Muscular Christianity: A Comparison and Analysis of the Historic and Modern Muscular Christian Movements

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2016

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

"Muscular Christianity" is a scholarly term that is used to define the general view of Christians in Europe and the United States that arose in the 1800s toward sport involvement. Muscular Christian beliefs have progressed throughout the past century and are still influential in the modern world. This thesis seeks to outline the historic progression of muscular Christian beliefs and practices and then explores similarities and differences of modern muscular Christian beliefs with its historic positions. It concludes with a future perspective on the globalization of muscular Christianity and provides suggestions for proper Christian attitudes toward sport.

Muscular Christianity: A Comparison and Analysis of the Historic and Modern Muscular Christian Movements

"Muscular Christianity" is a term that is not often used in the present age but designates a philosophy on sports and recreation among Christians in both the United States and Europe since the late 19th century. It is a tough term to define, as it carries a different meaning for distinct theological camps. A broad definition of the term, which will be used as a formalized meaning of it throughout this thesis, is encompassed by Putney (2001) when he says that "muscular Christianity can be defined simply as a Christian commitment to health and manliness" (p. 11). He goes on to state that the origins of the movement are traced to biblical texts in the New Testament. An example of a verse is Mark 11:15, which states that Jesus "began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers" (ESV). This passage shows the manly exertion that was emphasized by muscular Christians. Another emphasized text is 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, which states that each believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and admonishes the believer to "glorify God in your body" (ESV). For the muscular Christian, this was done through presenting a physically healthy body. Brock (2012) puts emphasis on a later chapter in Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians, where he looks at 9:24-27. Paul was drawing upon the famous Corinthian athletic competition, the Isthmian Games, to teach spiritual truths to his audience. These biblical texts, among many others, inspired the philosophy that is now known as muscular Christianity.

History of Muscular Christianity

Ladd & Mathisen (1999) write of the history of muscular Christianity from an evangelical Christian perspective. In their analysis, they chronicle two eras in which Christians were heavily involved with the general American sporting culture (these will be termed "engagements" of Christians with sport) interrupted by a time of withdrawal of Christians from the American sporting culture (this will be termed the "disengagement" of Christians from sport). They start off by tracing the development of American muscular Christian traditions to its roots in Europe in the latter 19th century. From the latter 19th century up until the 1920s and the Great Depression, American Christians actively engaged in the general American sporting culture. This will be termed the historic engagement, or historic muscular Christianity. However, following the Great Depression and up until World War II, Americans as a whole largely disassociated with sport during the disengagement period. With unemployment reaching up to 25%, fewer people could afford to attend games. As an example, professional baseball attendance declined from 10.1 million in 1930 to below 6 million in 1933 (Davies, 2012). Yet, following World War II, American Christians began reengaging within the athletic culture. This will be deemed the modern engagement, or modern muscular Christianity. The book (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999) ends with a study of muscular Christian thought up until 1999, but it is obvious that American Christians are still enthusiastically involved in the sporting world today.

Historic Muscular Christianity (1850-1917)

Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes were the original proponents of muscular Christian thought (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999; Putney, 2001). Charles Kingsley was an

English Christian socialist who believed that good health benefited one both in Christian service and in service to England as a country. Thus, Kingsley took more of an approach that bodily health would benefit his country in a patriotic sense (Putney, 2001). On the other hand, Thomas Hughes "prompted educators and clergy to recognize the connection between effective religious education and healthy athletic endeavor" (Davies, 2012, pp. 68-69) through his 1857 novel *Tom Brown's School Days.* This story chronicled the life of a fictional Tom Brown, a young boy who played rugby for his boarding school team. Stressing the unity of the mind, body, and spirit, it communicated that "participation in vigorous sports competition would produce a young man who understood the values of fair play, good sportsmanship, and an appreciation of the Ten Commandments" (Davies, 2012, p. 69). Since Hughes lived in England, it took some time for his ideas to carry over into the United States. His beliefs in sport were initially viewed with skepticism by many Americans, who still had lingering thoughts on sport that carried over from Puritan practices. The Puritans believed that "sport should refresh the participants so that they could better execute their worldly and spiritual 'callings' or duties" (Rader, 2004, p. 7). Puritans outlawed any sport that did not fulfill this goal. In essence, the Puritans only used sport as an end for more productive work lives (Rader, 2004).

Early development of American muscular Christianity. Muscular Christian thought appealed to many Americans because it addressed fears of an overly civilized United States (Davies, 2012). Increasingly, men were working behind desks and anxieties abounded that the long office hours were causing American men to become less masculine. Medical professionals believed they had discovered a newly found disease named "neurasthenia" that was draining males of their energy. This led some to fear that

the American male was becoming a liability in the more competitive marketplace. As the United States became increasingly urban rather than rural in the late 1800s, much uneasiness abounded about the status of men in the nation. Fathers were putting in longer hours at work, leaving mothers with the work of raising their boys. It was feared that this was creating a generation of boys that would be overly feminized. In addition, school years were continually lengthening, meaning boys would be spending more time behind desks. Cities were perceived as places of corrupt moral values. The solution to these problems, according to men such as the Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson of Harvard Divinity School, was athletic competition in a Christian atmosphere (Davies, 2012).

An upsurge in American athletics began during the 1850s and extended through the early 1900s. In 1852, the first intercollegiate competition was held between Harvard and Yale in rowing. European competitive inter-collegiate sport inspired representatives from four U.S. colleges to form the College Union Regatta Association in 1858, sponsoring several races from 1859-1860. Baseball spread rapidly following the Civil War along with football and track, all of which were being instituted across college campuses. Basketball and volleyball were developed in the 1890s by James Naismith and William Morgan, two individuals in a YMCA psychology of sport class. The first U.S. tennis championship was held on August 31, 1881. Luther Gulick, a pioneer figure in the YMCA, also founded the Public Schools Athletic League in 1903, which was a groundbreaking effort to encourage school children to become physically active (Rader, 2004). Increasingly, sports were viewed as an opportunity that “could build individual

character" (Rader, 2004, p. 103), and Americans sought ways to encourage sporting activities among the populace.

Out of this growing sporting environment, the stage was set for Christians to engage in sport. For the most part, the initial engagement of American muscular Christianity was begun by the Studd family, who used their athletic abilities in order to preach the Gospel (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Edward Studd, who was the family father, was led to Christ by Dwight L. Moody (a prominent muscular Christian, also known as D.L. Moody) in 1877, and each of his sons would go on to use cricket as an opportunity to share their faith. Charles (C.T.) Studd, one of Edward's sons, forfeited his international standing in cricket in 1885 in order to preach the Gospel, becoming the leader of the "Cambridge Seven." The "Cambridge Seven" was a team of missionaries who used their athletic abilities to build relationships with other people around the world (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

The YMCA and protestant brotherhoods. The YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) was founded in 1844 by George Williams, and the first U.S. YMCA was founded by Captain Thomas Valentine Sullivan in Boston in 1851. After the initial founding of the YMCA, more began to spring up around the U.S., including one specifically for African Americans in 1853 (YMCA, n.d.). They YMCA initially started off as a means to save souls, not simply to just build character (as it would later become). In fact, until 1925, the initial aim of the YMCA was to direct men into active membership in the church of their choice. Through the contributions of wealthy businessmen, three training schools were opened up for the YMCA (two in Springfield, one in Chicago). Luther Gulick, a leading figure in the YMCA, coined its primary phrase "body, mind,

spirit", which is based off Deuteronomy 6:5 – "You shall love the Lord your God with all your *heart* and with all your *soul* and with all your *might*" (ESV). He developed this into the well-known Red Triangle used by the YMCA. Gulick was hired to lead the YMCA Training School at Springfield, the same location that James Naismith (inventor of the game of basketball) worked at that time (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Gulick viewed the YMCA as a place to put into the field men of tested Christian character who had thorough athletic training, Bible knowledge, and experience with the Association. The YMCA held the philosophy that the gym exists as a fundamental and intrinsic part in the salvation of man (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Outside of the YMCA, other ways muscular Christians sought to create a more masculine faith were through the development of protestant brotherhoods. The brotherhood movement was a campaign to establish men's groups and Bible-studies that flourished in the early 1880s until World War I. Among the most prominent brotherhoods was the Brotherhood of St. Andrew (Episcopalian), which was the first group to achieve national prominence. It held to a militaristic type structure with membership, which appealed largely to young men. The Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip (founded in 1888) was very identical to the Brotherhood of St. Andrew but held to an interdenominational membership. The Gideons were developed in 1899 in Janesville, Wisconsin, where they looked for opportunities to minister outside the traditional church setting. These brotherhood ministries increased men's membership numbers in churches throughout the U.S., which led to an increase of men's evangelism books. While not directly associated with sport, these brotherhoods helped contribute to the idea that idea that Christianity called for masculine men (Putney, 2001).

Schools, camps, and the Northfield Conferences. While the brotherhood movements provided opportunities for men to fellowship with each other, there was a growing concern among adults that their male offspring would not be able to compete with female professionals and immigrant politicians (Putney, 2001). A more secularized muscular Christianity arose out of these concerns, which was heavily promoted by President Theodore Roosevelt. Public and private schools began to seek better sport programming in order to deal with the supposed fears of feminization of boys in their classes. Middle class families sought out boys' summer camps to provide physically rigorous training, which were run by organizations such as the YMCA. According to Putney (2001), these summer camps allowed boys to acquaint themselves with nature and escape from their mothers. However, since these camps were only open during the summer, a rise in in-school year programs for boys was necessary. The Knights of King Arthur, YMCA after-school programs, the Boys' Brigade, and eventually the Boy Scouts arose out of these needs. It was around this time that the YMCA gradually turned from its emphasis on missionary work and instead focused on developing leadership and character qualities among youth. Theodore Roosevelt heavily endorsed these programs, not necessarily for their spiritual value, but for their physical value (Putney, 2001).

Another important development in the initial engagement of Christians with sport were the Northfield Conferences, founded by D.L. Moody (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Moody helped legitimize the use of sport for evangelism and discipleship in America. These conferences fostered significant interaction among students involved in sport and religion. Eventually, it would become known as the College of Colleges, formalizing the union of muscular Christian sport and religion. Many prominent muscular Christians

arose from these conferences such as Amos Alonzo Stagg, who is considered to be the "father of coaching" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 65). Prior to the 1880s, most teams had team-directed leadership with few external forces exerted on the teams. However, Stagg exemplified the business-based model for coaching that is evident today. He coached football at the University of Chicago, believing it to be a form of Christian service. He taught values of serious effort, consecration to one's task, and laying down one's life for the team as morals that could be learned through sport (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Stagg thought he could accomplish more on the athletic field than from the pulpit, where football "provided an arena in which to test one's faith, to purify one's soul, and to develop one's character" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 68).

Disengagement of Christians from Sport (1917-1940)

The disengagement of Christians from sport stems from several factors of the muscular Christian movement. Putney (2001) describes the status of muscular Christianity in the years leading up to and following World War I. When the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, Protestant churches and groups responded with alacrity, characterizing America's cause as God's cause. At the same time, an impulse of paternalism stemmed within American churches (the belief that the United States should take an active role in governing other countries). Intense patriotism ensued amongst many churches in the United States. Pastors of churches even preached that war was a moral medicine for the state, allowing young men to regain their sense of masculinity, which they felt was stolen from them.

This is not to say that all churches were fully devoted to the war effort since many churches held on to pacifistic standpoints. Pacifists still sought to build manhood among

their congregants through “moral equivalents of war”, such as the Boy Scouts, settlement house work, physical education classes, and pugilism. However, the need for U.S. involvement in World War I was expressly evident following the exposure of the Zimmerman telegram. The Zimmerman telegram was an encoded message obtained by President Woodrow Wilson from German Foreign Minister Zimmerman that sought a German alliance with Mexico and Japan against the United States (“German plot story”, 1917). Many clergy who once argued for pacifism were incapable of holding that stance anymore. In fact, President Theodore Roosevelt referred to pacifists as “active agents of the devil” (Roosevelt, 1916, p. 23).

World War I. The fact that World War I was called the “War against War” helped justify Christian action in the war. American churches advocated for the idea that Allied powers were on the divine side while the Central powers were satanic forces. This drove many Christians to believe that killing Germans was a righteous act and duty. Clergy, who had inordinately high hopes for the war to bring in a utopian society, began to be caught up in the excesses of war and to develop spirits of bigotry and intolerance. Pacifists and men who were against the brutality of the war suffered for their stances through loss of their jobs or stints in jail. Also, because of the increased religious pluralism of America at the time of World War I, pastors were encouraged to bolster American war efforts as opposed to their traditional promotion of Anglo-Saxon values. Throughout this time period, the dominant view was that government was the ultimate source of correcting moral ills (as opposed to the church). Christians sought to engage themselves in war efforts (Putney, 2001). The General War-Time Commission of the Churches (GWCC) was established by the Federal Council in May 1917 in order to bring

together Protestant Christians to address the religious issues taking place in opposing countries (Mislin, 2015). There were tremendous increases in the number of military chaplains and Christian servicemen in the war during World War I (Putney, 2001).

Putney (2001) goes on to state that the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) of the military invited seven organizations to provide relief to the soldiers, of which the YMCA was preeminent among them. The YMCA sought to provide educational, sport, and entertainment opportunities for the soldiers. They also helped develop the camp "hut", which consisted of a club, theater, gym, church, and school at military bases. All of these efforts were provided as platforms for the YMCA to advance the Christian faith. However, most soldiers hated and despised the YMCA efforts in their camps because of the perceived weak nature of their workers. In response, the YMCA began to hire physically stronger men without regard to their theology in order to better relate to the soldiers. The YMCA developed looser moral values and stopped preaching Gospel conversion, slowly leading to a secular focus of individual character development. Following the war, when the churches were disappointed that the United States did not join the League of Nations and was not the world's chief insurer of international peace, churches began to regret their wartime behavior. Following World War I, churches began pushing for ways to create a peaceful world. In fact, a Christian Century magazine article in 1935 condemned "the blind servility with which the Christian Church gave itself to the government of the United States in 1917 and 1918." (Putney, 2001, p. 194). The war efforts and the church's response during the war helped cause much of the disengagement of sport and religion.

Post-World War I. The decline of Evangelical muscular Christianity in secular institutions occurred during World War I and in the years that followed (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Many colleges during this time severed denominational ties to demonstrate that their religious affiliation "played little, if any, part in the religious or intellectual life of the student body" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p.75). Religion within educational settings began to be defined as propaganda. Many leaders of the muscular Christian movement began to disbelieve that games held unalterable divine or natural laws that provided transformation for the players. As an example, James Naismith, who developed the game of basketball as an opportunity for Christian mission, made many changes as the athletic director at the University of Kansas. He removed the mandatory chapel, reduced the daily chapel from chapel to twice a week, and separated his personal piety and public practices of faith (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

The "second disestablishment" of churches occurred during the "Roaring Twenties" (the first "disestablishment" being the separation of church and state) in that Protestant churches were deprived of their cultural influence. The YMCA became increasingly secularized in the years following World War I and American Christianity had an internal conflict that resulted in two distinct theological camps (fundamentalism and modernism). The American public became more interested in leisure than issues of salvation while churches saw declines in membership. Men increasingly turned to business, rather than to church, for places of fellowship. The church responded by hiring "salesman" preachers – leading to the abundance of what is known as the prosperity gospel. For the most part, liberal churches disregarded muscular Christian thought, while fundamentalist churches held onto it, although in a different form (Putney, 2001).

Christian fundamentalism arose as a counter to the steadily growing pluralistic society in America. Essentially, fundamentalists "insisted upon the necessity of a conversion experience through faith in Jesus Christ alone, the accuracy of the Bible in matters of science and history as well as theology, and the imminent physical return of Christ to the earth where he would establish a millennial reign of peace" (Wacker, n.d.). Fundamentalists tended to be looked down upon by society. They were largely characterized as backwards thinkers because of the arguments of Williams Jennings Bryan in the Scopes-Monkey Trial (which took place in 1925), in which Bryan fought for a creationist educational system in spite of the developing evolutionary theory that was being taught in schools (Harrison, 1944). Unfortunately, "Bryan's responses earned him widespread ridicule as he attempted to define the literal meaning of the Holy Bible" (Harrison, 1994, p. 62). Sinclair Lewis' comedic novel *Elmer Gantry* was a satire that openly critiqued early 20th century Protestant fundamentalism (Hamner, 2009).

Billy Sunday. One of the most prominent men worth studying in the muscular Christian movement is Billy Sunday (1862-1935), who appeared around the time of the disengagement of sport and religion and possibly accelerated that disengagement. After the deaths of D.L. Moody and several other prominent muscular Christians, there was no clear speaker for the muscular Christian movement (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Billy Sunday became a Christian while playing for the Chicago White Stockings and was in line to become the next spokesperson for muscular Christianity. However, in 1891, he left the MLB to join the Chicago YMCA staff. By 1893, "he had come to view participation in baseball and Christian work as mutually exclusive endeavors" (Ladd & Mathisen,

1999, p. 81). He wrote an article entitled “Why I Left Professional Baseball”, in which he gave a list of ten reasons he quit playing baseball (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

During this time, Christians began to break away from sport as it became more of a professional endeavor. Billy Sunday largely rejected the existing muscular Christian thought of that time, ultimately failing to reconcile his faith with his participation in professional baseball, leading to his early retirement. Because of his inability to reconcile his faith with his sporting activity, he helped to accelerate the disengagement of sport and religion. However, through his evangelistic practices following his professional career, he still promoted the belief of muscular Christians that Christianity is a muscular, masculine religion (Martin, 1996). Martin (1996) emphasizes that Sunday regarded Jesus as the personification of true manhood but also evoked Old Testament characters such as David and Daniel to emphasize the masculine aspects of faith. He would use hymns such as “Onward Christian Soldiers” or “Battle Hymn of the Republic” in his services. Throughout his preaching (which was primarily directed towards men), he emphasized that although he had become a Christian, he had not lost his manliness (Martin, 1996).

Sunday is largely known for his use of sport metaphors while illustrating his sermons. People were drawn to his evangelistic gatherings because of his athletic success. In fact, he would sometimes compete with local citizenry in baseball games with his evangelistic staff. Liberal Protestants largely rejected his preaching because of his fundamentalist leanings, but conservative Protestants largely embraced him. Billy Sunday believed that “the trouble with the church, the YMCA, and the young people’s societies is that they have taken up sociology and settlement work but are not winning souls to Christ,” which shows his fundamentalist leanings (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p.83).

Since fundamentalist churches became the upholders of muscular Christian philosophy and the American culture of the 1920-30s largely rejected their beliefs, the disengagement of religion and sport occurred. Because of this disengagement, sports were looked upon less for their educational and moral value and more for their quantitative comparisons of performance. Sports lost their philosophical underpinning, which took away any moral groundwork for sport – leading to cheating, rule violations, and excessive egos amongst sport figures (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Re-Engagement of Christians with Sport (1940-1999)

Ladd & Mathisen (1999) describe the re-engagement of muscular Christian activity through preachers such as Billy Graham and athletes such as Gil Dodds. However, before these prominent men reached the national scene, fundamentalist activity went rather unnoticed by the larger American society from the 1930s through the early 1950s. There were two distinct camps of fundamentalism: one was opposed to cultural change and resisted the modernist faith totally, while the other camp was given to revivalism and saving souls, even if that meant working alongside suspect denominations (although the extent of compromise varied among individuals) (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Fundamentalist leaders. With the development of mass media through the advent of the radio, many evangelists began to take their messages through the air waves. Mass media encouraged the targeting of youthful audiences, which gave rise to evangelistic preachers that specifically targeted the American youth. These preachers were typically younger and more charismatic, able to draw large audiences to their events. Ladd & Mathisen (1999) state that “the fundamentalist leaders from the 1920s were succeeded by a younger cohort of energetic leaders displaying a more moderate

tenor toward the culture and their Protestant kin" (p. 105). Among these prominent preachers were men such as Percy Crawford and Jack Wyrtzen, both of whom used a radio based message to share the Gospel, specifically targeting youth audiences.

Youth for Christ was founded in 1944 by Torrey Johnson. The organization held massive evangelical rallies that took place in large stadiums. Billy Graham's ministry emerged during this time (Graham was the speaker for the initial Chicago-land Youth for Christ rally in 1944). In 1945, he traveled 135,000 miles with Youth for Christ and spoke in 47 states, preaching the "born-again" Gospel. Youth for Christ would become a powerful beacon of the muscular Christian faith as it re-engaged with the American culture (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Subsequent to the development of Youth for Christ was the ascent of the runner Gil Dodds, who exemplified the characteristics that were preached by muscular Christians. As a three year high school runner, he finished his career undefeated, eventually going on to run at Ashland College where he would run a two minute half mile (Mathisen, 1990). After graduating from Ashland, he went on to study at the Gordon School of Theology and Missions. In December of 1943, he was awarded the James E. Sullivan Memorial Trophy, which is presented to the most outstanding American amateur athlete of the year ("Gil Dodds," 1943). He would kneel to pray before every race he participated in and would sign "Phil. 4:13" whenever he was asked for his autograph (Blake, 2010). According to Mathisen (1990), he viewed track as secondary to his commitment to ministry, eventually leaving running at the peak of his career to go into full-time Gospel work. Dodds would go on to become a full-time representative of the Youth for Christ movement, working alongside Billy Graham. In 1944, he began a 16

state speaking tour that lasted four months. While on his evangelistic trips, Dodds would work out with local high school teams and then invite them to the services on those nights (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). In 1947, Dodds participated in a Charlotte rally with Billy Graham, using his athletic ability as a spectacle to draw people to the event. Billy Graham and Gil Dodds helped draw adults into the growing muscular Christian movement, which was largely characterized by youth up until that point. Billy Graham began to realize that having "athletes on his platform (along with Hollywood personalities and former gangsters) provided one way to attract an adult crowd" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 119).

Youth for Christ helped provide the basis for sport-specific ministry in the coming decades through their engagement of the world with the Gospel through sport. In 1951, Youth for Christ formed a basketball team to do missionary work throughout Europe, competing with teams and sharing the Gospel with people throughout those countries. Dick Hillis, who was the Youth for Christ leader in Taiwan, requested a basketball team for evangelism in his country. Following a successful run by that basketball team in Taiwan, Hillis went on to form Orient Crusades, which developed an entire branch of its ministry for sports through the Sport Ambassadors (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). The Sport Ambassadors provided a model for future sport ministries.

Sport ministries. Garner (2003) defines sport ministry as an "activity that takes place during leisure time with the stated purpose or intention of helping people become aware of their need for a relationship with God, His daily role in their lives and their place in His kingdom work" (p. 10). Tucker (2012) acknowledges that churches began to back away from sport ministry in the early 20th century because of the rise of immoral

activities associated with big time athletics (which was a major factor in the disengagement period). However, Tucker (2012) goes on to cite the factors that led to the increase in sport ministries in the mid-20th century. Among these were more church-based sport and recreation ministries, bigger sport celebrities (allowing an athlete's message to be more influential to the public), sport mission teams (such as the Youth for Christ basketball teams), and specialized sport ministries that targeted specific demographics of sport participants.

The motivations for participation in sport ministry, according to Tucker (2012), are many: creation, in which sport is considered to be a part of God's created order; worship, in which participation in sport is viewed as an act of worship in itself; redemption, in which participants seek to use sport to redeem the world through the Gospel (this also includes the redemption of sport itself); and liberty and expediency, in which Tucker (2012) cites 1 Corinthians 9:19-23: "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them" (v. 19, ESV).

The big three. The advancement of sport ministry gave way to what is called the "big three" of sport ministry by Ladd & Mathisen (1999): the Sports Ambassadors, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), and Campus Crusade for Christ's Athletes in Action (AIA) ministry. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes was founded by Don McClanen with the financial help of prominent businessmen and coaches, such as Branch Rickey (general manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates at the time) and Amos Alonzo Stagg. It was kicked off in January 1955 with three rallies in Oklahoma where many well-known athletes spoke. However, aiming to be a much more inclusive ministry than the earlier Youth for Christ, some people wanted to change the word "Christian" in its title to

"religious". Obviously, that change never occurred, but it could be used to highlight one of the struggles the ministry has dealt with. In 1956, the first summer conference of FCA was held in Estes Park, Colorado. The purpose of the conference was "to confront athletes and coaches, and through them the youth of the nation, with the challenge and adventure of following Christ and serving Him through the fellowship of the church and in their vocations" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 131). FCA would go on to provide summer camps for athletes, which grew at a remarkable rate, and "huddle" programs, which took place on high school and college campuses. The FCA model differed from the Sports Ambassadors and Athletes in Action models in that it was not as creedal or ideological as either and focused more on high school and college athletes than the Sports Ambassadors did (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Campus Crusade for Christ's ministry, on the other hand, more closely reflected the Youth for Christ ministry than the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Campus Crusade was started by Bill Bright at UCLA in 1951 where he began leading Bible studies, which later bloomed into the official ministry. Bright's Bible studies grew through various stages as the ministry progressed, and in 1966, Dave Hannah started the Athletes in Action ministry, which was taken under the umbrella of the Campus Crusade. Dave Hannah stated that "the purpose of this work is to introduce athletes to Christ, then to use the platform they have for evangelism… This visibility is influential, because when spectators and athletes themselves hear the testimonies of our players and see the way they play, it makes an impression" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 133). While FCA was labeled as a "fellowship", AIA was much more aggressive in their ministry. AIA had a

stricter definition of what it meant to be “Christian”, whereas FCA’s definition of “Christian” was broader and more inclusive (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Several further trends in sport ministry and muscular Christianity developed as more American Christians began to reengage in athletics. In the years following the development of the “big three,” more specialized sport ministries developed within the larger athletic subculture. As examples, the Christian Motorcyclist Association and Fellowship of Christian Anglers Society were formed to target specific demographics of individuals with interests in those areas. To influence professional athletes, Bobby Richardson and Bill Glass helped begin Baseball Chapel for MLB teams and Pro Athletes Outreach for professional sport teams. Further, sport teams adopted chaplains for spiritual and character development, following the model of military and hospital chaplains. The rise of the sport chaplaincy signified the change from justifying sport through religion in the 1800’s to justifying religion through sport in the 1950s. The International Sports Coalition was founded in 1986 as a way to unite all the various evangelistic efforts that existed during this era (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Uniting sport ministry efforts. Another major impact of the reengagement of muscular Christianity was the inter-institutionalized nature of sport and faith. Several organizations were formed to unite Christians in different spheres of American life: churches, colleges, and sports. Sports Outreach America (SOA) was founded as the North American branch of the International Sports Coalition. Through this organization, sport and religion began to mutually promote each other, building a reciprocal alliance between church and sport. The National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) was founded in 1968 and was “incorporated to provide a Christian-based organization that

functions uniquely as a national and international agency for the promotion of outreach and ministry, and for the maintenance, enhancement, and promotion of intercollegiate athletic competition in a Christian perspective" (National Christian College Athletic Association, 2015). This organization helped promote Christian colleges through sport. The Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) helped to unify Christian colleges with the churches. The SOA, NCCAA, and CCCU all worked as partners for the advancement of church, college, and sport. Christian colleges began to use sport to promote their campuses, while evangelical megachurches (which started developing around the 1970s) began hiring full time staff for recreational programs. Colleges and churches realized that sports could be used as a marketing tool for bringing people to their institutions (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Modern Muscular Christian Faith (2000-Present)

While Ladd & Mathisen (1999) leave their book with an open ended question regarding the future of muscular Christian faith in the United States, several circumstances point to a new generation of muscular Christians who are involved in the sporting world. Hoffman (2010) writes of the sport crazed society in America today. In 2006, $17 billion was spent on tickets to sporting contests and $90 billion was spent on sporting goods, which was over double what was spent on books ($42 billion). Hoffman is displeased by the sport-obsessed society, citing examples of Alabama parents who missed their daughter's wedding to watch a University of Alabama football game and an Eagles fan who sprinkled his mother's ashes on the Eagles football field. He laments the current evangelical and sport relationship, which "shows itself not only in the outsized athletic complexes that are common features of church architecture, but also in the ease

with which sport and its symbols show up in the sanctuary" (Hoffman, 2010, "Joining the parade" section).

As examples, Hoffman (2010) claims that the church overemphasizes sport metaphors in sermons, testimonies from famous athletes, and sporting event outreach such as Super Bowl nights and "faith nights." The emphasis on sports has had an impact on Christian college mission statements, mostly for the negative. For Hoffman, "big-time sports culture lifts up values in sharp contrast with what Christians for centuries have understood as the embodiment of the gospel" (2010, "The deafening silence" section), yet evangelicals rarely question their practices of sports. The rise of "sportianity" – a term that was coined by Frank Deford of Sports Illustrated (Deford, 1976) – symbolizes the culture's view of Christians who overemphasize sporting accomplishments. For Hoffman, modern muscular Christian practices indiscriminately accept the morality of sport, which is just as dangerous as the Puritans' indiscriminate rejection of sports before the rise of muscular Christianity. According to Hoffman (2010), "cheap advertisements of the faith embedded in the cheap milieu of big-time sports smack of cheap grace" ("Steps toward a well-played game" section).

On the other side of the debate for muscular Christian practices are men such as Ted Kluck (2009), who argue that Christians need to develop a "theology of sports." In his book, he challenges the way evangelicals view the sporting world, addressing topics such as PED's, honesty and integrity, success, and fame. For Kluck, sports are to be enjoyed compartmentally, used as a part of the Christian's greater whole spiritual development. Miller (2007) takes a similar position to Kluck's, acknowledging that the National Football League feeds off an elaborate form of self-worship. He asks Christians

to take into account the biblical terms of "the world" and "idolatry" and for them to question their own motives behind their devotion to sport. However, whereas Hoffman denies the good to be found in football, Miller (2007) states that "evil exists only by corrupting that which is good, and in football there remains considerable good to be savored and persevered" ("A richer experience of grace" section). For him, football gives rise to hopes that are longed for in the human race and can be an agent that ties together families and communities. The laughter, play, and joy that come from participating in healthy sport competition are benefits of which God wants Christians to have. For Miller, sports can be seen as a gift of the grace of God, but must not be mistaken as the end-all. True joy and gratitude are found in the Creator and centered on the cross of Christ (Miller, 2007).

Among those who represent modern muscular Christian faith is arguably its recently most prominent figure, Tim Tebow. Tebow's ascension to national celebrity began during his college career as the starting quarterback for the Florida Gators, where he won a national championship and the Heisman Trophy. Tebow became a national phenomenon during the 2011 NFL regular season for his off-field actions and on-field success, including an inconceivable playoff victory. While Tebow is certainly not the only Christian in professional sports, the media attention surrounding around him made him "a very polarizing figure" in sports (Butterworth, 2013, p. 18). According to Butterworth (2013), with all the media praise of Tim Tebow, some might consider that the sports media had mistaken Tebow for Christ himself. Tebow's devotion to Christian principles and sense of Christian mission make him an ideal practitioner of muscular Christian faith. He often inscribed his eye-black with Bible verses such as Philippians

4:13 (a popular verse among muscular Christians, as Gil Dodds used the same verse) and John 3:16 during his time as quarterback at the University of Florida. While Tebow was a divisive figure in the popular culture, he was deemed "America's favorite active pro athlete" at one point according to a 2012 ESPN poll (ESPN, 2012). Also among well-known Christian athletes is Jeremy Lin, whose inspirational performances over the course of a season with the New York Knicks inspired the movement known as "Linsanity" and eventually featured full-length documentaries about himself (Meader, 2012). A third major athlete to promote modern muscular Christian beliefs is Josh Hamilton, who even wrote a New York Times Bestseller book *Beyond Belief: Finding the Strength to Come Back.* This book traces his redemption from an alcoholic, drug-filled lifestyle to his saving faith in Christ (Hamilton, 2008). These athletes, among many others, embody the practices of modern muscular Christianity in the professional sporting realm.

Comparison and Contrast of Historic Muscular Christianity with Modern Muscular Christianity

It is interesting to compare and contrast the historic muscular Christian movement with the modern movement, which similarly parallels the development of the Christian faith in the United States. For the purposes of this paper, historic muscular Christianity will be that which took place during the late 19th century up until the 1917, while modern muscular Christianity will be that which took place during the reengagement of sport and faith in the 1940s up until today. While each of the movements had various camps of thought (as with any movement), there are common themes that can be traced that largely highlight the whole of the movement. In the following pages, the overarching themes of each movement will be drawn out.

Comparison of Historic and Modern Muscular Christianity

Both the historic and modern muscular Christian movements had similar influential figures, similar institutions for promoting their ideology, and similar ministries upon which they shared their faith. The chart below provides a simple overview of the similarities which will be explained in the following pages.

Table 1. *Comparison of Historic and Modern Muscular Christianity*

	Historic Movement	**Modern Movement**
Similar Figures	Amos Alonzo Stagg	Gil Dodds
	D.L. Moody	Billy Graham
Similar Institutions	YMCA	Megachurch
Similar Ministries	YMCA	Sports Ambassadors
	Northfield Conferences	Fellowship of Christian Athletes
		Athletes in Action

Similar figures. Both the historic and modern muscular Christian movements relied upon athletes in order to attract audiences to their faith. Ladd & Mathisen (1999) draw upon the similarities in figures such as Amos Alonzo Stagg and Gil Dodds, who were both prominent figures in the sporting world and were, for the most part, muscular Christian spokespersons during their time. Interestingly, both were All-American amateur sport heroes. Neither was considered a good public speaker nor were they treated as theological geniuses. In fact, both only had common training in regard to theological issues. Both Stagg and Dodds were able to attract young males through their athletic

prowess, which signified the captivating grasp that influential athletes had in muscular Christianity. A major difference between the two figures, however, was that Stagg was committed to athletics for the sake of the intrinsic benefits of sport, while Dodds used athletics as a platform for evangelistic purposes (see intrinsic/extrinsic contrast later).

Another similarity that is drawn out by Ladd & Mathisen (1999) were two analogous spiritual spokespersons for muscular Christian faith. D.L. Moody and Billy Graham both arose as spiritual leaders for the muscular Christian movements of their time. They both had similar theological beliefs. For example, both were premillennialists and revivalists (which largely emphasized "born-again" theology). While neither was an athlete at a high level, both expanded their theological boundaries to include areas of sport. Further, they liked to play sports and would affiliate themselves with athletes. Both of them had an organizational base in which they conducted their work with muscular Christianity, with Moody doing much of his work with the YMCA and Graham doing his work with Youth for Christ. However, Graham's affiliation with sport lasted much longer than D.L. Moody's.

Similar institutions. Both historic and modern muscular Christians used the institutions available to them at the time to promote their ideology. Since the rise of the megachurch setting did not begin until 1955 (Thumma, 1996), historic muscular Christians used the platform of the YMCA and similar institutions to spread their message. However, the megachurch provided a platform for modern muscular Christian faith to integrate itself into the community.

The megachurch is a relatively recent social phenomenon, with a distinct pattern of organization and programs. Thumma (1996) defines a megachurch as a church that has

2,000 worshippers attending on a weekly basis. With the incredible size of megachurch, the size alone serves as one of the primary promotional tools to a local community. Most megachurches are found in suburban areas, attracted to expansive, less expensive property. Megachurches tend to be non-denominational or loosely tied to a denomination, with most having a diverse range of attendees. Thumma (1996) describes three various expressions of their one Gospel message:

1. Nontraditional message: Those churches that seek to attract religious seekers and the unchurched.
2. Conventional approach: Churches that hold a traditional worship setting but with a large number of attendees. These generally form from a church that grows from a smaller church into a megachurch.
3. Composite approach: A blend of the nontraditional and conventional approach; seeks to provide the convenience of a nontraditional church building with the traditional symbols.

Other characteristics of a megachurch is its visionary identity and consumer-minded approach to the worshippers. These churches ordinarily offer a diverse range of programs and a highly-structured time of worship revolving around a relevant, motivating message. Generally, megachurches are led by innovative spiritual entrepreneurs, while the members tend to be drawn from middle-class, highly educated members of the community. However, there is growing research that the backgrounds of people that make up megachurches are still rather diverse (Thumma, 1996).

These megachurch settings have given rise to intra-church sport ministry settings, especially for those with exceptionally large memberships and plentiful facilities. For

example, Second Baptist Church of Houston, TX offers intramural sports for the surrounding community as an opportunity to share the Gospel. According to their sports manual, the church's adult sports division exists to "connect people [to] each other and to new life through Christ" ("FLC sports manual," n.d.). Further, the leagues are places where "teamwork is encouraged, relationships are built, and Christ-like character is emphasized" ("FLC sports manual," n.d.). The church designates captains as spiritual leaders for their intramural teams, leading devotions after each event ("FLC sports manual," n.d.). Many megachurches also promote physical health and wellness programs that are grounded in Biblical teaching, which assumes the role formerly taken by organizations such as the YMCA. Saddleback Church's pastor Rick Warren has established "The Daniel Plan," a weight loss strategy that incorporates spiritual concepts and has been used by many of his church members as well as the Christian community as a whole (Fields, 2013).

Megachurches have also built gymnasiums to both promote physical well-being of members as well as to provide an outreach to the community. Brainerd Baptist Church of Chattanooga, TN, opened a gymnasium and workout facility called the Brainerd Crossroads Center, which started off with 200 members but had 3,000 members at the time of Fields' article (2013). These activities hopefully help counter findings found in a 1998 study by Purdue University, which came to the conclusion that "religious people are more likely to be overweight than are nonreligious people" (De Grotte, 2011). Ken Ferraro, one of the leaders of the Purdue study, specifically stated that at the time of the study that "America is becoming a nation of gluttony and obesity, and churches are a feeding ground for this problem" (Fields, 2013). Fields (2013) states that these church

wellness programs are designed to address the total health of the body, whether in the body, mind, or spirit.

Megachurch sport and wellness programs increasingly mirror those of the earlier YMCA programs. Both sought (seek) to apply muscular Christian principles to their communities. While the YMCA functioned outside an individual church's leadership, the megachurch provides a platform to practice modern muscular Christian principles in an individual church setting, which is enhanced by its financial benefits.

Similar ministries. One of the interesting similarities between both historic and modern muscular Christian proponents is their shared emphasis upon parachurch organizations to support the role of the Church. Galli (2014) writes that parachurch ministries began in 1810 with the establishment of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Ever since, parachurch ministries have come alongside local churches to assist them in reaching their communities, and even have taken on a leadership role in some circumstances. One of the prime benefits of a parachurch ministry is that it can focus on a specific core issue, whereas the church itself holds to a variety of programs. These parachurch ministries assist and lead church efforts by keeping sound theology that aligns with evangelical beliefs while providing a focused vision on an issue (Galli, 2014). Saunders (2015) writes that "parachurch groups ought to come alongside churches to provide ministries those churches cannot fulfill alone."

As opposed to the megachurches' intra-sport ministries that have recently become popular, parachurch ministries exist outside the church with the emphasis to bring people into it. Both historic and modern muscular Christians utilized this form of ministry. In the historic movement, D.L. Moody's Northfield Conferences provide a sort of parachurch

movement that existed to bring people from varying backgrounds and evangelical churches together for the purpose of equipping them for ministry efforts on their campuses. Likewise, the YMCA existed outside the church with the purpose of providing Bible teaching and physical training to young men. In modern muscular Christianity, ministries such as the "big three" (Sports Ambassadors, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action) exist with a specialized sport focus unique to the church. These groups identify with broader evangelical Christianity as opposed to a specific church and provide a distinct ministry to assist churches in a particular way.

Contrast of Historic and Modern Muscular Christianity

While there are some overarching similarities between the two movements, the differences between them are abundant. In order to most effectively share the differences between the two movements, the first half of the contrast will explain the unique components of historic muscular Christianity while the second half of it will point out the paralleled unique components of modern muscular Christian faith. It is vital to emphasize that the themes presented here are broad and attempt to capture the general attitude of the people they involved, but there were still many individuals within each movement who did not hold to each of these beliefs. The chart below provides a brief overview of distinctions between historic and modern muscular Christian faith, which will be explored in the following pages.

Table 2. *Contrast of Historic and Modern Muscular Christianity*

Historic	**Modern**
Postmillennialism	Premillennialism
Social gospel theology	Fundamentalist theology
Intrinsic value of sport	Extrinsic value of sport
Patriotic and American-centered movement	Salvation-centered movement

Historic muscular Christian thought. Historic muscular Christian thought held to postmillennial doctrine, a social Gospel theology, the intrinsic value of sport, and was largely a patriotic and American-centered movement.

Postmillennialism. The historic muscular Christian practices were grounded in postmillennial beliefs. The millennial concept is a Christian doctrine that teaches that there is a time when those who were Christians will "[come] to life and [reign] with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4, ESV). Differing interpretations of Revelation 20:4-5 have resulted in various forms of eschatology, which is "the study of 'the last things', or future events" from a biblical perspective (Grudem, 1999, p. 483). Grudem explains that the three major views of the Christian millennium are the a-millennial view, the postmillennial view, and the premillennial view. The postmillennial view teaches that Christ will return after the millennial reign of the Christian body. This view holds that the millennium of Revelation 20:4-5 is currently happening through the universal church, or the global Christian body. According to this view, the spread of the Gospel will occur through Christian believers so that the growth of the church will

continually increase, making a larger proportion of the world's population Christian. The growth of Christianity around the globe will result in a more Godly society, which ultimately will lead to the millennium of peace and righteousness mentioned in the Scriptures. The postmillennial theology is very optimistic about the power of the Gospel to transform lives and the world as a whole. Postmillennialists will argue their position from the context of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Christ's parables of the gradual growth of His kingdom (such as Matthew 13:31-32), and from their belief that the world is progressively becoming more Christian (Grudem, 1999).

Postmillennialism tends to thrive during times of peace. Grudem (1999) states that "belief in postmillennialism tends to increase in times when the church is experiencing great revival, when there is an absence of war and international conflict, and when it appears that great progress is being made in overcoming the evil and suffering in the world" (pp. 439-440). This would definitely apply to the historic muscular Christian movement, which occurred before some of the darkest times in American history such as World War I & II and the Great Depression. Historic muscular Christian organizations generally held to the postmillennial view, which was stressed by the British idea of "making the good of society better" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 56). This idea stressed that society in itself was good and the muscular Christians of this time thought that activity in sports would lead to an even further improved society. The YMCA certainly held to this view, as it looked to sports to build character among middle and upper class boys. This view would lead to the opinion that strenuous activity would develop young men of character, as seen in the development of the Boy Scouts and Knights of King Arthur (Putney, 2001).

Social gospel theology. Historic muscular Christian faith adopted much of the philosophy held by social gospel proponents. Since the social gospel movement arose in the years following the American Civil War and enjoyed a prominent standpoint in academic circles until 1915, historic muscular Christians were generally influenced by it in varying degrees. The social gospel, according to Deichmann (2015), is "the application of the teachings of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions such as the state, the family, as well as to individuals" (p. 203). Thus, American social gospel proponents sought conversion not only of individuals, but of the whole society, seeking to build the kingdom of God on earth starting in the United States.

According to Deichmann (2015), the American population in the years following the Civil War experienced much wartime trauma and loss of lives, relocation of emancipated slaves, increasing industrialization and urbanization, and an influx of immigrants. The common view of America as a "godly nation" was progressively eroding in the midst of an increasingly harsh and seemingly more sinful society. Wage depression, high illiteracy and unemployment rates, poverty, racial discrimination, poor sanitation, plagues of human trafficking, lynching, liquor abuse, and civic corruption were rampant during this time. Proponents of the social gospel pointed to the advent of the kingdom of God, the first and second Great Commandments (Matthew 22:34-40), and the golden rule as hallmarks for their engagement with society. Advocacy for women's suffrage along with the fight against slavery and racial discrimination arose out of the social gospel movement, helping lead to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. The social gospel also challenged the practices

of unchecked capitalism, which was a growing fear during the late 19th century (Deichmann, 2015). Deichmann (2015) explains that the social gospel "includes ongoing, grassroots efforts to live out a faith beyond personal piety in order to transform communities, the nations and the world according to a common sense understanding of the teachings of Jesus about salvation and the Kingdom of God" (p. 206).

In the 1880s, churches began to take more active roles in their community, which was largely neglected before that time. Arguments such as those made by Henry C. King (former president of Oberlin College) asserted that the church needed more relevance in American society. Thus, muscular Christian proponents pressured churches to emphasize the masculine aspects of Christianity as opposed to the creedal facet that characterized many churches of the time. The church had become overly dominated by women, so men sought to reclaim the masculine aspects of Christianity against the overly feminine practices of the church. Proponents of the social gospel were likewise drawn to muscular Christian faith. Josiah Strong, a leader of the social gospel movement and active muscular Christian activist, stated that "if the true Christian aim is service, not ecstasy, then that is the most Christian treatment of the body which fits it for the most perfect, the most abounding, the longest-continued service in upbuilding the kingdom of God" (Strong, 1893, p. 32). Thus, social gospel believers viewed the muscular Christian emphasis upon strong bodies as a way to increase the capacity of each individual to serve in the work of God (Putney, 2001).

Deichmann (2015) points to the African Methodist Episcopal pastor Reverdy Ransom as a prime example of the practice of the social gospel. Ransom founded Chicago's Institutional Church and Social Settlement in 1900 to meet the needs of blacks

and immigrants moving into the city. He developed programs of men's and women's clubs, childcare assistance, classes, and concerts for those people. Further, his residential city mission included an auditorium, dining room, kitchen, and gymnasium. This broader emphasis on the total well-being of individuals as opposed to the previous emphasis upon spiritual well-being would eventually shift to the YMCA. The YMCA would leave its earlier emphasis placed upon evangelism and mission work and replace it with social gospel work following World War I (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). However, muscular Christian emphasis upon the social gospel had the unintended consequence of eroding the boundaries of the sacred and the secular along with equating health and manliness with divinity (Putney, 2001).

Intrinsic value of sport. Various resolutions to explain the relationship between the soul and body have been made throughout church history. The Apostle Paul's writing that "bodily training is of some value, [while] godliness is of value in every way" (1 Timothy 4:8, ESV) could be seen as a source of the mistrust of recreation among the church. In the Middle Ages, the church adopted a Platonian philosophy, emphasizing intellect to the neglect of physical virtue. However, the Protestant Reformation encouraged various fresh approaches to sport. On the one hand, Martin Luther approved of sport and recreational activities, while John Calvin and his theological teachings remained unconcerned with those activities. There were multiple reasons for the church's general distrust of sport, such as beliefs that recreation detracted from spiritual devotions, was a waste of time, had unsavory connections with taverns and gambling, or that recreation would prove to be too addictive given humanity's sinful nature (Putney, 2001).

According to Putney (2001), “the decades following the 1870s witnessed a growing clerical acceptance of sport – first in the cities, then in the countryside” (pp. 53-54). It was increasingly believed that there were too many “weak” Christians and that there was a growing fate of unhealthy clergy suffering from nervous diseases, and sport was viewed as a necessary medicine. Heightened medical evidence of the benefits for exercise materialized during this time, giving rise to a “new theology” – one in which the individual viewed the body and soul as co-partners, not enemies. Churches realized that they needed recreational activities in order to stay relevant in society. The “body as temple” theologians (which was based upon 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, which states that “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you” [ESV]) praised the body as a vehicle for good, teaching that physical upkeep of the body was a virtue while physical neglect of it was a sin. The “body as temple” theology manifested itself in prep school addresses, college sermons, and YMCA periodicals. Themes of making health Scriptural (including portraying biblical characters as physical specimen) and glorification of the body emanated as a result (Putney, 2001).

Many important muscular Christian figures further emphasized the intrinsic value to be found in sport. James Naismith, the inventor of basketball, believed that playing sports yielded a positive educational experience. In fact, he viewed basketball as a means of teaching people about morality and Christian values. He decried the changing state of athletics in his time, voicing that “so much stress is laid today on the winning of games that practically all else is lost sight of, and the fine elements of manliness and true sportsmanship are accorded a secondary place” (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 70). Another historic muscular Christian proponent who emphasized the inherent goodness of sport

was Amos Alonzo Stagg. He viewed his football coaching position as a place in which he could teach the morality to be found in sports. He thought that he could accomplish more good on the athletic field than in the pulpit. Men such as Edward Hitchcock (first college professor of physical education), Dio Lewis (founder of the first teacher training institute for physical educators), and Luther Gulick (one of muscular Christianity's main theorists and a head figure of the YMCA) all saw the gym and playing field as places to teach the truth of the Gospel. Physical education classes in American school systems actually developed from muscular Christian thought (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). The YMCA eventually became the leader of teaching character and instilling values through athletics, although it had many battles throughout its history. One of the large disagreements in regards to the vision of the YMCA was the battle of the postmillennialists and the premillennialists who both had different beliefs in how the YMCA should view sport and evangelism. The postmillennial camp would ultimately win out, leading to the YMCA's further acceptance of the intrinsic values of sport, as postmillennialists generally believed that sport was inherently a vehicle of good (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

While postmillennialism and the intrinsic value of sport were beliefs that the YMCA eventually adopted, the Northfield Conferences of D.L. Moody provided a contrast in thought during the historic muscular Christian time period. The Northfield Conferences typically embraced a premillennial viewpoint along with an extrinsic value of sport, which were beliefs that are more in accordance with modern muscular Christianity rather than historic muscular Christianity. The Student Volunteer Movement would arise out of the Northfield Conferences, which emphasized action to evangelize the world within the students' generation (Winter, 1985). These are examples that fall

outside the commonly held views of historic muscular Christianity but still proved to be an extensive influence on the movement (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Patriotic and American-centered movement. That the historic muscular Christian movement arose from a sense of patriotism and American pride is evident in how it was used to justify American intervention in World War I. It is no surprise that Charles Kingsley, one of the original proponents of muscular Christianity alongside of Thomas Hughes, justified his beliefs by acknowledging that it could be used to improve England as a country. According to Kingsley, an ingrained muscular Christianity philosophy would lead to better physical activity for English men, thereby strengthening their military. He justified muscular Christianity for the sake of the country, not necessarily for the sake of the kingdom of God. In fact, Cardinal Newman, a leader in the Church of England, rebuked Kingsley and said that his philosophy better squared with Islam (Putney, 2001).

As stated earlier, the rise of muscular Christian thought along with the popularity of the social gospel blurred the lines between what was to be considered sacred and secular. Consequently, a secularized version of muscular Christianity developed, which was strongly emphasized by one of its most famous followers, U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt promoted what is known as “the strenuous life” (Rader, 2004, p. 131). The strenuous life was stressed by progressive reformers that encouraged a shift from a religiously-focused to a fitness-focused America. Drawing from a Darwinian perspective, those of the Anglo-Saxon race feared that they would be wiped out because of their withdrawal from active lifestyles into lives of comfort and ease. Since the Civil War was over and there was no longer a frontier for the American population to conquer

to the west, “the elite manifested its activism in an aggressive nationalism, an intense interest in untamed nature, and an enthusiasm for organized sports” (Rader, 2004, p. 131). The “strenuous life” was a lifestyle that began being promoted in the 1890s to counteract the office work culture with sports and physical activity (Rader, 2004, pp. 130-134).

Roosevelt even used politics as a field to practice his masculinity, preaching many of the ideals of the muscular Christians during that time. He emphasized the virtues of athleticism, the outdoors as a remedy for urban life, improved character as an impediment to vice, and the necessity of opposing race suicide (which was an anxiety among Americans that feared their society was becoming over-civilized and would ultimately weaken them to the point that they would no longer be able to support themselves in an increasingly competitive world). Interestingly, he believed that God would use America to redeem the world. His Bull Moose Party campaign song was “Onward Christian Soldiers,” and he was viewed as a messiah-like figure by the Boy Scouts of America. During this time, he helped change the perception of the ideal college man from an intellectual to an athlete (Putney, 2001).

Roosevelt was also a proponent of the social gospel. He believed that the work of the Lord “can be done only by the man who is neither a weakling nor a coward” (Reisner, 1922, p. 254) but only by one who was physically fit. He admired the missionary work of groups such as the Laymen’s Missionary Movement, which believed that the key to increasing male missionaries was the addition of the element of heroism. It could be said that these missionary movements did more to spread the sports and culture of Western civilization than the Gospel itself. For “in the end their converts to Western sport

outnumbered those to Christianity" (Putney, 2001, p. 133), which made it appear to be more of a progressive movement than a Christian movement.

Theodore Roosevelt's beliefs also helped to establish a belief in American superiority. American muscular Christians during World War I viewed the war as a time to stress the masculine benefits of war while encouraging young men to participate. Muscular Christians were increasingly fearful of the feminized perception of men in America and thought that the war would be a necessary countermeasure to draw the men back to their masculinity. While not all churches supported the war efforts, increasingly pastors among churches in the U.S. looked to the U.S. government as the source that had the potential to solve the world's problems. They began to believe that the key to world peace would be through U.S. dominance in the world and the spread of Western culture and traditions. Roosevelt believed that churches that held onto their pacifistic stances were agents of the devil himself. However, because of the massive human death toll in World War I and the devastating effects on humanity, churches were quick to retract their stance on the war afterward. This led to the state of "normalcy" following World War I, when people regained their anti-war stances. The historic view of muscular Christian principles with its emphasis upon American exceptionalism was rejected by society as a whole (Putney, 2001).

Modern muscular Christian thought. Modern muscular Christian thought holds to a premillennial doctrine, fundamentalist theology, the extrinsic value of sport, and is a salvation-centered movement.

Premillennialism. In contrast to the postmillennial thought of the historic muscular Christian movement, the modern muscular Christians holds predominately to a

premillennialist theology. Interestingly, “premillennialism has tended to increase in popularity as the church has experienced persecution and as suffering and evil have increased in the earth” (Grudem, 1999, p. 443). According to Grudem (1999), two types of premillennial viewpoints are common. The first is classic, or historic, premillennialism, which teaches that Christ will return once before His coming kingdom that is mentioned in Revelation 20:4-5. The millennial reign of Christ will be a physical kingdom with Christ as the King of the world and the Christian believers reigning alongside him. However, the other conviction on this position is referred to as pretribulational (or dispensational) premillennialism. This view is similar to the classic premillennialist view except that it involves two separate returns of Christ. One return of Christ will involve the “rapture” of the church, which is when Christ secretly returns to gather His church before the period known as the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation is believed to be a seven year period in which God pours out His judgement upon a world that rejected Him. Following the Great Tribulation, Christ will return again, this time to set up His millennial kingdom (Grudem, 1999). In disagreement with the postmillennialists, the premillennialists do not believe that the present age can represent the “millennium” since the church is under constant persecution and because of the increasing evil upon the earth.

Grudem (1999) and Chapman (2009) show that the dispensationalist premillennialism movement gained widespread popularity in the United States and the United Kingdom toward the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century. Chapman (2009) shows that the dispensationalist view was developed by the Irish clergyman John Nelson Darby (who lived from 1800-1882) and was advanced in the

United States largely through the *Scofield Reference Bible* (published in 1909). The rise in recent dispensational thought can be attributed widely to the best-selling *Left Behind* series. According to Chapman (2009), "premillennialists assume that prior to the Second Coming (of Christ), humans will be largely incapable of doing anything to improve their own degenerate condition" (p. 5). Thus, Ladd & Mathisen (1999) would emphasize that while the postmillennialist emphasized "making the good of society better", the premillennialist would emphasize "making the bad of society good" (p. 56).

Since the premillennial movement began in the 1800s, it still had an influence upon the historic muscular Christian movement. This is highlighted in the disagreements between the premillennialists and postmillennialists on how the YMCA should operate. The postmillennialists ultimately won the YMCA battle, pushing many of the premillennialists to form the Northfield Conferences. Premillennialist theology would be one of the essential components of the fundamentalist theology that characterizes the modern muscular Christian. Billy Graham, the preacher who helped legitimize the reengagement of sport with Christianity, was a proponent of the premillennial view. One of the implications of the premillennial view was its urgent call for evangelism. Since premillennialism taught that society as a whole would gradually become more evil until the return of Christ, muscular Christians looked less to sport as an opportunity to improve society and more as an avenue to "save souls." The modern muscular Christian uses sport more as an opportunity for evangelism than as an avenue to build character, which contrasts with the historic muscular Christian movement (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Fundamentalist theology. Woodberry & Smith (1998) write of the historic development of the fundamentalist movement among American Protestants.

Fundamentalism is a movement that grew out of the 19th century evangelical movement. Following the Civil War, tensions began to arise over Northern evangelical leaders on the issues of Darwinism and biblical inerrancy. Out of these tensions arose the fundamentalist/modernist split. Modernists attempted to modify their Christian faith with contemporary views of scientific thought. In response, a series of monographs called *The Fundamentals of the Christian Religion* was written, giving rise to fundamentalist viewpoints. These writings emphasized the authority of Scripture, the veracity of biblical miracles, and salvation through Christ alone as the fundamental aspects of the Christian faith. The historic muscular Christian faith emphasized that the social gospel would lead to the betterment of society. However, the fundamentalists noticed that "society was not becoming better, it was becoming worse" and that "social reform and education could not overcome human sinfulness" (Woodberry & Smith, 1998, p. 28).

The fundamentalist movement faced significant defeats at the Scopes-Monkey Trial of 1925 and when the moderate Christians (those affiliated with neither the modernists nor fundamentalists) chose largely to side with the modernists for the sake of tolerance. The fundamentalists emphasized the literal interpretation of Scripture, dispensational premillennial theology, and institutional separation from what they considered to be apostasy (Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Billy Sunday was a prominent fundamentalist, preaching of the total truth of Scripture and the need for salvation through Christ alone. However, his death in 1935 signaled the death of fundamentalism to some people, who still had the memories of the Scopes trial in their minds. Fundamentalist activity would go largely unnoticed by the larger society from the 1930s until the 1950s (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Following World War I, muscular Christian thought gradually faded from liberal seminaries and churches. Instead, fundamentalist churches began to adopt more of the muscular Christian thought and use it for their own purposes. Thus, as fundamentalist theology gradually disappeared from American societal influence, so went muscular Christian philosophy (Putney, 2001). However, Billy Graham and the Youth for Christ movement later pushed fundamentalist thought back into the spotlight of American society (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Christian groups like the Moral Majority and the Religious Right in the 1970s founded by influential individuals such as Jerry Falwell Sr. and Pat Robertson suggests the impact of fundamentalist thought upon American politics (Banwart, 2013). In the early 1990s, as fundamentalism was becoming more mainstream, more churches began using sport as an opportunity to reach the lost (Church Sports Outreach, n.d.).

Interestingly, the fundamentalist movement also separated into two distinct theological camps. One was opposed to cultural change and modernist religion absolutely, while the other (accommodational fundamentalism) was given to revivalism and saving souls, even if that meant working alongside suspect denominations. The Youth for Christ movement began to identify with the accommodationalist faction, which included Torrey Johnson and Billy Graham. Johnson and Graham both found that through the influence of sports, they could legitimize their message of fundamental evangelicalism, which had been previously marginalized (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Extrinsic value of sport. Whereas historic muscular Christian followers emphasized the intrinsic value of sport (that is, the ability of sport in itself to produce the moral attributes that were desired), the modern muscular Christian movement views sport

more as a platform upon which to evangelize. Woods (2007) states that today's athletes typically use sport to promote their individual religious beliefs. In fact, a popular justification for intense dedication to sport is the ability to evangelize. Evangelicals in sport have been encouraged to "witness for Christ" on the athletic field, which is a term that largely has fundamentalist roots. Professional athletes use their platform to design charities that are affiliated with their own religious beliefs. Ministries such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes look to distinguished Christian athletes as means to legitimize the Gospel for the secular world (in a sense) and give their ministry publicity. In modern muscular Christianity, athletes look to their own athletic accomplishments and publicity as a platform for which they can then share the Gospel, such as Tim Tebow's eye-black Bible verses on nationally televised games (Woods, 2007).

The negative effects of looking to sport solely for its extrinsic benefit of providing a platform upon which to do ministry are evident by an increasing number of Christian athletes who are struggling to justify their commitment to high-competition sport. This was highlighted by Billy Sunday's abandonment of professional baseball, but Stevenson (1997) provides relatively recent perspective on Christian engagement in sport. Stevenson conducted interviews with 31 college athletes from the Athletes in Action ministry, questioning them on how their Christian faith intersected with their athletic pursuits. He notes that many Christian values, such as meekness, appear to contradict many of the sport attitudes that are remarkably esteemed, such as aggressiveness.

While interviewing these athletes, Stevenson (1997) noticed that there were common difficulties the athletes expressed in reconciling their Christian faith with their sport. First, the athletes struggled with the importance of winning that was constantly

stressed in their athletic environments. Winning, when taken as an absolute necessity, can oppose Christian values, and the overemphasis on winning in collegiate athletics created an uncomfortable environment for these athletes. Secondly, the athletes struggled with the importance of social status in sport along with their temptation to find their self-worth in performance alone. The athletes acknowledged that their sporting success generally caters to a spirit of pride. Thirdly, these athletes struggled with their relationships with their teammates and their coaches. Collegiate coaches often use forms of humiliation or shaming of their players in order to motivate them to perform better. The athletes had a tough time responding in a Christian manner to this behavior. The athletes' relationships with their teammates were hard because of the intense competition they had with each other for the spots on the roster. Fourthly, the athletes struggled to properly relate with their opponents, with many athletes being encouraged to go beyond the rules of sport to intimidate their opposition. They also tackled with the supposed paradox of dominating your opponent while also abiding by the rules of the game and displaying a sportsmanlike attitude. Lastly, the athletes struggled with the expectations that others had placed upon them as athletes in their social settings, such as the pressure to succeed in sport while also living up to the higher standards put upon them as athletes to engage with the student body (Stevenson, 1997).

The modern muscular Christian would emphasize the extrinsic values to be found in sport, which were how most of the 31 athletes in the study were able to reconcile their faith to sport. For a good deal of the athletes, "the difficulties they experienced came to a head in the form of crises, whereas for others, the difficulties forced the athletes to begin to question the very meaning of their sporting practices" (Stevenson, 1997, p. 248). In

fact, 3 of the 31 athletes eventually went on to reject the sporting culture in which they were involved. For those that remained, coming to faith in Christ allowed for a way to cope with the demands of athletics and give their activities a higher purpose. They found their self-worth in "playing for God", not in winning. Some of the athletes that remained dedicated to their sport began justifying the non-Christian elements of their sport as unfortunate means necessary for evangelistic opportunities in their sport. Many athletes saw that winning and popularity could be redeemed for the purpose of evangelism, enhancing their drive in their sport. Thus, "the demands of the dominant sport culture, therefore, become more legitimate as means of achieving a sacred goal" (Stevenson, 1997, p. 260). This study illustrates the fact that the athletes tended not to see the virtue of sport in and of itself, but in the ability to use it (even if it contradicted their beliefs) to provide a platform upon which to share the Gospel, thus legitimizing their practices.

Salvation-centered movement. If the historic muscular Christian movement is looked upon as a movement that fostered a sense of patriotism and national pride, the modern muscular Christian movement can be thought as one in which the ultimate desire is to convert people to Christ. Indeed, while the historic movement was heralded by individuals such as Theodore Roosevelt and proponents of American exceptionalism, the modern movement arose from a fundamentalist background in which the desire was to "save souls." Hence, this further emphasizes the point made earlier about the extrinsic view of sport – the view that sport provides a neutral platform upon which the good of evangelism could be done. The development of institutional sport ministries as well as the materialization of the sport chaplaincy was encouraged by modern muscular Christian proponents.

Tucker (2012) underlines that the main theme of modern sport ministry is that of evangelism. Those who participate in sport ministry believe that the sporting arena is an ideal place for reaching unchurched people. The sport ministry concept was reasoned from the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:22, which emphasizes finding ways to connect with the people in one's own culture. Proponents of sport ministry follow Paul's methodology and believe that sporting activity is a platform that helps promote the Gospel. Tucker (2012) emphasizes that sport helps individuals cross potential cultural barriers, helping unify Christians from different cultures and creating opportunities for evangelism where they normally would not be accepted. One needs only to look at the mission statements amongst the numerous sporting ministries in order to see that the end goal of their work is to provide a platform upon which to present the Gospel. As an example, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes mission statement is "to present to coaches and athletes, and all whom they influence, the challenge and adventure of receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, serving Him in their relationships and in the fellowship of the church" (Fellowship of Christian Athletes, 2015).

Sport ministries also helped to encourage the sport chaplaincy. Ladd & Mathisen (1999) show that chaplains were the result of American fascination with sport and religion. The chaplaincy developed within the sporting world in the 1970s, with many influential figures helping shape the "ideal" sport chaplain. Among those was Pat Richie, who was a former director for Athletes in Action and served as the chaplain for the San Francisco 49ers. He combined his background in Christian ministry with his familiarity in sports, developing three elements of his sport chaplaincy ministry: weekly group chapels, small group studies, and one-on-one training. Further, he led training sessions

for other sport chaplains, spreading his ideas on the ministry. Max Helton, who was the founder of the Motor Racing Outreach, would travel to all the NASCAR race sites, serving as a chaplain for the racers. He developed such close relationships with some of the NASCAR members that he even buried some of them and offered death counseling to others. Cris Stevens serves as the chaplain for the Ladies Professional Golf Association, providing a different perspective to the chaplaincy as a woman. She assists the mothers who are competing by providing ways for their children to have early religious education and helps organize teams of golfers to participate in Habitat for Humanity work. Another influential chaplain was Henry Soles, who served as a chaplain for the Chicago Bulls. He is important to note because of the different subculture that runs in the National Basketball Association, which is much less structuralized in its chaplaincy approach. All of these men and women have been instrumental in helping develop the chaplaincy to where it is today. As sport chaplains, they provide points of contact for sport ministries to engage in professional sport settings. While the historic muscular Christian faith viewed sport itself as the agent of good, the modern view does not, which encouraged institutional sport ministries as well as the role of the sport chaplain (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999).

Globalization of Muscular Christianity

Future Christian athletes, whether recreational or professional, will be entering an increasingly global sporting world. Major sport leagues (such as the NBA, NFL, MLB, and NHL) are seeking to expand their influence outside the traditional walls of the U.S. market through multinational company sponsorships, international sporting events, and by recruiting athletes from other countries. Team sport apparel is increasingly global, and

it is common to see highly equitable team brand attire worn across the world (such as the New York Yankees or Manchester United). Fantasy sporting leagues and online video games have allowed people from opposite ends of the world to connect with each other and compete with sport teams. Major world competitions, such as the Olympics and the World Cup, are readily available to the typical consumer by continually expanding media options (Ratten, 2011). Indeed, the globalization of sport opens opportunities for Christians to engage with the world at a greater scale.

Interestingly, CSR (corporate social responsibility) has become a major emphasis for modern business organizations in light of this globalization. CSR can be defined as "situations where the firm goes beyond compliance and engages in actions that appear some social good," including those cases that go outside the direct concerns of the organization (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006, p. 1). These businesses include sporting organizations, as there is an "increasingly higher demand for social and ethical behavior by people involved in sport" (Ratten, 2011, p. 683). In fact, CSR allows organizations to achieve their international objectives by working alongside public institutions and nongovernmental organizations to help them achieve their goals. Thus, the emphasis on CSR has enabled sport organizations to have greater impacts in their community (Ratten, 2011). This emphasis on CSR can be strategically utilized by Christians in the athletic realm.

Ratten (2011) asserts that "sport is a platform and agent for positive social change" (p. 683). As an example, the United Nations uses sport as a peace-building activity (Ratten, 2011). Both the globalization of sport along with the emphasis upon CSR should encourage Christians that participate in sport. Sport ministries such as the

International Sports Federation (ISF) have arisen to take advantage of the global marketplace by sharing the Gospel while providing a public service to the people in the areas in which they work. It was founded in 1993 and "seeks to change the world through sports" (International Sports Federation, n.d.). However, ISF is not alone. Sport ministries are increasingly globally focused – such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, which has recently instituted strategic efforts toward international outreach (Seward, 2013). Future muscular Christian efforts appear to be progressively more international in scope.

Conclusion

Muscular Christianity has been a defining movement through post-Civil War U.S. history. The development of muscular Christian ideals reflects the historical ideologies of the corresponding times. As sport ascended into popularity following the removal of belief systems that hindered progress of recreational activities, Christians began seeing sport as an opportunity to counter the concerns of over-civilization and the feminization of men. Following World War I, Christians followed the general American populace in a time characterized by disengagement from sport. However, following World War II in the 1940s, Christians began a gradual reengagement with sport inspired by individuals such as Billy Graham and Gil Dodds. This active engagement has lasted up until today as Christians are still using their athletic platforms to promote their faith.

As examined, modern muscular Christianity has many similarities with historic muscular Christianity. However, there are still many theological beliefs and practices that differentiate the two systems of thought. Both historic and modern muscular Christians had similar influential figures, similar institutions, and similar ministries to help spread

their message. However, historic muscular Christianity held to postmillennial beliefs, preached a social gospel, promoted the intrinsic value of sport, and used sport as an opportunity to stimulate patriotism and nationalism. In contrast, modern muscular Christianity holds to a premillennial belief, preaches from a stronger fundamentalist standpoint, promotes the extrinsic values of sport, and uses sport as an opportunity to preach salvation and "save souls."

In light of this research, it is essential that future Christian involvement in sport be based upon biblical principles rather than wavering cultural influences. Indeed, Christians should be well-informed of the culture around them and seek to reach people where they are. As a prime example, the Apostle Paul, in Acts 17:16-34, addressed the Areopagus by explaining that the one true God is the ultimate fulfillment of their own cultural teachings. Paul stated that he had "become all things to all people, that by all means I [Paul] might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22, ESV). However, core biblical foundations remain eternal, and Christians in sport should not compromise those bedrock principles because of a cultural fad.

Sport can be used as both a platform to physically mature and build character for the individual as well as to share the Gospel message. This implies that it has both intrinsic and extrinsic value for the Christian. This also simultaneously fulfills the primary goals of sport for both the postmillennialist and the premillennialist. The postmillennial tends to view sport as an occasion to build individual character, which sport certainly accomplishes. The premillennialist tends to view sporting activity as an opening to share the Gospel, which it surely is. Christians should use sport "to the glory

of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV), which assuredly includes taking care of one's body, building Christian character, and sharing the Good News of Christ.

Both the historic emphasis upon the social gospel and the modern emphasis on fundamentalist theology have advantages and weaknesses. The social gospel tends to teach the development of society to the exclusion of the individual's need for repentance. Modern fundamentalists can sometimes overemphasize the need to be "born-again" without the message of the overall plan of God to redeem the world. Truly, both elements are necessary in order to properly understand the overall Gospel message. Future Christians in sport can use sport as both a vehicle to better society as a whole as well as to share the urgency of biblical repentance to non-believers.

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