the *Ayer Dictionary of Newspapers and Periodicals*, the magazine's circulation after the merger jumped by seven thousand. *Ayer Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, vol. 98 (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Sons, Inc., 1966); *Ayer Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, 1969.

constituted the UCM would re-allocate their resources to the new movement, a plan that would later prove difficult to implement in reality.<sup>13</sup>

At the time of the UCM's creation, however, this pervasive ecumenical spirit was inextricably linked with the Christian student movement's broader activist goals, as cooperation across denominational lines helped students to be far more effective in bringing about societal change than they would have been on their own. The need for a theology that would allow for active social engagement, as well as a growing universalist sentiment, rose among mainline students activists—so much so that even well-respected theologians of the prior generation were considered increasingly irrelevant. Duke University religion professor Robert T. Osborn's February 1962 *motive* article reflects the intimate relationship between activism, ecumenism, and universalism in the student Christian movements. "Perhaps 90 per cent of you who read this will not subscribe to the notion of eternal damnation; in other words, ecumenical, American Protestantism is universalistic. This is hardly ever acknowledged, because we have no theology that can contain it.... One would expect us to turn to Barth, who if he is not a universalist, should be. But we do not like Barth, because his optimism is not activistic."<sup>14</sup> As Osborn's article suggests, the great neo-orthodox thinkers to whom the *motive* staff and its readers had looked for intellectual and theological guidance seemed to them more and more out of touch with the movement's activist goals. Articles like Osborn's make it clear that the promotion of Christian activism was equally important—if not superior—to the magazine's other functions. In the end, the movement would find the ideological fuel that it was searching for in the Death of God Movement.

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<sup>13</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 15, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Robert T. Osborn, "Capitulation to Communication," *motive*, February 1962.

Death of God theology first emerged in the early 1960s in the work of thinkers such as Thomas J.J. Altizer, who posited that God's life commenced at creation and culminated in Christ's death. Altizer and other Death of God theologians maintained that although Christ had left his spirit behind on earth following his crucifixion, his death was essentially the extinction of the Divine.<sup>15</sup> The Death of God Movement paired well with a commitment to activism, as it called for man's involvement in society given God's absence. William Hamilton, who with Altizer co-authored *Radical Theology and the Death of God* in 1966, expounded on his theology and its implications in the pages of *motive*. He claimed that modern theologians no longer had the "energy or interest to answer ecclesiastical questions about 'What the Church Must Do to Revitalize Itself.'"<sup>16</sup> He asserted that "contemporary theology must be alienated from the Church...the theologian must exist outside the Church, he can neither proclaim the Word, celebrate the sacraments, nor rejoice in the presence of the Holy Spirit: before contemporary theology can become itself, it must first exist in silence."<sup>17</sup> This silence was to be undertaken to the end of transforming one's society. Hamilton was convinced that although the modern theologian's faith and hope may have been "badly flawed," his capacity to love was not. "The theologian," Hamilton wrote, "is sometimes inclined to suspect that Jesus Christ is best understood not as either the object or ground of faith, and not as person, event, or community, but simply as a place to be, a standpoint. That place is, of course, alongside

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Jonathan Jackson Altizer, *Toward a New Christianity: Readings in the Death of God Theology* (New York etc.: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967).

<sup>16</sup> William Hamilton, "Thursday's Child: The Theologian Today and Tomorrow," *motive*, April 1964, 28.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

the neighbor, being for him.”<sup>18</sup> This idea of loving one’s neighbor through action and activism was to be a recurring theme in *motive* for the rest of the magazine’s life.

Michael Novak, the first Roman Catholic member of *motive*’s editorial board, echoed these sentiments in his 1968 article, “The Secular Saint.”

If one wishes to be radically religious in our society—that is to say, radically committed to a vision of human brotherhood, personal integrity, openness to the future, justice, and peace—one will not, commonly, seek an ecclesiastical outlet for one’s energies. One will, instead, find community under secular auspices, create one’s own symbols for community and integrity, and work through secular agencies for social and political reforms. The saints of the present (and perhaps of the future) are no longer ecclesiastics, churchgoers, or even, necessarily, believers in God. The saints of the present are, in the words of Albert Camus, secular saints.<sup>19</sup>

Many of these new “secular” theologians railed against those of the prior generation, such as Paul Tillich, on the grounds that their work was irrelevant to modern, secular society.<sup>20</sup>

While *motive* negotiated its position in the interstices between the liberal tradition of its founding and the emerging Death of God theology, evangelical student publications still railed against Tillich and what they deemed, “The New Liberalism” in theology.<sup>21</sup>

It should be noted that *motive* never explicitly espoused one theological framework over another. While the magazine devoted a significant amount of content to interaction with the Death of God movement, it also featured a satire of the Death of God theology on the back of its May 1966 issue, under the headline, “God Is Dead In Georgia:

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Novak, “The Secular Saint,” *motive*, November 1968, 29. The article’s title can be seen as a play on the title of Harvey Cox’s controversial work *The Secular City*, which received a rave review as a “brilliant book” in *motive*’s October 1965 issue.

<sup>20</sup> Guy B. Hammond, “Paul Tillich’s Impact on American Life,” *motive*, May 1966, 26.

<sup>21</sup> Klaas Ruina, “The New Liberalism,” *HIS*, June 1964.

## Eminent Deity Succumbs During Surgery—Succession in Doubt As All Creation

Groans—LBJ ORDERS FLAGS AT HALF STAFF.”<sup>22</sup> The author continued:

God, creator of the universe, principal deity of the world’s Jews, ultimate reality of Christians, and most eminent of all divinities, died late yesterday during major surgery undertaken to correct a massive diminishing influence.... Dr. Altizer, God’s surgeon, in an exclusive interview with the *Times*, stated this morning that the death was “not unexpected.” “He had been ailing for some time,” Dr. Altizer said, “and lived much longer than most of us thought possible....” There has been as yet no statement from Jesus, but a close associate, the Holy Ghost, has urged prayer and good works.<sup>23</sup>

In publishing the satire, the staff seemed to assert that *motive* would not officially endorse a singular doctrine. Official endorsement notwithstanding, the magazine and the UCM increasingly embodied many elements of this secular theology in practice as the 1960s progressed.

Audience reception of these ecumenical and theological shifts was diverse, but the magazine’s theologically controversial content was far more polarizing than its ecumenical emphasis. Many readers found *motive*’s articles to be spiritually lacking, especially for a purportedly religious publication. One student who began his letter in support of the magazine noted that “the arts, existentialist theology and philosophy, social and political comment are all ably represented...and I agree...But look,” he continued, “isn’t there an area of critically alive dialogue in the church which finds *motive* strangely silent and aloof?...What I’m suggesting is not an entering into the jargon of the technicalities of Biblical exegesis, but some reflection of the historico-critical work being done, and some of the beauty and excitement of scholarship brought to bear on the

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<sup>22</sup> Anthony Towne, “God Is Dead In Georgia,” *motive*, February 1966, back cover.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

handling of Biblical content.”<sup>24</sup> While this student’s suggestion addresses one specific area of improvement, most expressions of disapproval regarding *motive*’s theological stance contained more general denouncements of the publication’s lack of spiritually edifying content. One Missouri Methodist wrote that much of his congregation had withdrawn financial support from the church for fear that their funds were contributing to the publication of *motive*. Several additional families were considering membership withdrawal. “As illogical as this may be,” he explained, “they are not easily dissuaded. I beg you to seriously evaluate what the church is, or should be saying to its young people in these confusing times. Have we nothing to offer them while they flounder in the seas of moral laxity and social upheaval? Can we not offer them something which is basic and at least would contrast that which they are able to get from most other sources?”<sup>25</sup>

Additionally, a large percentage of reader feedback regarding *motive*’s religious identity appears to have been tied up in the reader’s political preferences. But while many of *motive*’s critics opposed the publication due to its clearly leftist slant, many readers felt drawn to the magazine’s ecumenical outlook and prophetic political stance. One Presbyterian reader from California wrote, “*motive* once again is stirring up the wrath of the right-wing here—and I for one would like once again to extend the appreciation of the United Presbyterian Church for your publication, and express the hope that our relationship will continue for quite a while.”<sup>26</sup> Still others were vocal in their appreciation of a magazine with such a wide religious appeal. One University of Pennsylvania student

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<sup>24</sup> Tom Payne, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, October 1964, 2.

<sup>25</sup> G. Kenneth Brun, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, November 1966, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert A. Stocker, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, October 1964, 3.

wrote in to the “stimulating, thought-provoking, discussion-inspiring” magazine.<sup>27</sup> “Your choice of art and your intelligent and articulate articles are well worth the 50 cents per issue. As a Roman Catholic, I feel that your *motive* transcends sect and reaches everyone.”<sup>28</sup>

For these readers, *motive*’s nontraditional take on religion—especially in comparison to other student publications of the era—was quite refreshing. *motive*’s unique combination of ethical social commentary, irreverent tone, and avant-garde arts coverage appealed not only to those outside of the Methodist Church, but to nonbelievers as well. One young Methodist in the US Navy wrote of his struggle to maintain and communicate his faith in a coarse military environment. “I [was] on the verge of frustration,” he explained, “when my first *motive*, the Nov. issue, came in. When the other guys saw me reading it, many of them asked to look at it...[and] it began to gain popularity.”<sup>29</sup> He described how the following issue had seen “almost constant use,” and was a “far more successful vehicle of decent thought and of God than either myself or the Sunday services we all attend.”<sup>30</sup> Another college student lamented, “If only [conservative] critics realized that *motive* is one of the few reasons I...can without shame admit to being Christian.”<sup>31</sup> He recounted how, in his Peace Corps training the previous summer, *motive* allowed him to offer a response to those who critiqued Christianity’s irrelevancy to twentieth century society. “Like so many young college students today,” he

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<sup>27</sup> Patricia M. Nugent, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, October 1964, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> James S. Newman, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, March 1965, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Jim B. Smith, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, May 1967, 5.

went on, “a large majority of my fellow trainees had turned away from the religious faith—be it Catholic, Protestant or Jewish—because they simply didn’t find religious answers that dealt with modern problems of civil rights, poverty or international relations, etc.”<sup>32</sup>

For all of *motive*’s appeal to students who may have been turned off to traditional religion, many students in the emerging New Left saw even *motive*’s engagement with Death of God theology as too religious, and worried that MSM participants may not be radical enough.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, throughout Stiles’s editorship, even the magazine’s more radical articles employed a measure of religious and theological rhetoric in pronouncing their criticisms of American society and foreign policy. Still, that *motive*’s voice spoke to such disparate segments of society is telling. Under Stiles, *motive* acted as a bridge between traditional Methodist circles and the emerging New Left, albeit a bridge that felt increasing strain as the decade progressed. The arena of race relations would prove to be one such area of strain.

#### *motive and Race*

From the magazine’s inception, *motive* editors never shied away from discussions regarding the topic of race. The American civil rights struggle was deeply important to the publication’s first editor, Harold Ehrensperger, who spent time in India studying Gandhian nonviolent protest and was an active participant in the Fellowship of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Paul M. Buhle, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, January 1967.



Reconciliation.<sup>34</sup> Years before the civil rights movement became known to the masses, Ehrensperger's *motive* advocated for racial equality, disparaging segregation in all its forms. The magazine's very first issue in February 1941 promoted a "Race Relations Day" and promoted interracial student cooperatives.<sup>35</sup> The following issue included an article instructing readers in how to identify propaganda promoting white supremacy, urging them to reject any such material.<sup>36</sup> In line with *motive*'s characteristically broad outlook, the magazine's commitment to racial equality extended to groups beyond the black population; a 1945 piece cautioned students to keep their eyes open to the anti-Semitism present in some fraternities and sororities.<sup>37</sup>

Under each of *motive*'s editors, the issue of race surfaced as a prominent theme. Under Stiles, however, the issue of race would emerge as one of the most distinctive themes of his editorship. As the struggle for civil rights intensified, Stiles's commitment to continuing and increasing the publication's focus on race as a central societal issue was, at root, an ethical and moral imperative. The editor's engagement with the movement did not stop with journalistic commentary; he and his wife were active in local demonstrations in Nashville, frequently bringing their young children along to local protests. While the editor acknowledged that his white, middle class family often appeared out of place among the ranting student protesters, the Stileses remained largely

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<sup>34</sup> Dan McKanan, *Prophetic Encounters: Religion and the American Radical Tradition* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2011), 209.

<sup>35</sup> "motive Almanac," *motive*, February 1941, 26; Fielder, "Student Cooperatives as a Constructive Force," 4–7.

<sup>36</sup> Clyde R. Miller, "Propaganda Analysis," *motive*, March 1941.

<sup>37</sup> Mildred Romedahl, "Heartbreak on the Campus," *motive*, October 1945. This broad focus would later be reflected in *motive*'s 1960s treatment of racism as a global issue, especially as it concerned apartheid in South Africa.

unfazed. “We grew accustomed to participating in sit-ins because it was the right thing to do,” he explained.<sup>38</sup>

The *motive* staff, by and large, encouraged—if not expected—the same level of commitment from its readers.<sup>39</sup> The publication’s identity as a student magazine allowed it to speak to race issues that students and faculty were likely to deal with firsthand, as universities nationwide were rocked with debates over campus integration.<sup>40</sup> In order to inspire its students to action, the magazine regularly held up students who crossed the color barrier as examples for MSM readers to follow.<sup>41</sup> The November 1962 issue included the harrowing story of Methodist student Bob Zellner, a white SNCC participant who had been beaten and jailed for participation in peaceful civil rights protests. The article explained that Zellner had grown up with a philosophy of racial equality after his Methodist parents underwent a liberalization during his youth, and had been prompted to re-examine their racial values despite their identity as a typical southern, religious family.<sup>42</sup> After their son was subjected to such brutality and barred from Huntingdon College, his Methodist alma mater, for his stance on civil rights, Zellner’s parents issued a statement defending their son, invoking the Methodist Discipline as a theological basis

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<sup>38</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 13, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> In addition to encouraging its own students to become involved in the fight for civil rights, the MSM also acknowledged that civil rights involvement provided a way in which students who may have been apathetic to traditional religion could become involved with the movement. See: Ruth Ann Short, “The Student Movement Moves,” *motive*, November 1962.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph R. Washington, Jr., “Where Do We Go From Here in Campus Integration?,” *motive*, January 1963.

<sup>41</sup> Stan Hamilton, “KU Student Ignores Color Barrier,” *motive*, December 1953.

<sup>42</sup> Edgar A. Love, “Claiming the Right to Choose: A Profile,” *motive*, November 1962.

for their family's stance on equality.<sup>43</sup> "The Methodist Church," they wrote, "must view the perplexing times and problems which we face today in the light of the teachings of Jesus.... To be silent in the face of need, injustice, and exploitation is to deny him."<sup>44</sup> They reminded readers of the Methodist Church's recommendation "that Methodists in their homes, in their work, in their churches, and in their communities actively work to eliminate discrimination and enforced segregation on the basis of race, color, or national origin."<sup>45</sup> The juxtaposition of the Methodist Church's official stance on race and Bob Zellner's persecution by those in his denomination illustrates the diversity of views among Methodists, and are illustrative of the broader ideological divide between clergy and laity. Still, that both *motive* magazine and the Methodist Discipline spoke of the fight for racial equality as a biblically mandated, Christian burden was significant.<sup>46</sup>

This conception of racial equality as a Christian imperative contrasted with discussions of race in secular student publications such as the wildly popular *Mademoiselle*. This self-proclaimed "magazine for the smart young woman" became the first major fashion publication to feature African American models.<sup>47</sup> Although the

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<sup>43</sup> The Methodist Discipline, or *Book of Discipline*, lays out the laws and doctrine of the Methodist Church. The book is updated every four years, and includes the Methodist Church's positions on various social issues.

<sup>44</sup> Love, "Claiming the Right to Choose: A Profile."

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> *motive* staff and contributors were by no means the only individuals in the Methodist denomination, or even in the South, who took such a stand. Joseph Reiff's *Born of Conviction* chronicles the efforts of a group of Mississippi Methodists standing against segregation in the denomination. These individuals were, however, in the minority in their communities and in the broader South. See: Joseph T. Reiff, *Born of Conviction : White Methodists and Mississippi's Closed Society* (Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Lonnie Bunch, "Smithsonian Institution : Email - A Picture Worth a Thousand More," *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, accessed February 10, 2017.

magazine was classified as a fashion publication, it boasted a robust focus on literature and displayed a sophisticated, intellectual tone throughout. Its recurring “Disturber of the Peace” column was devoted to interviews with such controversial figures as Ayn Rand, James Baldwin, and Paul Goodman. *Mademoiselle*’s discussions of social and race-related issues, however, were intended more to educate rather than inspire to action, and were marked by a sense of detachment. While some articles, such as one 1964 reflection piece from a Mississippi Freedom School teacher, contained moving anecdotes, the magazine’s overwhelming tone of worldly refinement precluded the inclusion of more disquieting content matter.<sup>48</sup> What is more, when contributors did broach the subject of racial issues, the fight for civil rights was almost never portrayed as a distinctly moral obligation.

On the other end of the spectrum, *motive*’s attention to race was a far cry from the coverage that race received in evangelical student publications of the era. Youth For Christ’s *Campus Life* and InterVarsity’s *HIS*—directed at teenagers and college students, respectively—provide a stark contrast to *motive*’s content and editorial approach.<sup>49</sup> Where *motive* sought to challenge students’ definitions of religion in society, *Campus Life* sought to help students maintain a Christian lifestyle in the midst of teen temptations and challenges. While the magazine’s younger audience was no doubt a contributing factor in the content’s more juvenile tone, its reticence to acknowledge the struggle for civil rights cannot be attributed to audience demographics alone. Even a cursory

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<sup>48</sup> Lucia Guest, “Their Dream Is Not to Be Nervous,” *Mademoiselle*, November 1964, 164, University of North Texas.

<sup>49</sup> Youth For Christ’s student publication operated under the name *Youth For Christ Magazine* until 1965, after which time its name was changed to *Campus Life*, which it still carries to this day. For continuity’s sake, this author will use the title *Campus Life*.

evaluation of the magazine makes clear that Youth For Christ avoided the issue of race at all costs.<sup>50</sup> One 1961 article, aiming to correct student ignorance on the Civil War, stated that the war “accomplished many necessary and worthwhile things,” including the preservation of the Union, industrialization, and a rich tradition of folklore. In the entire article, the issues of slavery and emancipation were never mentioned once. On the rare occasion that non-whites did appear in the magazine, they were almost always featured in the context of athletics or international missions. Athletics, especially, seems to have existed as a safe space in which the publication could highlight the achievements of blacks, while eschewing discussion of their status off the court or field.<sup>51</sup> *Campus Life* consistently presented these successful athletes as respectable and nonthreatening students, always foregrounding the athlete’s strong Christian faith and dodging any acknowledgment of racial differences or tensions in the athlete’s community.<sup>52</sup>

The content of *HIS* magazine proved, on the whole, to be more intellectually sophisticated than that of *Campus Life*, with many of the articles geared toward equipping college students to defend their faith in a world increasingly hostile to Christianity. The publication was similar to its Youth for Christ counterpart, however, in that pieces on the civil rights struggle were exceedingly rare and articles advocating involvement in the struggle were almost nonexistent. When the rare article on civil rights did crop up, the

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<sup>50</sup> The treatment of race in *Campus Life* and *HIS* can be viewed as part of a broader evangelical reluctance to actively promote the cause of racial equality. See: Mark A. Noll, *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 131–34; David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Jim Hefley, “On the Way to His Goals, This Oklahoma Negro Smashed through More Tough Obstacles than Just Opposing Linemen,” *Campus Life*, November 1965.

<sup>52</sup> *Campus Life* did see a small uptick in articles addressing race and integration in the late sixties.

staff made sure to include more conservative opinions as well, as evidenced in the magazine's 1963/1964 pieces debating federal intervention in the South.<sup>53</sup>

*motive* stood in stark contrast to both *HIS* and *Campus Life*, not only in its focus on race relations in the Methodist Church, but in the broader church as well.<sup>54</sup> The group of writers to whom *motive* gave voice on the issue of race grew increasingly diverse over the course of the 1960s. One of the most significant features on the topic was a piece penned by Thomas Merton, titled "The Black Revolution: Letters to a White Liberal."<sup>55</sup> This piece captures well *motive*'s stance on race for the better part of the sixties, namely its willingness to pursue the rhetoric and reality of revolution in the name of Christian equality and love. Merton's article probed the Christian roots of racial equality, arguing that the pursuit of full racial reconciliation was nothing short of a Christian imperative. This reconciliation could not be achieved, however, with the mere granting of legal rights. "In effect," he wrote, "we are not really giving the Negro a right...but only [the right] to sue the white man who refuses to let him do these things. If every time I want a Coca Cola I have to sue the owner of the snack bar, I think I will probably keep going to the same old places in my ghetto."<sup>56</sup> He reprimanded liberals for priding themselves on their civil rights advocacy without living out the practical implications of integration.<sup>57</sup>

Whenever the rights of blacks were infringed upon, Merton argued, liberals simply

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<sup>53</sup> John Goodwin, "A Debate on Integration," *HIS*, December 1963; William Eckbert Jr. and John Goodwin, "A Debate on Integration: Rebuttals," *HIS*, January 1964.

<sup>54</sup> James S. Thomas, "The Central Jurisdiction: Dilemma and Opportunity," *motive*, March 1964. This article critiqued the increasingly controversial and historically black Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church, which would be done away with in 1968.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Merton, "The Black Revolution: Letters to a White Liberal," *motive*, March 1964.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

redoubled their efforts at introducing new legislation. “The Negro finally gets tired of this treatment and becomes quite rightly convinced that the only way he is every going to get his rights is by fighting for them himself.”<sup>58</sup>

Merton urged readers to recognize that the black community was indeed observing its white neighbors in this crucial period, and that their Christian witness was at stake. He maintained that white participation in the struggle of his black brother had the potential to heal the collective sin of racism, to awaken the white man’s conscience, and to secure absolution for a national transgression. This moment in time, according to Merton, was a window of opportunity for the white man to partake in this salvific absolution, if only he would reject the temptation to corrupt the purity of Christian Truth by equating it with white American ideals.

He closed by offering readers a prescient picture of the future of the movement if its ties with Christianity were severed:

It seems, however, that all hope of really constructive and positive results from the Civil Rights Movement is to be placed in the Christian elements. It is also possible that as the movement gains in power, the reasonableness and the Christian fervor of these elements will recede into the background and the Movement will become more and more an unreasoning and intransigent mass movement dedicated to the conquest of sheer power, more and more inclined to violence.... The awakened Negro will forget his moment of Christian hope and Christian inspiration. He will deliberately drive out of his heart the merciful love of Christ.... There will be no more hymns and no more prayer vigils. He will become a Samson whose African strength flows ominously back into his arms. He will suddenly pull the pillars of white society crashing down upon himself and his oppressor.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 13, 16.

While Merton's prediction never came to fruition completely, it in many ways mirrored the ideological and rhetorical shifts in the struggle for civil rights following the rise of Black Power.

As many African Americans grew discontent with a gradualist, integrationist approach to race relations they craved a more effective and expedient means of pursuing racial, social, and economic equality. Black Power ideology—closely related to Black Nationalism—promoted racial pride, stressed the preservation of black cultural heritage, and promoted armed resistance. In the late sixties, Black Power ideology began to appear in civil rights organizations that had once been characterized by interracial cooperation and peaceful civil disobedience.<sup>60</sup> Consistent with their goal that the magazine stay culturally relevant, *motive* printed an interview with Black Panther Party for Self Defense leader Huey Newton.<sup>61</sup> The interview was conducted from jail, where the controversial figure awaited trial for voluntary manslaughter after killing a California policeman in a 1967 gunfight. In the interview, Newton explained that the two main goals of the Black Panther Party were the destruction of capitalism and the eradication of racism. Cultural pride alone, according to Newton, could not harness sufficient power to bring about the freedom of the black race. He called for a revolutionary nationalism that brought power to the black people through socialism, contrasting his movement with that of the black

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<sup>60</sup> Stokely Carmichael's election as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality's repudiation of nonviolence, both in 1966, are two examples of this national ideological shift.

<sup>61</sup> For more on the rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California and its relation to the Black Power Movement, see: Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).



“bourgeoisie.”<sup>62</sup> He went on to defend the use of armed resistance and violence by arguing that if one wanted to reform the system, it was necessary to “deal with his protector, which is the police who take orders from him.”<sup>63</sup>

B.J. Stiles, aware that Newton was an incendiary figure even among racial liberals, addressed the article choice head on in the issue’s opening editorial. He maintained that, although Newton expressed certain views that did not align with those of the editors and publishers, “he also represent[ed] a growing minority...who must be dealt with in some way other than fascist repression.”<sup>64</sup> He cautioned: “Newton and those whom he represents will not be silenced and the sooner we and our Chevy-driving, affluent readers can come to terms with his indictments, the sooner this country can stop breeding and electing George Wallaces.”<sup>65</sup>

Even Stiles’s preemptive rejoinder was not enough to allay the concerns of readers. One Louisiana reader felt that Stiles’s editorial implied that *any* opposition to radicals like Newton constituted fascist repression.<sup>66</sup> For a magazine whose mission was to broaden students’ horizons by offering multiple points of view, she felt that *motive* had grown decidedly one-sided: “[I]f you are only going to print one point of view, you ought to label the magazine correctly, as one explaining the revolutionary point of view, of advocating political upheaval, expressing the minority point of view.”<sup>67</sup> A Minnesota

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<sup>62</sup> “Huey Newton Speaks From Jail,” *motive*, October 1968, 9.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Stiles, “Between Bars,” October 1968, 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Mrs. Charles Kent, “Letters,” *motive*, January 1969.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

chaplain and professor echoed her concerns: “[M]y specific protest [is] against your printing an apparently ‘serious’ interview with convicted murderer Huey Newton. While you are careful to ‘hedge your bets’ ...in the preface to this interview...I suggest that this whitewash interpretation stands forth clearly as your own, by the very fact that you have dignified Newton with the printing of his comments, picture, and so forth.” The reader requested that *motive* discontinue his publication, sarcastically adding, “Even though I happen to have a twenty-five year record of integrationist activity...and have...worked for...Senator [Eugene] McCarthy's campaign, I must be a real ‘square’ at heart because I still see no difference between the ‘political act’ of Huey Newton who killed a policeman and the ‘political act’ of the man who killed Martin Luther King.”<sup>68</sup>

While the publication’s “Letters” section contained a balance of positive and negative reader feedback, letters like those above reveal that many readers—even those that considered themselves theological and political liberals—felt increasingly alienated from the magazine over the course of the 1960s. *motive*’s broader political commentary would follow a trajectory similar to that of its discussion of race.

#### *motive and Politics*

When Stiles assumed editorship of *motive*, he inherited a magazine steeped in a proud tradition of political liberalism, one that looked optimistically ahead to the new Kennedy presidency. Initially, it appeared that *motive* under Stiles would carry on this established tradition, with articles on such topics as the pursuit of world peace and the rejection of American exceptionalism. Leading up to the sixties, *motive* displayed far less concern over the expanding forces of communism than did its Christian counterparts. In

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<sup>68</sup> John R. Bodo, “Letters,” *motive*, January 1969.

an era in which many Christian student publications devoted ample space to the threat of communism to American democracy and Christianity itself, *motive* took a decidedly different tack in the face of Cold War fears. While the magazine acknowledged the “detestable” nature of the ideology, it did little to reinforce public fears of communism. One writer seemed to reflect the magazine’s attitude when he wrote, “I would be more happy if fewer preachers began their sermons by declaring ‘I am not a communist,’ and more began ‘I am a Christian, therefore, this I believe, therefore, this I do.’”<sup>69</sup> The mid-sixties, however, saw a turn in the seriousness of *motive*’s political commentary, a turn that was signaled—if not prompted—by the assassination of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963.

Early in his tenure as editor, Stiles and the *motive* staff began to piece together a double-issue on the topic of death. While some argued that an issue on mortality would not resonate with college students, the staff continued to develop the issue, convinced that the subject bore a weighty significance for readers.<sup>70</sup> These instincts proved all too timely. Just before the death issue hit the press, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, shaking *motive* readers and the nation. The death issue was now poised to offer particularly insightful commentary on the subject of mortality. “[W]hen Jack Kennedy was assassinated,” remembered Stiles, “it made the topic of universal interest and it particularly underscored the interest of young people in what death is all about.”<sup>71</sup> The staff was ultimately able to extend the publication date to include a memorial sermon

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<sup>69</sup> “Trends in National and Community Life,” October 1957.

<sup>70</sup> B.J. Stiles, “Editorial,” *motive*, February 1964, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 15, 2016.

by Rev. Howard R. Moody, minister at New York's historic Judson Memorial Church, as well as a new editorial.<sup>72</sup> Wrote Stiles in his revised editorial:

Death in all its existential grandeur and arrogant finality badgered us into a bewildered stupor.... Our glib and sophomoric accolades to Sartre, Kafka, Ionesco, Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard mocked us. The awful reality of death arose to indict our pseudo-commitments to 'live as men of faith.' Anguish, futility, despair, absurdity became tough truths which could not be dismissed easily by playing intellectual games.<sup>73</sup>

For Stiles, the aligning of the death issue with the national tragedy served as confirmation that the magazine was on the right track: "Things like that happened...that we had no anticipation of, but...the magazine seemed to always be on top of whatever the big issue was."<sup>74</sup> In this way, *motive* exhibited a timeliness lacking in other student publications of the day. Where *motive* dedicated an entire issue to Kennedy's death, evangelical student publications such as *HIS* and *Campus Life* made no mention of the assassination. While the differences are by no means surprising given the traditions out of which these publications emerged, they do underscore *motive*'s unique position in offering theological and philosophical reflections on significant societal trends. Stiles urged readers to take from the issue a "renewed sense of urgency about the importance and relevance of [their] own individual contributions to life," especially in light of the "sobering and dramatic events in [the] decade."<sup>75</sup>

Dramatic events were indeed in store where US foreign policy was concerned. Thanks to mounting Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union and Southeast Asia,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Stiles, "Editorial," 3.

<sup>74</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 15, 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Stiles, "Editorial," 3.

discussion of communism and its relation to American foreign policy began to appear more frequently. In line with its mission to remain ever-relevant to the world around it, *motive* wasted no time in offering commentary on the international events. Ed Wright, a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Saigon, penned one 1964 piece titled, “The Mess in Vietnam.” In the article, Wright criticized US aid to Vietnam, arguing that its success was stymied by “military insecurity,” “widespread waste and corruption in use of aid funds,” and “a leadership vacuum and shortage of responsible and trained personnel and technicians.”<sup>76</sup> “We should not deceive ourselves,” he advised, “into thinking that our presence everywhere is indispensable to the world’s progress.”<sup>77</sup> Even more liberal student publications such as *Mademoiselle* did not match *motive*’s staunchly antiwar sentiment. When *Mademoiselle* did discuss the Vietnam conflict, it made sure to co-feature opposing viewpoints.<sup>78</sup>

It soon became apparent following the Gulf of Tonkin incident and ensuing resolution that the conflict in Southeast Asia was only beginning. As US involvement in Vietnam escalated, student protests erupted across the nation. In April 1965, Students for a Democratic Society led a march against the war in Washington, D.C., attracting more than 20,000 participants. In March 1966, the National Council of the Methodist Student Movement issued a statement on the war:

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<sup>76</sup> Ed Wright, “The Mess in Vietnam,” *motive*, May 1964, 46.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>78</sup> “The Crisis of Conscience: Vietnam,” *Mademoiselle*, August 1966, 272.

We are still deeply disturbed...not only by a general trend in foreign policy that has led our nation into armed conflict, but also by the authoritarianism which precludes the reasonable form of dissent necessary for debate. We are witnessing a time when national policy has come to such an impasse that it is almost impossible to discuss policy openly.... The right to disagree with governmental policy is being questioned, and dissent from our present policy is being discouraged, often with punitive intent.... In recent years we have come to understand anew the way in which the ethical responsibility of the Christian man inevitably involves political decisions. We hold, therefore, that the Church has a clear responsibility to engage intensively in open dialogue on American foreign policy in Southeast Asia.<sup>79</sup>

Concerns over the Vietnam War permeated not only the national levels of the MSM (and, later, UCM) but in the local levels as well. In 1968, *motive* boasted that nearly thirty percent of its readers had participated in multiple political protests in the last year.<sup>80</sup> As the war intensified, local Wesley Foundations prepared to counsel young men who had been drafted. This counseling did not merely consist of teaching young men to cope with the emotional realities of facing combat; college chaplains were instructed to counsel students to take whatever path they felt was best, even if that path were to resist the draft.<sup>81</sup>

On the *motive* front, Stiles voiced his concerns as well, expressing alarm at the ease with which the public accepted the government's "simplistic" and "formulaic" domino theory as a valid justification for US involvement in Vietnam.<sup>82</sup> "Because of our paranoic fear of communism," he explained, "we have shifted an existential, human need (social depravity and hunger) to an abstract, ideological level (democracy versus

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<sup>79</sup> National Council of the MSM, "The Picket Line," *motive*, March 1966, 2.

<sup>80</sup> Stiles, "Between Bars," October 1968, 6.

<sup>81</sup> Don Lowdermilk, "Letter from Don Lowdermilk to Campus Ministers and Chaplains," Spring 1968, Series 4: Correspondence, 1951-1981, Box 1270, File 18 (Correspondence with Nashville 1968-1969), Bridwell Library Special Collections, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

<sup>82</sup> B.J. Stiles, "The War in Vietnam," *motive*, March 1966, 5.

communism) and, in the process, missed a golden opportunity to defeat communism on its own terms.” “If we are to regain any of our lost integrity,” he stated, “then we must begin by ridding ourselves of a curious messianic complex.”<sup>83</sup>

Much of *motive*’s audience, such as graduate student John Swomley Jr., was inclined to agree. “The articles [on the Vietnam War],” wrote Swomley, “are brilliant and passionate writing which go directly to the heart of our American problem—self-righteousness. We cloak the most brutal destruction of people in moral arguments designed to demonstrate that we are history’s white knight in armor defending civilization against communism.”<sup>84</sup> He added that, “some Christians who support the mass murder of ordinary people in Viet Nam see the problem as involving so many complexities that there is no simple solution.” War as a solution, he argued, was far more egregious in its simplicity.<sup>85</sup> The magazine’s antiwar content inspired international students as well. “Your October issue,” wrote one German student, “encourages some of us abroad that the Church in America hasn’t lost entirely its voice on the war in Viet Nam.”<sup>86</sup> He held that the outcry of American Christians against the war had not gone far enough, and urged the National Council of Churches to devote a committee to pressuring political decision-makers. *motive*’s stance on the Vietnam War not only shaped students’ ideology of armed conflict, but came to bear upon their personal decisions as well. One reader spoke of the strength he gleaned from *motive* in making the decision to refuse army induction.<sup>87</sup> He

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> John M. Swomley Jr., “Letter to the Editor,” December 1966, 3.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Cristoph Bornhauser, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, December 1966, 4.

<sup>87</sup> MacKie, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, May 1968, 2.

expressed dismay that more dissenters had not spoken out, and praised the publication's view of the war as a moral failure rather than simply a "military miscalculation."<sup>88</sup> For these students, *motive* was a lone and welcome voice crying out in the American Church.

Not all readers, however, were so welcoming of *motive*'s exclusively antiwar slant. Accusation of one-sidedness was a recurring theme in letters from subscribers throughout the 1960s. One 1968 article is representative of this sentiment. The reader noted that *motive*'s content on the Vietnam War was well-written and informed, but was not, by definition, liberal. "A magazine," he wrote, "if it is to remain 'liberal,' cannot present an issue of this importance from a completely one-sided point of view. Where were articles condoning the war? ...I can understand your point of view.... Yet, I cannot agree with the narrow-mindedness that was displayed in presenting the articles on the Vietnamese war."<sup>89</sup> Other readers, such as college student Norman Bosley, critiqued *motive*'s failure to suggest helpful courses of action alongside their denunciations of the establishment. Bosley wrote that, "If *motive* truly has any expectation of becoming significant reading fare for the concerned laity in current times, it will have to recognize that pious moans of protest are no substitute for specific, constructive alternatives, no matter what the issue may be."<sup>90</sup>

Many of *motive*'s other critics, however, often attacked the publication in harsher terms than did Bosley. As one 1968 reader accused:

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Edward Johnston, "Letter to the Editor," *motive*, March 1968, 2.

<sup>90</sup> Norman K. Bosley, "Letter to the Editor," *motive*, May 1966, 3.



Your so-called ‘University Christian Movement’ magazine encourages rioting, burning and bloodshed as well as subversion. No wonder college youth are confused and restless. You denounce our American soldiers as murderers and condone acts of the Viet Cong, such as mutilation of our boys, massacres of whole villages and the systematic murder of village leaders. How Christian is this? How objective? This isn’t journalism; it is simply communist propaganda hiding behind church robes.<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, while *motive* always included a fairly balanced selection of reader feedback in its “Letters” section, the staff oftentimes reprinted letters of critique containing original errors or bombastic speech that cast the reader in a negative, if laughable, light. One reprint of a 1967 letter read: “Is motive a religious publication or a left-wing scandal sheet?... America, in fighting communism, does not always trample down the country where it fights, take Greece for example. [sic!] I respect your right to freedom of speech, but I resent the continual leftist leaning of ‘our’ publication. The communists are not all good guys!” The May 1967 issue included a similarly colorful critique: “My misfortune (was) to behold one of your ugly magazines while shuffling through some trash. What dismay to find it published for the University Christian Movement.... Proof positive of this sick society. Anyway I burned it; even the smoke was foul.”<sup>92</sup>

Although these letters may have garnered a smirk from *motive*’s more radical audience, their sentiments reveal the broad political spectrum that was present in the Methodist Church and the broader mainline, especially when juxtaposed with pronouncements from the Methodist General Conference. Since 1960, the General Conference had urged the “abolition of war and complete disarmament.”<sup>93</sup> In 1968,

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<sup>91</sup> James E. Foote, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, October 1968, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Member of the Blue Army, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, May 1967.

<sup>93</sup> Tooley, *Methodism and Politics in the 20th Century from William McKinley to 9/11*, xvi.

bishops strongly urged the U.S. government to review its dealings with communist countries, repudiating the “chicanery and savagery” of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>94</sup> When viewed alongside these official statements, the critiques of *motive* readers underscore the ideological divide between clergy and laity and speak to the diversity present in the Methodist Church in the late sixties. While Methodism until this point had been far from monolithic, the advent of new, radical theologies, the rise of the Black Power Movement, and an escalating Vietnam War had an overwhelmingly polarizing effect on the Methodist masses.

#### *motive in Transition*

While *motive* continued to function as a radical voice in the midst of societal and international turmoil, its editor began to question whether or not the political left would ultimately prevail. “By early 1968,” remembered Stiles, “I was so preoccupied with the condition of American society and the terrible state of politics that I didn’t know how to cope adequately.”<sup>95</sup> His response to the upheaval around him took shape in his February 1968 editorial titled “Wanted: Some Hope for the Future.”<sup>96</sup> As he surveyed the landscape of American politics in light of the upcoming presidential election, he opined, “the one candidate who could do more than any other single individual to infuse hope into the political system remains undecided.”<sup>97</sup> That candidate was Robert Kennedy. “I am not here suggesting,” Stiles added, “that RFK offers a panacea for what ails

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Stiles, “motive Magazine: Methodism’s Icon and Albatross: A Talk by B. J. Stiles.”

<sup>96</sup> B.J. Stiles, “Wanted: Some Hope for the Future,” *motive*, February 1968, 4–5.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 4.

America.... But I do contend that his announced candidacy at this time for the Democratic nomination would do more to restore hope for the political process itself than any other single act.”<sup>98</sup> Stiles made the case that 1968 presented a far more urgent need for political clarification than would 1972. If Kennedy were to defer his candidacy until the next election, Stiles argued that the eroding hope of the Democratic Party could be “entirely dead or redirected.”

Throughout the piece, the *motive* editor cast the idea of Robert Kennedy’s candidacy as the fulfillment of his older brother’s legacy. Stiles argued that Kennedy had the potential to engage the poor, the young, and middle-class liberal intellectuals who had been alienated from both parties and to whom President John F. Kennedy had once offered a promising, if fleeting, modicum of hope. Echoing the words of John F. Kennedy on his inauguration day, Stiles closed: “Is it too much to expect that he who would be served by his country would now make it clear that he would first serve his country—as candidate?”<sup>99</sup>

The *New York Times* promptly picked up Stiles’s editorial, ensuring its circulation to thousands of American readers—including Robert Kennedy. Not only did Kennedy read Stiles’s editorial, but after announcing his candidacy, the politician invited the young editor to join his campaign staff as well. Stiles later recalled meeting Kennedy for the first time in the home of their mutual friend, *Nashville Tennessean* editor John Seigenthaler: “Seigenthaler looked at me and said, ‘Would you go to the kitchen and get me a beer?’ ...So I go back to the kitchen, and there is senator Kennedy alone, standing at

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 5.

the kitchen bar.” “Well,” he remembered Kennedy remarking, “Seigenthaler says you’re the guy who wrote that editorial.... We don’t have a lot of time here. I’ve made my decision. Are you ready to make yours?”<sup>100</sup> Two weeks later, the editor negotiated an unpaid leave of absence with the magazine to join Kennedy’s presidential campaign staff in the Indiana, California, and Oregon primaries. Stiles thrived in his new position on the campaign trail thanks to an expansive network of contacts; previous *motive* contributors, MSM participants, and influential Methodist clergy proved willing and eager to lend a hand. In this role on the Kennedy campaign, Stiles personified *motive*’s dual existence in both religious and secular realms and served as an example of the symbiotic relationship *motive* sought between the two.

Stiles’s involvement with the campaign came to an abrupt halt, however, following Senator Kennedy’s untimely death in June 1968. The senator’s assassination proved to be the first of a series of events that would drastically shift his professional trajectory. “I was paralyzed,” he explained, ‘incapable of thinking clearly or positively or optimistically about anything.’<sup>101</sup> “Being involved in the ’68 campaign and being outside the church...it was a life-changing experience.... [A]fter I went back to *motive* after Bobby was killed, I never could really just re-enter the job. I think I was still so much in grief and transition that it became clear that I needed to resign.”<sup>102</sup> Stiles would finish out the fall of 1968 with *motive* before taking a position as the director of the Robert F. Kennedy Fellows Program. As the momentum from Stiles’s editorship carried the

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<sup>100</sup> Stiles, “motive Magazine: Methodism’s Icon and Albatross: A Talk by B. J. Stiles.”

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Stiles, phone interview by the author, December 15, 2016.

magazine through the 1968-1969 school year, the Board of Higher Education and *motive* staff searched for a new leader and vision for the future.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *motive's* Final Years and Demise

#### *The Committee on the Future of motive*

Over the course of Stiles's eight-year tenure, *motive* magazine saw a marked increase in circulation, joined itself with the largest Christian student movement in the United States, and rose to prominence in religious and secular publishing circles alike. When Stiles departed, he left not only a position to be filled, but a visionary vacuum as well. At the annual Board of Education meeting in January 1969, Department of Campus Ministry Director Myron Wicke declared, "*motive* had done more for the appearance of journalism in the church than any publication the church has and...if *motive* should stop, it would be an irreparable loss to the church."<sup>1</sup> Rather than forming a simple editorial search committee, the Board of Higher Education saw fit to form a Committee on the Future of *motive*, comprised of representatives from organizations such as the United Campus Ministry, the United Methodist Student Movement, the United Ministries in Higher Education, the National Campus Ministry Association, the Editorial Board, and the Division of Higher Education. In addition to nominating a new editor, this group was tasked with setting a vision for the future trajectory of the publication.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Minutes of the Department of Campus Ministry Annual Board of Education Meeting," January 28, 1969, 4, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 3, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>2</sup> Myron F. Wicke, "Letter to the Editorial Board of *motive* Magazin," January 3, 1969, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 3, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

Even as an editorial vacancy loomed, the Department of Campus Ministry remained optimistic about the future as the committee met for the first time in the spring of 1969. Still, the committee's deliberations revealed a diverse and often conflicting array of opinions as to the future mission and identity of the magazine. Although the committee acknowledged that *motive* had once widely been considered an avant-garde publication, some worried that it would be left behind given the recent "proliferation of magazines 'on the edge.'"<sup>3</sup> While committee members did not reference specific publications, one can reasonably assume that they referred to such radical magazines as *Ramparts* and *Radical America*, both closely associated with the New Left. It would seem that, in the eyes of committee members, *motive*'s unique combination of religious ties and radical content were not enough to set the magazine apart in the world of radical student publications. "*motive* has been living off the mystique of its past," the committee wrote. "If it is to survive as a crucial magazine, it must define its particular role more clearly."<sup>4</sup>

The committee subsequently identified several possible roles into which the magazine could move in order to distinguish itself. They suggested that *motive* brand itself as a "radically oriented free university" that "would clearly advocate basic social change" and "provide an occasion for exploration of ideas...." They advised that *motive* "call [readers] into accountability for the lives they le[d]," offer a "fusion of the artistic and political," and cultivate a "theological consciousness" through articles that dealt with fundamental life questions. In total, the Committee enumerated five potential functions for the magazine; still, it remained unclear whether they intended to pursue them

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<sup>3</sup> "Policy Statement from the Committee on the Future of *motive*," March 1969, 1, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 3, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

simultaneously or whether they aimed to prioritize some over others.<sup>5</sup> For all of the direction these goals provided, they also brought debate. While the committee agreed that their publication should cultivate a theological consciousness, they disagreed on the practical implications of such a goal. Was it enough, some argued, for an article to contain subconscious theological reflection, or should pieces be self-consciously and overtly theological in nature? Furthermore, certain directives in their policy statement appeared to contradict others. For example, the committee wrote that, as there was “no such thing as neutrality,” decisions regarding *motive*’s content were political decisions, and should be self-consciously so. Later, however, the statement declared that the magazine would not “support one action or particular group, but seek to...further the analysis and work being done by those committed to social change.”<sup>6</sup> This fluid sense of identity and internal contradiction would surface repeatedly in both the magazine and the broader University Christian Movement in the coming years.

The Danforth Foundation’s extensive study, *The Church, the University, and Social Policy*, also figured heavily into the committee’s deliberations. This study, conducted over a six-year period from 1963-1969, examined the issues facing campus ministry in light of declining church influence, societal upheaval, and a widening ideological gap between clergy and laity.<sup>7</sup> The report identified four potential functions of campus ministry: the pastoral, the priestly, the kingly, and the prophetic.<sup>8</sup> Though the authors noted that these four strands would ideally exist in tension with one another, they

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<sup>5</sup> “Policy Statement from the Committee on the Future of *motive*.”

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> “New Wine: A Report of the Commission on the Danforth Study of Campus Ministries: An Interpretation of The Church, The University, and Social Policy” (St. Louis: Danforth Foundation, 1969), 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



highlighted the prophetic role as one of the most effective in bringing about lasting changes to both society and the university. The study found that campus clergy and students were uniquely situated to speak out against a university system that was complicit in perpetuating an increasingly industrial, bureaucratic and technology-dependent society. According to the authors, this prophetic role did not denote an anti-intellectual, anarchist activism simply for activism's own sake. Rather, it required the cooperation of students, faculty, and campus ministers.<sup>9</sup>

Campus ministers, however, increasingly found themselves in difficult and undefined positions in relation to students and administrators. Involvement in student organizations was on the decline, and campus clergy often felt pressure to develop new strategies to connect with students who were not religiously committed.<sup>10</sup> As the Danforth Study observed, "There is a substantial group of students on campuses that is not deeply [religiously] committed but is accessible to a proclamation of the faith...within a context of doubt [and] prophetic inquiry....They offer campus clergy an opportunity to explore the meaning of contemporary Christianity along with other religious and ethical options."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, campus ministry models were shifting to reflect this line of thinking. By 1968, the average number of service projects at campus Wesley Foundations doubled the number of weekly religious services offered.<sup>12</sup> As student protests erupted nationwide, campus ministers experienced mounting strain as they attempted to relate to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>10</sup> "Minutes of the Department of Campus Ministry Annual Board of Education Meeting."

<sup>11</sup> "New Wine," 24.

<sup>12</sup> Board of Education of the United Methodist Church, "Annual Report of the Department of Campus Ministry," 1969, 5, Box 1270, File 19, Texas Methodist Student Movement records, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

increasingly dissatisfied students and yet maintain positive relations with campus administrators.<sup>13</sup> The Danforth Study foregrounded the polarizing nature of campus unrest in the late sixties, noting that many campus ministers were either uncritically supportive of the student protest movement or of the administration, with only a small percentage falling in the middle. These strains were reflected in high turnover rates among Wesley Foundation staff, all the while the Department of Campus Ministry continued to push for greater ecumenical involvement among campus ministries.<sup>14</sup>

The Committee on the Future of *motive* was well aware of this shift away from denominationally based campus ministry and toward ecumenical prophetic inquiry. Their policy statement explicitly signaled *motive*'s transition toward viewing its subscribers as a "constituency" of individuals who, on the whole, were "theologically sensitive but not necessarily a 'church' group."<sup>15</sup> The push toward ecumenism stronger than ever, the committee and magazine staff resolved that *motive*'s best hope for future success would be to detach itself from its denominational moorings. The committee appeared convinced that *motive*'s identity as a "denominational or church-confined" publication would undermine this future vision; in order to accomplish it, the magazine would need to find a new ecumenical base.<sup>16</sup> Rather than a magazine held accountable to a denominational board, the committee envisioned an ideal future in which *motive*'s constituency alone

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<sup>13</sup> "DHE News Notes" (National Council of Churches, February 1969), Box 1270, File 19, Texas Methodist Student Movement records, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Davis and The National Council for the Methodist Student Movement, "Letter to Reverend Charles Laing," February 13, 1968, Box 1270, File 18, Texas Methodist Student Movement records, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

<sup>15</sup> "Minutes of the Department of Campus Ministry Annual Board of Education Meeting."

<sup>16</sup> "Policy Statement from the Committee on the Future of *motive*."

held the magazine accountable for its content. Furthermore, the decision to seek a new ecumenical home seems to have been mutual, providing the Board of Education with an opportunity to display its commitment to true ecumenicity while allowing *motive* the editorial freedom it so desperately sought.

### *Liberation and Censorship*

The search for this ecumenical home had barely begun, however, when more pressing concerns arose. *motive*'s March/April 1969 installment, a double-issue devoted to the theme of women's liberation, proved to be one of the most provocative yet. The issue was guest-edited by Joanne Cooke, a *motive* staff member; Charlotte Bunch Weeks, UCM's first president and prominent feminist activist; and Robin Morgan, a Women's Liberation Movement activist and poet who had "written widely for the overground and underground press."<sup>17</sup> The issue began to take shape after the staff sent Cooke, the "Token Woman on the editorial staff," to the first national women's liberation conference in Lake Villa, Illinois over the 1968 Thanksgiving weekend.<sup>18</sup> "Nothing has been the same since," declared Cooke after returning. "Now every song on the radio, every magazine ad...every casual conversation...is political.... [P]olitics didn't demand a change in lifestyle until I felt that I was being personally oppressed."<sup>19</sup> Cooke credited this conversion to Charlotte Bunch Weeks, director of the conference and longtime friend of *motive*. Under Weeks's consultation, what started as an issue on women spawned into an issue solely devoted to the women's liberation movement.

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<sup>17</sup> "Contributors," *motive*, April 1969, 92.

<sup>18</sup> "Contents," *motive*, April 1969.

<sup>19</sup> Joanne Cooke, "Here's to You, Mrs. Robinson," *motive*, April 1969, 4.

The March/April installment was composed of articles on women's issues ranging from premarital cohabitation to lesbianism, unapologetically peppered with language guaranteed to elicit a response from concerned clergy and laity alike. One of the most inflammatory pieces was penned by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, two women who fifteen years earlier had helped establish Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian organization in San Francisco.<sup>20</sup> In "The Realities of Lesbianism," Martin and Lyon underscored the uniquely disadvantaged position that lesbians occupied as both females and homosexuals. They drew on their extensive knowledge of the larger lesbian community as they discussed the social plight of female homosexuals. These women, they explained, often faced social isolation, job discrimination, and, in the worst cases, criminal charges. Despite all of these setbacks, the authors argued that lesbians must be open and honest about their sexual orientation if societal views were ever to change. "[The lesbian] faces loss of job, family and friends," they wrote. "Yet, until she opens herself to such possibilities, no one will have the opportunity to come to know and to understand her as the whole person she is. It is only through more knowledge and more personal confrontation that the stereotype of the Lesbian can be dispelled."<sup>21</sup>

In a special piece for the issue, B.J. Stiles praised the women's liberation theme, admitting that while staff members had tossed around the topic of homosexuality, they had been reticent to broach the subject in print:

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<sup>20</sup> Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, "The Realities of Lesbianism," *motive*, April 1969, 62.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

Homosexuality—male and female—was a theme...warmly debated and editorially projected in the mid-sixties.... But procrastination and lack of courage to deal frankly and realistically with an explosive subject at a time when the magazine seemed to be in an already too-precarious political situation with the church resulted in month-to-month postponements of the issue.<sup>22</sup>

And yet while *motive* had finally broken its silence on the subject, it did so with a startlingly little amount of theological reflection or rhetoric, as contributors steered away from any overt discussion of religion and homosexuality. In the opening editorial, Cooke implied to readers that the issue of women's liberation was inherently theological, even if it led to societal upheaval. "All this is clearly Christian in its counterassumptions," she wrote. "It assumes brotherhood and sisterhood, with a radical call to mutual concern, involvement and commitment. It assumes working for justice and equality and dignity 'on earth.' And if fighting injustice, inequality and exploitation means a change basic enough to be called a revolution... Amen."<sup>23</sup>

This idea was not only confined to discussion of lesbianism; the entire women's liberation issue was characterized by a lack of interpretation from an overarching theological framework, especially when compared with the magazine's discussion of race and the Vietnam War. Interestingly enough, however, the most contentious element of this iconic issue would not be its discussion of lesbianism or challenging of traditional gender roles, but rather its use of obscene language. Perhaps the issue's most inflammatory article opened with a jarring anecdote from a recent Woman's Liberation Movement meeting: "'Take her off the stage and fuck her,' was the polite greeting of a 'radical' brother as one woman tried to speak....' Go home; women have it good in our

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<sup>22</sup> B.J. Stiles, "Between Bars," *motive*, April 1969, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Cooke, "Here's to You, Mrs. Robinson," 5.

society.”<sup>24</sup> The piece, titled “Woman As: Secretary, Sexpot, Spender, Sow, Civic Actor, Sickie,” probed these six primary roles into which society placed women: employee of limited competence, sexual object, materialistic consumer, wife and mother, voiceless voter, and, for those who did not fit into these categories, social outcast.

The author examined each of these roles through the lens of Marxist economics, tracing their historical development to explain how women had been programmed to fit into such “limiting and dehumanizing” categories in society. Instead of refuting the traditionally Christian conceptions of femininity and marriage, the author eschewed engagement with these ideas altogether. Instead, she drew from Friedrich Engel’s *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* to argue that the modern concept of marriage between two individuals was not instinctual, but rather the result of economic developments in which women became the property of men.<sup>25</sup> In addition to framing marriage as a property relationship and children as the resulting products, the author included several testimonies from young housewives who lamented their unused degrees and the monotony of quotidian domestic duties. The author ended with a call for women to organize in their communities to set up abortion funds, establish childcare facilities, and teach women’s history courses at local “free universities,” all the while pressuring government and educational institutions to offer these themselves.

Other provocative portions of the women’s liberation issue included an article by W.I.T.C.H., the Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, artistic renderings of nude women, and articles on such topics as femininity as a psychological

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<sup>24</sup> Marilyn Salzman Webb, “Woman As: Secretary, Sexpot, Spender, Sow, Civic Actor, Sickie,” *motive*, April 1969, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

construct. But while article topics varied, the use of four-letter words was consistent throughout. The magazine, however, addressed these stylistic choices head-on:

This issue appears with the four-letter words intact because the authors used them intentionally. Our society has permitted certain words to become weapons, often used against women and taboo to them. We have to learn to be shocked, not at “bad” words but at the “bad” concepts behind their use....These words should all have been demythologized and disarmed long ago.<sup>26</sup>

Even with Cooke’s explanation, the women’s liberation issue created a stir that extended far beyond *motive*’s audience. While response to the issue was “overwhelming,” the editors calculated that subscribers accounted for only 24 percent of positive feedback and 11 percent of negative feedback.<sup>27</sup>

Cooke spoke of this response in *motive*’s next installment. The guest editor observed that, despite the polarizing nature of the women’s liberation issue, reader responses contained as many similarities as they did differences. “Everyone who wrote,” she explained, “whether they had burned the issue or bronzed it, believed they did so as an affirmation of the same basic values.”<sup>28</sup> These values included the respect for human dignity, belief in individual responsibility for actions and mutual responsibility for one’s community, belief in the right to vote and organize, and the refusal to subscribe to the then-prevalent Playboy Philosophy.<sup>29</sup> Even so, responses ran the gamut from effusive praise to outright vitriol.

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<sup>26</sup> Joanne Cooke, “Here’s to You, Mrs. Robinson,” *motive*, April 1969, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Joanne Cooke, “Editorial,” *motive*, October 1969, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Joanne Cooke, “Editorial,” *motive*, October 1969, 3.

<sup>29</sup> *motive* had engaged with this philosophy previously, in a printed debate between Harvey Cox and Hugh Hefner on sexuality. See: Hugh Hefner and Harvey Cox, “Sex: Myths & Realities,” *motive*, November 1965, 7.

Approximately 60 percent of responses received reflected clear support for the recent issue, many of them from college-aged women who believed that the issue exposed an inequality that they too observed firsthand. As one Brandeis University student wrote, “There is nothing unfeminine about me....But I fail to see anything...cute...about my wanting to get a Ph.D., and not at night after changing diapers all day.”<sup>30</sup> She expressed her outrage at the treatment of women in society, the relegation of abortions to “dirty back rooms,” and the lag in women’s salaries. “Moreover,” she continued, “people justify all this by naming as God’s Law what is really only man’s. I am sure you will receive a great deal of criticism on this issue.... The fact that people oppose you means only that they cannot ignore what you are saying.”<sup>31</sup> College students, however, were not the only vocal supporters of the issue; campus faculty and staff wrote in to express their support as well. The director of the YWCA at Iowa State University praised the “truly superb” issue, commenting that the issue and the nationwide awakening of women to their oppression were “long overdue.”<sup>32</sup> For her, the women’s liberation movement was not “reformist” or “anti-male,” but “one deeply concerned about and moving toward radically new life styles and humane attitudes.”<sup>33</sup> Tom Leatherwood, the assistant chaplain at Yale University, requested that two hundred copies be sent for the next freshmen orientation, in which the university would welcome its first female students.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, the issue resonated with a large number of college students, faculty,

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<sup>30</sup> Jackie Hyman, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, October 1969, 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Claudia Johnson, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, October 1969, 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Tom Leatherwood, “Letter to the Editor,” *motive*, October 1969, 3.



and clergy across the nation, who had long desired the church to speak out against the unequal treatment of women in society.

But while a large portion of *motive*'s readership felt that women stood to benefit from an introduction to women's liberation, many female readers wrote letters in defense of their femininity, critiquing the issue's attack on traditional female gender roles. One Pennsylvania reader, who considered herself an "intelligent and logically minded" college student, wrote: "I love my femininity...and I am proud of my sex. I like to have men open doors for me.... Sure, I am frustrated at times when my opinion is not valued as highly...just because I am a woman. This doesn't happen very often, though. I find that any woman who has a valid opinion...will find acceptance if her opinions are, in fact, valid."<sup>35</sup> Others found themselves torn between their support for women's rights and their aversion to the magazine's radical stance on gender issues. One reader praised the fight for equal rights and pay, but chided, "It's a hell of a world when a woman is made to feel guilty about enjoying the role of housewife, homemaker, and mother!"<sup>36</sup> Wrote another, "I, as you, have the youthful illusion that I can succeed in 'making something of myself,' and it was quite pleasant to find someone has retained the faith, however what is this complete equality you speak of?"<sup>37</sup> She went on to ask, "Who among those of you 'WOMEN writers' would shoulder your guns on the front line of Viet Nam? Surely we can not expect the harvest of equality without the chaff? Fair or unfair, that is equality."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jessica L. Powers, "Letter to the Editor," *motive*, October 1969, 4.

<sup>36</sup> A.J. Gunther, "Letter to the Editor," *motive*, October 1969, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Denise Bartles, "Letter to the Editor," *motive*, October 1969, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Other readers believed that *motive*'s content was simply unsuitable reading for professing Christians, especially young adult readers. The tone of the critique from one Virginia pastor is representative of many who shared these sentiments. "We feel," he expressed, "that there is no excuse for the use of such filthy language," and went on to decry "the abominable choice of subject matter." The pastor located his disapproval for the issue in its contradiction of religious and political norms:

The overall tone in this and previous issues is one of dismay and sickness tending to undermine the normal accepted Christian way of life.... It is pure unadulterated trash regardless of the generation gap. It is a strong mark of atheist teachings of the communists who unfortunately have infiltrated into the educational and religious institutions of our great country. We wonder if Jesus or any of his 12 disciples were to appear in today's world...would they condone this as representative teaching of the scripture?<sup>39</sup>

While this pastor denounced both the issue's profanity and subject matter, many members of the *motive* audience attacked the use of four-letter words alone, making no mention of the issue's controversial content. Similarly, news of the magazine's questionable rhetoric traveled throughout conservative Methodist lay groups, whose newsletters bore criticism of *motive*'s profanity while remaining curiously silent on its radical message.<sup>40</sup> Given the exceedingly controversial nature of the issue's content, it seems plausible that these groups had not, in fact, read the issue in question, as their outrage would have logically been directed toward the subject matter as well.

In the same way, *motive*'s use of four-letter words appeared to worry the Board of Education far more than the magazine's focus on women's liberation. After they became

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<sup>39</sup> W.L. Harris, "Letter to the Editor," *motive*, November 1969, 5.

<sup>40</sup> "Think on These Things," *Good News Newsletter*, June 10, 1969, "Anti-motive" Folder, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey; Methodist Laymen of North Hollywood, "Letter No. 95," July 1969, "Anti-motive" Folder, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

aware of the language used in the March/April issue and its widespread criticism, board members called for a special meeting in June to address the incident. Before the day of the meeting arrived, however, Department of Campus Ministry director Myron Wicke received word that the May issue would also include a similar smattering of four-letter words.<sup>41</sup> Anticipating the reaction from both the Board of Education and the broader denomination, he informed the Committee on the Future of *motive* that, as he saw it, the only way to save the magazine from discontinuation would be to present the board with the nomination of an editor who would proposed a more responsible editorial policy for the future.<sup>42</sup> He re-emphasized that the nominee must be a person who could reassure the Board of Education that the magazine would remain sensitive to a broad spectrum of people and concerns in the church. This piece of advice aside, Wicke assured the committee that although he had already received advance criticism of the upcoming issue, he would under no circumstances serve as censor.<sup>43</sup>

By the time of the June meeting of the Executive Committee, however, Wicke had pulled the May issue from the press. While the director never publically addressed his seemingly abrupt change of heart, pressure from the Board of Education likely played a role in his decision. In a subsequent statement, he recounted how for years he had resisted demands that *motive* be censored or abolished, and affirmed his support of the ideas expressed in the May issue. But he went on to write, “The canons of good taste,

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<sup>41</sup> Committee on the Future of motive, “Minutes,” May 20, 1969, Committee on the Future of motive Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “Committee on the Future of motive Minutes,” May 20, 1969, Committee on the Future of motive Folder 3, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

however, are our mutual responsibility.... I want *motive* to remain a responsible journal that speaks prophetically to the issues that students face in contemporary society. This can be done without violating ordinary standards of decency.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, for Wicke and the Board of Education, this aversion to the use of profanity in the pages of *motive* was intimately tied to the question of decency. As well-educated Protestant mainliners, board members were by no means strangers to the discussion of liberal—and oftentimes, radical—ideologies, especially where *motive* was concerned. They were, however, part of a religious contingent whose cultural authority rested on an intellectual respectability—a respectability that could be undermined by the use of vulgar language.<sup>45</sup> At the June meeting, the Executive Committee of the Board of Education voted to continue the publication of *motive*, provided it recover the identity and direction it had exhibited in years past:

We have become convinced that this publication has increasingly lost its way. *motive* now needs to recover its original imperative; to speak both a prophetic and a healing word amid the confusions, divisions, turmoils, and creative dreams, hopes, and labors of the contemporary campus. This speaking must be from the perspective of the Christian faith....While the Executive Committee voted to continue *motive*, it did not vote to perpetuate the recent past.<sup>46</sup>

In light of the women’s liberation issue and May censorship debacle, the need for an ecumenical publisher became even more apparent. At this June 1969 meeting, the Executive Committee offered to aid the magazine financially for up to three years while

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<sup>44</sup> Myron F. Wicke, “Statement on May 1969 Issue,” May 27, 1969, *motive* Documents Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>45</sup> For more on the mainline and cultural capital, see: Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline*.

<sup>46</sup> “Statement on Executive Committee Actions of the United Methodist Board of Education,” June 24, 1969, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

the search for a publisher continued, and vowed never again to impose out-and-out censorship upon the publication.

Despite this offer and promise, however the Committee on the Future of *motive*, magazine staff, and a vocal segment of its readers were outraged by General Secretary Wicke's decision to halt publication. To the staff, this act of censorship was "both pathetic and offensive," reflecting "the church's great nervousness about relevancy."<sup>47</sup> In lieu of the May issue, the committee sent out a letter to readers in July 1969 offering a free future issue in its place. Despite their personal feelings, the staff updated readers on the changes at *motive* with a hopeful optimism. "We strongly disagree with [Wicke's] decision," they admitted. "At the same time, we are convinced that *motive* has an exciting future ahead of it....[T]he publisher...has given every indication that *motive*'s freedom will be intact."<sup>48</sup> In order to ensure this freedom, the board declared that the Committee on the Future of *motive* would act as the interim editorial board, granting members the authority to "strike out in new directions" as they sought a new ecumenical home.<sup>49</sup> The CFM assured readers that the magazine would indeed strike out in new directions, this time under new editorial leadership.

### *An Editorship Begins, A Movement Ends*

In the summer of 1969, after months of searching, the CFM found an editor in Robert Maurer. Maurer seemed to appeal to both the CFM and the Board of Education,

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<sup>47</sup> Eugene A. Ransom, "Letter to Robert Maurer and James Stentzel," June 30, 1969, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>48</sup> *motive* Staff, "Letter to *motive* Subscribers," July 7, 1969, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>49</sup> *motive* Staff, "Letter to Subscribers," July 7, 1969, 2.

no small feat given the recent controversy over the spring issues. In contrast to other candidates who had been turned down due to their lack of radicalism, Maurer—who belonged to the United Church of Christ—boasted extensive movement experience with organizations such as the WSCF and anti-ABM groups. He also, however, brought to the position a graduate degree in theology, editorial experience, and a “theological sensitivity” that promised to complement his penchant for radicalism.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps most importantly for the Board of Education, Maurer described himself as “half movement/half bureaucrat” and seemed to possess the ability to enact a more responsible future editorial policy.<sup>51</sup> He envisioned a future *motive* that operated within a theological framework and highlighted the “seed of hope in dilemmas and tragedies faced by men and women.” Employing the language of the Danforth Study, he identified two major strains in the Christian faith, the priestly and the prophetic. He noted that while the two strains reinforced one another, *motive* was called to function within the prophetic tradition by not only advocating for change, but by probing the root causes of societal ills. While Maurer, for the time being, appeared to please both the staff and the board, new challenges were on the horizon, namely that of helping to secure an ecumenical home for the publication.

But while *motive* hunted for an ecumenical publisher, its days as the flagship publication of the nation’s largest ecumenical student movement were at an end. In June 1969, the leadership of the UCM voted to dissolve its national offices. In the October

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<sup>50</sup> Charlotte Weeks, “Confidential Report of Interviews With/About *motive* Editor Candidates,” Spring 1969, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

1969 issue of *motive*, the three presidents of the UCM—Charlotte Bunch Weeks, Steve Schomberg, and Nell Sale—reflected on the movement’s demise. Schomberg stated that his vote in favor of the UCM’s dissolution “was a vote in favor of recognizing a dying dream.”<sup>52</sup> Schomberg explained that for years there existed tension between those who wanted to establish goal-oriented organizing principles, and those who desired that the movement house a set of divergent and even conflicting political goals. Out of this tension emerged specific political strains within the UCM such as the Radical Caucus, the Black Caucus, and the Woman’s Caucus. In Schomberg’s mind, these groups appeared more interested in receiving a portion of the national budget for their own causes than they did in fostering unity in the movement. Whatever their motives, these groups made movement unity increasingly untenable, and campus ministries almost obsolete.

Charlotte Bunch Weeks, the movement’s president during its first year, observed a similar trend. She held that the UCM had become the center of too many divergent expectations. For Weeks, the times demanded focused experimentation at the local level rather than at the national level.<sup>53</sup> She opined that if a new national group did rise to take the UCM’s place, it would have to develop out of local needs when conditions demanded it. Sale echoed this point, arguing that it was “increasingly clear that one doesn’t organize effectively around an ideology. Organizing is done around the common and acute grievances of people.”<sup>54</sup> For Weeks, both denominationalism and ecumenism were dead ends. Each of the UCM presidents criticized ecumenism as absorbing valuable energies

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<sup>52</sup> Steve Schomberg, “The UCM and the Movement,” *motive*, October 1969, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Charlotte Bunch Weeks, “The UCM and the Movement,” *motive*, October 1969, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Nell Sale, “The UCM and the Movement,” *motive*, October 1969, 55.

that could be spent at the local level. These local communities, argued Weeks, should not be limited to Christians. “The world cares little whether Christians are all together; it cries desperately for our insights into and efforts toward ending...forms of human exploitation.”<sup>55</sup>

Given the demise of the UCM and the MSM three years prior, it would appear that ecumenism and common religious belief had ceased to be viable unifying principles for the movement. Weeks encouraged students to ask, “Have we reached a period in the university community when there is no need for any particularly Christian structures or groups for mission, locally or nationally?” She suggested that the greatest impact that the UCM could have on the church would be to demand that inadequate structures be eradicated, even when no successors to these structures had yet appeared.<sup>56</sup> Schomberg also agreed that basic church structures—and even authority—were rendered moot. He considered the UCM to be a vestige of the old student work model, one that was no longer needed given the rise in emphasis on student power. “The student,” wrote Schomberg, “has now reached a maturity where as a theologian and as a prophet he is on the same ground as the clergy.”<sup>57</sup>

*motive* felt the repercussions of the UCM’s demise, both ideologically and financially. In the early 1960s, the magazine began to distance itself from its identity as a denominational publication in order to cast itself as a truly ecumenical entity. Since that time, the magazine’s identity and vision had been inextricably intertwined with its

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<sup>55</sup> Bunch Weeks, “The UCM and the Movement,” 53.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Schomberg, “The UCM and the Movement,” 51.



ecumenical goals. The blow to student ecumenism that was the dissolution of the UCM dealt a blow to *motive* by extension. Of course, *motive*'s Christian identity, while increasingly nominal, still allowed the magazine to occupy a unique space as one of the last major links between the church, the arts, and student activism. But, after the collapse of the UCM, the MSM as a separate national body was all but extinct, leaving the Department of Campus Ministry and its publication with little institutional direction or support.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps most significantly, the absence of the UCM also meant a dramatic downturn in subscriptions; *motive*'s bulk subscriptions alone dropped by fifty percent following the UCM's demise. Maurer began to explore the possibility of seeking out a more "nontraditional" audience to increase individual subscriptions, and was forced to increase the magazine's price to meet rising printing costs.<sup>59</sup>

#### *motive Under Maurer*

Despite Maurer's arrival on the heels of a censorship scandal and a substantial loss in subscriptions, the editor took the circumstances in stride. Maurer's editorial approach was not a drastic departure from that of Stiles, as the newcomer sought to continue to produce a publication that probed the major issues facing humanity. He did, however, bring a renewed emphasis on *motive* as a forward-looking publication. For Maurer the Christian tradition spoke more to a "future-oriented" outlook rather than a historically-rooted identity. As such, he held that one of *motive*'s chief responsibilities

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<sup>58</sup> Samuel M. Kirk, ed., "Campus Ministry Bulletin of the United Methodist Church," June 1, 1968, Box 1270, File 18, Texas Methodist Student Movement records, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

<sup>59</sup> Dennis Campbell, "Memo to *motive* Editorial Board," March 9, 1970, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 1, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey; Ralph Moore, "Letter to Robert Maurer," December 15, 1969, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

would be to point to “signs and symbols for a possible future.”<sup>60</sup> In addition to breaking free from the limits of historical identity, Maurer also sought to break free from any and all hierarchy within the staff. He was adamant that all staff members would participate in necessary decisions and would be free to make commitments on behalf of *motive*.<sup>61</sup>

Maurer’s future-focused vision surfaced in *motive*’s content almost immediately. Maurer’s recurring editorial column bore the title “Toward a Civil Future,” and issues featured such topics as the future dynamics of the New Left.<sup>62</sup> Aside from this forward-looking stance, however, *motive*’s content under Maurer was not a drastic departure from that of Stiles’s editorship. Pieces continued to center on issues such as U.S. foreign policy, the state of race relations, and ecological consciousness. The publication continued to attract well-known radical contributors such as William Stringfellow and Etheridge Knight, who served as poetry editor for one year from 1970-1971. But while topic material changed little, it exhibited a noticeable dearth of theological interpretation. *motive* had never considered itself a primarily theological publication, of course, and published its fair share of theologically controversial material. It had, however, engaged somewhat consistently with developments in the worlds of theology and ecumenism, and implied even in its radical political articles that action was a Christian imperative.

When rare discussions of theology’s relationship with the student movement did occur under Maurer, they mirrored those from the 1960s. In an article titled, “Movement

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<sup>60</sup> Maurer, Robert, “On the Future of *motive* Magazine,” June 23, 1969, 2, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>61</sup> *motive* Interim Editorial Board, “Minutes,” September 2, 1969, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>62</sup> Todd Gitlin, “Dynamics of the New Left (Part 1),” *motive*, October 1970; Todd Gitlin, “Dynamics of the New Left (Part 2),” *motive*, November 1970.

Theology,” theologian Joe Williamson wrote, “my inclination is to announce that the uneasy alliance between theology and the movement for social revolution in this country is at an end.” He noted that the individuals who had once tried to hold the two together, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., were gone, declaring: “theology apparently has nothing to say to the Movement. Much worse, the Movement apparently has nothing to say to theology.”<sup>63</sup> He even went so far as to suggest that those involved with the movement may be called to relinquish their middle-class notions of nonviolence, suggesting that the true murderers were “those wielders of corporate death in our society, the military and the industries, which daily carry out destruction of our lives.”<sup>64</sup> Echoing the Death of God theologians, Williamson argued that the only possible response was to fill previously formal theological categories with “the material content” of one’s daily life. Williamson closed the piece with an anecdote and charge to readers:

[I]f, perchance, I shall be asked as I quite recently was: “What does all of this have to do with Christian faith,” I can only answer that I am not quite sure about that. That question comes, I think, from the same pietistic mind which asks, “Are you a Christian?” The answer to these questions is not really ours to give. That is God’s prerogative. What we must do is set ourselves to working as we can.<sup>65</sup>

Unlike the early 1960s, however, these theories were now reflected in realities within the Christian student movement and within *motive* itself.

Even as the staff and interim editorial board searched for an ecumenical publisher, they debated as to the nature of *motive*’s identity as a Christian publication. In a letter to UMHE, whom *motive* was actively courting as a new publisher, the staff admitted, “we

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<sup>63</sup> Joe Williamson, “Toward a Movement Theology,” *motive*, January 1970, 29.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

need all the help we can get from our friends about ‘being a Christian publication.’”<sup>66</sup>

They noted that while they desired to “participate as fully as possible in doing radical theology,” they were unsure about what that entailed. They expressed hope that two upcoming conferences—one on liberation theology and one on theology and radical politics—would give them some clear direction.<sup>67</sup>

But theology was not the only area in which *motive* failed to present a unified front to their potential new publisher. In April of 1970, the staff composed an essay of sorts that they hoped would adequately communicate the *motive* ethos to the UMHE. This essay, titled “On the Life-Style Thing at *motive*” opened with a caveat: “Capturing the feeling-tones of a communal life-style is damn hard in printed lines....The magazine speaks for itself—this is simply a glimpse behind the scenes during a week in April.”<sup>68</sup> This glimpse included a recounting of the staff’s arguing over the contents of the essay:

...[T]he rest of us are gathered in ‘Jim’s room,’ fighting over something heatedly referred to as ‘the \*\$#!#\* life-style paper.’

(‘We need to tell how babies and kittens and freaks are always welcome and how...’ ‘But we need to tell why that’s significant. It needs more...’ ‘Analysis. Yeah, analysis. It really needs more...’ ‘But we’ve got to get rid of that theological rhetoric. It’s just too...’ ‘Hey, I resent that. That’s not just theological, it’s political too!’) And so it goes.<sup>69</sup>

This diversity was not only reflective in the staff’s opinions, but in the causes that they championed as well. The staff wrote that, whether they were stapling women’s liberation

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<sup>66</sup> motive Staff, “Letter to the UMHE Communications Committee,” February 6, 1970, motive Documents Folder 1, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> motive Staff, “On the Life-Style Thing at *motive*,” April 1970, 1, motive Documents Folder 1, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

leaflets or organizing a protest march, their office became “more and more like movement communications center or a radical camp headquarters.”<sup>70</sup>

The staff went on to explain that while each member had special responsibilities, they were “practically fanatical about avoiding hierarchical division of labor.” “Everyone does her/his own shitwork, arranges her/his own schedule and defends her/his own ‘rampant individualism,’” they wrote. “Any decision we care about is inherently debatable, so we fight a lot.” They admitted that perfect attendance was guaranteed during these debates, “because none of us trusts the others to represent our point of view.”<sup>71</sup> Lest the statement strike too serious a tone, the staff made sure to point out, “[W]e play a lot, too. The ‘office’ is equipped with radios, tapes, a stereo, boffers, a football, a Frisbee,...a jar of bubbles and a very political dart board.”<sup>72</sup>

The picture that the magazine left with the UMHE was one of a passionately countercultural, if fragmented, group attempting to maintain a balance between individualism and collectivism. And while *motive*’s colorful and free-spirited lifestyle certainly contributed to the magazine’s lively prose, avant-garde art, and incisive social commentary, it did not always lend itself to meeting deadlines. “This style does not easily lend itself to getting proposals in ‘on time.’ Our priorities in general are pitched in such a way that our survival, and the political machinations that go with it, become secondary considerations.”<sup>73</sup> Whether or not the staff knew it at the time, this was indeed a

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> motive Staff and Interim Editorial Board, “Letter to Leon Howell,” April 21, 1970, motive Documents Folder 1, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

prescient observation. Talks continued with the United Ministries of Higher Education, but *motive* seemed unable to define its future constituency and editorial focus in a way that satisfied UMHE. In the end, the UMHE remained reticent to commit to an exclusive relationship with *motive* in which it would be left with full financial responsibility for the publication.<sup>74</sup>

### *Financial Troubles*

*motive*'s financial situation continued to plague the discussions of the interim editorial board into 1970. The motive staff, undaunted by the recent drop in bulk subscriptions, embarked on several ambitious ventures, chief among them the internationalization of the magazine.<sup>75</sup> This initiative included plans to hire a second editor based outside of the US. It also aimed to fund managing editor Jim Stentzel on a year-long tour of Japan and the Far East, during which time he would establish new contacts while writing and photographing for the magazine.<sup>76</sup> While rolling out these new ventures, the magazine's staff also underwent significant turnover, as several staff members resigned to pursue other careers. With Stentzel abroad, only Robert Maurer and one additional contributor remained as the interim editorial board scrambled to fill the remaining staff positions before the start of the 1970-1971 publishing year.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> UMHE Communications Committee, "Letter to the Interim Editorial Board," February 6, 1970, motive Documents Folder 1, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>75</sup> motive Interim Editorial Board, "Minutes," January 24, 1970, 1-2, Committee on the Future of motive Folder 1, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>76</sup> motive Interim Editorial Board, "Minutes."

<sup>77</sup> Campbell, "Memo to motive Editorial Board."

However, even the best efforts of the new staff to set *motive* on a course to success in the seventies were no match for the publication's mounting financial burdens. In theory, the Board of Education was committed to the financial support of *motive* for one additional year, but the dire state of the magazine's finances forced them to reassess their proposed timeline. In January 1971, the board announced that it would relinquish all rights to the publication in July, at which time *motive* would become its own independent entity.<sup>78</sup> In a subsequent press release, General Secretary Wicke was quick to point out that the decision had been mutual, and was reached after the Division of Higher Education conducted a thorough survey of *motive*. He maintained that any future contributions to the magazine would be contingent upon *motive*'s identity as a publication for college students, as well as its handling of theological issues from a "broadly Christian" perspective.<sup>79</sup> While he asserted that the Board had not "thrown the child out of the house," some staff members claimed that the board advocated for *motive*'s independence with full knowledge that the magazine would be unable to stay financially afloat.<sup>80</sup> Other contributors held that the decision was mutual and that independence would afford *motive* the freedom it needed to best serve its constituency.<sup>81</sup> In a

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<sup>78</sup> Lynn Jondahl, "Memorandum to Myron F. Wicke," January 20, 1971, *motive* Finances, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>79</sup> General News Service of the United Methodist Church, "Press Release," January 28, 1971, *motive* Documents Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>80</sup> Reed, W. A., "Publication of 'motive' to Be Halted," *The Tennessean*, 1971, Committee on the Future of *motive* Folder 2, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>81</sup> Sara M. Evans and NetLibrary, Inc, eds., *Journeys That Opened Up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 139.

letter months later, Lynn Jondahl, vice president of the interim editorial board, confided that the board's decision to discontinue its role as publisher was due to multiple unfortunate realities, namely that *motive*'s subscriptions had shrunk to less than a fourth of what they were during its peak years, to the extent that the actual cost of each issue reached upwards of twenty dollars. Furthermore, with their yearly budget from the Board of Education cut in half, the staff did not have the time or resources to build another source base from the ground up. Jondahl also noted that the staff had been "attempting to operate as a collective and in the process alienation and frustration [had] developed to a level that all [felt] compelled to resign."<sup>82</sup>

#### *motive Cements a Legacy*

Indeed, the majority of the staff resigned by the summer of 1971, but several individuals on the editorial board were determined that *motive* make one last stand. At the time of independence, the magazine's final two issues were already in progress. Although most of the staff had resigned, a small group of former editors and contributors pulled together the finances and personnel to produce the final issues, one dedicated to lesbian feminism and the other devoted to gay men's liberation.

Charlotte Bunch, who by 1972 had started a Washington D.C.-based lesbian separatist group known as "The Furies," spearheaded the issue dedicated to lesbian feminism.<sup>83</sup> The Furies assumed editorial responsibility for the issue, ensuring that all articles, art, and poetry be contributed by fellow lesbians. While homosexuality and the

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<sup>82</sup> Lynn Jondahl, "Letter to Dr. John B. Evans," July 28, 1971, *motive* Finances, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>83</sup> Charlotte Bunch, previously Charlotte Bunch Weeks, had by 1972 left her husband for Rita Mae Brown, a member of The Furies.



Christian faith may have very well been compatible for these women, lesbianism replaced Christianity as the guiding principle that unified these contributors and structured their editorial vision. “Some of the women contributing to this magazine,” Bunch wrote, “were ‘happy’ heterosexual housewives not long ago. Some were homosexuals in hiding....we have all become lesbian-feminists. Lesbian feminism is the ideology that unites us. It is the way of thinking that enables us to understand our past and chart our future.”<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, the issue did not include commentary on female homosexuality’s relationship with the church or discussion of lesbianism within a theological framework. Most articles centered on the testimonies of lesbian women and the political dynamics of lesbian liberation. Free from the watchful eye of the Methodist Board of Education, the authors did not hesitate to employ obscene language or to include explicit accounts of lesbian sexual encounters. If seen as part of the broader women’s liberation movement, the issue confirmed feminist theologian Mary Daly’s prediction that the movement would “present a growing threat to patriarchal religion less by attacking it than by simply leaving it behind.”<sup>85</sup>

The Gay Men’s Liberation issue followed a similarly bold editorial approach where content and rhetoric were concerned. “[W]e are proud and glad to be Gay,” declared the opening editorial, “to be able to love other men, both emotionally and sexually, and knowing that this is beautiful even though our anti-Lesbian/anti-Faggot society denies our existence by dismissing us as ‘sick,’ ....We know we exist. We are gay and we are proud. *motive*, even with its long history and affiliation with the United Methodist Church, has come out!” In many ways, the magazine and its staff had come

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<sup>84</sup> Charlotte Bunch, “motive Comes Out,” *motive*, January 1972.

<sup>85</sup> Mary Daly, “After the Death of God the Father,” *Commonweal*, March 12, 1971.

out. In the months following B.J. Stiles's departure, both Stiles and Charlotte Bunch left their spouses and began to openly identify as homosexuals. And while the Gay Men's Liberation issue proved to be *motive*'s last, the magazine and its last issues helped launch several contributors and editors into successful careers in activism, academia, and politics.

In the months and years following *motive*'s final two issues, Bunch's editorial from the lesbian feminist issue set the tone for the ways in which the magazine's demise would be remembered. "In the aftermath of the controversy over the women's issue," wrote Bunch, "the church began to reduce its support of *motive* and *motive* decided it could no longer function under the church. *motive* could not survive without church money so the staff and editorial board decided to close up shop--using the remaining resources of the magazine to put out one final gay issue."<sup>86</sup> Reflecting years later on *motive*'s demise, Tom Driver lamented the magazine's folding at the hands of the Methodist Church and the larger rising tide of conservatism in the nation.<sup>87</sup> B.J. Stiles later observed that, in the end, the staff "burned out" and did not possess sufficient internal creativity and stamina to endure the "abuse of the church."<sup>88</sup> For these individuals and countless other *motive* readers, the magazine existed as the last sophisticated and well-edited advocate for the arts and liberal politics within the Church—a publication from whose loss liberal American Protestantism had never recovered.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Bunch, "motive Comes Out," 1.

<sup>87</sup> Driver, phone interview by the author.

<sup>88</sup> Stiles, "motive Magazine: Methodism's Icon and Albatross: A Talk by B. J. Stiles."

<sup>89</sup> Driver, phone interview by the author.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

That *motive* magazine was unique in the world of midcentury student publications is clear. Although it emerged as part of the larger student work zeitgeist of the early twentieth century, the Methodist Student Movement and its flagship publication set themselves apart from their very inceptions. In *motive*'s first two decades, the magazine established a substantial readership while the MSM quickly became a forerunner among denominational student movements. In a university environment that increasingly promoted knowledge as power and commodity, *motive* sought to aid students in identifying virtue and deeper meaning in their university experience. The publication provided a forum in which the arts, social and political commentary, cultural engagement, and the Christian faith intermingled. In *motive*'s pages, the streams of neo-orthodoxy, Gandhian nonviolence, and ecumenism converged, intellectually stimulating and inspiring the ranks of the MSM. *motive*'s aim to cultivate an ideology and theology of racial justice among readers complemented the practical opportunities for interracial cooperation found within the MSM.

The magazine continued to rise in quality and prominence following the 1961 arrival of B.J. Stiles as editor. While *motive* magazine had always boasted a prophetic edge, Stiles's passion for ecumenical political activism and the turbulent social issues of the 1960s combined to propel *motive* even further into its prophetic mission. The editor's pursuit of ecumenism as it related to the magazine's contributors and editorial board reflected larger trends taking place within the Methodist Student Movement itself. In

1966, the MSM joined the ecumenical University Christian Movement, of which *motive* became the official publication. Thanks to its affiliation with the University Christian Movement, the publication's subscription rates reached an all-time high, expanding its readership and influence even further. Following the death of President Kennedy, the magazine was characterized by a decidedly critical analysis of American politics and foreign policy and devoted much space to pro-Civil Rights and antiwar pieces. These pieces were not always overtly theological in nature, but many implied that political radicalism was crucial to the eradication of societal sin. The 1960s also saw the magazine's engagement with controversial schools of thought such as Death of God theology. Although *motive* did not uncritically endorse this theological position, both the magazine and the movements it was affiliated with would begin to embody elements of Death of God theology as the decade progressed. After both *motive* and the MSM threw off the constraints of denominational identity in pursuit of more effective ecumenical political mobilization, their Christian faith became an inadequate unifying factor as the movement splintered along ideological fault lines.

*motive*'s avant-garde art features, irreverent tone, and liberal stance on politics and theology had, during the magazine's first two decades, occasionally drawn criticism from Board of Education members and laity alike. But as *motive*'s content in the 1960s grew more radical, backlash increased. The responses of *motive*'s readers to the magazine's radicalization reveal much about the fissures in midcentury Methodism and the broader mainline as well. Many readers found *motive*'s publication of radical political and theological philosophies incompatible with the Christian faith, an attempt to brainwash and radicalize college students. *motive*'s staff would frequently point out that

their publication was a forum in which the featuring of an article did not equate to their agreeing with its contents. Readers often responded that the magazine's nearly complete exclusion of more moderate viewpoints constituted *motive*'s agreement with its radical contributors. In the eyes of the *motive* staff, the magazine cried out as a prophetic minority voice in an apathetic, idolatrously patriotic, and consumerist culture. To many readers, however, *motive* did not present a Christian witness to mainstream culture, but rather reflected a rising tide of secularism and antiauthoritarianism. Thus, both liberal and conservative segments of midcentury Methodism appear to have seen themselves as an oppressed minority, oftentimes drowning out more moderate voices in the process.

These warring perspectives within the Methodist Church continued even after Stiles's resignation as editor in 1968. While the Committee on the Future of *motive* worked to establish a vision and direction for the magazine's future, *motive*'s spring 1969 issue on the Women's Liberation Movement came under fire from a broad spectrum of readers, clergy, and laity. This backlash was as much a response to the issue's use of profanity as it was to its content; while many readers felt such coarse language was spiritually destructive, the Board of Education was more concerned that such language violated common codes of decency. In May, the General Secretary of the Division of Campus Ministry upheld this commitment to decency in censoring the May issue, which contained a smattering of profane language as well. Around this time, the Committee on the Future of *motive* became convinced that the publication should seek a new, ecumenical publisher; board members, who for years had fielded intense criticism of the magazine, heartily agreed.

The search for an ecumenical publisher became even more crucial following the collapse of the UCM, which ultimately determined that faith and/or ideology was not sufficient to sustain a movement of activists. When the movement imploded, *motive* not only lost its position as voice of the largest student Christian movement in the country, but sacrificed a large portion of its subscriptions as well. The rise and fall of the UCM and *motive*'s suffering as a result speak to both the advantages and limits of midcentury student ecumenism. On the one hand, the UCM illustrated the potential success of harnessing the latent energy, resources, and members of multiple Christian traditions to funnel toward a broad platform of political activism. On the other hand, the fate of the UCM revealed the danger in linking the success of denominational student movements with the success of a political agenda.

*motive*'s new editor, Robert Maurer, arrived on the heels of the censorship scandal and the UCM's implosion in the summer of 1969. He, however, brought to the magazine an optimistic, future-oriented vision for the publication. Maurer envisioned an editorial policy that would remain free from the restrictions of traditional religious identities or outdated ideas on Christian life and witness. But Maurer's approach brought little concrete direction as to how the publication should negotiate its relationship to the church, and debates over the nature of the magazine's Christian identity ensued. While these debates did not drastically alter the magazine's content, it significantly contributed to the staff's growing sense of disunity. It became increasingly apparent that this disunity would undermine the magazine's ability to secure an ecumenical publisher, and in 1971, the Board of Education and *motive* staff agreed that it was time for *motive* to seek an independent status.

Despite this prevailing narrative of suppression regarding *motive*'s departure from the Methodist Church, an analysis of the magazine's content and the inner-workings of the staff and Board of Education reveal that the story of *motive*'s decline was not so simple. In retrospect, the decision to cease publication of *motive* was no doubt aided by the knowledge that those who had been clamoring for the magazine's censorship and termination would be satisfied at long last. But *motive*'s demise cannot be explained solely in terms of an oppressive denominational hierarchy stamping out a progressive and prophetic minority. The dissolving of the Methodist Student Movement and University Christian Movement left the magazine without a substantial or defined readership. Furthermore, declining popular attendance of mainline denominations in the 1960s no doubt contributed to dwindling funds for the Methodist Board of Education. However, in addition to financial strain, *motive*'s self-imposed distance from the Methodist church and, later, from any consistent theological framework, created an identity vacuum of sorts, in which competing and increasingly radical ideologies vied for prominence. By sacrificing much of its previous identity and linkages with an older Christian tradition, the MSM and its magazine began to reflect rather than shape culture, and ultimately placed itself at the mercy of the success or failure of its political agenda.

To remember *motive* magazine and the Methodist Student Movement as entities that fell victim to a rising tide of conservatism discredits the magazine, its readership, and their religious community. The story of *motive* magazine and the Methodist Student Movement in many ways corroborates the "Post-Protestantism" thesis that several historians have posited. But this idea of Post-Protestantism cannot simply be understood as a phenomenon in which the mainline one day awoke to find that society had adopted

the values which liberal Protestants had been advocating for years. Rather, as the lives of *motive* and the MSM show, an entire generation of Christian student activists consciously rejected the cultural prestige, resources, and religious identities of their denominations in order to pursue what they truly believed was the Kingdom of God on earth—a pursuit that, ironically, was not contingent upon its identification with the Christian faith.

The rise of the evangelical left immediately following the demise of *motive* magazine and the UCM suggests that while mainline activism found local and secular outlets in the 1970s, it was progressive evangelicals that soon arose to occupy the space left by mainline student activists. The very year that *motive* magazine separated from the Methodist Church, liberal evangelical Jim Wallis published the first issue of the progressive magazine *The Post-American*, which would later become *Sojourners*.<sup>1</sup> While the evangelical left, or “moral minority” as it has come to be known by some, was not ultimately successful in attaining lasting political success, they seem to have risen to fill a space left in which serious theological commitments and political engagement could go hand-in-hand. Ironically, many of *motive*’s former staff members remained unaware of this contingent of liberal evangelicals for decades, despite their strikingly similar political goals and rhetoric. This being the case, a study of the linkages—or lack thereof—between midcentury mainline student movements and the emerging evangelical left promises to offer further insight into the relationship between religion and politics in the twentieth century US, as well as into the relationship between mainline and evangelical communities during this time period.

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<sup>1</sup> David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism*, 1st ed, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 54.



But whatever *motive*'s relation to subsequent movements, the magazine's influence within the world of midcentury student movements cannot be denied. While the publication has been remembered as both a dangerously subversive publication and unwelcome prophet in its home denomination, the magazine has proven itself to be, in the words of editor B.J. Stiles, both an "icon and albatross" of midcentury Methodism.

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