

**The Marriage of Heaven and Hell's Angels: Herb Shreve, Evangelicalism, and the  
Christian Motorcyclists Association, 1974-1994**

by

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## **Abstract**

Postwar America can be defined as a time of cultural warfare. The Civil Rights Movement, expansion of the federal government, debates on contraceptives, abortion, pornography, and homosexuality are only a few topics still being discussed in the public forum today. Evangelicals perceived public discourse on these topics as offending the religious freedoms guaranteed to them by the founding fathers. Religious leaders across America vowed to fight in order to preserve their heritage. Evangelicals found many different ways to combat secular culture. One way in particular was through the parachurch organization. The Christian Motorcyclists Association is only one parachurch organization that existed during the second half of the twentieth century. However, the history of the CMA from 1974-1994 sheds light on specific ways in which evangelicalism sought to stay relevant in modern society. More importantly, the history of the CMA is unique because it is oriented towards a technology: the motorcycle.

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## Introduction

Fresh country air invaded through the open windows in the cabin of Herb Shreve's truck. He was headed home. The informal preaching circuit around eastern Arkansas, Oklahoma, and North Texas sapped the weathered pastor's spirit for some years. His attempts to distract himself from last Sunday's sermon was nearly futile. His mind latched onto his young son. He wondered what that boy was doing right now. Most likely, Herbie was with the friends his father strongly disapproved of. "It was only because he loved him," Shreve justified his worry to himself.

Somewhere an hour outside of Hatfield--the Shreve family's Arkansas home--he heard a growing roar of machinery coming from behind his lethargic truck. Shreve welcomed this distraction and he looked into his rear view mirror: motorcycles. These men, about ten of them, clad themselves in black leather and their long beards not of wisdom, but rebellion, blew back over their necks in the wind. Shreve thought it looked like fun, but how silly would it look if he, a respected preacher, did the same. He returned back to the thought of his troubled son.<sup>1</sup>

The period of 1974–1994 reflected a conservative resurgence in American history. Evangelicals played key roles in this resurgence. The story of the Christian Motorcyclists Association helps to understand this resurgence. In leading the charge

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<sup>1</sup>Gene Harlan Powell, *Fisher of Men: The Motorcycle Ministry of Herb Shreve* (Ketch Publishing, 2012) 25.

against the image of the godless rebel motorcyclist, the CMA, as an evangelical parachurch organization, made sure that they conserved “old-time” American religion. The CMA was able to accomplish this goal only as far as their structure allowed them to. They had to wear leather, ride certain motorcycles, and attend rallies albeit suffused with evangelical belief.

The rapidity of the growth of the CMA is impressive and solidifies its relevance in motorcycling culture. At the outset of the CMA in 1975, motorcyclists in Phoenix created the first CMA local chapter. Five years later, in 1980, the CMA had chapters across the country in every state. Many members of the CMA already practiced some form of Christianity. They worked, attended church, and rode in the countryside on the weekends. The fruit was ripe it only needed someone to harvest it.

Motorcycling culture had long been established as an American sub-culture with its own set of behaviors, political affiliations, gender roles, clothing, and music. The American motorcyclist was a cultural icon who became synonymous with rebellion, masculinity, and mayhem. Like many icons, this did not fully explain the kaleidoscope of the different types of motorcyclists by 1974. The CMA became all of these things in order to create fertile ground for salvation. Thus, the history of the CMA reveals the lengths evangelicalism was willing to change in order to reach new people in new ways.

This thesis argues that the CMA contributed to the rise of a reactionary conservatism among evangelicals and motorcyclists from 1974-1994. I will illustrate this by exploring historical movements leading up to Herb Shreve’s creation of the parachurch organization, its organizational structure, the political engagement of the CMA, and its views on gender.

A brief explanation of what I mean by “parachurch organization” and “evangelicalism” is important not only to place this project within the greater historiographical discussions of these terms, but also to clarify the significance of CMA activity by providing clear boundaries. Parachurch organizations are the means through which evangelicals operated within the free marketplace of culture. They are not bound as other, more established, institutions of American religion. They typically are non-denominational, which allow them to transcend major theological and cultural discrepancies. Funding often does not come from institutional coffers, but rather from donors both small and large. Relative freedom allows parachurch organizations to alter policy at a more rapid rate than traditional denominational bodies and thus they are more adaptable. It is no coincidence that the rise in parachurch organizations coincided with shifting church membership of larger denominations during the second half of the twentieth century.

The purpose of the parachurch organization is directly tied to real or perceived notions about society outside of religious communities or cultural groups. What many American evangelicals deem as “secular,” culture in postwar America danced to a different tune than many evangelicals wanted. In some ways, such as music or forms of leisure, American culture took a decidedly “less religious” turn. Perhaps the realities of a modern time drove the perspective of Americans towards pessimism. Whatever the case, American religion seemed as if it was on the decline. However, in other extremely important ways, religion in America was not on the decline. Postwar America saw a marked increase in church membership. Therefore a constructed dichotomy existed as these two facts seemed to make enemies out of one another.

I refrain from using the term secular in this project because it assumes that any action deemed with this term is completely devoid of a “religious character.” Though characters such as Herb Shreve spoke in terms of the non-religious “other,” the secular simply did not exist. Herb Shreve, the CMA, and evangelicals during the postwar period believed that they were losing out to a culture without God. The parachurch organization provided an antidote.

“Evangelicalism” is perhaps a troublesome term to use, but a necessary one nonetheless. For example, both D.L. Moody and Jerry Falwell could be considered evangelical, but both also differ on many theological, cultural, and political matters. It is not my intention to get caught up in who was an evangelical and who was not except for the individual at the center of this history: Herb Shreve. He was indisputably an evangelical.

But what exactly is an evangelical? In *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, George M. Marsden provides a definition of evangelicalism and describes its relation to the fundamentalist movement that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. Marsden first defined this term as a movement rather than a list of theological beliefs. Evangelicalism’s origins can be traced back to at least the middle of the nineteenth century when many Protestants believed that they lived in a “Christian Age.” Many Protestants believed that, despite denominational affiliations, they held certain core beliefs. Those core beliefs are: biblical inerrancy, the redemptive nature of

God through the salvation of Christ, an emphasis on evangelism and missions, and the importance of living a spiritual life.<sup>2</sup>

The challenges of modernism during the early twentieth century forced evangelicals to reform in order to stay relevant. Some evangelicals accepted some implications of modern science and literary criticism on their faith. This angered other evangelicals who adhered to the traditional system of belief. Angry evangelicals were then called separatists, or fundamentalists after *The Fundamentals*, a series of doctrinal tracts published between 1910 and 1915 outlining the specific beliefs of the “true evangelical faith.” Marsden provided two definitions for fundamentalism: one long and the other short. The short version, for the purposes of defining the beliefs of Herb Shreve, is simply an evangelical who was angry about changes in church and culture.<sup>3</sup>

Evangelicals, evidenced through parachurch organizations such as the CMA, kept faith relevant despite the expectations of many. They kept evangelical faith relevant by clinging to a few simple beliefs they held most dear. Everything else from the clothes that they wore to the songs that they sung attempted to match the culture they attempted to influence.

Chapter one takes a deep look at the historiography of evangelicalism, politics, fundamentalism, Southern Baptists, gender, and motorcycling in order to help explain why, among other things, Herb Shreve would leave his pastorate at a Southern Baptist church in Cove, Arkansas in order to start a motorcycling ministry. Denominational strife, the growth of motorcycling among the middle classes, and a perceived expansion

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<sup>2</sup>George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991) 2-5.

<sup>3</sup>Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 2.



of secular culture all contributed to the creation of the CMA. This chapter also uses that historiography to inform themes and events that are explored in chapters two and three.

Chapter two, then, is an organizational history of the CMA. There is not a solid history of the CMA available, so this chapter provides one as the basis for analyzing various activities of the CMA. Chapter two also illustrates the extent at which the CMA attempted to redefine motorcycling culture through its mission, how it raised money, the leadership team, and the local chapters and members.

Chapter three explores the CMA's unique definition of freedom through political activity and beliefs about gender roles. The organization's definition of freedom was defensive in nature, and it was directed against perceived challenges by secular culture and an expanding federal government. The CMA was concerned with gender roles among motorcyclists and in society as a whole. While not the explicit target of the organization, gender was nonetheless important to the CMA. Women rode on the back of motorcycles or, as in the case of Herb Shreve's wife Shirley, in the sidecar. And evangelical men found a new identity astride a motorcycle. Masculine forms of recreation, especially for working class men, happened outside of the home. To them, the home was the sanctuary even in the late postwar period. It is why the CMA and evangelicals alike fought so hard to go at great lengths to prevent divorces among their rank and file. Less couch recreation such as motorcycling provided an attraction for middle and upper class Americans from 1974–1994 because it was an escape from the pressures of perfection coupled with the necessary skills needed to ride the machine. The CMA blended the sanctity of the family with the recreation of the motorcycle. Therefore

a male CMA member could enjoy his independent act of cruising the open road while at the same time enjoying his family and fulfilling his duties.

Though movements and events before 1974 will be more explicit in chapter one through various relevant histories, it is important to highlight a few specific occurrences. On the back of the cultural upheaval of the sixties, many American evangelicals sought to reassert a dominant role in American culture. One need to look no further than the presidential election of Richard Nixon whose catchall political message created a loose coalition of conservatives and turned the South away from its loyalties to the Democratic Party. The war in Vietnam finally wound down but the Cold War still simmered. Then, Watergate and a failed presidency dashed the hopes and dreams of conservatives, including evangelicals who, after Gerald Ford, turned to the Democratic Party once again in search of a “born-again” leader. These are the conditions by which the Christian Motorcyclists Association was born.

## Chapter 1

### Big Decisions: Historiographical Context Leading Up to 1974

There is a story that exists in the folds of Herb Shreve's sermon notes. On the back of a scratch piece of paper Shreve wrote the story of Edward Kimball, a Sunday School teacher in the suburbs of Chicago. Apparently, Kimball had D.L. Moody, creator of the Moody Bible Institute and a titan of evangelicalism, as a Sunday School student. Kimball led Moody to the faith. Moody led Frederick B. Meyer to faith. Frederick B. Meyer led I. Wilbur Chapman to faith. I. Wilbur Chapman led Billy Sunday to the lord through one of his evangelistic meetings. Billy Sunday led Mordecai Ham to faith. Mordecai Ham led Billy Graham to faith. Billy Graham led Herb Shreve to faith.<sup>1</sup>

Sources that exist from Herb Shreve before 1974 are hard to obtain. What exists is only secondary commentary on those years before the creation of the Christian Motorcyclists Association. However, as the story above illustrates, context told through recent histories on motorcycling, evangelicalism, politics, gender, fundamentalism, and Southern Baptists assist in re-creating the environment in which Shreve believed that he could create a successful parachurch organization oriented to the motorcyclist.

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<sup>1</sup>Herb Shreve, "The Power of One Witness," *Sermon Notes*, Unarchived collection of Herb Shreve's personal papers, n.d. This collection is held by Shreve's biographer Gene Powell, who loaned them to the author for this project.

In order to properly place the story of the Christian Motorcyclists Association within the context of evangelicalism during the second half of the twentieth century, we must begin before 1974. This chapter will piece together various histories of evangelicalism, fundamentalism, and religious-cultural politics from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In other words, this chapter will answer the question of why Herb Shreve, a Southern Baptist preacher at the age of 40, dropped his steady profession in order to become the president of a non-denominational ministry with the goal of saving the souls of motorcyclists. It will provide definitions on subjects such as parachurch organizations, religio-political definitions of “freedom,” and historical gender norms within the evangelical community that inform the creation of the CMA in 1974. Furthermore, this chapter will focus on the historiography that frames the question previously posed.

Perhaps the most informative, and interesting, history on the general state of religion during the twentieth century is *The Restructuring of American Religion* by Robert Wuthnow. While not limiting the project to strict definitions of what it meant to be “religious” in the twentieth century, Wuthnow attributed the persistence of religion in the age of modernity to vast religious structures’ ability to become flexible.

According to Wuthnow, the best evidence for flexibility among America’s religious institutions was in “special purpose groups,” which, for the purposes of this project, are parachurch organizations. Examples provided by Wuthnow include the YMCA, women’s rights groups, the Moral Majority, and the Baptist Missionary Society. The structures of American religion in the twentieth century were broken and remolded

by these various groups which “primarily serve to achieve a goal and once that goal is met, the special purpose group typically dissolves.”<sup>2</sup>

The significance of parachurch organizations cannot be overstated when considering the course of evangelicalism from 1974–1994; they were innumerable and served many different purposes. The YMCA fused masculine forms of leisure with evangelicalism. Christian female groups geared towards the evisceration of alcohol consumption in American society significantly changed the course of Prohibition. The Moral Majority coalesced wide swaths of religious people for a religio-political cause. Parachurch organizations were an inexorable limb of evangelicalism when it needed to accomplish a very specific goal.

Wuthnow contended that special purpose groups typically dissolved which indicated the effect that they had on the groups of people they intended to sanctify. Dissolution meant success. Wuthnow measured the growth of parachurch organizations in the twentieth century and determined that their growth in number can also be attributed to their relative success. In addition, success existed, in part, because some certainly did terminate and “religious structures” continued to pour resources into these organizations. Wuthnow curiously omitted extensive discussion on the growth in political-parachurch organizations, which therefore creates a thirst for further study. The story of how Herb Shreve came to create the Christian Motorcyclists Association quenches that thirst because I will explore the religious intent and political engagement of the Christian motorcyclist.

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<sup>2</sup>Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 101.

*Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* by R. Laurence Moore is equally as important to our understanding of the creation and success of the CMA. Moore asserted that evangelicalism, as it moved into the twentieth century, required commodification in order to stake its place within the “marketplace of American culture.”<sup>3</sup> A major portion of Moore’s work shows that the creation of a diverse marketplace of culture not only had profound effects upon American culture but also brought unexpected changes into religion. In fact, because commodification of goods and ideas had such a profound effect upon society, it bent the will and purpose of evangelicalism; it forced religious structures across America to compete. Evangelicalism in American responded by borrowing “selling strategies” to compete with a public increasingly enmeshed in secular culture. Evangelicalism needed new ways to reach new people and therefore they created techniques and parachurch organizations in order to achieve that goal.

Religion, according to Moore, changed alongside American culture throughout the modern era. Festivals, music, and dress were all indicators of change within particular religious experiences in Europe and the Americas. However, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are unique in the trajectory of religious experience as Protestant church practices, theology, and missions became intertwined with consumer culture.<sup>4</sup>

For example, during the First Great Awakening George Whitefield borrowed practices from theatre to intentionally create environments conducive to the movement of

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<sup>3</sup>R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 10.

<sup>4</sup>*Selling God*, 13.

someone to salvation.<sup>5</sup> Swirling changes did not quite emerge until the 1850's when Protestant denominations ran into the "problem" of leisure. Bosses and business owners in great metropolises across America created leisure by purchasing the labor of workers during the latter stages of the industrial revolution. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* by Jaqueline Dowd Hall et al. is but one great example of the significant changes in labor during the turn of the century in the South. Labor hours and production became increasingly measured and therefore, leisure became increasingly measured. The measurement of leisure time proved to be a difficult issue for denominations because they competed for time with other forms of leisure such as driving, recreational sports, and radio broadcasts.<sup>6</sup> Thus, parachurch organizations such as the YMCA began in order to solve that problem. The creation of the YMCA marked a significant moment in the history of evangelicalism because a non-denominational organization, or a parachurch organization, performed functions that mainline organizations simply could not do within church walls. The YMCA had the ability to serve several purposes at once while at the same time not entangling themselves with theological differences.<sup>7</sup> To them, that was a job for professors in Seminaries.

Major denominations in America during the second half of the nineteenth century found ways to deem certain types of leisure acceptable. Moore pointed to the creation of the Chautauqua club, a Methodist leisure club meant to gather bible-believing Christians in leisure fellowship, as evidence of how much evangelicalism changed. The early 1910's brought forth a new type of leisure that would again, change the way in which American

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>6</sup>Jaqueline Dowd Hall, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

<sup>7</sup>*Selling God*, 112-115.

Protestants of all types could enjoy entertainment: the movie. The popularity of early movie houses during the early twentieth century caused concern and warranted immediate action by American religious institutions. Protestant leaders quickly moved to use the popularity of movie houses to their advantage. In order to sanctify moving pictures and bring people into their faith, some religious organizations began creating their own movies filled with biblical epics and stories of redemption.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, Moore's narrative concluded at the beginning of the 1950's. Moore ended his narrative in the 1950's because according to him, evangelical religion in America already succeeded in its mission: to create a new structure in place to stay relevant in an age of modern technologies. By 1950, "religion had become an ordinary commodity" thus, for the remainder of the twentieth century, evangelicals had extraordinary structures in place to handle a sinful consumer society.<sup>9</sup> In addition, postwar consumers not only had traditional consumer items to purchase, but they also had an array of religious commodities to choose from.

The bulk of information and historical analysis provided by Moore came from the second half of the nineteenth century and did not focus on any particular group of evangelicals or institution during this time. Broadly speaking, the model provided by Moore illustrated that a non-denominational organization such as the CMA would not be out of place during the second half of the twentieth century. By 1950, religious institutions, both denominational and nondenominational, had cultural investments in the

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 221.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



entertainment industry showing that the great evangelical force would stop at nothing to capture leisure for its own purposes.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, examples used by Moore depict religion in America during the modern era as a cultural force that not only borrowed certain characteristics of whichever portion of culture obtained, but also that religion in America altered both types of culture in which it borrowed from and therefore created an alternate way of religious practice. Simply put, the objects of leisure were not sinful, just as long as they were performed within specific boundaries deemed acceptable. Methodists during the second half of the nineteenth century allowed leisure, but only certain types. American culture came to identify Methodists, then, by the types of leisure that they deemed holy or unholy.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Moore's model of a "cultural marketplace" is a useful one as parachurch organizations borrowed (and continue to borrow) non-religious methods to reach the unreached or minister to an increasingly distracted membership of believers. Moore proved that parachurch organizations were a vital part of evangelical missions during the twentieth century. It is not surprising, then, that Herb Shreve would use this type of organization for the purposes of "saving souls."

*Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* by Joel Carpenter narrowed historical study from 1920-1950. Before Carpenter, historians viewed this period as a "retreat" in the saga of fundamentalists who were the pariah of American popular culture. That thirty-year period was crucial to the success of fundamentalism because it was a time of incubation.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 99-105.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Carpenter reasserted George Marsden's definition of Fundamentalism as "militant anti-modern evangelical Protestantism."<sup>12</sup> Fundamentalists vacillated in and out of major denominations utilizing an expanding network of parachurch organizations as their primary space to reform. Furthermore, their belief in premillennial dispensationalism, a particular interpretation of history and prophecy, was a way to deal with rapidly modernizing society. Fundamentalists interpreted events such as the First World War, the Great Depression, and technological advances, as the fulfilling of biblical prophecies about the end times. While they thought that they lived in the "last age," they believed it to be their duty to take as many people with them to heaven as possible.<sup>14</sup>

Not all fundamentalists were part of parachurch organizations, nor were all members of parachurch organizations fundamentalists, but fundamentalist use of these organizations such as seminaries, radio programs, and summer bible retreats kept their views alive before, during, and after the Great Depression.<sup>15</sup> The organizations focused on by Carpenter were primarily in the northern United States and carried controversial views such as fundamentalism during the first half of twentieth century. Tensions between fundamentalist and moderate evangelicals, to Carpenter, did not arise because of the nature of the parachurch organization, but rather various views of selective members within those organizations frustrated one another. The largest denominations did not harbor hatred for the structure or character of any parachurch organization, but at

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<sup>12</sup>Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-57

the individuals that threatened evangelical popularity. This is not surprising, according to Carpenter, because those denominations used parachurch organizations before 1900.<sup>16</sup>

Though the CMA began in 1975, themes described concerning fundamentalists inform the theological lineage inherited by Shreve. He was a fundamentalist. Not only did Shreve ascribe to all basic tenets of evangelical faith, his core mission was to spread the Gospel. It was part of the impetus for the creation of the CMA. Additionally, many top evangelists in the CMA ascribed to the same beliefs as Shreve. Thus the CMA is of the same character, or spirit, of many of the organization described by Carpenter.

However, Carpenter primarily described northern fundamentalists during the first few decades of the twentieth century. It is important to remember that Herb Shreve and the CMA began as a “southern” parachurch organization. The organizations’ southern character is worth noting because it illustrates that fundamentalist use of parachurch organization were not limited to northern separatist evangelicals. Additionally, realizing the southern nature of the CMA helps to explain aggressive expansion during the organizations’ early years in the Sun-belt South.

One of the most significant pieces of history in relation to the story of the CMA is *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt* by Darren Dochuk. In this book, Dochuk detailed the migration of southerners across North America to arrive southern California during the second third of the twentieth century. These people carried not only their belongings, but also their “plain-folk religion.” Along the way, these migrating southerners acquired a “Texas theology” which was known by its intense convictions about fundamentalist views and its methods of expansion.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 59-60.

The majority of the project by Dochuk explained the convergence of politics and religion for the plain folk of southern California, but the author also wrote at length about the apparatus by which plain folk religion perpetuated itself in a modernizing nation. Evangelical seminaries grew in numbers across the nation during the inter-war years. Evangelical businessmen, such as Lyman Stewart, stewarded their institutions as good shepherds. After the great depression, southern evangelicals transplanted to southern California altered their message to cater to the middling classes, which proved successful in keeping with the growth of fundamentalism.<sup>17</sup>

The CMA relates to the spread of plain folk religion in many ways. Dochuk proved that migrating southerners not only carried their religion with them, but also the challenges of Californian liberalism solidified conservative beliefs.<sup>18</sup> By the time the CMA spread to places such as southern California, middle class evangelicals were already familiar with the messages of Herb Shreve who was a Southern Baptist preacher for the majority of his career. In addition, the middle class from Arkansas to California were prepared for a ministry such as the CMA.

Not only did the spread of plain-folk religion create an environment conducive to the spread of a parachurch organization such as the CMA, but it also must have affected its leader and the people who will eventually come into contact with it. For example, there is no doubt that the fervor by which Shreve defended his personal liberties and theology fit into the exact “Texas theological attitude” spoken about by Dochuk. One story, in particular, exists where Shreve drove his motorcycle to a nearby town to defend

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<sup>17</sup>Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 169.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

the “religious liberty” of a family who attempted to keep their children outside of local schools. Herb Shreve was determined to make known to everyone around him, including the authorities, his views on liberty and faith. Dochuk characterized southerners in the “Sun-Belt South” in this manner. These people, located in places such as rural Arkansas, thought of themselves as redeemers of “old-time religion” by acting in this way.<sup>19</sup>

Robert Wuthnow encouraged students of American religion to pursue specific studies of various special purpose groups, or parachurch organizations.<sup>20</sup> Equally so, R. Laurence Moore did the same when he wrote on the ability of religious institutions to successfully make way into the radio market.<sup>21</sup> The call has largely been unanswered, however a few studies do indeed attempt to examine how specific parachurch organizations form, grow, change, and dissolve.

*Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* by Tim Gloege attempted to explain the formation and continuation of the Moody Bible Institute. Gloege determined that this institute best illustrated the failed intentions of “the churchly type” of northern Protestant religion during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Second generation leaders of MBI such as Henry Crowell ushered in a new generation of parachurch organizations by intertwining business and religious methods for success toward gaining support to reach a lost generation.

Gloege’s most significant contribution to the study of parachurch organizations came from his analysis of the relationship between business policy and theology within the MBI, which set evangelicals on a trajectory, that “liberal Protestantism would always

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<sup>19</sup>“Motorcycle Preacher Arrives at Grannis instead of Jesus,” *Mena Star*, September 1974

<sup>20</sup>Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 104.

<sup>21</sup>Moore, *Selling God*, 255.

be incompatible with.”<sup>22</sup> Leaders in the circle of northern evangelicals such as Moody, Crowell, and Lyman Stewart exchanged “churchly Protestantism” for a faith oriented towards hard work and realism. Evangelical faith was not concerned with intellectualism, but rather on solving the issues of modernity such as communism, morality, and the ills of youth. The message of realism resonated with middle class Americans who valued principles such as hard work and perseverance, values that were associated with a constructed “old-time religion.”

The culmination of middle-class American and evangelical views of work, leisure, and society made sure, that by the time Shreve created his parachurch organization in the mid-seventies, the transition was a smooth one. This is precisely why the nature and beliefs of bikers surprised Shreve during his first motorcycling rally in Texas; motorcyclists were not as different as he once thought on the long road home from preaching that day in 1972. The only work to be done, then, was to change motorcyclists’ views on God by using that particular technology.

Darren Dochuk described parachurch organizations as they related to the success of “old-time religion” in Southern California. Bible colleges such as Biola existed in order to make “good young Christians” and they survived the economic downturns of the early twentieth century because of big business owner’s ability to fund it through difficult times. Much like Moody Bible Institute, Lyman Stewart was able to use common sense secular business acumen to appeal to southern Californians to gain a large following.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Timothy Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 10.

<sup>23</sup> Dochuk, *Bible Belt to Sun Belt*, 53.

*Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion, and Popular Culture in America* by Tona

Hangen is a history that informs Herb Shreve and the CMA. The use of radio by evangelicals during the twentieth century successfully illustrated two principles: evangelicals were not afraid to use technology for their own purposes and also that modernizing technology does not necessarily modernize those purposes of use. These principles explained by Hangen do not apply to every parachurch organization during the twentieth century as the radio uniquely aligned itself with tenets of “old-time religion”. For example, Hangen made the point that hearing famous preachers through the speaker was actually not all that offensive to evangelical families because in those families, patriarchs often communicated religious messages by voice.<sup>24</sup>

In the same way that evangelicals used the radio to achieve religious purposes, Herb Shreve used motorcycles, a modern technology, to further his goals of evangelism. The modern technology did not seem to affect his theology while he was in charge. Herb Shreve, in the same fashion as Lyman Stewart, Henry Crowley, and D.L. Moody, used motorcycling cultural methods to obtain funds and to reach people. Therefore, the CMA indeed does prove to be consistent with studies provided by Robert Wuthnow and Joel Carpenter in that parachurch organizations such as the CMA were spaces of cultural flexibility so that American religious folk, fundamental and otherwise, could shake-off the throes of denominational culture wars during the twentieth century. Further still, the possibility of a parachurch organization would not have been too foreign to the motorcycling minister. Numerous parachurch organizations thrived by the mid-seventies when Shreve pondered his separation from his pastorate in Cove, Arkansas.

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<sup>24</sup>Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion, and Popular Culture in America*, (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

*Bill Bright and the Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* by John G. Turner provides the best frame of reference for the Christian Motorcyclists Association. Turner, in concord with definitions on the nature of parachurch organizations by other historians mentioned, found that Campus Crusade for Christ proved to be a place where young Americans could participate in a flexible space of evangelicalism in the twentieth century. Perhaps, as Turner asserted, religion in America would have failed in the era of modernity were it not for the existence of institutions such as Campus Crusade for Christ.<sup>25</sup>

Bill Bright created Campus Crusade for Christ in response to what he saw as the chief challenge to faith in the early fifties. The parachurch organization responded rather quickly to a modern problem and it refashioned itself for campus culture of younger and inquisitive adults. Campus Crusade for Christ was also masculine, it was fundamentalist, it combated communism, it was non-denominational, it was flexible, and like Shreve, its founder grew up as a “country boy.”

Studies such as Turner’s reveal much that Robert Wuthnow could only speculate about. Unsurprisingly, Campus Crusade for Christ’s ability to be flexible in the face of opposition contributed to the perpetuation of this parachurch organization’s success into the twenty-first century. Turner noted that during Explo’ 72, music meant for worship sounded much like music heard on the radio.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Bill Bright worked in concord with John Heyman on the blockbuster Hollywood production *Jesus* (1979). This was significant because at one time, it would be unthinkable for a fundamentalist evangelical

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<sup>25</sup>John G. Turner, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 228.

<sup>26</sup>Turner, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ*, 140,



to work with a Hollywood producer. Turner noted that change in music and Hollywood relationships to evangelicalism was a mark of a changing evangelical landscape.<sup>27</sup> All of this is to say that, again, parachurch organizations often operated in sync with American culture.

No other aspect of American religious culture changed as much as in the realm of politics. *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* by Andrew Hartman describes the culture wars that defined politics during the second half of the twentieth century. The culture wars began during the sixties when a new, plural generation of Americans sought to redefine what it meant to be called “American.”<sup>28</sup> *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The American Dream and its Critics, 1945-1965* by James Hudnut-Beumler outlined suburban conservative culture that cultural “liberals” challenged during the time period researched by Hartman. Suburban white middle class Americans asserted their cultural beliefs in every aspect of American life.<sup>29</sup> During the culture wars, both conservative and liberals sought to change society, at least in part, through political action. Hartman defined conservatives as those who were challenged for cultural dominance and liberals as those who were challenging.<sup>30</sup> The sixties were ten years in which a liberal consensus gained ground on reforms in society. The next two decades saw conservatives attempting to recapture what they lost (religious freedoms, local racial autonomy, and gender norms). Despite best efforts of conservative

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<sup>27</sup>Turner, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ*, 182.

<sup>28</sup>Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>29</sup>James Hudnut-Beumler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and Its Critics, 1945-1965* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 12-17.

<sup>30</sup>Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 23.

Americans, they largely “lost” in a general sense. Hartman remarked that this point is most clear for the war over how men and women should act.<sup>31</sup>

Andrew Hartman concluded, “The culture wars were the defining narrative of post-modern America” because political action by both conservatives and liberals had lasting effects on virtually every aspect of American life.<sup>32</sup> World War II had a significant impact on the growth of federal government and therefore it changed the way American citizens viewed the role that government played in society. The predominant culture in American history until the twentieth century felt challenged through laws proposed by other seemingly peripheral cultural groups. The growth of a federal government more actively engaged in local and social affairs, especially laws concerning school prayer, road safety, and conscription (to name a few) weighed heavily on the minds of many American citizens.

*Born to be Wild: The Rise of the American Motorcyclist* by Randy McBee measured the change in motorcycling culture from the same period explored by Hartman. The federal government enacted specific helmet laws that required all motorcyclists to wear helmets while on the motorcycle. This outraged die-hard motorcyclists who were already hell bent on keeping each centimeter of freedom. In fact, according to McBee, freedom was one of the main reasons that many of motorcyclists rode.<sup>33</sup> In other words, working class men used the motorcycle to escape the drags of labor and confinement of home. Motorcyclists, in response to helmet laws, organized and chose the political party

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<sup>31</sup>Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 134.

<sup>32</sup>Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 293.

<sup>33</sup>Randy McBee, *Born to be Wild: The Rise of the American Motorcyclist* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015) 32.

that promised to support their goal of repealing those laws.<sup>34</sup> Encroaching laws on perceived political freedoms defined their political engagement; participation was reactionary.

Motorcyclists were not the only, or the most significant, group of Americans that increased their political participation in this period. Currently, the literature on the study of the intersection of religion in politics is a booming field. Robert Wuthnow, adding to the debate, wrote about the increased political action of evangelicals during the second half of the twentieth century. Wuthnow measured the changes in boundaries that American religious folk operated within. He argued that because of the stability of religious institutions in America before the twentieth century, evangelicalism was able to use its resources to shape-shift in a relatively short amount of time. The unique relationship between the state and American religious institutions further made room for institutional agility. Wuthnow deemed this part of the “American System.”<sup>35</sup>

Before the 1960’s, a period in which Hartman described in detail, evangelicals in voted on both sides of the aisle. This is because neither party seemed to challenge what Wuthnow defined as “The American System.”<sup>36</sup> Again, evangelicals were the primary defenders of the system and the politicization of that system forced them to choose a party. Evangelicals, even today, could be found on either side of party politics, but certain interpretations of the system differentiated parts within that culture. In one extremely important example, fundamentalists, because of their view of premillennial dispensationalism, thought America was uniquely ordained by God to perpetuate true

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 73.

<sup>35</sup>Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 259.

<sup>36</sup>Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 259.

faith. This meant that whichever party catered to cultural conservatives, won their support. Thus, evangelicals became known not only by their beliefs, but also more specifically by their party affiliations.

Darren Dochuk's study on the Sun Belt South is primarily about the intersection of politics and religion. In the twentieth century southerners gradually moved west and brought their religion with them while acquiring aspects of other "religious attitudes." Eventually, these people settled in Southern California, which ultimately created what historians termed the Sun Belt South. Politicians such as Richard Nixon sought to capture votes from this politically active part of American by the late seventies. He succeeded.

The constituency of the Sun Belt South is formidable, evangelical, and active even today. Dochuk's study is absolutely essential in studying the Christian Motorcyclists Association because the politics and evangelical beliefs of the Sun Belt South explain, at least in part, its immediate success during the late seventies until today.

The Sun Belt South, however, was not the only part of the nation that the CMA found immediate success. The question must be asked: how were evangelicals in the Sun Belt South linked to other social conservatives across the older regions of the South? *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* by Stephen Patrick Miller used the life of Billy Graham to tell the story of white, southern evangelicals and their growing affection for the Republican Party.

The political clout carried by a non-politician such as Billy Graham provides an appropriate example for the changing structures of evangelicalism written about by Robert Wuthnow. Perhaps, as Miller suggested, Graham would not have had such political importance to evangelicals prior to the second half of the twentieth century were

it not for the period in which he was born.<sup>37</sup> More importantly, Graham helped to create what Miller called an “evangelical universalism.” What Miller meant was that Billy Graham’s image, his aura, helped evangelicals across the political spectrum to come in agreement with one another on key issues. Evangelical universalism highlighted a significant change in evangelical culture because it seemed as if American religion became increasingly sectarian. However, figures such as Graham unified the Sun Belt South and show that evangelicals unified during postwar America.

The creation of evangelical universalism allowed Graham to rise above partisan politics. Each president during the second half of the twentieth century, to some degree, used Graham as a spokesperson for the South. Miller noted that the significance of this fact could not be overstated. It illustrated that many evangelicals were middle class moderates who were often overshadowed by fundamentalists who were more vocal in political discourse. Graham’s influence was so powerful in fact, that Richard Nixon crafted an entire campaign around the political power carried by the evangelist. Additionally, Miller’s study shows us that the Sun Belt South was uniquely different than mainline Protestants to the north. The geographically southern brand of “old-time” religion was uniquely modern and unifying.

Within the scope of the Sun Belt South, one denomination in particular was dominant: Southern Baptists. *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism* by Oran P. Smith studied the gradual increase of Southern Baptists in the halls of power after World War II. Their prominence on the political stage during the second half of the twentieth century was a reaction to perceived cultural challenges to Southern Baptist ideas of freedom.

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<sup>37</sup>Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 46.

However, as Smith made the point, the Southern Baptist Convention whether established in Seattle, Washington or Selma, Alabama was inherently “southern.”<sup>38</sup> Smith defined Southern Baptist culture as a unique mix of conservatism and revivalism. Southern Baptist culture significantly changed during the postwar era. Moderate Southern Baptists believed that religion and politics should be separated. The fundamentalist wing of the denomination thought otherwise and believed that politics was a vital tool for evangelical use. Fundamentalists consolidated power in the SBC during the late twentieth century and then became increasingly active to reach new people across the nation. These efforts exported “southernness” from the old Confederacy to numerous parts of the country.<sup>39</sup> In other words, the antebellum and modern periods, when considering Southern Baptists, are inextricably linked because the previous was instrumental in building a trajectory ending in the latter.

What drove the Southern Baptist Convention into the realm of conservative politics was upheaval within the denomination. Until 1968, moderates had clear control of SBC political stances. Many Southern Baptists still supported the Democratic Party, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter being two of the most prominent. That year, 1968, conservatives within the SBC attempted to consolidate power to take the denomination in a new direction once it was clear that Baylor University strayed from what fundamentalists believed to be good education. In essence, the conservative-fundamentalist wing of the convention could no longer keep quiet. By the early seventies, the SBC was firmly in the hands of conservatives intending to make changes within

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<sup>38</sup>Oran P. Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997) 21.

<sup>39</sup>Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*, 30.

denominational missions and its political associations.<sup>40</sup> Conservatives forced people within the denomination to choose political sides: old guard moderates kept loyalty to the Democratic Party and fiery conservatives pledged their allegiance to the new-look Republican Party.<sup>41</sup>

In review, political participation of evangelicals after World War II increased. Furthermore, party alliances shifted in major ways, which dramatically changed the existing institutional structures of religion in America. Social conservatives sought to perpetuate the American System in light of challenges by a new social order. Evangelicals certainly made up significant portions of the conservative movement. Southerners migrated west to create the “Sun-Belt South” along their migratory path. Elections during the second half of the twentieth century depicted a solid block of exported southern conservatism that insisted that they must protect The American System. Billy Graham seemed to be the Godfather of the new Sun-Belt South as he advised numerous presidents and politicians on “proper” ways to lead people who fell under the umbrella of evangelical universalism. Many Southern Baptists experienced a purifying fire of conservatism in the late sixties into the early seventies and came out as refined Republicans.

How does this apply to the Christian Motorcyclists Association? More specifically, how does this apply to the decision made by Herb Shreve to break away from his pastorate to create the CMA? The studies discussed here lay a nearly seamless historical framework when considering the CMA. In fact, by measuring the political ascent of evangelicals during the postwar years, the keen eye is able to see what these

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<sup>40</sup>Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*, 52.

<sup>41</sup>Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*, 56.

people cared about and why. Surely evangelicals who were drawn to the polls to vote for individuals who protected religious freedoms, or promised to anyway, cared less about political processes or ideologies and more about their ability to create the city on the hill during their last days on earth. These are the same middle class Americans who allied with parachurch organizations such as the CMA and help explain, at least in part, why the CMA was relatively successful in such a short amount of time.

Parachurch organizations and political action are not the only ways in which structures changed within the evangelical community. Robert Wuthnow proved that religious experience in America during the twentieth century was oriented towards combat. R. Laurence Moore, in concord with that fact, explained that this should not surprise the student of American religion because cultural warfare forced religious institutions to compete for customers in a cultural marketplace. All histories previously explored defined evangelical change during this period as reactionary to those cultural changes outside of the evangelical community. Therefore the roles played by each gender within evangelical circles of influence also changed despite the CMA's willingness to perpetuate its view of perceived practical roles within the family.

*Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States* by Gail Bederman explored how American societies made and remade ideas of gender at the turn of the twentieth century. The CMA would do more than just reinforce a gender hierarchy placing men above women. Ideas of gender were not inherent or absolute, and in this period Americans reformed ways "manliness" was defined. Some evangelicals in the early twentieth century were concerned about popular perceptions of the faith that seemed to threaten to emasculate male believers. As Bederman writes, "To



study manhood...is to unmask this process and study the history of ways different ideologies about manhood develop, change, are combined, amended, contested—and gain the status of “truth.”<sup>43</sup>

Later in the twentieth century, the ways in which society developed ideas of manhood can be summed up by the combination of reconciling ideas between “civilization” and “primitive.”<sup>44</sup> The term “civilization” stemmed from the “old,” Victorian view of gender. Manliness meant self-restraint from the ills of society. The better the man, the more upright he was. Technology and urban life destroyed “civilization.” Men, white men in particular, therefore went to the other extreme: “primitive” manliness. This meant that manliness was defined as bravado, sexual fulfillment, and freedom from control over any decision made.

Motorcyclists, for example, were the epitome of some combination between civilization and primitive.<sup>45</sup> Though McBee did not intentionally wield the same framework of understanding gender as Bederman, it is easy to see the same themes. Motorcyclists, during the late sixties and early seventies replaced the image of the cowboy: strong, stoic, and free. Movies, books, and cartoons all represented the quintessential motorcyclist independent of anyone and anything. Public discourse created the stereotype and sold it as truth.<sup>46</sup>

*Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* by Ted Ownby contended that males in the South were different than males in the

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<sup>43</sup>Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995) 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>45</sup> *Born to be Wild*, 195.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-202.

North. Southern males, opposed to their northern counterparts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sought freedom outside of the home. Leisure forms, such as fighting, reflected that sentiment. To be manly meant to be free of anyone else. Northern males, as already explain by Bederman, found manliness in Victorian ideals.<sup>47</sup>

Popular culture changed all of that. I have outlined how that changed for northern males, but it seemed as if the change came at a later date for southern males. Change happened at the outset of the popular culture revolution during the twenties. Automobiles, movies, and music replaced other “outdated” forms of leisure that came from the farm. Instead, Ownby noted, that the younger generation gleaned leisure forms from urban culture, a new phenomena in southern culture.<sup>48</sup> This further proved Bederman’s point that urbanization and technology directly correlate to changes in leisure.

How did this affect gender? More specifically, how did re-orientation affect southern gender? It challenged it. Unlike motorcycling culture, however, popular culture seemed to intensify the need for masculine defense of evangelical piety. Many activities in themselves were not impure, just as long as southerners kept the Sabbath. Ownby was unclear as to the nature of the relationship of popular culture and gender in the twentieth century. For good reason, this topic fell out of the scope of his study.

*Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950’s* by Pete Daniel picked up where Ownby left off. However, Daniel focused heavily on the relationship between gender and race rather than gender and religion in the South. Ultimately, the aim of Daniel’s book was to highlight the missed opportunities for southerners to step into cultural modernity during

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<sup>47</sup>Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South 1865-1920*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990),14.

<sup>48</sup>Ownby, *Subduing Satan*, 204-208.

the immediate post-war years. In the process of highlighting those missed opportunities, Daniel examined southern manliness and racist sentiments in modern forms of leisure, which were driven by a rapidly modernizing society.

Modernizing society challenged rural forms of southern manliness defined by Ownby. Though southern males used modern technologies such as cars, guitars, and radio, they continued previous behaviors of escapism. Southern males still fought for sport. They cursed, gambled, and danced outside of the home. Ownby and Daniel both portrayed southern culture to be inherently conservative through ways in which they used new technologies. NASCAR during its early years seemed to be inclusive. Once public interest in the sport grew, southern white males cut short African American and female participation. This, in essence, is Daniel's thesis: Southern culture missed numerous opportunities to take a step towards equality in the modern era, but "white manliness" and competition was too strong to overcome.<sup>49</sup>

For the purposes of understanding the context by which Herb Shreve created the CMA, it is important to examine how evangelical views on gender changed during the post-war years. The best gauge of changing views is the parachurch organization because, if the Wuthnow and Laurence model are followed, they represent evangelicalism's latest and greatest attempt to stay relevant in modernizing society. That is also true in the small time frame of the existence of the CMA.

Concerning gender, Campus Crusade for Christ reflected disdain for secular society's decisions on what constituted "manliness" and "femininity." During the nineties, Campus Crusade for Christ created a smaller organization within the larger one

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<sup>49</sup>Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950's* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 125-163.

titled “FamilyLife.” This sub-organization, though markedly different from evangelical views on gender during the immediate postwar years, sought to educate young men and women on “biblical views of man and women in relation to one another.” Turner discovered that evangelicalism, represented in Campus Crusade, filtered which parts of secular society to adopt and which ones to disdain. FamilyLife taught that it was acceptable for the male-female relationship within the bounds of marriage to be corroborative rather than patriarchal, although Turner noted that this new stance still was “soft-patriarchy.” At the same time, evangelicalism ardently fought against the acceptance of homosexual relationships, which was seen by some to be an assault on Godly manliness.<sup>50</sup>

If it is at all possible to tell a concise cultural history of America after World War II it would be that, as Robert Wuthnow noted, this era was a time of complete restructuring. In other words, American culture sought to undo the structures put in place by its previous two hundred years in existence while at the same time, Americans, in general, attempted to also push forward into modernity in the realms of religion, politics and gender. If this is a valid story, why is it necessary to study the Christian Motorcyclists Association? Are there any gaps in history that this overlooked story can fill in?

Robert Wuthnow and R. Laurence Moore both remarked, despite dedicating an entire chapter to parachurch organizations, that further study of those organizations are necessary. Up to this point, outside of institutional histories, students of American religion overlook the majority of parachurch organizations put within the context of the

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<sup>50</sup>Turner, *Bill Bright and the Campus Crusade for Christ*, 208-216.

greater story of evangelicalism. John G. Turner also noted this gap in historical knowledge when attempting to frame the C.C.C. If parachurch organizations are as important as all three historians create them to be (as the incubator of fundamentalism, the mechanisms of cultural accommodation, and as a contributing factor to sectarianism), then further analysis is indeed necessary.

John G. Turner illustrated in *Campus Crusade for Christ*, evangelicals in parachurch organizations dictated which aspects of secular culture to deem right and wrong. It would seem to be no different in the Christian Motorcyclists Association. However, C.C.C. is simply one out of countless different other parachurch organizations during the postwar period. Therefore there are degrees of difference in the history of the CMA.

The motorcycle, Randy McBee declared, has a special place in American history and culture. It is an icon and continues to represent not just a technology, but also a specific lifestyle; that lifestyle is freedom incarnate. If motorcycling symbolizes freedom, how is it that an evangelical parachurch organization which emphasized submission, come to be so significant in motorcycling culture? That question is what this project will attempt to answer by examining the changes in organization from its creation in the mid-seventies to the early nineties, its political actions throughout those years, and how evangelical ideas of manliness fused with perhaps the most “manly” act in post-war America. Before politics and gender can be discussed, first a history of the organizational structure is necessary.

## Chapter 2

### The House that Herb Shreve Built: An Organizational History

In early 1980, Herb Brock, reporter for the Danville, Kentucky *Advocate-Messenger*, met with a chapter of the CMA in Danville, Kentucky and he noticed something. To begin, he was not afraid. He called the Christian motorcyclists “tame as a Sunday School class.” Brock noticed that the gentlemen cared about their image more than many other motorcyclists that he came into contact with. For example, Vernon Floyd, a Honda dealer and shop owner, announced to the reporter that “Motorcyclists get a bad name... We get the image of being Hell’s Angels.”<sup>1</sup>

Of all the articles written about the CMA from the period of 1974, when the idea of the CMA was apparently conceived, until 1994, when Herb Shreve’s involvement became cursory after his wife’s death, this column written by Herb Brock properly captured the most striking fact about the CMA: the parachurch organization was a fusion of motorcycling and evangelical culture.

Much like Brock’s article, an organizational history of the Christian Motorcyclists Association serves two purposes. First, an account of how money was spent, who made decisions, and a description of the people who constituted local chapters, brings to life a

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<sup>1</sup>Herb Brock, “Cycle ‘Gang’ Plans to Ride for the Son,” *OFF THE RECORD*, Vol. 114, No. 241, 1980.

sturdy history of the organization that currently does not exist. Second, reviewing organizational structure and the changes it underwent from 1974-1994 highlights the discovery excavated in Brock's article. Thus, the thesis of this chapter is that an organizational history of the CMA reveals that the CMA was successful in its goal to evangelize motorcyclists and revise popular perceptions of them. Through this success, the CMA signified that non-denominational parachurch organizations had the potential to operate with great freedom during the second half of the twentieth century. The organizational history of the CMA will sustain a solid foundation upon which deeper analysis can be made. It is essential.

Before the organizational history can be told, a quick outline as to how Herb Shreve conceived the idea of the Christian Motorcyclists Association is necessary in order to fully grasp the significance of the changes in the ministry from 1974-1994. According to Herb Shreve's biographer, Gene Harlan Powell, and various newspaper articles quoting Shreve as he told the story, Herb wanted a way to reconnect with his rebellion son Herbie. Herb came home one day in 1972 and told Herbie that if he sold his horse, he could have a motorcycle. Two of them would be bought, one for the father and one for the son. The horse was sold and both bikes were paid for.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, the motorcycles did not bridge the generational gap. The relationship needed time. Herb had to learn how to ride. Herbie, at first, used the motorcycle to further escape his "stuffy" home. Herb recognized this and decided to take his son on a trip to the West Coast, north to Washington, and then back home. This trip taken by Herb, Boyd

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<sup>2</sup>Gene Harlan Powell, *Fisher of Men*, (Ketch Publishing, 2012), 27; Dick Moody, "This Christian Biker Goes by the Book," *Spokane Chronicle*, July 13, 1985.

Smith, and Herbie proved to be significant because in some sense, Herb experienced other parts of the country and became familiar with the attraction of motorcycling.<sup>3</sup>

In 1974, Herb, Herbie, and Kenny Harker attended a secular motorcycling rally in Texas. This rally was for the Texas Motorcyclists Riding Association and Herb found his calling at this rally because he saw the kindness of motorcyclists, people he thought were supposed to be evil. Herb wondered then, how could these men and women be so kind, if they did not know Jesus? Christianity was all that was missing according to him.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of the following two years, Herb travelled to numerous motorcycling rallies to preach open air on Sundays. Somewhere on the road, he placed an ad in *Road Rider Magazine* and the *American Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*. In the ad he asked if there were any motorcyclists interested in a Christian motorcycling group. While Herb and Shirley were on sabbatical during the time they contemplated separating from their home church in early 1975, Herbie called his parents from Arkansas to tell them that there were multiple letters sent to the family's address inquiring about this group.<sup>5</sup> By 1976, the Christian Motorcyclists Association had an office building, at least three different local chapters, a full time evangelist (Shreve), and a primary financier. In order to expand this ministry and make enough money to live on, Herb needed to hit the rally trail and continue to put ads in various touring magazines to gain more members.<sup>6</sup> Now is the story about how the Christian Motorcyclists Association grew into a successful, and sustainable, parachurch organization during the twentieth

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<sup>3</sup>Powell, *Fisher of Men*, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Steve Brewer, "Christian Biker Seeks Good Image," *The Day*, January 10, 1981.

<sup>5</sup>*Fisher of Men*, 46, Shirley Shreve, "It Happened Along the Way," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 43, November 1987, 2.

<sup>6</sup>*American Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 45, 1977; *Fisher of Men*, 59.



century which fused evangelical belief with what it sought to conquer: motorcycling culture.

By 1977, according to Shreve, the Christian Motorcyclists Association had members in every state.<sup>7</sup> After its creation in 1975, the CMA grew exponentially. The figures will be the focus of a latter part of this study, but needless to say, the national organization needed ways to fund itself. Herb Shreve was adamant, from 1975 until his passing in 2013, that the CMA never take a formal offering where buckets would be passed around for financial support. Of course, the reasons for this changed during this time period, but most importantly, the Shreve did not think of his organization as a church and he wanted to separate the CMA from the denominationalism that he believed plagued the nation.<sup>8</sup> In addition, Shreve sought to distinguish the CMA from other motorcycling “clubs” by never requiring members to pay any sort of annual due. The only requirement was to profess the Christian faith. In this manner he paved an alternate way of funding his organization that neither culture had previously done before. By never taking up an official offering or charging annual dues, Shreve institutionalized this alternate religious experience through alternate forms of raising money. Furthermore, Shreve was intentional in creating a different experience for motorcyclists on the fence of faith. He announced that his ministry “did something that the churches weren’t.”<sup>9</sup>

The most obvious and best example is the CMA use of selling merchandise or what the newsletters name them as “goodies.” Shreve not only raised money by selling

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<sup>7</sup> “Cycle Christian: Gospel Goose Takes Him on a Motorcycle Ministry,” *The Evening Independent*, May 26, 1977.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Latta, “Cycle Evangelists Switch Image,” *Wichita Eagle*, January 12, 1980.

<sup>9</sup> Peacemakers of Ohio, “Peacemakers of Ohio Charter and By-laws,” 1985.

motorcycling products with the CMA badge attached to them, but he also perpetuated the CMA identity through the purchase of various consumer products. The sale of “goodies” is illustrated in newsletters as early as issue fourteen in 1980 continuing today where these products are purchased through the CMA website.<sup>10</sup> Examining what types of consumer products that could be bought intermittently from 1974-1994 further illuminates this point and illustrated the different experience that Shreve attempted to achieve.

In 1980, a member of the CMA could purchase seven different items from extra jacket patches to belt buckles to personalized stitching with a personalized name attached under the CMA logo.<sup>11</sup> Not only did the purchase of a Gold Medallion Pendant at eighteen dollars (the most expensive goodie in the 1980 edition of the newsletter) distinguish the Christian motorcyclist from other secular motorcyclists, it also distinguished him or her from other CMA members who did not purchase one. At the bottom of the “goodies” section in the newsletter an unknown author lauded the member by saying “your thoughtfulness goes far to extend the good stewardship of this ministry.”<sup>12</sup> A CMA member that wore a Gold Medallion Pendant not only was a believer and a participator in CMA activities, but he or she was also a distinguished monetary contributor to the CMA, or evangelical, cause. The purchase of a Gold Medallion Pendant did not feel like church where one would put money into a bucket.

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<sup>10</sup>“CMA Goodies,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 14, March 1980, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

In 1982, Herb Shreve, after a long warning to members about the additional needs of funds, created an extra patch for those who continually contributed to the CMA's cause. This special badge was blue and gold with special lettering that again, distinguished contributing members from one another.<sup>13</sup> In 1985, members could purchase a commemorative tenth year anniversary patch.<sup>14</sup> By this time, members could participate in supporting the CMA cause through the purchase of a variety of goodies such as vests, pens, sport shirts, posters, t-shirts, and jerseys. In 1991, CMA Newsletters provided members full pictures of goodies they could buy in order to make the products more attractive for purchase. For example, an eagle superimposed over an American flag with the words "Ride for the Son" (the CMA motto) underneath it were available for purchase along with all the other goods sold since 1980.<sup>15</sup>

Funds raised by the sale of goodies did not keep up with the growing ministry. Shreve addressed his members through quarterly newsletters and admonished them to give more if they could. In 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, and 1991 Shreve outlined the hardships of various traveling evangelists in order to gain financial support from members of local chapters. In 1982, Herb asked members to help pay for a computer which would clear up space in the office and convert all documents into electronic form.<sup>16</sup> He needed more money, but still refused to take a formal offering.

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<sup>13</sup>"New Patch," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 21, May 1982, 4.

<sup>14</sup>"CMA Goodie Corner," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 35, April 1985, 16.

<sup>15</sup>"CMA Goodie Corner," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 71, May 1991, 16.

<sup>16</sup>Herb Shreve, "A Special Note from Herb," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 21, May 1982, 1.

Alternative forms of raising funds outside the realm of “goodies” in the CMA were numerous. One of the most curious forms of fundraising, the CMA recorded, pressed, and distributed its own gospel music album. In 1980, Lynn McBride and his wife, both CMA evangelists who did not know quite where to fit into the ministry, found their place on the stage and apparently in the recording studio. At the yearly “Changing of the Colors Rally,” the national rally held at CMA headquarters in Cove, Arkansas, the McBrides led worship on Saturday and Sunday. They wanted to do more than perform once a year so they created new lyrics to the tunes of old gospel songs. For example, sung to the tune of “Everyday with Jesus” went the “Song for CMA.”<sup>17</sup>

Members purchased CMA gospel tunes in stereo albums, 8 track tapes, or cassette tapes. The ad placed in the newsletter suggested to buyers that the album would be a great Christmas gift. Apparently, these records did not sell very much as ads on the backs of newsletters for the album ceased in 1983. This record was intended for the traveler in mind as touring motorcycles had 8 track players on new models of motorcycles that members bought for long trips.

A more pious way to raise money, according to Shreve, was through the sale of devotional books meant to enhance the spiritual experience of local chapters. 1983-1984 happened to be one of the most significant years for the CMA in this period because leadership experienced large amounts of turnover from the first generation of founders. The 1983-1984 year will be explored further in this study, but turnover in leadership influenced ways in which Herb Shreve sought to raise funds for his ministry. In addition

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<sup>17</sup> Pappy Flora, “Rolling Down the Highway Sing to the Tune of ‘Everyday with Jesus’,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 16, October 1980, 8.

to leadership changes, CMA membership exploded during the first half of the decade. The autonomous nature of CMA chapters around the nation meant that members in these chapters could potentially act in ways that Herb Shreve disapproved of. Thus, the devotional book was created in order to combat two wars on two fronts. Shreve reigned in dissenting members and raised money at the same time.

In 1983, Lynn McBride, former purveyor of CMA gospel tunes, wrote an article in the CMA newsletter echoing Herb Shreve's address earlier in the issue outlining the direction the CMA was going in 1984. McBride intended this devotional book to help local chapters to meet on a regular basis and do more than simply ride together.<sup>18</sup> The following year, 1984, Shirley Shreve, Herb's wife, confirmed Lynn McBride's admonition. By this time, all chapters received copies of the "CMA Bible Study Vol. 1" and members purchased each book for five dollars.<sup>19</sup>

In the same year that the CMA sold devotional materials to local chapters, Shreve organized member retreats and the CMA School for Evangelism. Again, these efforts to institutionalize Shreve's beliefs through the school and devotional books, served two purposes. Shreve sought to raise money and homogenize the beliefs of the CMA leadership in order to promote unity in belief and intention to evangelize across the country at motorcycling events.<sup>20</sup> In 1984, the School of Evangelism cost twenty-five dollars per person in order to register and the CMA required each member go through the

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<sup>18</sup> Lynn McBride, "Attention Chapters: Something New," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 28, October 1983, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Shirley Shreve, "Bible Study," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 30, May 1984, 3.

<sup>20</sup> "Just Released," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 42, August 1987, 6.; Herb Shreve, "A Special Note from Herb," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 21, February 1982, 1.

curriculum of the school so that if a member spoke at non-sponsored CMA rallies, the member knew what Shreve deemed appropriate public behavior. Each retreat cost the same amount of money for a married couple, but the CMA only suggested payment instead of requiring it. Herb Shreve used these activities for his greater purpose for the CMA.

Until now, all of the ways in which Herb Shreve intended to raise money for the CMA related in some fashion to evangelical belief. Pins, patches, and pens all had a cross printed on them, which was bound within the CMA logo. Devotional books also served a religious purpose, as did retreats for married couples. In these ways, the CMA functioned as a church despite intentional efforts by Shreve to avoid formal offerings. Leaders needed money to travel, eat, and set up tents at rallies. The most interesting ways in which the CMA raised money outside of the previously mentioned methods was through advertisements of non-CMA consumer items in CMA Newsletters and the Run for the Son.

In 1985, as previously mentioned, Herb Shreve asked for more money in order to pay the salaries of new regional evangelists.<sup>21</sup> CMA chapters grew and multiple chapters emerged in each state. Since each state had multiple chapters, each state could hold its own annual CMA rally. In 1983, the CMA had three separate regional evangelists aside from Herb Shreve who also still traveled nationally. By 1985, five regions with five evangelists assigned to those regions existed. So, in 1987, Herb Shreve finally allowed

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<sup>21</sup>Herb Shreve, "Open Letter to All CMA Members," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 32, April 1985, 12.

businesses that sold items from campers to helmets place ads in newsletters in order to fund expansion.<sup>22</sup>

In 1987 a towable camper company placed the first advertisement in the CMA Newsletter. The following two issues of the newsletter did not contain any advertisements, but instead a small block that outlined prices for any company that wanted to place their ad in newsletters. Full page ads were \$350 all the way to a small classified which cost \$4.<sup>23</sup> E-Z Campers occupied most of the advertisement blocks for the remainder of 1987 into 1988. Late in 1988 ads for the American Motorcyclists Association, Utopia Seating, and E-Z-Charger advertised products in each newsletter. These ads showed up in newsletters through 1994.

It is difficult to measure the significance of advertisements placed in the newsletters. These ads were not political in the literal sense and, aside from ads placed by the AMA, they seemed to cater to a market in “need.” Furthermore, not a single major corporation placed an advertisement in the CMA Newsletters. No backroom existed where an evangelical billionaire plotted his next bid to spread the Good News. At the very least, Herb did not have an issue with the mutual benefits that came with the placed ads. The CMA could continue supporting small businesses while at the same time gathering funds for evangelical needs.

*To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of a Christian Free Enterprise* by Bethany Moreton explored the creation of the iconic corporation of Wal-Mart created by

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<sup>22</sup>“Attention!!!! CMA Newsletter Advertising,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 40, January 1987., 3.

<sup>23</sup>“The Affordable Alternative,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 42, August 1987, 5.

Sam Walton. The magnate imbued his business with Christian middle-class ethics not only to become successful, but also to reconcile wealth and faith. Sam Walton's Wal-Mart embodied, from its staff to its consumers, evangelical faith, Republican politics, and capitalist economics.<sup>24</sup> *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* by Kevin M. Kruse illustrated the intersection of faith, politics, and capitalism more broadly to show that large corporations certainly helped shape Christian identity in postwar America.<sup>25</sup> Both Bethany Moreton and Kevin Kruse inform, at least in part, the role businesses play in shaping consumer culture and faith. Because the CMA allowed businesses to advertise in CMA Newsletters, Herb Shreve placed approval on those businesses. The CMA made supporters feel comfortable through the trust of approval. This is but one example of the intersection of faith and business. Spheres of faith, politics, and capitalism did not operate separately in the CMA.

The most significant way in which money was raised during this period was the "Run for the Son." This was neither a rally nor an event to homogenize CMA members' beliefs as other forms of raising money. The Run for the Son is a strategy taken from the book of motorcyclists. Essentially this event is where a group of motorcyclists, in this instance CMA members, collectively ride together for a long period of time in order to show solidarity in purpose and belief. In 1988, Herb Shreve proposed this idea to CMA members.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of a Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>25</sup>Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Christian America Created Corporate America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

<sup>26</sup>Herb Shreve, "Run for the Son," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 44, February 1988, 2.



Shreve asked that if motorcyclists outside of the CMA could use “rides” to improve the image of motorcyclists and raise millions in doing so, should not the CMA be able to raise more since they embody safe motorcycling through the message of Christ? The plan proposed would have various CMA members meet at the headquarters in Cove and have each member who is willing to ride find a donor for every mile ridden. The example provided in the newsletter required ten cents per mile for one hundred miles. The proceeds would go to overseas missions, a new fleet of motorcycles for evangelists, and maintenance on facilities for the “Changing of the Colors Rally.”<sup>27</sup>

The exploration of the ways in which the CMA gathered funds and why they gathered those funds leads to a consensus about how those methods affected the organization and its members over from 1980-1991. Shreve’s insistence to avoid formal offerings made contributing to the CMA a very public affair. A member could purchase “goodies,” listen to CMA gospel music, participate in monthly bible devotions, attend marriage retreats, and Run for the Son. Each one of these actions created tangible evidence on who supported what, how, and why.

Evangelists of the CMA at all stages of growth contributed to CMA funds. However, in theory at least, these evangelists gave something much more important: their time. The gift of time for evangelists justified “ordinary” members’ efforts to bankroll their travels. In other words, CMA members of local chapters largely paid for efforts to evangelize. It is important then to examine the leadership of the CMA from 1974-1994. Shreve’s beliefs on how his organization should operate were most transparent by

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; Changing of the Colors Rally is the name given to the annual national CMA rally held at CMA headquarters. It was given this name late in 1979 because it happens during the fall of each year.

reflecting who evangelists were, what they did, and why they did it. They were the most dedicated and they worked alongside the president in each and every action they performed.

The CMA leadership structure is remarkably similar to that of evangelical churches at the time. For example, in a Southern Baptist church there typically is a pastor, deacons, ministers, and laity. Of course, this is a gross over-simplification of church structure, but nonetheless, most SBC churches abided by this form of hierarchy. *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism* by Oran P. Smith noted the organizational structure of the SBC and how it led to difficulties in change when the SBC needed change.<sup>28</sup> The CMA reflected this in similar ways as it changed over time. Herb Shreve played the role of the “pastor.” Following Shreve there were evangelists that played the role of the deacons. Local chapter leaders played the role of the ministers. Shreve never made a full “break” away from evangelical faith; he simply intended to create a non-denominational evangelical parachurch organization. I mean to compare the two not to say that Herb Shreve intentionally wanted to reflect SBC organizational structure, but to show that the autonomous nature of the CMA caused some strife. The same happened in the Southern Baptist Convention. Shreve created the CMA School of Evangelism and other methods to remedy strife or at least to contain it. The SBC sought to purify ranks through different means, but the natures of both problems are strikingly similar.

Until 1980, Herb Shreve did most of the evangelizing for the CMA by himself. His wife Shirley often accompanied him in a sidecar or on the back of the motorcycle.

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<sup>28</sup>Oran P. Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997) 32-28.

They toured the western part of the country staying with various CMA members and attended secular rallies to preach on Sundays. The CMA grew and recruited new leaders to assist in evangelism. Tom Pitman joined the cause in 1980 and thereafter reported his quarterly travels until 1991.<sup>29</sup> Pitman and Shreve traveled extensively between 1980 and 1982. By the end of the two-year period, their health waned. Before 1980 began, both split duties to preach at whichever rally each decided to attend. Pitman, while interviewing for an *Associated Press* report, admitted to logging over 35,000 miles on his motorcycle in 1980.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, other members did the same as Shreve and Pitman, but they did not get compensated for their duties.

In 1982, the CMA added two new evangelists.<sup>31</sup> Herb anticipated the growth of new chapters and rallies in each state and knew that if he created an additional evangelist position, he needed to make sure that their theology and methods of evangelism were sound. That same year, Herb Shreve created the CMA School of Evangelism for any aspiring evangelists. This educational mechanism assured Shreve that if anyone spoke at a motorcycling event, they would have sound doctrine. Just as mechanisms to gain funds for the CMA created an identity for members, so too did the School of Evangelism as it imprinted the beliefs of Herb Shreve on to his future evangelists.

It is important to take a quick detour to fully explicate the significance of the CMA School for Evangelism as it affected CMA leadership. In the inaugural year, trained evangelists learned about the brief history of the CMA, preaching principles,

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<sup>29</sup>Tom Pitman, "Tom Pitman's Ride Report," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 16. April 1980, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Steve Brewer, "Christian Biker Seeks Good Image," *The Day*, January 10, 1981.

<sup>31</sup>Herb Shreve, "A Special Note From Herb Shreve," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 21, May 1982, 1.

shared peer testimonials, and where the largest need was for evangelizing.<sup>32</sup> The CMA did not necessarily act as church, but in many ways, such as the CMA School of Evangelism, the ministry functioned as one. This is one primary example of a way in which this ministry is transformed into a church-like organization.

At the end of 1982, evangelists that attended the CMA School of Evangelism received official titles as regional evangelists. Shreve's health slowly declined and his body could not handle the endless stretches on a motorcycle between rallies. Instead, he chose to allow trained individuals to travel thousands of miles and he would become more strategic in rallies that he participated in.<sup>33</sup>

By 1984 the leaders of the CMA that helped Shreve start the ministry aged at the same rates as their president. As mentioned, 1983-1984 was an extremely transformative year for ways in which the CMA raised money. The same could be said for the evangelist team. Already, the team grew from 1 in 1976 to 6 in 1983. This is because the first generation of leaders (Shreve, Tom Pitman, Greg Heinritz) became older and the CMA needed to learn how to make the transition from the older generation to the new. In May of 1984, Herb Shreve wrote in the section "As I see it" that "From the country I received word of the passing on of some of our members... The empty saddles make us sad because of our loss, but we rejoice because of those who rode in these saddles are alive in the presence of our lord."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Herb Shreve, "Herb's Report," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 24, April 1982, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Herb Shreve, "As I see It," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 30, May 1984, 1.

Immediately after Shreve explained reasons why he lost some of the older members, he announced appointments of new evangelists and the need for more. In August 1984 a new face appeared on the evangelist report page: Herbie Shreve. Shreve wrote “You who have heard Herbie Shreve teach at the Changing of the Colors and at the School of Evangelism will be proud to know that he has begun his training in the CMA...The CMA is really working toward a balanced evangelism. Herbie’s work in the CMA will strengthen and quicken this effort.” Herbie, along with others including Lynn McBride the gospel singer, represented a new generation of leaders in the CMA.<sup>35</sup>

From 1984 to 1991, the CMA steadily grew both in memberships and in salaried positions. There are three of these evangelists who are worth mentioning because they represented the second generation of leaders. These three dictated how the organization operated as it moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These three leaders are Herbie Shreve, Lynn McBride, and Wayne Henderson.

Herbie Shreve was Herb’s rebellious son. Many times Shreve attributed the creation of the CMA to Herbie’s rebellion in his youth.<sup>36</sup> Once he graduated high school, Herbie got married and wanted to be a lawyer, so he went to college. After college he pursued numerous careers, but he ultimately decided that he needed to be in the ministry. This is especially true once his father’s role in the CMA diminished. Today, Herbie does not hold any official position in the ministry, perhaps because his father recently passed, but during the years between 1985- 1991, Herbie essentially replaced his father by taking

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<sup>35</sup>Herbie Shreve, “Ride Report: Herbie Shreve,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 31, August 1984, 3.

<sup>36</sup>“Two Preachers Hit the Road in Taking the Gospel to Motorcyclists,” *Toledo Blade*, January 9, 1981; Randy Barnett, “Bikers Share Christian Fellowship,” *Eugene Register*, June 1986.

over the editor's section of the newsletters in addition to his own evangelical report of his travels between motorcycling rallies.

The next evangelist that represented the second generation of evangelists in the CMA is Wayne Henderson. Wayne lived with his wife Donnie in Texas in 1976. In efforts to expand the reaches of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States, both Wayne and his wife moved to Oregon to help start a church. They happened to be motorcyclists and heard about the CMA through an ad in *Road Rider*. They applied to start a chapter once their local outreach grew. Their CMA chapter received approval in 1981. During the next few years, their chapter, named "The Heaven Bound Riders," worked as an extension of the Church that the couple helped to start.<sup>37</sup> By 1987, Herb Shreve awarded the couple the full northwest region of the country to oversee for the CMA. In 1988, Donnie and Wayne caught the eye of the Southern Baptist Convention for their evangelical work. The Home Missions Board, a subsidiary department of the SBC in charge of domestic missions, praised the couple for leading many to faith and getting them involved in their local SBC church. In a publication called *Baptist Press* the SBC praised various individuals who were members of SBC churches to illustrate that money donated was put to good use. Because the Hendersons did missionary work for the CMA and their church, the SBC praised them.<sup>39</sup>

The third and final example of this new generation of evangelists was Lynn McBride. Lynn began working with the CMA in order to produce music through the pressing of a record and leading worship at the "Changing of the Colors Rally." Lynn

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<sup>37</sup> Randy Barnett, "Bikers Share Christian Fellowship," *Eugene Register*, June 1986.

<sup>39</sup> *Baptist Press*, August 1988, 8.

dedicated himself completely to the CMA and travelled around to rallies with his family in order to support people like Greg Heinritz, Tom Pitman, and Herb Shreve. His loyalty, like the Hendersons, won him a position as a full-time regional evangelist. He even, aside from his quarterly update from the road, received multiple blocs in CMA Newsletters to explain what a CMA chapter should look like and how people should operate within it.

These three evangelists (Herbie, Wayne, and Lynn) are in no way the only evangelists to be hired full time for the CMA after 1983. In 1991 the CMA had a head evangelist for each state, which replaced the regional positions.<sup>40</sup> However, each of the three evangelists is highlighted because each they held significant positions in the CMA during their tenure and each implemented a shift in policy within the ministry. Herbie was the prodigal son who came full circle in the CMA. He, in a sense, returned home where he “belonged” his entire life; he was the quintessential target for the CMA that embodied the organization’s mission. The Hendersons best represented the part of the CMA that was still tied to the SBC and they were essential in gaining support of a major denomination that apparently was opposed by local churches of various denominations. Lynn McBride represented the ultimate member who sacrificed his life and talents for the CMA cause.

From the CMA’s inception in 1975 to 1991 leadership changed over time. 1983-1984 proved to be the most important period in which this leadership experienced the most change. The second generation of leaders of the CMA seemed to be more cosmopolitan in some ways and in other ways the CMA seemed to fulfill its own

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<sup>40</sup>“CMA State Coordinators,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 76, August 1991, 10.

prophecy of apparent success. The CMA sought to reach new people in new ways and because of its leadership, it achieved that goal. However, one piece of this organizational history is still missing and that is a description of the CMA members themselves in the context of the local CMA chapter. It is impossible to cover each and every person who wore the CMA patch on their jackets, but actions led by the leadership, greatly impacted ways in which members interacted with this organization.

Who made up the members of the CMA? Most members resided in the middle class and above.<sup>41</sup> Though nearly all members rode motorcycles, Herb Shreve did not require members to own a motorcycle.<sup>42</sup>

When interviewed, CMA members made it very clear to distinguish themselves from the “1%.”<sup>43</sup> In 1985, a reporter for the *Spokane Chronicle* asked Herb Shreve to describe members in the CMA. He said that many members were “mostly 9-to-5 working types who enjoy riding motorcycles...we are seeing people’s attitudes about motorcyclists change as they realize only 1 percent are the outlaw types.”<sup>44</sup> Members went far to separate themselves from a notorious section of motorcycling culture. So

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<sup>41</sup> Dick Moody, “This Christian Biker Goes by the Book,” *Spokane Chronicle*, July 13, 1985.

<sup>42</sup> Peacemakers of Ohio, “Peacemakers of Ohio Charter and By-laws,” 1985.

<sup>43</sup> 1% meaning the small percentage of motorcyclists that are involved in gangs. For more on the %1 see Randy McBee, *Born to Be Wild: The Rise of the American Motorcyclist* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Dick Moody, “This Christian Biker Goes by the Book,” *Spokane Chronicle*, July 13, 1985; Randy McBee, *Born to Be Wild: The Rise of the American Motorcyclist* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015), 187.



much so, in fact, that Herb Shreve reprimanded members for passing around fliers at rallies, which targeted the 1% for ruining the image of many motorcyclists.<sup>45</sup>

Members of the CMA typically attended church before joining the CMA. This is because Herb Shreve required members to come to the faith before joining. Shreve so desperately wanted to improve the image of the biker that he required each member to be a person of faith. However, Shreve noted that the applicant's word was enough for a CMA chapter leader who could not determine a person's true salvation.<sup>46</sup> Countless letters written from 1980-1985 reflected the joys of members who found other motorcyclists that were also evangelicals. For example, Herb Shreve reflected on this by saying that people who attended motorcycling rallies that he attended during his early years wanted to do something other than "drink and fight."<sup>47</sup> Donnie and Wayne Henderson began as regular members who found great success on the ladder of the CMA and the SBC. Female members of the CMA tended to be married. Most men were also married, however single men were more common than single women.

In 1989, the CMA evangelized to a different demographic. The CMA created particular ministries within its organization that catered to the young and the CMA bought off-road motorcycles to create events focused on that particular style of motorcycling. Victor and Susan Rowell placed an ad in the 1989 newsletter to report that

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<sup>45</sup> Herb Shreve, "As I See It: NOT a Slide Representation of CMA," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 34, August 1985, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Peacemakers of Ohio, "Peacemakers of Ohio Charter and By-laws," 1985.

<sup>47</sup> John S. Workman, "Motorcyclists 'Riding for the Son'," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 20, 1980.

twenty young men and women committed their lives to faith and they needed three CMA chapters to help with recruiting youth.<sup>48</sup>

Why these members of that demographic chose to become members of a parachurch organization instead of committing to current churches of membership is interesting to note and perhaps contributes to understandings of middle class American life. Obviously with changes to American culture during this period, evangelicals felt tension for participating in activities not outlined as acceptable behavior in the church that they attended. Shreve helped to alleviate those tensions. This is not only evident in the success of the organization's beliefs, but also in the structure of a CMA chapter. This is not to say that members in the CMA did not regularly attend church, they certainly did. However, full-time CMA evangelists, with the exception of the Hendersons, found it difficult to maintain full church attendance because many rallies and meetings which happened on the weekend. Perhaps CMA members at the local level felt the same conflict of attending their local church or attending a CMA rally, but Shreve on many occasions encouraged his members to attend church.

CMA chapters were not, at first, in the vision that Herb Shreve had for his organization. To be fair, Herb Shreve most likely would have admitted that at certain junctures, the structure of the CMA was ad hoc. Nonetheless, CMA chapters formed immediately after 1975 when the organization first received its legal status as a non-profit ministry. From 1975 to the present, the local Chapters have been the lifeblood of the CMA. How members formed chapters provides insight into the parameters that members

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<sup>48</sup>Victor and Susan Rowell, "TNT Report," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 55, May 1989, 5.

could move in and out of. In order for a chapter to be official, there needed to be CMA members willing to meet on a regular basis. Next, the members came together, nominate a leader (typically the person most familiar with evangelical religious structure such as a minister of an existing church), and then potential chapter members drafted a charter to be approved by Herb Shreve.<sup>49</sup>

Chapters organized freely and performed whatever duties necessary to local communities. In 1988, the autonomy of local chapters frustrated Herb Shreve because there was not a process in place to homogenize behavior within chapters. Despite his frustrations and members oft flippant behavior, Herb Shreve continuously allowed relative autonomy of practice within the chapters by curtailing how chapters wrote their constitution and conducted activities. For example, chapter leaders, among other things needed to have “Godliness,” “respect,” and have to ability to lead while following and if they did not have those qualities, members could meet to replace that leader.<sup>50</sup>

In 1983, Lynn McBride wrote a section in a newsletter about how the ideal CMA chapter should operate. Though many CMA chapters probably did not operate in the “ideal” capacity nor is there much evidence to measure each chapters’ ability to do so, it is important to know what that ideal was. The ideal depicted intention, which depicted belief. According to McBride, the “balanced” CMA chapter needed to participate in family activities and spiritual activities. On one hand, numerous chapters had picnics and rides, activities that were safe for families. On the other, many chapters participated in

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<sup>49</sup>Herb and Shirley Shreve, “Ride Report,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 47, May 1988, 1; Peacemakers of Ohio, “Peacemakers of Ohio Charter and By-laws,” 1985.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

family activities such as community rides and secular rallies. However, they never helped at CMA booths at those rallies to spread the word. Few had both and if the chapter was to be successful, the chapter must have an equal amount family activities and rally participation.<sup>51</sup>

The CMA institutionalized the belief in the balanced chapter by sending videos to all chapters across America in order to expand the reaches of headquarter activity in Cove, Arkansas. Furthermore, the CMA sold monthly devotional materials to promote spiritual activities within chapters. Videos and devotionals both depicted a lack of faith in CMA members by the leadership team, most especially Herb Shreve, to carry out evangelical duties. By attempting to curtail the previously autonomous CMA chapters, Herb Shreve bound members within a familiar denomination-like organization structure.

Examining ways in which the CMA raised money, how leadership functioned, and how members interacted within the parameters of chapter structure reveals much about evangelicals during the second half of the twentieth century. Many themes that emerge are in concord with what has already been written about evangelicals, middle class American, and motorcycling culture. For instance, evangelicals certainly tended to be white middle to upper class citizens who could afford motorcycles and regularly voted for religious freedoms. The CMA helped bring evangelical cultural ways to prominence within the motorcycling community. By doing this, they helped to alter ways in which motorcyclists came to be viewed by the public. In addition, members of the CMA created a financial structure consistent with other like-minded organizations such as Campus

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<sup>51</sup>Lynn McBride, "A Balanced CMA Chapter," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 26, May 1983, 14.

Crusade for Christ. CMA members purchased their identity along with other “goodies” and gospel records.

But in other ways, perhaps, the organizational history of the CMA can reveal themes that are slightly different. The CMA was explicitly non-denominational and more importantly, the CMA was not funded by one single prominent businessmen or entity. The ministry’s indoctrination of its leaders was for homogenization purposes and even still, the indoctrinations were brief and focused more on organizational education rather than theological education. Furthermore, changes that did occur concerning finances, leadership, and memberships are largely efforts to solve logistical issues.

In 1991, Herb Shreve said that the CMA’s success could be attributed to the fact that his ministry was doing something that churches were not.<sup>52</sup> What Herb Shreve meant was that his organization, in theory, allowed motorcyclists and their families to come to faith without having to be contained within church walls on Sunday. This statement carried additional cultural weight due to the vortex of denominational strife that marked most of the twentieth century. Shreve created this environment of non-denominationalism by never taking offerings, carefully selecting regional evangelists, and allowing a relative amount of autonomy in local CMA chapters. The next chapter will explore the implications of political actions and expectations of gender norms on CMA members.

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<sup>52</sup>Herb Shreve, “Squad Dismissed,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 76, August 1991, 1-2.

## Chapter 3

### **Fighting Back: Gender and Politics as an expression of Freedom**

Ronald Reagan marked May 5, 1988 as a National Day of Prayer. A week earlier, hundreds of thousands of evangelicals stood in the cold rain on April 29, 1988 to listen to a variety of religious leaders across the world. They prayed for the nation to turn to God in this time of religious turmoil. Later on in the day, Washington for Jesus put on a parade through the big boulevards of the Nation's capital. Hundreds of motorcyclists, mostly male, led the parade in order to show that the Christian Motorcyclists Association supported the cause. The symbols on the backs of the motorcyclists and painting on the gas tanks of the motorcycles let people know that not all motorcyclists were violent, but instead the most "free" individuals in America were Christ-followers.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, Washington for Jesus 1988 was a microcosm of how the Christian Motorcyclists Association defined the word freedom. Most participants in the parade that day were male motorcyclists and they were politically active. The changes in the CMA organizational structure from the years between 1974-1993 have already been discussed, but deeper analysis is required of how the organization functioned beyond the action of outright evangelism. This chapter will explore the political engagement of the CMA, revealing how this parachurch organization reinforced gender expectations and promoted an evangelical re-interpretation American and Christian "freedom."

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<sup>1</sup>Lynn McBride, "Washington for Jesus," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 46, May 1988, 1.

Conservative politics rose, reached its peak, and fell in the period from 1974-1994. The period began with the end of Gerald Ford's presidency and concluded with the election of Bill Clinton. Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush consumed the majority of time during this period. At first glance of the electoral results from 1975-1992, Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush's comfortable victories point to a unified nation devoid of political fracturing. However, the increased political action of the CMA tells a different story: the political hopes and disappointments of evangelicalism in the political figures of America. Underneath the surface of political victory, even during the conservative movement's brightest moments, constituents were not always satisfied.

Constituents were not satisfied because politics was a means to an end, not the end itself. Vast changes in the way in which American culture defined masculinity and femininity challenged Judeo-Christian views from 1974-1994. Public discourse on subjects such as AIDS, contraceptives, abortion, and homosexuality alienated many evangelicals because conclusions of those subjects unfurled in courtrooms and media outlets across the country. Evangelicals turned to politics in order to conserve their beliefs in efforts to fight those secular conclusions. As such, ascension of conservative political figures only told half the story.

Disappointed conservatives were not the only Americans who, at times, held Ronald Reagan and the conservative ascension in contempt. Too often forgot is the fact that the 1980's were not simply the culmination of a united America; the decade was contested. Though the conservative movement, embodied by Ronald Reagan, shared its precious moments of victory, a deeper look reveals that in politics and society,

antithetical movements also brewed which reached its pinnacle during Bill Clinton's presidency. Thus in this whirlwind of politics, masculinity, contested spheres of influence, and whispers of treason, there was a word used by many to denote what they believed the nation's identity to be. That precious, loaded word was freedom.

People and publications from the CMA used the word "freedom" frequently from 1974-1994. The term, in the Context of the Cold War and the bicentennial of the American Revolution in 1976, was the topic of discussion in many, especially evangelical, circles at the time. In the CMA, freedom was not limited to conversation. Riding a motorcycle proved to be a potent act of freedom. Conversations about freedom embodied through the motorcycle captured the thoughts and publications within CMA. The CMA generally used freedom in six different ways: political freedom, gender freedom, religious freedoms, freedom from work, freedom from the city, and the individual freedom of the technology of the motorcycle. All six are linked, but they all influenced explicit political actions and perpetuation of evangelical gender norms.

When CMA members said, wrote, or sang about freedom, they often meant political freedoms. In an article titled "Land of Opportunity, Will it Last?" Herb Shreve pushed his readers to think about the political freedoms of opportunity given to his members. He implored them to be good stewards of this privilege otherwise opportunity, the catch all conservative buzzword, may dwindle. How did one protect that opportunity? According to Shreve, they voted for who gave motorcyclists the largest amount of opportunity.<sup>2</sup> The *Palm Beach Post* interviewed Greg Heinritz, one of Herb Shreve's top evangelists, on August 27, 1983. In this interview, Heinritz asserted that motorcycling

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<sup>2</sup>Herb Shreve, "Go Vote," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 16 October 1980, 4.



provided a unique experience of escape that could not be accomplished by car or bicycle. In addition, the motorcycle was a way to escape from a political system that continually grew, which suffocated individual rights through excessive taxation and restrictive laws.<sup>3</sup>

A perfect example of the types of taxes that infringe upon political freedom and opportunity for Herb Shreve and the CMA is evident in the CMA Newsletter of February 1987. Apparently, a member from a Minnesota CMA chapter mailed in a letter asking Shreve to publicize the criminal nature of a new tax law presented to the Minnesota state government wherein insurance rates increased one dollar per CC on a motorcycle. Shreve wrote,

“Many Christians criticize Christian leaders who take political stands. They believe we should take whatever Satan hands us and we should be content with it...As you check further into this, please keep us informed. I hope this turns out to be a false alarm, but if not, Christian, wake up! I don't like getting on a soapbox, but I'd rather get on a soapbox than let my motorcycling people be ripped off by a bunch of callous politicians.”<sup>4</sup>

This passage reveals not only the concerns of Shreve, but also the intersection of faith and politics. Shreve announced that many Christians accept their fate, but it is an evangelical duty to stand up to those who he thought took advantage of them.

A less common way Shreve and his team of evangelists spoke about freedom was in terms of gender. Though the CMA had restrictive ideas about the roles played by men and women, motorcycling in the CMA continued to provide an attractive, fulfilling community activity. A review of various newsletters and news reports about the

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<sup>3</sup>“Preacher Reaches Motorcyclists,” *The Palm Beach Post*, August 27, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>“Attention!!!! CMA Newsletter Advertising,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 40, January 1987, 3.

organization reveal much about gendered freedoms that typically presented itself in deeper, subtle ways. In June of 1980 *The Loveland Daily Reporter Herald* wrote a story on a woman named Dallas Herter who was a member of the CMA. When asked about why she rode a motorcycle, she replied, “I was attracted to the freedom of the motorcycle.” Further on in the interview, Miss Herter explained that normal motorcycling clubs often left her behind and that riding with other motorcycling groups was “tough for a woman.” Those issues, whatever they were, did not persist in the CMA as Herter was made to feel welcome even as a single female motorcyclist.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the CMA did not outwardly lament the diminished state of manliness or the deterioration of the female purpose. Rather behind the curtains of enjoyment and the open road, the CMA revealed what was and was not acceptable evangelical behavior.

CMA members also used the term freedom when speaking about religion. Herb Shreve spoke about why the CMA was so successful and he concluded that it was partially due to the fact that the CMA had the freedom to assemble as a body of believers. They were not simply a motorcycling club. A belief in a higher power, which prompted them to act, bound members as brothers and sisters. In the same article, Shreve spoke about how people he spoke to about Jesus (motorcyclists) complained about intense denominationalism and the CMA did not have any of the typical infighting that happened in churches.<sup>6</sup> Members clearly responded to Herb Shreve’s brand of organizational freedom.

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<sup>5</sup> Becky Orr, “Cyclists ‘Ride for the Son’,” *Loveland Daily Reporter Herald*, June 30 1980.

<sup>6</sup>Patty Benoit, “Two-Wheeling Minister Rides The Asphalt, Seeking the Lost,” *TempleDaily Telegram*, August 19, 1979.

Discourse about denominationalism and freedom during the early eighties gives insight to the movement through evangelicals who were willing to shed the armor of their denomination so that they could achieve greater goals against a common enemy. Indeed, Steven P. Miller discovered the same phenomena in the popularity of Billy Graham who seemed to transcend denominationalism and theological intricacies by creating an evangelical universalism.<sup>9</sup> Shreve's assertion to operate as a non-denominational organization could stem from his break from the SBC, but it also places the CMA within the larger movement to combat opposing forces.

The final three ways in which the term freedom was used centered on the motorcycle. What it could accomplish and how it was accomplished it made the technology of the motorcycle extremely attractive to those who needed an escape and to those who needed to do it alone. Perhaps this is why a great number of CMA literature and public topics of discussion are dedicated to the spirituality of the motorcycle.<sup>10</sup> In November of 1980, the *Arkansas Gazette* published a story on the gathering of thousands of CMA members in Cove, Arkansas for the annual Changing of the Colors rally. A reporter asked Shreve about why so many members attended the rally and he told the reporter that many of the members considered themselves as slaves throughout the week and motorcycling paired with fellowship provided necessary freedom from the punch-clock.<sup>11</sup> Escaping work was still on the minds of members five years later in 1985 when a reporter from the *Spokane Chronicle* asked members the same question and received a

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<sup>9</sup> Steven P. Miller, "Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South," (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> See Robert M. Pirsig, "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," (New York: William Morrow Publishers, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> John S. Workman, "Motorcyclists 'Riding for the Son'," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 20, 1980.

similar answer.<sup>12</sup> *The Times Sunday Magazine* of Shreveport-Bossier City reported that in May of 1982 many CMA members enjoyed the experience on a motorcycle because it took one away from the city which forced the rider to enjoy “God’s creation.”<sup>13</sup> In the same article reported in *The Palm Beach Post* in 1983, the member interviewed galvanized the previous statement by saying that the motorcycle embodied freedom as the rider could take it virtually anywhere at any time at will.<sup>14</sup>

Freedom was on the minds of many Americans, not only CMA members, from 1974-1994. However, the ways in which CMA members used this term reveals that the parachurch organization’s culture centered around a type of cultural escapism. CMA members used the motorcycle as a way to escape. From their perspective, they felt alienated. Evangelicals felt the same during this period in the land that they believed they once ruled effortlessly. Alienation of evangelicalism from the American public defined culture within the CMA. Even though motorcycling was an escape from the city and the yoke of labor, the CMA used the symbol of the motorcycling and Christianity to achieve political goals and to reinforce evangelical gender norms.

As participation in the Washington for Jesus Rally of 1988 suggests, the CMA was politically engaged in plain sight of the public eye. Members fused an evangelical brand of freedom with the cares and concerns of motorcyclists. The product of conception was an embrace of masculine and evangelical freedom consumed through riding the open road and voting at the ballot box.

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<sup>12</sup>Dick Moody, “This Christian Biker Goes by the Book,” *Spokane Chronicle*, July 13, 1985.

<sup>13</sup>Steve Smith, “The Preacher Wore Black (Leather),” *The Times Sunday Magazine*, May 2, 1982.

<sup>14</sup>“Preacher Reaches Motorcyclists,” *The Palm Beach Post*, August 27, 1983.

Historians such as Darren Dochuk, John G. Turner, R. Laurence Moore, and Steven P. Miller, among others, described the increasing political engagement of evangelicals during the twentieth century. Thus far, the political aims of motorcyclists have not been thoroughly explicit in this study. Thankfully, *Born to be Wild: The Rise of the American Motorcyclist* by Randy McBee explored the changes in political affiliations of motorcyclists in America. The rise in the motorcyclist's political engagement was, in effect, a reaction to the growth of the federal government thought to be denying apparent freedoms. McBee pointed to the increase in helmet laws as one specific piece of legislation during the early seventies that pulled motorcyclists in political engagement.

Because it seemed as if the federal government unfairly used motorcyclists for political gain, motorcyclists “rose” and became politically active. Some motorcyclists became concerned with showing the true nature of motorcyclists in order to prove to the government that there was no reason to single them out as people who created havoc. It was the primary aim of organizations such as the American Motorcyclists Association and *Road Rider Magazine* to remedy the errant stereotype. Ultimately, motorcyclists aligned with the Republican Party's resurgence that spoke about a small federal government and “freedoms.”<sup>15</sup> Politics for motorcyclists, like evangelicals, saw political engagement as a means to an end. It was an arm, perhaps, of the enemy, but not the heart. The heart of the enemy was the negative image associated with motorcyclists.

The relationship motorcyclists had with the political Right and the relationship that evangelicals had with the political Right are both strikingly similar. Both allied with the Right because in some way, they felt as if they were being challenged by either the

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<sup>15</sup> Randy McBee, “Born to be Wild: The Rise of the American Motorcyclist,” (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 153-192.

federal government or, in the words of evangelicals, secularizing society. The nature of political engagement in the CMA focused on individual action and responsibility, which in turn impacted their greater community of faith.

CMA political engagement was outspoken, brawny, and aggressive. Perhaps the most bizarre account of the political engagement of Herb Shreve occurred a year before Shreve created the CMA. While Herb pastored the church of First Baptist of Cove something happened in the neighboring city of Mena, Arkansas. In 1974 a religious group believed the end of the world was close so they grabbed their children and gathered in a house to await the coming of Christ. For a month parents held their kids hostage. Eventually, schools that the children attended took notice and alerted the authorities. In September the local judge sent the County Sheriff to take the kids out of the home and put them in the hands of children services. Just as the Sheriff arrived, Shreve approached the scene on his motorcycle.

Reporters overheard the conversation between the Sheriff and the Pastor and apparently, Shreve said, “The State law is in conflict with the U.S. Constitution and should not be enforced...The State should send teachers to the home to assure the children received an education.”<sup>16</sup> This incident in Mena exemplified the militant efforts of Shreve who blended politics and faith. He believed it to be a responsibility for Americans to exercise what they believed to be right in the sight of God. This took precedence over local laws. Furthermore, he insisted that if the State wanted every child to be educated, then they should have to do the work.

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<sup>16</sup> “Motorcycle Preacher Arrives at Grannis instead of Jesus,” *Mena Star*, September 1974.

Once news in the CMA broke about the passing of the long-time leader, members wrote letters to share past experiences with Shreve when he lived. One particular letter, written by Archie Archuleta, member number 9,139, described how he enjoyed Shreve's sense of humor. At the Minnesota CMA state rally, Herb Shreve said while he was on stage that he thought it was fitting that the state of Arkansas renamed highway 71 as the Bill Clinton Highway. It was fitting, according to Shreve because the highway road was "slick, crooked, and has a yellow stripe down the middle."<sup>17</sup> Shreve abhorred Bill Clinton. In Gene Harlan Powell's own recollection in the biography about Shreve, the fiery preacher went on for "two hours" about how bad the Governor at the time was and it "wore all of us out."<sup>18</sup>

Herb Shreve as an individual was not the only member of the CMA to have concerns about the expansion of the federal government. Many articles in CMA Newsletters reflect a general fear and concern for the nation and its political leaders. The CMA believed that in order to perpetuate America's greatness, they must pray, actively participate in elections, and protect their evangelical way of life. In July of 1980 Herb Shreve wrote an editorial piece in the CMA newsletter stating, "if American does not give God a reason to bless her, America will not end the 80's as a free nation." Shreve then advised members to consider four ways to keep America blessed: humble ourselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Archie Archuleta, Letter to Shreve Family, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Gene Harlan Powell, "Fisher of Men: The Motorcycle Ministry of Herb Shreve," (Ketch Publishing, 2012) 197.

<sup>19</sup> Herb Shreve, "Motorcyclists and America," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 15 July 1980, 2.

In the next issue, Shreve continued encouraging members to keep America blessed. In this issue Shreve wrote to his members that what makes the CMA and America so wonderful was the nature of its political process; he dubbed this process free enterprise. An important aspect of free enterprise, according to the CMA president, was in the action of voting. Not only should his members vote, but they also should “vote Christian” in the vital election between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.<sup>20</sup> Concern for the federal government and the nation it represented continued throughout the end of the twentieth century. In February of 1991, Michael S. Shelton, an evangelical journalist, wrote about his considerations of the Gulf War in a CMA Newsletter. Shelton and two other evangelists wrote that CMA members should support the troops overseas no matter what the feelings were about whichever politician.<sup>21</sup> General concern that translated into political action in the CMA can be seen as late as 1994 when the National Day of Prayer Task Force placed an ad in a CMA newsletter asking members to join them for a few moments on May 5 to pray for the ailing nation.<sup>22</sup>

CMA political action was deeper than simple concerns and admonitions from CMA leadership. There was action. Political action in the CMA was not only about the protection of religious freedoms. The most significant political relationship the CMA held outside of evangelical ties was with the American Motorcyclists Association. In his history of American motorcycling, Randy McBee outlined the political concerns of motorcyclists as they became acquainted with the political Right. It should come as no

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<sup>20</sup>Herb Shreve, “Go Vote,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue #16 October 1980, 4.

<sup>21</sup>Michael S. Shelton, “Why Does God Allow War,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 71 February 1991, 10.

<sup>22</sup>“Give American a Breath of Fresh Prayer,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 104 April 1994, 10.



surprise then that motorcyclists in the CMA had similar concerns. According to McBee, society errantly stereotyped motorcyclists. The image paired with the filthiness and noise of the motorcycle contributed to the alienation on motorcyclists in America.

The CMA's objective was not only to save the souls of motorcyclists, but it was also to clean up the image of the biker. In other words, the CMA was beneficial to the motorcycling community because it let society know that most of them were not troublesome human beings. The CMA-AMA relationship, therefore, was immensely political. To motorcyclists, perhaps if the federal government and non-motorcyclists knew that they were not out to cause trouble like in most movies about motorcyclists during the twentieth century, then maybe they would escape such harsh legislation. When Herb Shreve is quoted speaking about excessive taxation, the AMA, or highway safety laws, he is linking that statement with what the CMA represented (positive motorcycling).

In 1982 the American Motorcyclists Association spoke about the CMA in their newsletter. The AMA commended the CMA for removing the outlaw image of motorcyclists. In the same article, the AMA writer spoke about how Herb Shreve assisted the AMA in preventing motorcyclists from being "legislated off the highways."<sup>24</sup> *The Times Sunday Magazine* of Shreveport and Bossier City wrote a three page feature on Herb Shreve and the CMA. In the interview Shreve linked improving motorcyclists image with political activity by highlighting the negative image associated with motorcyclists.<sup>25</sup> How did Shreve prevent motorcyclists from being legislated off the highways? By encouraging his members to be active at the polls. Comments such as

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<sup>24</sup> AMA Newsletter, Issue 66, 1982.

<sup>25</sup>Smith, Steve. "The Preacher Wore Black (Leather)," *The Times Sunday Magazine*, May 2, 1982.

these solidified the CMA's union with the larger motorcycling culture because the parachurch organization improved their image and supported legislation affecting secular motorcyclists.

In the same article published in *The Palm Beach Post* in 1983 that spoke about how the motorcycle represented freedom, Shreve spoke about what the motorcycle was freedom from. One of those things was the federal government in the form of excessive taxation. Shreve said that his organization provided an alternative to "normal life, it provided an escape."<sup>26</sup> CMA members, through the political relationships created by Herb Shreve, fully integrated themselves into motorcycling culture by joining in support against those laws.

The CMA primarily advocated for religious freedoms outside of the various increases in taxation and recent helmet safety laws. Returning back to the first example in this chapter, support for religious freedoms could not be better exemplified in the event of Washington for Jesus in 1988. This event was intended to repeat similar activities done at the first Washington for Jesus Rally in 1980. The event, led by John Gimenez, was meant to be interdenominational. During the 12-hour vigil many topics were prayed over such as political leaders, the upcoming election, pornography, abortion, and recent downfalls of well-know Christian leaders.

In August of 1987, the Herb Shreve spoke to his members about the invitation to lead the parade at the event. The CMA leader justified the participation in the event by outlining the moral state of America. He followed by asking for his members to attend if

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<sup>26</sup>"Preacher Reaches Motorcyclists," *The Palm Beach Post*, August 27, 1983.

at all possible.<sup>27</sup> The CMA placed a full-page ad in the April edition of the CMA Newsletter. The CMA asked members to attend because America needed outspoken Christians who cared about the nation.<sup>28</sup> In May, the CMA reflected on their experience at Washington for Jesus '88 calling it a "success." Lynn McBride wrote,

It was a gathering of the dedicated, curious, promoters, the media and tourists of all types... Reading the Old Testament we find the story of how Joshua brought the wall of Jericho excellent police leadership we drove through an impossible town at rush hour lifting up Jesus... taking 300 motorcycles through town... Looking at the event in hindsight, CMA was an important part of Washington for Jesus 88. We have heard many stories of God working and people witnessing both at the event and on the road.<sup>29</sup>

Washington for Jesus 88 was not a simple action for the CMA. This passage provided by McBride tells of the successes and purpose of the CMA's participation in the event. It shows the points of intersection of faith, politics, and freedom. The CMA, while caring deeply about the moral state of the nation, looked to political engagement to achieve their means. It is no coincidence that the CMA used the motorcycle to make a statement to the nation's capital: many motorcyclists were Christian, they cared deeply about their nation, and they cared deeply about unreached Americans.

CMA members attended rallies, they voted, they attended church, they rode millions of miles, and they went on mission trips. However, beneath the surface of action there were indicators as to the ways in which members performed these activities. The

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<sup>27</sup>Herb Shreve, "Ride Report," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 42 August 1987, 1.

<sup>28</sup>"Washington for Jesus 88," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 45, April 1988, 4.

<sup>29</sup>Lynn McBride, "Washington for Jesus," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 46, May 1988, 1.

history of the CMA told through newsletters, articles, sermon notes, journals, letters, testimonials, and pictures give tantalizing clues to the limits of method in those activities. One limit, decided by what was acceptable and what was not an acceptable way to behave, was in the realm of gender. The CMA gladly admitted members of both sexes, but they had clear ideas about the roles of both.

What provides clues about the proper ways in which men and women should act, and in turn how the nuclear family should properly function, were the ways in which the CMA spoke about particular men and women, the positions they held, and how that changed over the course of 1974-1994. Gendered statements, staff positions, and smaller organizations within the CMA, can all be better understood when looked at, again, through the lens of the CMA definition of freedom because cultural challenges on subjects such as gender was the end, it was the battleground.

When speaking about masculinity and femininity during this vast period of change, it is easy to think of women breaking the chains of male domination. However, freedom meant something completely different in the CMA. Freedom did not mean to break away from “traditional gender roles.” For the CMA freedom was of a defensive sort. It represented a subconscious, or mentality, that struggled to cope with changing culture in America and the CMA went at great lengths to protect that defensive freedom.

Randy McBee wrote about how the image of the motorcyclist came to embody masculinity in America. The motorcyclist replaced the manly image of the cowboy during the highest point of the American obsession with “western” nostalgia.<sup>30</sup> Certainly, there were a few differences between evangelical masculinity and motorcycling

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<sup>30</sup>*Born to be Wild*, 194-197.

masculinity, but at the same time, they were not all that different. Motorcycling was loud, physically taxing, independent, and specialized.

In addition, Ted Ownby specifically outlined how southern masculinity expressed itself in certain ways through certain types of leisure outside from the home. For example, during the post-bellum period, men committed public sins only to be washed with grace on Sunday through the ritual of public church confessions. During the early twentieth century, Ownby noted that evangelicals turned to legislation in order to curtail the sinful effects of mass culture. Efforts to “subdue satan” were efforts to preserve the home.<sup>31</sup> In the same way, men in the CMA found release from this pressure away from the home by performing masculine acts deemed inappropriate for mothers and children. Since men were able to experience leisure in the form of motorcycling while making it an act of familial bonding, the CMA became all the more attractive to middle class Americans.

Though the CMA existed many decades after the advent of mass culture in the South, similar phenomena occurred. Evangelicals continued to fight for the sanctity of the family, which included specific roles for each gender. This is especially true for men. The CMA provided a way to reconcile masculine leadership, leisure, and the sanctity of the family by catering towards the family motorcyclist. In other words, men were able to perform masculine actions, otherwise performed away from the home, and their familial obligations by riding a motorcycle with their family in the midst of other like-minded families.

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<sup>31</sup>Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990) 209-212.

The CMA protected evangelical gender norms that are extremely consistent with organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ. C.C.C. sought to perpetuate evangelical masculinity primary through its subsidiary ministry called FamilyLife. The subsidiary ministry taught men how to lead, provide, and guide their families to Christ as a nuclear unit. Men reflected industriousness, ingenuity, a hard working ethic, leadership, and they held the responsibility for personal change. All of these qualities are illustrated through the positions men held in the CMA. Various testimonials of how men came to faith, expectations of actions through admonitions of CMA leadership, and their riding position on the motorcycle when with their family allowed men to reconcile leisure and the duties of a family leader.

Surprisingly, the CMA created ways to include young men in the ministry. It is surprising because motorcycling requires a person to be of certain age and strength to ride a motorcycle. However, this is key in understanding the masculine ideal of the CMA. There were many instances where the CMA spoke about young men. In addition, there were camps and ministries within the CMA dedicated to raising young boys up in the evangelical tradition. There were not any ministries created for young women. Motorcycling, at this point in American society was primarily a masculine activity. Women participated, but in the CMA it almost always came after the husband approached the technology.

Herb Shreve, on numerous occasions, said he believed that the parachurch organization was created, at first, so that he could connect better with his son. *The Spokane Chronicle* reported in 1985 that when prompted to explain how the CMA began,

Shreve replied, “Well, I wanted a way to connect with my son.”<sup>32</sup> In March of 1980, CMA Newsletter issue fourteen reported on the first CMA chapter in Phoenix that spent time with inner city boys in order to reach them.<sup>33</sup> *The Milwaukee Journal* reported in 1989 that they witnessed many “sons and fathers riding motorcycles together.”<sup>34</sup> Roy Conatser, in reflection of Herb Shreve and the CMA, wrote a letter to CMA headquarters in Cove, Arkansas to say that he was proud of the parachurch organization because he witnessed so many young men come up through the CMA.<sup>35</sup> Even other evangelical organizations were allowed to place ads in CMA Newsletters in order to attract young men to similar male-dominated activities. In May of 1985 “Hams for Christ,” another male dominated ministry that used a technology for faith, placed an ad asking if other men, young and old, would like to join their ministry.<sup>36</sup>

The emphasis by the CMA on young men and the absence of like comments and outreach for young women simply proves that the CMA and motorcycling in general, was a male dominated space. A deeper look into what those men actually did, what personality types were commended, and which ones were criticized reveals what type of man was appropriate within the male dominated space. First, language used by particular newspapers is full of male related activities that resonated with men rather than women.

There certainly are articles written by women speaking about female topics, but by and

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<sup>32</sup>Dick Moody, “This Christian Biker Goes by the Book,” *Spokane Chronicle*, July 13, 1985.

<sup>33</sup>Bill Ballard, “C.M.A. Chapter at Work,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 14, March 1980, 2.

<sup>34</sup>“The Word on Wheels: Ministers Spread Gospel to Motorcycling Flock,” *MilwaukeeJournal*, December 27, 1989.

<sup>35</sup> Roy Conatser, letter to Shreve family, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Dave Friar, “Letters from Members,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 34, May 1985, 3; Ham radio culture was a masculine space. No study exists on the little known ministry of “Ham’s for Christ,” but it was created in order to reach the vast network that is the Ham radio technical culture. For more on the masculinity of the Ham radio culture see: Kristen Haring, *Ham Radio’s Technical Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007).

large they are the exception. One example stands out among the rest. In 1985, John M. Drecher, a Mennonite Preacher, wrote a guest article titled “A Plea for Fishing: Is a Person a Fisherman if Year After Year He Never Catches a Fish?” In this article, Drecher wrote about what the title assumes: if Christians are never making new Christians, then can they be called Christian? The theological implications of the article are surely interesting, but it is important to highlight the male-like language associated with fishing techniques in order to reach other men who are members of the CMA. Drecher purposed that members should stop being exclusive and to reach out to other motorcyclists more often.<sup>37</sup>

In one of the most bizarre articles contained within the CMA newsletters, Herb Shreve wrote to his members to explain why it is not a sin for a CMA male to make his motorcycle “nice.” Shreve justified that CMA evangelists spend a lot of time on their motorcycle and since they spend a lot of time, there should be no reason that they should not make it to their liking. More importantly, as it related to what is expected of a male CMA member, Shreve explained that males are funny in this way, which men simply cared about these sorts of things and that is how their Maker made them.<sup>38</sup>

The CMA commended certain men in the CMA which illustrates what type of men they believed to be the most “Godly.” There are numerous articles within the CMA newsletter explaining a certain number of things that particular male biblical figures did and males should do the same. Not only did articles point to specific biblical figures acting in certain ways, the language used is often inherently masculine. In May of 1993

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<sup>37</sup>John M. Drecher, “A Plea for Fishing,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 36, November 1985, 2.

<sup>38</sup>Herb Shreve, “Preachers and Pretty Cycles,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 30, January 1985, 8.



Wayne Henderson wrote about what was so good about the Good Samaritan. There were four qualities, according to Mr. Henderson, that made him so good: he saw a need and responded to it, he invested his resources to help another, he used the resources of others, and he saw the task through to the end.<sup>39</sup> For Wayne Henderson, men should also follow this example. They should be proactive, resourceful, and be willing to finish a job.

In one of the lengthiest editions of the CMA Newsletter, the CMA staff wrote a few sentences about each staff member in order to highlight their strengths so that other members could know their leaders better. This section included both male and female staff, but the strengths highlighted are markedly different between the sexes. For example, Herb Shreve's description said, "A compassionate man who has the 'bulldog-faith' of Jacob and intends to hold on till God blesses him." Tom Pitman's description reads, "A seasoned veteran in God's army who still battles Satan in the trenches every day. He continues to grow spiritually and to maintain a sense of humor." Another example is Roy Johnson whose description is, "a man with stability, strength, steadiness and the glue that holds things together."<sup>40</sup>

Women in the CMA reflected kindness, humility, submission to spiritual leaders, energy, an uncompromising spirit, and faithfulness. Women never held serious positions of authority in the CMA during the years in study despite being featured or spoken about just as much as men. Gradually, the CMA accommodated slightly different styles of femininity, but the ideal never seemed to completely perish. It was not uncommon for females to ride and own a motorcycle and some single females were members of the

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<sup>39</sup>Wayne Henderson, "What's So Good About the Samaritan," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 93, May 1993, 1-2.

<sup>40</sup>"Seasons of Refreshing," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 33, February 1985, 6.

CMA. However, if a woman to have a significant impact on the CMA, she would have to do so from a supportive position.

It is appropriate to first speak about the ideal and then speak about derivatives of that ideal. The ideal woman in the CMA was the “first woman:” Herb Shreve’s wife Shirley Shreve. Shirley’s first involvement with the CMA began before the parachurch was official. Apparently, she gave Herb a deadline to provide for the family. The money came through and she committed to Herb and his ministry. She first exemplified submission to her husband. The CMA praised her in numerous publications for her willingness to support her husband and her sacrifices she made in her lifetime for the parachurch organization.

Herb Shreve wrote a booklet titled “The First Lady Goes to Sturgis.” In this booklet, Shirley went to the largest motorcycling event of the year with her husband and son while riding in a sidecar. This was the first time that the CMA attended Stugis as a group, albeit a small group. Tom Pitman and his wife Marilyn attended, but the booklet never revealed other leaders in the CMA because it is not the purpose; the purpose was the greatness of Shirley’s sacrificial character.

In the booklet, Shirley was put off by all of the usual frivolities that happened at events like Sturgis. After the first night without sleep and threats to the family’s safety, Shirley wanted to leave. However, Marilyn, Tom Pitman’s wife, convinced Shirley to stay; she said that they were there for a reason. Shirley stayed and they made friends with many motorcyclists which, of course, was important because the Shreve family was worried that motorcycling culture would not accept them. Shreve intended to show

obedience by Shirley. God awarded her obedience, according to Shreve, by many motorcyclists coming to faith on the last day of the rally.<sup>41</sup>

In October of 1981, an unknown author wrote an article in the CMA Newsletter titled “This Lady I know.” In the article the anonymous author highlighted the humble character of Shirley. The author explained how Shirley, through surgeries, sickness, failure, and broken bones, stood by the side of her husband and never wavered.<sup>42</sup>

A different side of Shirley is shown through the CMA Newsletter of November 1987. Shirley told the story of when she first worked up the courage to ride a motorcycle. It was not that she overcame the fear of the loud machine. It was not that she felt left out when her son and her husband left without her. It was another woman, a friend of Shirley’s, who would ride of the back of Herb’s motorcycle. Shirley wrote,

Ladies, ride the motorcycle with your husband. If you wont there is somebody out there who will. Men, If you want your wife to ride with you make her comfortable. Be sure she has a face shield, a comfortable seat, back rest, warm clothes, and a working intercom. If she is going to take the trip with you, she wants to be able to share it with you.<sup>43</sup>

Shirley, as a mother would, advised women in the CMA to have the courage to ride with their husbands, not drive with their husbands. She also advised husbands to make a place for wives on the motorcycle. This story, or admonition rather, from the “first lady of the CMA” embodied the ideal spheres of operation for a man and a woman in the CMA.

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<sup>41</sup> Herb Shreve, “The First Lady Goes to Sturgis.” *Christian Motorcyclists Association*.

<sup>42</sup> “This Lady I know,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 20, October 1981, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Shirley Shreve, “It Happened Along the Way,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 43, November 1987, 2.

Here, on the motorcycle especially, men must find a way to reconcile the independent machine with their duties as a husband. Women, at the same time, must find the courage to be subservient to their husbands and take the ride as long as they are provided for. In the CMA, Shirley was known by members to be the loving, shepherding mother they all thought to be essential to the nuclear family. In the newsletter that introduced staff members in preparation for the staff retreat, Shreve introduced Shirley as a “trophy of God’s grace whose perseverance has made her a blessing.”<sup>44</sup>

Shirley Shreve passed in 1994. The CMA Newsletter, now called “Heartbeat,” dedicated the edition in remembrance of the first lady. Qualities that Shirley was remembered for were “hard work, thriftiness, a pioneering spirit, and her down-home hospitality.” Though representations of Shirley never changed, views on how women should act and operate not only in the CMA, but also in American culture changed since 1974, albeit at much different rates.

From 1974-1994, female authorship of articles increased. In addition, language about the place of women in the world and in the CMA relaxed from the late eighties until the end of the period of study. This coincided with great strides made by females in America. One of many examples that contextualized the increase in authorship in the CMA newsletters happened when the FDA approved oral contraceptive for female consumption.

Shirley was not the only woman in the CMA. In fact, the CMA not only gained new men every year, but they also gained their wives and daughters. It is important to explore how the CMA handled and interacted with new female members in order to

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<sup>44</sup>Jerry Settle, “Staff Retreat,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 33, February 1985, 13.

ascertain how women performed within CMA public spaces. The CMA expected young female members to get married. Though single women were part of the CMA, they were certainly the exception, not the ideal. In July 1980 Linda Birch, then twenty years old was “shopping” according to her mother. At her first CMA Changing of the Colors Rally, her mother introduced her to twenty-two year old Matthew Forbes. They eventually became married and the CMA praised it by placing the article in the newsletter.<sup>45</sup> The role changed once married in the CMA. Shirley’s lesson on women riding with husbands provides a good example of the hierarchy of the physical space on a motorcycle. *The Temple Daily Telegram* witnessed in August of 1979 wives that “two-up” with their husband.<sup>46</sup>

For instance, in the May issue of the CMA Newsletter of 1991, husbands in the CMA wrote descriptions of their wives. The feature on Diane Shreve, Herbie’s wife, explained how she rode over 35,000 miles in a sidecar for her husbands’ ministry. In addition, each description praised their wives for the secondary, supportive positions each one of them took in order for their husbands to work for the CMA. Women in the CMA in this feature consistently reflected wives as a supportive source of strength for their husbands. The CMA praised each woman for the sacrifices they have made in order to make the CMA possible.<sup>47</sup>

It is also important to return to the CMA Newsletter of February 1985. In stark contrast to the way in which the men are described, the female staff members are spoken

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<sup>45</sup>“Twenty and Shopping,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 15, July 1980, 7.

<sup>46</sup>Patty Benoit, “Two-Wheeling Minister Rides The Asphalt, Seeking the Lost,” *TempleDaily Telegram*. August 19, 1979.

<sup>47</sup>“...A Woman that Feareth the Lord, She Shall be Praised,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 73, May 1991, 4-5.

about much like they were in 1991. Each woman, aside from Shirley Shreve, is described as being supportive, gentle, and kind. Phyllis Pitman is described as “quiet, supportive with a sweet spirit.” Diana Fitzpatrick is described as “sensitive, supportive, understanding, and caring.”<sup>48</sup> There were some women who fell out of the supportive category, but the CMA never seemed to speak about these women in a negative way. In the most “extreme” case, CMA female staff members were considered “partners” or “best friends” to their husband.

Expectations on females were not static, as it was with men. The period of 1974-1994 was a time of great change for women in America and the CMA did its part in attempting to adjust to change while keeping as much the same as possible. John G. Turner wrote about a similar phenomenon in *Campus Crusade for Christ* when the parachurch organization created FamilyLife in order to conserve gender roles.<sup>49</sup> The CMA attempted to do the same in order to protect the freedoms challenged by change outside of the parachurch organization.

In 1991, Diane Shreve noted that more women were working outside of the home. She wrote, “We behold the professional woman every night via the television and we stand in awe of her.” She goes on to say that even in the ministry women have “become equated with their professional image, her lack of dependence on her husband...” and “women of God are opting to build personal ministries rather than serving alongside her husband.” Diane Shreve provided an alternate vision of the modern woman by reminding

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<sup>48</sup>Jerry Settle, “Staff Retreat,” *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 33, February 1985, 13.

<sup>49</sup>Bill Bright & *Campus Crusade for Christ*, 9-10, 208-216.

women in the CMA that they cannot make it alone and that they need their husbands and more importantly, God in order to accomplish anything.<sup>50</sup>

This article represented CMA struggle to define freedom for women. On one side, changing culture portrayed women to be capable of being the leaders in business, faith, and family. On the other side, evangelicalism still held to the vision of the supportive female. Diane Shreve did not necessarily cry out against the old or the new, but instead she provided a solution that was a neutral fusion of the two. This is vital evidence to the slight shifts in language regarding feminine roles in the CMA and society.

In the same way that Campus Crusade created FamilyLife in order to save the Christian marriage, the CMA created women's conferences in order to define how Godly women should conduct themselves in relation to their family. From November 1991 until October 1992, CMA Newsletters placed ads for the Women's Conference each December. The conference, titled "Building Homes of Joy," covered topics such as leaving a heritage of joy to children, joy from within, and maintaining joy in times of stress. A year later, the Women's Conference covered additional topics such as the power of a woman's influence, responsibilities to home and beyond, and selecting your sphere of involvement.<sup>51</sup>

The CMA certainly concerned themselves with ideas about the godly man and the godly woman. The CMA expected men to be brave, servants to their ministry, and entrepreneurial. The CMA expected women to be supportive, gentle, sweet, and

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<sup>50</sup> Diane Shreve, "Living References," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 77, September/October 1991, 4.

<sup>51</sup> "CMA Womens Conference," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 78, November 1991, 4.

sacrificial. Perhaps of greater concern to the CMA was the family or how those two ideals supposedly created a symbiosis of one nuclear family unit.

For men and women in the CMA, nothing less than the ideal way of operation was acceptable. They operated this way because, according to Shreve, if God intended men and women to be together, men and women needed specific roles. This principle created a balanced family, the cornerstone of holy living. This emerged in interesting ways because the technology of the motorcycle was meant for one person despite various ways motorcycle manufacturers attempted to create something otherwise. In October of 1980 Herb Shreve told his members that the CMA is essentially created for the family motorcyclist.<sup>52</sup> Activities at the Changing of the Colors Rally included worship, bible studies, games, and scenic drives. All of these things can, in theory, be enjoyed by every member of the family as opposed to secular rallies which often including drinking, alcohol, and dancing.

In November of 1983 Tom Pitman lamented the sad state of marriages in America and warned CMA members that they must do every single thing possible in order to keep a marriage alive. According to Pitman,

You need to make your current marriage work. Learn to forgive and forget. This can only come from God. When the home breaks the children are hurt and damaged...Set aside time each day for the family to read the bible and pray...A happy home is a healthy home and has a hearty heritage.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Becky Orr, "Cyclists 'Ride for the Son'," *Loveland Daily Reporter Herald*, June 30 1980.

<sup>53</sup> Tom Pitman, "Marriage is Honorable," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 28, November 1983, 3.



Pitman, as a prominent evangelist in the CMA, sought to resonate deeply with his members in order to encourage them to live a holy life. He used principles such as hard work, individuality, and heritage to show that marriage was the holiest of unions. If not, then their lives and those around them would crumble. Herbie Shreve wrote a similar article in order to encourage men in the CMA to do what was necessary to save the marriage as life is better lived with the family intact. The family, according to Pitman and Herbie, was the lifeblood of American life if God were to bless their nation.<sup>54</sup>

The CMA not only spoke about the perpetuation of the nuclear family, they also created programs to accomplish this goal and to pursue freedom against the secular world. In February of 1987 the CMA placed an ad in the CMA Newsletter to alert members about the upcoming couple's retreat for failing marriages. Activities included bonding exercises, couples scenic motorcycle rides, and counseling.<sup>55</sup> Broken marriages were not the only target for the perpetuation of the family unit. The youth ministry in the CMA isolated college-aged men and women in order to prevent unholy unions by educating young adults on sexual purity and the importance of saving themselves for their marriage partner.<sup>56</sup>

It is essential to think of the CMA action in terms of freedom because during the period of 1974-1994, evangelicalism, in general, underwent extreme change because of perceived cultural competition for people's soul. Thinking about the nature of the CMA's defensive freedom allows the historian to determine exactly what the CMA fought against in order to protect its way of life.

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<sup>54</sup>Herbie Shreve, "Editorial," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 103, March 1994, 12.

<sup>55</sup>"Couples Retreat," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 40, February 1987, 10.

<sup>56</sup>Victor Rowell, "TNT Report," *Christian Motorcyclists Association Newsletter*, Issue 71, February 1991, 9, 12.

In the realm of politics, the CMA fought against an expanding federal government and religious freedoms. The CMA joined with motorcyclists to battle against society's bias of their image. In addition, CMA participation in politics sought to fight against the federal government's denial of its godly heritage by preventing people to practice religious freedoms. The CMA, or the Christian motorcyclist, represented both groups simultaneously.

In the same way that the CMA fought against a changing government, they also fought against a changing culture concerning gender. The CMA always praised men for being brave, ingenious, and a leader. The CMA even derided young men who fell short of this ideal.<sup>57</sup> Feminine definitions within the CMA changed slightly, but the ideal was relatively static through this period. The CMA praised females, in particular Shirley Shreve, for submissiveness, a supporting spirit, and a sweet disposition. Expectations of men and women were intended to create a perfectly balanced nuclear family. This is why the ideal was always so important because deviation from the standard could potentially bring unbalance and thus cause divorce. The CMA sought to perpetuate the family through numerous retreats and admonitions against the evils of the separation of the family.

In no way was the CMA malicious in protecting their freedoms. They believed the world to work in a certain "Godly order." If members upset the ideal, then judgment would follow. Perhaps that is why they went at such great lengths to sacrifice their lives for positions of little to no pay. Perhaps this is why they were able to raise millions each

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

year and gather hundreds of thousands of members in total. Perhaps this is why they continue to thrive in the face of modernity.

## **Conclusion**

Herb Shreve passed in 2013, nine years after his beloved wife. Shreve left the CMA in the hands of John Ogden Sr. a longtime CMA evangelist. After Shirley's death, Herb withdrew himself from many of the duties of the president so that his son could replace him. In essence, Herb chose to live his last nine years, in the midst of numerous health issues, as a legendary figure within the CMA away from the organization.

After Shreve stepped away after the passing of his wife, the CMA slipped into a quiet period in its history. The CMA's organizational structure was set in place in order for membership to grow in meaningful ways. The state organizations became more hierarchical as chapters grew in number. Youth ministries and women's conferences continue to be an important part of the organization today.

It is surprising then, that after the election of Bill Clinton in 1994, the CMA did not increase its political engagement. The liberal consensus in America finally was able to wrangle back the White House to create a unified Democratic congress and president. Though Bill Clinton attempted to blend conservative fiscal policy with liberal social programs, many evangelicals still derided the Arkansan. It is no secret how Herb Shreve felt about the man when he was the Governor of Arkansas.

There is a lesson to be learned. The president, no matter who it is, cannot always be a correct barometer of political pressure. One could make a convincing argument that

the conservative movement had its brightest years during the Reagan administration, but as shown, the CMA increasingly let their ideas be known about the state of their nation. Discontent was everywhere.

The history of the CMA, how it formed, created an organizational structure, and created its own version of freedom through political engagement and ideas of gender illuminates a vital aspect of evangelicalism during the second half of the twentieth century. As free market incarnate, parachurch organizations functioned as a “special forces” group in the battle against secular society. Evangelicalism had to live and breathe among the “enemy” in order to have hopes of victory. Make no mistake, however, evangelicalism thrived in these conditions.

One of the most important aspects of this study is how evangelicalism adapted itself to a technological culture. The motorcycle and the culture associated with the technology heavily influenced how the CMA operated. The CMA cared for both the concerns of the evangelical fight against secular culture and also the concerns of motorcycling culture against the sour image associated with motorcyclists.

In review, Chapter one explored historiographical themes in an attempt to discover what could have caused Herb Shreve to break away from his pastorate in Cove, Arkansas. Parachurch organizations were common by the mid seventies, which laid the foundations for the CMA to operate within the realm of evangelicalism in American culture. The Southern Baptist Convention, by 1974, created in an environment of theological conflict within the denomination, which could have prompted Shreve’s non-denominational actions. For social conservative, the political landscape of America on the eve of 1974 did not look promising. Shreve and other evangelicals represented a vital

portion of the Silent Majority who eventually became estranged from President Nixon. Social conservatives believed that the nation lost its moral compass, which, to them, was the bedrock of American greatness. The future of America, evangelicalism, and the SBC looked bleak by 1974. These movements certainly created an environment for and an impetus to the creation of the CMA.

Chapter two laid the necessary foundations for analysis of the CMA by outlining the CMA organizational structure from 1974-1994. The manner in which the CMA raised money was consistent with other parachurch organizations of its age. The CMA relied heavily upon donations, newsletter advertisements, and the sale of motorcycling merchandise until Herb Shreve created the “Ride for the Son,” an event originally created by non-CMA motorcyclists. CMA institutional policy did not change until the year of 1984-1984 when a second generation of evangelists assisted Shreve in creating new programs such as the “CMA School of Evangelism.” The creation of and the limitations on memberships at the local chapter level further illustrated how Herb Shreve sought to control his organization.

Chapter three built upon the foundations set by chapters one and two by exploring the meaning of Freedom within the CMA. Political engagement of the CMA was a means to an end, not an end itself. In other words, the politics of the CMA represented deeper concerns of evangelical culture. The true goal of the CMA was not to simply preach to motorcyclists, but instead to imprint a certain brand of evangelicalism on the culture they infiltrated. The CMA fought to continue ideas of manhood as brawny, independent, and entrepreneurial. It also fought to perpetuate female gender norms by praising women in the parachurch organization who were kind, supportive, and sacrificial.

Today, numerous motorcycling ministries exist in various forms. The Tribe of Judah, another non-denominational motorcycling ministry, is second only to the CMA in membership and began in 1980. The Tribe of Judah joined with the CMA to ride in the parade at the event. Other, less known motorcycling ministries are the Sons of God, the Sons of Jesus, and the group called Moto 4 Jesus. They range from a predominantly African American group to a Pentecostal motorcycling group. Herb Shreve was not the only one who had this idea, but he was the most successful in terms of recognition and membership.

Altogether, the CMA holds the membership of over 150,000 current motorcyclists. There is plenty left unsaid about the parachurch organization leaving room for future study. One example is the CMA expansion around the world. The CMA established chapters in South Africa, England, and Guatemala as early as 1980. The exportation of beliefs on freedom, gender, business, and theology are all important to the story of evangelicalism in the modern era.

Focus on parachurch organizations in the historical conversation on American religion frames the importance of the story of the Christian Motorcyclists Association because it warrants new light on topics of politics and gender. Current scholarship, as shown, defined conservative political action after the sixties as counter-reactionary to cultural movements during the previous decade. People from all walks of life joined together to protect this term called “freedom.” Not one history discussed defined what that term meant to different people. The political action of Herb Shreve and the CMA is important because it sheds light on the process of how two completely different cultures

(evangelicalism and motorcycling) joined together for both spiritual and political purposes.

Evangelicalism and motorcycling culture both accepted the Christian motorcyclist. During the late eighties, the Southern Baptist Convention commended the Hendersons for their charitable works. Additionally, Road Rider magazine, now defunct, presented the CMA with numerous awards on its charity and its contributions to cleaning up the biker image. Herb Shreve, while still alive, even spoke about how the CMA was invited to attend the “outlaw” rallies. There is no doubt that the CMA was, and still is, an integral part of motorcycling culture. Evangelicalism may not have won, but it certainly did not lose.



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