



Sport in the Global Society: Historical Perspectives

SPORT AND CHRISTIANITY

Edited by Hugh McLeod, Nils Martinus Justvik, and Rob Hess



Sport and Christianity

Sport and Christianity examines sport and Christianity from a variety of historical perspectives, with the main focus on the period from the nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries.

The book is not limited to a narrow definition of Christianity, but rather encompasses a wide range of denominations, related philosophies and viewpoints. The contributors are international, and the geographical range of their chapters is equally wide, extending, for example, from China to Argentina, and from Australia to Poland. Some chapters focus on a single sport such as gymnastics, soccer or Australian Rules football, while others look at modern sports more generally. Different methodological and theoretical approaches have been adopted, as contributors enter the debates on topics as varied as cultural imperialism, gender, changing Christian attitudes to leisure, or the intersection between religion, politics and sport.

Demonstrating the many-sided significance of the relationship between Christianity and sport, this book is ideal for scholars of Sport History and Christianity. This book was originally published as a special issue of *The International Journal of the History of Sport*.

Hugh McLeod is Emeritus Professor of Church History at the University of Birmingham, UK.

Nils Martinius Justvik is Associate Professor of History at the University of Agder, Norway.

Rob Hess is Adjunct Associate Professor with the Institute for Sport and Health at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

Sport in the Global Society: Historical Perspectives

Series Editors: Mark Dyreson, Thierry Terret, and Rob Hess

Titles in the Series:

Sport in the Americas

Local, Regional, National, and International Perspectives

Edited by Mark Dyreson

Sport and Protest

Global Perspectives

Edited by Cathal Kilcline

A Half Century of Super Bowls

National and Global Perspectives on America's Grandest Spectacle

Edited by Mark Dyreson and Peter Hopsicker

Sport in Socialist Yugoslavia

Edited by Dario Brentin and Dejan Zec

The Olympic Movement and the Middle East and North African Region

Edited by Mahfoud Amara

Sport Development and Olympic Studies

Past, Present, and Future

Edited by Stephan Wassong, Michael Heine and Rob Hess

Match-Fixing and Sport

Historical Perspectives

Edited by Mike Huggins and Rob Hess

Sport and Christianity

Historical Perspectives

Edited by Hugh McLeod, Nils Martinius Justvik and Rob Hess

For more information about this series, please visit:

<https://www.routledge.com/Sport-in-the-Global-Society—Historical-perspectives/book-series/SGSH>

Sport and Christianity

Historical Perspectives

Edited by

**Hugh McLeod, Nils Martinus Justvik,
and Rob Hess**

First published 2020
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Foreword, Introduction, Chapters 1, 3–6 © 2020 Taylor & Francis

Chapter 2 © 2018 Alexander Maurits and Martin Nykvist. Originally published as Open Access.

With the exception of Chapter 2, no part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers. For details on the rights for Chapter 2, please see the chapter's Open Access footnote.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN13: 978-0-367-36906-4

Typeset in Minion Pro
by Newgen Publishing UK

Publisher's Note

The publisher accepts responsibility for any inconsistencies that may have arisen during the conversion of this book from journal articles to book chapters, namely the inclusion of journal terminology.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders for their permission to reprint material in this book. The publishers would be grateful to hear from any copyright holder who is not here acknowledged and will undertake to rectify any errors or omissions in future editions of this book.

Contents

<i>Citation Information</i>	vi
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	viii
<i>Series Editors' Foreword</i>	x
Mark Dyreson, Thierry Terret, and Rob Hess	
Introduction: Sport and Christianity: Historical Perspectives <i>Hugh McLeod, Nils Martinius Justvik and Rob Hess</i>	1
1 Gymnastics, Physical Education, Sport, and Christianity in Germany <i>Michael Krüger</i>	8
2 A Sportful History of Christianity: The Case of Twentieth-Century Sweden <i>Alexander Maurits and Martin Nykvist</i>	26
3 Cultural Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Modernization of Physical Education and Sport in China, 1840–1949 <i>Huijie Zhang, Fan Hong and Fuhua Huang</i>	42
4 Mormon Missionaries and the Emergence of Modern Argentine Sport, 1938–1943 <i>Ryan A. Davis</i>	60
5 'Necessary Cessation from Toil and Work': Young Christian Workers and the Question of Sport on Sundays in Post-War Melbourne <i>Melissa Jean Walsh and Nicholas Thomas Shaw Marshall</i>	86
6 'If God Be for Us, Who Can Be Against Us?': Religion and Religiousness in Polish Football, 2008–2017 <i>Michał Mazurkiewicz</i>	107
<i>Index</i>	121

Citation Information

The chapters in this book were originally published in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, volume 35, issue 1 (2018). When citing this material, please use the original page numbering for each article, as follows:

Introduction

Sport and Christianity: Historical Perspectives

Hugh McLeod, Nils Martinius Justvik, and Rob Hess

The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 1 (2018), pp. 1–8

Chapter 1

Gymnastics, Physical Education, Sport, and Christianity in Germany

Michael Krüger

The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 1 (2018), pp. 9–26

Chapter 2

A Sportful History of Christianity: The Case of Twentieth-Century Sweden

Alexander Maurits and Martin Nykvist

The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 1 (2018), pp. 27–42

Chapter 3

Cultural Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Modernization of Physical Education and Sport in China, 1840–1949

Huijie Zhang, Fan Hong and Fuhua Huang

The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 1 (2018), pp. 43–60

Chapter 4

Mormon Missionaries and the Emergence of Modern Argentine Sport, 1938–1943

Ryan A. Davis

The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 1 (2018), pp. 61–86

Chapter 5

'Necessary Cessation from Toil and Work': Young Christian Workers and the Question of Sport on Sundays in Post-War Melbourne

Melissa Jean Walsh and Nicholas Thomas Shaw Marshall

The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 1 (2018), pp. 87–107

Chapter 6

'If God Be for Us, Who Can Be Against Us?': Religion and Religiousness in Polish Football, 2008–2017

Michał Mazurkiewicz

The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 1 (2018), pp. 108–121

For any permission-related enquiries please visit:

www.tandfonline.com/page/help/permissions

Notes on Contributors

Ryan A. Davis is Professor at Illinois State University. The author or co-editor of three books on the cultural history of Spain, his current research explores the place of minority religions (e.g. Mormonism) in Spain and Latin America.

Rob Hess is Adjunct Associate Professor with the Institute for Sport and Health at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

Fan Hong is Professor in Asian Studies at Bangor University, UK. Her main research interests are in the areas of culture, politics, gender and sport, and she has published extensively in these areas.

Fuhua Huang is Professor at the School of Physical Education and Sports, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China. His main research interests are globalization and sport, the professionalization and commercialization of sport, sport history and traditional sports.

Michael Krüger is Professor at the University of Münster in Westfalia, Germany. His main research interests are in sport pedagogy and sport history, especially political, cultural, and ethical impacts of movement, physical education, gymnastics and sport.

Nicholas Thomas Shaw Marshall is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Health and Sport at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

Nils Martinus Justvik is Associate Professor of History at the University of Agder, Norway.

Alexander Maurits is Senior Lecturer in Church History at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University, Sweden. In his research, Maurits has, among other things, written about ideals of masculinity, household ideologies and the use of history.

Michał Mazurkiewicz is Associate Professor at Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland. He has published widely on sport and religion. His most recent book is *Sport and Religion: Muscular Christianity and the Young Men's Christian Association. Ideology, Activity and Expansion (Great Britain, the United States and Poland, 1857–1939)*, published 2018.

Hugh McLeod is Emeritus Professor of Church History at the University of Birmingham, UK.

Martin Nykvist is a PhD student in Church History at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University, Sweden. He has published on the relations between religion and sport, as well as on gender constructions in the Church of Sweden.

Melissa Jean Walsh, PhD, contributed to the establishment of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) Archive in 2013, coordinating the Archive and YCW Oral History Project until late 2017.

Huijie Zhang is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of History, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China. Her main research interests are in the areas of sports history, especially Christian involvement in sports in modern China, and traditional sports.

Series Editors' Foreword

Sport in the Global Society: Historical Perspectives explores the role of sport in cultures both around the world and across the timeframes of human history. In the world we currently inhabit, sport spans the globe. It captivates vast audiences. It defines, alters, and reinforces identities for individuals, communities, nations, empires, and the world. Sport organizes memories and perceptions, arouses passions and tensions, and reveals harmonies and cleavages. It builds and blurs social boundaries – animating discourses about class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Sport opens new vistas on the history of human cultures, intersecting with politics and economics, ideologies, and theologies. It reveals aesthetic tastes and energizes consumer markets.

Our challenge is to explain how sport has developed into a global phenomenon. The series continues the tradition established by the original incarnation of *Sport in the Global Society* (and in 2010 divided into *Historical Perspectives* and *Contemporary Perspectives*) by promoting the academic study of one of the most significant and dynamic forces in shaping the historical landscapes of human cultures.

In the twenty-first century, a critical mass of scholars recognizes the importance of sport in their analyses of human experiences. *Sport in the Global Society: Historical Perspectives* provides an international outlet for the leading investigators on these subjects. Building on previous work and excavating new terrain, our series remains a consistent and coherent response to the attention the academic community demands for the serious study of sport.

Mark Dyreson,
Thierry Terret,
and Rob Hess

Sport and Christianity: Historical Perspectives

Hugh McLeod, Nils Martinus Justvik and Rob Hess

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of a collection of works related to sport and Christianity from historical perspectives. After a brief general historiographical introduction, the material connected to the burgeoning field of sport and religion is summarized. In particular, it is noted that the works concentrate on diverse geographic locations and different time periods. The investigations are not limited to a narrow definition of Christianity, but encompass a wide range of denominations, related philosophies, and viewpoints. In terms of variety, it is noted that different methodological and theoretical approaches are adopted, and, given the existing state of play, it is clear that there is still much to be uncovered, documented, and written about when it comes to the enduring topic of sport and Christianity. The conclusion is that any research agenda which emerges from observations on historical perspectives concerning the relationship of sport with aspects of Christianity will continue to resonate and add value to wider understandings of sport, culture, and the human condition.

... [W]hile there is a significant amount of scholarship on sports and Christianity, there is a distinct lack of primary empirical research in the area.

Nick J. Watson and Andrew Parker¹

This collection of papers had its genesis at the 'Inaugural Global Congress on Sports and Christianity', which was hosted by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at York St John University, England, 24–28 August 2016. Convened by Nick Watson, the ambitious aims of the Congress, as set out in the programme, were to:

- Encourage global collaboration between academics, practitioners, politicians, clergy, administrators, and athletes
- Produce quality academic and practitioner publications that have societal impact
- Through intentional mentoring and collaboration, develop individuals in their sphere of influence

- Affect a ‘culture shift’ in modern sport through the sharing of ideas and practices and a ‘coming together’ of individuals from across the academic disciplines and all streams and denominations of Christianity, culminating in an inclusive and ecumenical event.²

The Congress was comprised of 12 ‘thematic strands’, one of which was ‘Historical Perspectives on Sports and Christianity’.³ A relatively small number of papers were presented on the day that this strand was scheduled, and the strand leaders (the authors of this paper and editors of the volume) agreed to elicit additional items by means of a further call for papers on the website of *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. While no specific theme was nominated, the editors encouraged the submission of papers on topics associated with sport, history, and Christianity from a range of temporal, geographic, methodological, and thematic perspectives. As it transpired, the process of peer-review and the final selection of submitted papers has produced a more than suitable palimpsest of material, reflecting a strong diversity of viewpoints, in part helping to address the dearth of ‘primary empirical research’ identified and bemoaned by Watson and Parker in their systematic, and exhaustive, review of relevant literature published in 2014.⁴

This is not to suggest that the field is barren. In fact, the general intersections between sport and religion have attracted unprecedented academic interest in the last two decades, and readers are directed to the recent works of Watson and Parker for an impressive mapping of the published material as it relates to sport and Christianity.⁵ Special issues of sport history journals devoted to sport and religion are also not new, as evidenced, for example, by a hefty multilingual 2009 volume of *Stadion* devoted to ‘... a stimulating historiographical debate on the relation between sport and religion’.⁶ Indeed, conferences dedicated to investigations of related themes, in some cases tied to the launch and activities of associated research centres (such as the Centre for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development at Neumann College, Philadelphia, in the United States, and the Centre for the Study of Sport and Spirituality at York St John University College, York, in England), pre-date the 2016 Congress at York. And, of course, serious academic analysis (inclusive of philosophical considerations of play and leisure) by trail-blazing historians and sociologists can be traced back at least to the first half of the twentieth century.⁷

With the partial exception of Michael Krüger’s paper, the concern here is with the years from the later nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. This period saw the emergence of the modern sporting world, including the global diffusion of the world sports of today, commercialization and professionalization, and increasing international competition. Five themes have been prominent in histories of Christianity and sport in this modern sporting world. First, much has been written about the movement known as ‘muscular Christianity’ which arose in the 1850s and 1860s in Britain and the United States, the countries in which a high proportion of the world sports of today have their origins.⁸ Second, historians have examined the role of the churches in relation to the rather different lines of sporting development in many parts of continental Europe. These differed in two major ways from the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ pattern: gymnastics played a larger role, and for a time were more

important than team-sports ('English Sports' as they were sometimes called); and politics shaped sport much more directly in such countries as France or Germany than in Britain or the United States. The politics often had a major religious dimension. In France, for example, in the early twentieth century, sport was mainly organized through three mutually antagonistic federations, Republican, Catholic, and Socialist.⁹ Third, an important theme of sports history in recent years has been the part played by Christian missions and schools in the diffusion of European and American sports in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.¹⁰ Fourth, historians have shown how sport offered an arena in which rivalries between different Christian denominations and different religions, or between Christians and Secularists, could be played out, and one which may have exacerbated these antagonisms.¹¹ And fifth, they have shown how the popularity of sport has been exploited by the churches. Since the later nineteenth century Christian athletes have been favourite role-models, and their faith has been seen as an advertisement for Christianity.¹²

Historians of Christianity and sport have tried to answer one or more of the following three key questions:

1. What were the reasons for the embrace of sport by the Christian churches from the later nineteenth century onwards? The explanations offered have been many, and sometimes contradictory. Among the most common lines of interpretation have been to see it as an aspect of the liberalization of Christian theology,¹³ or to see it as a 'masculinist' reaction to the perceived 'feminization' of the churches,¹⁴ or to see it as part of the church's response to anti-clerical politics.¹⁵ Not that these explanations need to be mutually exclusive. The liberalization argument has mainly been advanced with regard to Protestantism, and gains support from the fact that the longest resistance came from the more conservative Protestant churches;¹⁶ but it raises the question of why many conservative Catholics, including a succession of popes, have also been sports enthusiasts.¹⁷ The masculinity argument raises the question of when, how, and why 'muscular Christians' have also championed women's sport.¹⁸ The political interpretation works very well for certain countries, such as France, but is less relevant to places where anti-clericalism was less of a force.
2. Has the role of the Christian churches in the rise of modern sport been proactive and creative, or has it been a defensive damage-limitation exercise? The latter view is strongly argued by Callum Brown, who suggests that muscular Christianity was a 'tactical shift', and that the church remained hostile to games and to the body.¹⁹ Some other historians of sport and leisure have played down the influence of the churches in sport's modern history either by largely ignoring them,²⁰ or by arguing that this influence was short-lived.²¹ On the other hand, local studies in England have tended to highlight the importance of religious organizations in the early development of modern sport,²² or to show that this role continued for much longer.²³ While the importance of Christianity in the history of European and American sport is at least open to debate, it was unquestionably a major factor in the wider diffusion of sports originating in those countries. In many parts of the world, Christian missionaries and teachers