

## THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SPORT

### A BURGEONING TERRITORY WITHIN HISTORICAL RESEARCH!

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS. *The World of Sport Today. A Field of Christian Mission. International Seminar. Vatican, 11-12 November 2005.* (Laity today. A series of Studies edited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, 10). Città del Vaticano, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006. 21 × 15 cm, 148 p. € 10. ISBN 978-88-209-7863-1.

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS. *Sport, Education, Faith. Towards a New Season for Catholic Sports Associations. International Seminar Proceedings (6-7 November 2009).* (Laity today. A series of Studies edited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, 17). Città del Vaticano, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011. 21 × 15 cm, 162 p. € 15. ISBN 978-88-209-8573-8.

*Sport and Christianity. A Sign of the Times in the Light of Faith.* Edited by Kevin LIXEY, L.C., Christoph HÜBENTHAL, Dietmar MIETH and Norbert MÜLLER. Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 2012. 21,5 × 14 cm, vii-257 p. USD 24,95. ISBN 978-0-8132-1993-6 (e-book 978-0-8132-1994-3).

*L'Église, le sport et l'Europe. La Fédération internationale catholique d'éducation physique (FICEP) à l'épreuve du temps (1911-2011).* Sous la direction de Laurence MUNOZ et Jan TOLLENEER. (Espaces et Temps du Sport). Paris, L'Harmattan, 2011. 24 × 15,5 cm, 354 p., ill. € 32,50. ISBN 978-2-296-54931-9.

Antonella STELITANO, Quirino BORTOLATO & Alejandro Mario DIEGUEZ. *Pio X, Le Olimpiadi e lo Sport.* (Centro Studi San Pio X, 1). Treviso, Editrice San Liberale, 2012. 24 × 17 cm, 144 p., ill. € 15. ISBN 978-88-95262-59-8.

Patrick KELLY. *Catholic Perspectives on Sports. From Medieval to Modern Times.* New York – Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 2012. 20 × 13,5 cm, xi-212 p. USD 19,95. ISBN 978-0-8091-4795-3.

*Sports and Christianity. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.* Edited by Nick J. WATSON, Andrew PARKER. (Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society, 19). Milton Park, Routledge, 2013. 22,5 × 15 cm, xiii-299 p. GBP 80 ; USD 125. ISBN 978-0-415-89922-2 (e-book 978-0-203-08462-5).

The Catholic Church has always shown particular concern for the many different facets of human existence, and the same can be said of sporting activity. Nevertheless, the historiography on this topic has never

been abundant. Besides some early exceptions<sup>1</sup>, one almost has to wait for the Pontificate of John Paul II and particularly the official erection of the Church and Sport Section within the Pontifical Council for the Laity on January 23, 2004 for evidence of activity in this realm. This section, which was envisioned as a point of reference within the Holy See for all national and international sports organizations, currently serves as a kind of ‘observatory’ for the world of sport at the service of evangelization. One of its specific goals is the diffusing of the teachings of the Church regarding sport and to promote the study and research of various themes of sport, especially those of an ethical nature (*Sport & Christianity*, p. 1-14). The Acts of the International Seminars at the Vatican, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, within the themes “The World of Sport Today” and “Sport, Education, Faith” must be seen in this context. This is also the case with the publication *Sport & Christianity*, which contains the English translation of the European seminar, “Sport and Christianity: Anthropological, Theological, and Pastoral Challenges”, that was held March 1-4, 2007, in Mainz. This seminar was a unique and historic collaborative effort between the Vatican’s “Church and Sport” office and the Scientific Commission of the Church and Sport working group of the Catholic German Bishops’ Conference.

*The World of Sport Today. A Field of Christian Mission*, containing the acts of an international seminar at the Vatican, November 11-12, 2005, reflects the views of John Paul II, who saw the world of sport as an important areopagus of modern times, awaiting apostles who are ready to boldly announce the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first part of the seminar, which took a historical view of sport from ancient times until today, was given by Maria AIELLO (*A Brief History of Sport*, p. 13-21). She addressed a number of issues regarding the origins of sport: the link between physical exercise and education, the framing of sports law, relations with politics, the ever-increasing importance of the political implications of sport, and essential ethical demands. Dietmar MIETH (*Towards an Ethic of Sport in Contemporary Culture*, p. 23-43) spoke about sport in

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Gianni PINTO, *Lo sport negli insegnamenti pontifici da Pio X a Giovanni Paolo II*, Rome, 1964; A. VAN DEN MEERSSCHE, *De paus en de sport. Pauselijke uitspraken over de sport en haar problemen, samengebracht door Sporta*, Antwerp, 1957; Edmondo DE PANFILIS, *Tempo libero, turismo e sport: la risposta della Chiesa*, Rome, 1986; Carlo RINALDI, *Giovanni Paolo II e lo Sport*, Rome, 1990; Giovanni Battista GANDOLFO – Luisa VASSALLO, *Lo sport nei documenti pontifici*, Brescia, 1994; Leo KENIS, “Wat gij ook doet, doet alles ter ere Gods”: *Kerkelijke en theologische opvattingen over sport*, in: Mark D’HOKER, Roland RENSON, Jan TOLLENEER (red.), *Voor lichaam & geest. Katholieken, lichamelijke opvoeding en sport in de 19<sup>de</sup> en 20<sup>de</sup> eeuw* (Kadoc-studies, 17), Louvain, 1994, p. 13-41.

contemporary society and culture, emphasizing the values and principles that are essential for framing a Christian ethos of sport. A round table discussion on the “problems and challenges of sport today” (p. 92-115) with interventions on “sport and business”, “sport and violence”, “sport and doping”, and “sport and the media” followed. The second phase revolved around the opportunities that sport offers the Church in realizing her mission of evangelization to, above all, young people. Edio COSTANTINI (*Opportunities and Resources for Renewal in Sport*, p. 45-54) addressed the educational and formative dimensions of sport, while also referencing Italy’s long-standing tradition of parish clubs, known as “oratories”, a model, according to him, that can always be adapted. Carlo MAZZA (*Sport as Viewed from the Church’s Magisterium*, p. 55-73) laid out an organic summary of the popes’ teaching on sport from Pius X to Benedict XVI. He offered a number of stimulating guidelines for identifying new ways in which Christians can be present in this field, while making the most of the rich patrimony of teachings and resources that already exist. Speakers at the round table discussion on *Sport: the Frontier of the New Evangelization* (p. 117-146) touched on themes such as Catholic sports associations and sport chaplains, pastoral care at major sports events, and the Christian presence in sports institutions. As the Secretary of the pontifical Council, Bishop Josef Clemens pointed out in his conclusions (*A Look at Our Future Commitment*, p. 85-89), there is no doubt that the first step by the Church towards a more organic pastoral ministry in the world of sport must be to undertake the commitment to disseminate the principles of a sound anthropology, which recognizes and valorises all the dimensions of the human person.

*Sport, Education, Faith. Towards a new Season for Catholic Sports Associations*, the publication of the international seminar held at the Vatican, November 6-7, 2009, desires to reinsert sport into an educational perspective. Carlo MAZZA (*The Christian Presence in Sports in the Light of the Church’s Teachings*, p. 21-33) traces the historical roots for the Church’s sympathy for the sporting phenomenon. Michael McNAMEE (*Sport and Virtue: Integral Education of the Person*, p. 35-49) focuses on sports ethics based upon Aristotelian thinking. He tries to show a glimpse of what moral educational prospects there might be in sports conceived of as an arena of human excellence, where virtue-ethical considerations are central to a conception of both sports performance and pedagogy. Edio COSTANTINI (*New Approaches and Educational Strategies for Sporting Environments*, p. 63-86) states that the appeal of Pope Pius XII from October 9, 1945, which exhorted Catholic sports associations not to deprive youth of the educational value of sport, remains just as valid today as it was then. The Church and Catholic sports associations, while respecting the autonomy proper to each institution, must find more and more ways of collaborating with the entire international sports movement in pursuing those same general goals that favour the development of the human

person, especially the youth. Two panel discussions on *Training True Champions* (p. 93-121) and *Opportunities to Witness to Christ in Catholic Sports* (p. 123-162) complete the publication.

*Sport & Christianity. A Sign of the Times in the Light of Faith* starts with an introduction by Bishop Josef Clemens (*The Christian Mission within the Field of Sport*, p. 1-12) on the operations of the Church and Sport Section of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, whose task is to coordinate the Church's worldwide initiatives in this area according to the aims established by the Holy See. Clemens also mentions his desire for the eventual publication of a comprehensive document on sport for the benefit of the Universal Church. After this general introduction, the book is divided into three main sections.

The first part (*Anthropological Aspects*, p. 13-78) offers an anthropological investigation of some fundamental considerations of the human person and his or her final destiny relating to sporting activity in a general way. Karen JOISTEN (*Man, Mortality, and the Athletic Hero. Yesterday and Today*, p. 15-38) offers an original approach with her presentation of four historical mindsets that help us to understand a person's worldview and self-perception. Pedro BARAJÓN (*Overcoming Dualism. The Unity of the Human Person in Sport*, p. 39-60) presents different models (the bio-anthropological model and the model of Hans URS VON BALTHASAR) that could be used to overcome the residue of dualism that continues to resurface today in sport. Christoph HÜBENTHAL (*Morality and Beauty. Sport at the Service of the Human Person*, p. 61-78) draws attention to the "anthropological difference", that is the difference between that which is pre-given in the person and that which the person creates through his actions.

The second part (*Theological Aspects*, p. 79-185) of the book is a theological approach that considers sporting activity from the perspective of the Church's magisterium and from current theological reflection. Alois KOCH (*Biblical and Patristic Foundations for Sport*, p. 81-103) provides an academic methodology that differs from the usual theological and biblical approaches to sport. He focuses on the meaning of the biblical and patristic metaphors in ecclesial literature that are drawn from the realm of sport. He clearly argues that the sports metaphors used in the Bible (especially in Paul's Letters to the Corinthians) are not sufficient grounds for inferring that this has any retroactive relevance for the understanding of sport per se or for a Christian appreciation therein. A.K. states that these sports metaphors are always directed toward the understanding of a Christian way of life, and not vice versa. Kevin LIXEY (*Sport in the Magisterium of Pius XII*, p. 104-120) investigates the concern of Pius XII in the aftermath of World War II, with the role of sport in the lives of Italian Catholic youth. The Pope encouraged the sporting activities that were carried out under the leadership of the Church through its Catholic youth and sports associations. K.L. suggests that Pius XII had

a broad vision of “pastoral care” that considered youth sport as an opportunity for developing certain natural and Christian virtues. Thus, Pius XII highlighted sport’s educational dimension. In his ethical evaluation of sport, he primarily stressed natural law, the Decalogue, and the salvific dimension of human existence. Carlo MAZZA (*Sport in the Magisterium of John Paul II*, p. 121-138) focuses on sport in the writings and speeches of John Paul II, as one who spoke about sport from the perspective of an insider (who practiced it). This personal experience explains the enthusiasm of the phenomenology of sport that overflowed into his speeches. John Paul II always placed his analysis of sport within the framework of the modern development of culture. He therefore used two levels of criteria: the criteria of truth of creation, and the criteria of the salvation and redemption of man. By reuniting these concepts, he created a socio-ethical concept of the human person that is understood in a complex and holistic way. Josef CLEMENS (*Sport in the Magisterium of Benedict XVI*, p. 139-155) reflects on the theme of sport by Cardinal Ratzinger / Pope Benedict XVI. He begins with an interview that the then Cardinal Ratzinger gave on Bavarian radio before the Football World Cup in 1978. This interview is followed by a study of Benedict XVI’s papal addresses on sport throughout his first five years of his pontificate. Dietmar MIETH (*A Christian Vision of Sport*, p. 156-185) concludes this part stressing the necessity of communication of the language of the Church and the levels of ecumenical extension, in an effort to lead an authentically religious and moral life in sport.

Part III (*Pastoral Aspects*, p. 187-233) seeks to describe some of the pastoral aspects of sport from the twofold perspective of its challenges (Stephan GOERTZ, *Sport as a Sign of the Times. Pastoral Observations and Challenges*, p. 189-205) and its opportunities (Bernhard MAIER, *Sport as a Pastoral Opportunity. The Sports Chaplain*, p. 206-222). After this, it moves towards a consideration of this phenomenon from a more practical nature (Norbert MÜLLER, *Concrete Pastoral Action within Sport*, p. 223-233).

Catholic sports organisations came in to existence at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as fruits of the Encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891) by Pope Leo XIII. Although *Rerum novarum* does not concern sport directly, it deals with the world of work and leisure, thus it indirectly deals with sport. In this context, parishes began to focus more directly on their youth and proposed sporting activities as effective means for their development. In *L’Église, le sport et l’Europe. La Fédération internationale catholique d’éducation physique (FICEP) à l’épreuve du temps (1911-2011)*, Laurence MUNOZ and Jan TOLLENEER compile several studies which trace the history of the “Union internationale des oeuvres catholiques d’éducation physique” (UIOCEP) that was finally born or officially erected in Rome on December 13-14, 1911. This book is written on the occasion of the centenary of the “Fédéra-

tion Internationale Catholique d'Éducation Physique et Sportive" (FICEP). Today, the FICEP has about 3.5 million members in 12 European countries, as well as Cameroon and Madagascar. The FICEP is an international sports federation that seeks to educate youth in human and Christian values through sporting and recreational activities. It promotes the mutual exchange of the experiences of people of different cultures, traditions, and backgrounds by bringing youth together from different countries for international events. The organisation is inspired by the strong formative value of sporting and the artistic, recreational activities which are grounded in and inspired by the teachings of the Gospel. To facilitate these objectives, the FICEP is assisted by a youth commission that focuses on human development, a pastoral commission that attends to their spiritual formation, and a sports commission that organises the annual FICEP games.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, *L'émergence d'une fédération catholique internationale*, p. 17-78), describes a period when the Belgian Catholic Gymnastic Federation ("Fédération belge catholique de gymnastique", FBCG), the French Catholic Sporting Federation ("Fédération gymnastique et sportive des patronages de France", FGSPF) and the Catholic Italian Sports Federation ("Federazione associazioni sportive cattoliche italiane", FASCI), were erected in, respectively, 1892, 1898 and 1906. All of these antecedents of the FICEP and the beginnings of this association are elaborated in detail (J. T., *Le mouvement gymnique et sportif catholique en Belgique et en France (1879-1914)*, p. 21-44; Angela TEJA, *Le sport et les catholiques en Italie à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> et au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 45-57; L. M., *Une fédération internationale catholique au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, au Cœur des enjeux sportifs, idéologiques et diplomatiques*, p. 59-78). During several occasions between 1905 and 1908, these federations assembled for an international gymnastics competition, and they launched the idea of uniting all Catholic sports associations under one international organization. In 1908, Pope Pius X gave impetus to this project by receiving the participants of the first ever international competition of Catholic gymnastics and sports in the Vatican's inner courtyard.

Part II (*Le mouvement sportif et d'éducation physique catholique dans les pays affiliés et leurs rapports à la FICEP*, p. 79-237) concerns the sports movements and Catholic physical education within the countries that were affiliated with the FICEP. This section contains contributions from Germany (Heinz Egon RÖSCH, *Sur l'histoire de l'éducation physique et des activités sportives au sein de l'Église catholique en Allemagne*, p. 83-93), Austria (Gilbert Norden, "Évolution du sport associative et fédérative chrétien en Autriche", pp. 95-110), Belgium (J. T., *Initiatives pionnières et parcours astucieux de la gymnastique catholique belge (1892-2011)*, p. 111-121), Canada (Roger BOILEAU, *La FICEP, l'Église catholique et le sport au Canada*, p. 123-137), Spain (Alex VIUDA-SERRANO, *Sport et religion en Espagne. La relation avec la FICEP*, p. 139-156), France (L. M., *La FSCF, le mouvement sportif catholique en France au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 157-171), Italy

(Felice FABRIZIO, *Le mouvement sportif catholique en Italie*, p. 173-187), Poland (Malgorzata JACKO, *Le sport catholique en Pologne. Une histoire du temps présent*, p. 189-203), Slovakia (František SEMAN, *L'éducation physique catholique et le sport catholique en Slovaquie*, p. 205-219), Slovenia and Yugoslavia (Tomaž PAVLIN, *La société Orel en Slovénie et Yougoslavie*, p. 221-236).

Part III (*La gymnastique et le sport catholique entre religion et politique*, p. 239-302) focuses on gymnastics and Catholic sports, otherwise known as the position and evolution of the FICEP between Religion and Politics. It concerns the following themes: the definition of sports federations within the Church (L. M., J. T., Maria Mercedes PALANDRI, *Sens et enjeux d'une fédération sportive dans l'Église*, p. 243-260); the vocation and legitimacy of a Catholic federation within the world of sports (J.T., L. M., *Vocation et légitimité d'une fédération catholique dans le monde des sports*, p. 261-284); and the alliances and political tensions of the International Federation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (L. M. and J. T., *Alliances et tensions politiques de la fédération internationale au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 285-299). History teaches us that the first great sporting event of the FICEP took place in Rome in 1913. Although its activities were suspended from 1914 to 1918 due to World War I, they were resurrected once again in 1919. Membership in the association grew quickly during the Interwar period (1922-1939), with sports competitions taking place in Paris (1923), Prague (1929), Antwerp (1930), Vienna (1936) and Ljubljana (1938). During the Second World War, FICEP activities were suspended once again and resumed after the war. Socialistic nationalism and communism would suppress the Catholic sports federations in Eastern Europe until 1989.

A general conclusion (p. 303-306), an annex with biographical data on the principal historical persons mentioned in the articles (pp. 313-326), and an overview of the main events of the FICEP (327-336) conclude the study.

The favorable attitude of Pope Pius X (1903-1914) towards sport and the idea of organizing the Olympics in Rome in 1908 are the topics contained in the recent booklet *Pio X, le Olimpiadi e lo sport*. This study recalls the role of Pius X concerning the emergence of Catholic sports organisations and his initiatives in the same matter during the years 1904, 1905, 1906, 1908 and 1913. The authors base their findings on contemporaneous descriptions of the sporting events held within the Vatican and in Rome, which were published in the Journals *La Civiltà Cattolica* and *L'Illustrazione Italiana*. It is interesting to mention the correspondences between the Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val, and Pierre De Coubertin, the 'father' of the modern Olympic Games, during the period 1905-1906, concerning the potential candidacy of Rome as host of the 1908 games. The sources show the positive inclination of the Holy See towards the project, but they also bring to light the very difficult political position of the Vatican during that period.

It is a pity the authors did not investigate the field of international heuristics concerning the attitude of Pope Pius X towards sports and the use of the bicycle by members of the clergy, as one would have noticed that a lot of material was already published and known outside of Italy.<sup>2</sup>

The book entitled *Catholic Perspectives on Sports. From Medieval to Modern Times* by the Jesuit Father, Patrick KELLY, is, in my eyes, the most innovative study. P.K. rightly states that very little research has been done on the relation between Catholic theological, spiritual traditions, and sport in the West. He finds this omission strange, especially given the importance of the Catholic faith during the medieval and early modern periods in Europe. When historians and other scholars write about sport during these periods, they tend to describe the games and sports themselves and simply bracket the religious dimension altogether, or they argue that these practices took place, for the most part, in spite of the Catholic faith of the people, a faith that taught them to regard the body as evil and pleasure as the gateway to sin. In his study, P.K. strives to provide a positive account of the relationship between Catholic theological and spiritual traditions and the games and sports of these periods.

In almost each chapter of the six contained in his book, P.K. deals with the recurring narrative in Western sports history writing that assumes that Christians, prior to the Reformation, placed a great emphasis on the soul and the spiritual realm, while disregarding, if non disdaining, the body. The author states that this assumption is not accurate. He contextualizes this mistake within the historiography of the last twenty-five years, in which historians, sociologists, theologians, and religious studies scholars have written a great deal about the influence that Protestant Christians have had on modern sport in England and the United States. Their suggestion is that Christians and theologians have only recently,

<sup>2</sup> See, besides the mentioned *L'Église, le sport et l'Europe. La Fédération internationale catholique d'éducation physique (FICEP) à l'épreuve du temps (1911-2011)*, also Willi SCHWANK, *Kirche und Sport in Deutschland von 1848 bis 1920*, Hochheim, 1979; Philippe ROCHER, *Une nouvelle chevalerie catholique contre le néopaganisme du sport moderne: L'Église catholique et le vélo, XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, in: Laurence VAN YPERSELE - Anne-Dolorès MARCÉLIS (éd.), *Rêves de Chrétienté – Réalités du monde. Imaginaires catholiques*, Paris / Louvain-la-Neuve, 2001, p. 341-368; Dries VANYSACKER, *Véhicule moderniste ou instrument d'apostolat? Le dilemme de Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto / Pie X envers l'utilisation de la bicyclette par le clergé (1894-1908)*, in: Jean-Pierre DELVILLE et Marko JACOV (Éd.), Luc COURTOIS, Françoise ROSART et Guy ZELIS (coll.), *La papauté contemporaine (XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles). Il papato contemporaneo (secoli XIX-XX). Hommage au chanoine Roger Aubert, professeur émérite à l'Université catholique de Louvain, pour ses 95 ans.* (Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, fasc. 90). Louvain-la-Neuve – Leuven, 2009, p. 245-254.



and somewhat reluctantly, embraced sports.<sup>3</sup> To the contrary, P.K. states that Christians in the early and medieval periods insisted repeatedly on the importance of the material world in the Christian life over and against views held by the Gnostics, the Manicheans and others. They developed their arguments by appealing to central Christian beliefs regarding the goodness of the created world, the Word becoming flesh and the resurrection of the whole person, body, soul, and spirit (p. 63-93).

When Christians moved to a position of influence in European society, they began to think about the proper place of play and sport in the Christian life (p. 27-62). In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Hugh of St. Victor recognized the validity of such activities in society and included them in the curricula of the newly emerging cathedral schools. Thomas Aquinas asked in his *Summa Theologica*, “Whether there can be a virtue about games?”, and answered in the affirmative. For him, it was immoderate to be working all the time. So, play was necessary for a virtuous life. In Aquinas’s view, it was possible to sin by having too little play in one’s life. Thomas pointed out that play and contemplation were similar because both were enjoyable and done for their own sake. He even described contemplation itself as a kind of play. For Nicholas of Cusa, human beings are able to invent games and sports because of two powers of the soul: intelligence and freedom. For him, this means that games, sports and the various domains of culture have a close relationship to the spiritual dimension of life (p. 116-117). Such emphases provided the rationale for the emergence of religious practices, such as the sacraments and the use of images in worship, in which the body was involved and led to the emergence of religious drama. These emphases were also part of what led Christians to be comfortable with bodily activities such as play and sport. During the Middle Ages, Christians played games and sports on Sundays, feast days and holy days. Such activities were depicted in prayer books, stained glass windows and woodcuts of churches and cathedrals. Starting in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, games and sports were included in the curriculum of humanist schools. A school established at the Court of Mantua by Vittorino da Feltre in 1423—one of the most influential early humanist schools—reserved ample space for games, riding, running, and all athletic exercises that were popular at that time. He especially encouraged certain ball games, leaping and fencing. The Jesuits followed their lead in subsequent centuries. The Jesuits would play an important role in West-

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., D. Stanley EITZEN and George H. SAGE, *Religion and Sport*, in: Charles S. PREBISH (ed.), *Religion and Sport: The Meeting of Sacred and Profane*, Westport, 1993, p. 80-117; Clifford Wallace PUTNEY, *Muscular Christianity: The Strenuous Mood in American Protestantism, 1880-1920*, Cambridge, 2001 (especially p. 50-51). Very interesting overview in Nick J. WATSON, Stuart WEIR, and Stephen FRIEND, *The Development of Muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and Beyond*, in: *Journal of Religion & Society* 7 (2005) [online].

ern education in this regard, because of their vast network of schools. They were influenced in this regard by medieval cultural traditions and the importance of educating the body in games and sports in schools. The classical notion that moderation was central to a life of virtue influenced the humanists and early Jesuits. This meant that students should not be excessive in the pursuit of their studies or spiritual exercises, but should also take time for relaxation and rejuvenation, reading games and sports. The Jesuit missionaries also had an accepting attitude towards the games and sports of the natives they encountered in North America.

The Reformation rejected many of the religious sensibilities and practices of the medieval Catholic Church. The number of feast days and holy days was reduced. The nature (and number) of the sacraments was questioned, as well as the appropriateness of the use of images in worship. The Puritans went further than other Reformation groups in their condemnation of images, elimination of all feast days, and their prohibition of play and sport, even on Sundays. The Puritan work ethic played a significant role in shaping their attitudes toward play: they regarded play with suspicion and even associated it with sin, primarily because it led the believer away from work. According to P.K., another important change occurred when the emphasis shifted from the unity of the human person, body and soul, to a dualism of body and soul. René Descartes described them as polar opposites: the body as material, extended and unthinking, and the soul as immaterial, unextended and thinking. Both the Puritan suspicion of play and the Cartusian dualism of body and soul would undercut the foundation upon which a theology or spirituality of sport could have been developed in the modern period. If play is primarily viewed as being associated with sin, one would hardly think of looking at the human experiences of play in order to learn anything about the human person or the Christian life. What is then the point of taking bodily activities such as play and sport seriously from a theological or spiritual perspective?

P.K. states that the Catholic Church was undergoing a great deal of change as it moved into the modern world, which also made it difficult to develop a theology or spirituality of sport in a contemporary context. In the wake of the challenges posed by the Protestant Reformation, Catholic theologians spent a great deal of their time offering systematic answers to issues having to do with papal primacy, the number and nature of the sacraments, and the relationship between faith and works. The increasing acceptance of the scientific mode of knowing, the Enlightenment, and political revolutions all posed new challenges to theologians and Church leaders alike, who began to see themselves as being 'at war' with the modern world. In their eyes, the modern world placed too much emphasis on material things, including the body. In general, the antagonism between the Church and the modern world meant, according to P.K., that theologians and Church leaders were not paying attention to cultural developments, including those taking place in the realm of sport (p. 4).

To verify his statement, P.K. points to the first speech delivered by Pius XII on sport in 1940, in which he told the young men of Catholic Action that even though people in the modern world were fascinated by physical exercises and sport, the Church is “a mother who will teach you more the things of the mind and the spirit than those of the body and the material order”. Personally, I do not agree with this statement: Since Pope Leo XIII, and especially since Pope Pius X—as we have seen—the Holy See has been, completely in line with the earlier theological and educational tradition, very positive towards moderate sporting activities. My own research based upon sources in the Secret Vatican Archives and upon the Historical Archives of the Secretary of State shows that Pius XII only reacted against the excessive body culture that had been witnessed during the Interwar Period under national-socialistic and fascist ideologies. The same Pope would become a big pioneer of a moderate Catholic sport after World War II. I believe it is clear that the attitude of the Holy See is a chapter that is lacking in this study.<sup>4</sup>

The last part of the book concentrates on the Catholics who, when they arrived in the United States, simply continued to play games and sports as they had done for many centuries in Europe (p. 118-140). Indeed, Catholics’ easy acceptance of games and sports was, according to P.K., a part of what made them seem out of place to some in the Protestant majority in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The approach of Catholics in the United States was influenced by theological tradition as well: the Jesuits and the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) sisters emphasized that both work and play were important. The Jesuits continued to give this idea concrete expression in their schools in the United States, as they built their schools with playing fields and courtyards while providing ample time for games and sports. Examples are: the College of Georgetown (1789), St. Joseph’s College in Bardstown, Kentucky, St. Louis University and Fordham University, where Vince Lombardi, the legendary football coach of the Green Bay Packers, was a teacher. The IHM sisters, who studied Thomas Aquinas in their training, attracted many of the most talented female basketball players from Catholic high schools in the Philadelphia area and formed the very successful “Mighty Macs” team. Nevertheless, P.K. finds it important to recognize that even in the United States of the nineteenth century, which was predominantly Protestant, there was no consensus concerning play and sport. Some of the more prominent Protestant ministers of the period rejected the Puritan heritage and argued that play and prayer are analogous activities that provide us with access to religious heritage while pointing the way

<sup>4</sup> See my lecture “*For the Glory of God or for the Glory of the Nation?*”: *The Attitude of the Holy See toward Sport during the Interwar Period (1919-1939)*, held in Chicago, at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (17 November 2012). This lecture will be published in an adapted version in *The Catholic Historical Review* in 2013.

forward to the future (p. 155-157). P.K. concludes his study by stating that scholarship about play should be taken seriously by any Catholic theologian who is interested in reflecting on the play element of sport in our context (pp. 141-165).

*Sports and Christianity. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* presents itself in a way that conveys a sense of urgency to publish a collection of chapters by some of the most established academics in the sport and Christianity field in an attempt to provide both a flavor and an overview of the variety and quality of previous and ongoing work in the area (p.1-6). It broadens the view of Church and sport by speaking about other Christian traditions beyond the Catholic Church, especially those of Protestant denominations. The book explores two main themes: 1) the history and genealogy of debates surrounding the sport-religion relationship (Part 1, p. 7-164), and 2) the contemporary philosophical debates surrounding sport and Christianity (Part II, p. 165-285). Within the first part, Nick J. WATSON and Andrew PARKER provide a map of the academic landscape on sport and Christianity (*Sports and Christianity: Mapping the Field*, p. 9-88). Their main objective is to chart the historical terrain of this discursive canvas while simultaneously highlighting possible avenues for future research. Curiously enough, they only pay attention to the historiography and bibliography written in English! Citations in other languages are confined to one short footnote, simply stating that books and articles written in German, French and Italian exist... Tracking the historical trajectory of the sport-Christianity relationship leads Victor PFITZNER to St. Paul's use of athletic and sporting metaphor in Scripture (*Was St. Paul a Sports Enthusiast? Realism and Rhetoric in Pauline Athletic Metaphors*, p. 89-111). His suggestion is that Paul's use of agonistic imagery is due to both, in terms of 'social reality' (a knowledge of contemporary athletics) and as part of a 'tradition' of appropriating athletic metaphors. Hugh McLEOD (*Sport and Religion in England, c. 1790-1914*, p. 112-130) seeks to uncover details of the way in which various ecclesiastical (especially Protestant) traditions differed in their perceptions of, and approaches to, sporting involvement in Victorian Britain. It is a story of ideologies, institutions and individuals who mobilized the "muscular Christian" movement in order to change and challenge the way in which sport was viewed by those within the Church. Shirl James HOFFMAN (*Harvesting Souls in the Stadium: The Rise of Sport Evangelism*, p. 131-149) documents the Church's engagement with sport in the North American context at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At first being viewed as a form of physical, moral and emotional refreshment, sport was later recognized as a strategic tool for evangelization. Robert J. HIGGS (*Stereotypes and Archetypes in Religion and American Sport*, p. 150-164) suggests that one way to analyze how sport has evolved over time is to think about who the sports performers are, what they represent and how their identities both create and reflect particular values.

The contributions of Part II (*Contemporary Perspectives on Sport and Christianity*) are grounded in philosophical reflection. *Sports and Christianity* “aims not only to reflect on the ways in which the underpinnings principles of the Christian faith might allow us to consider and challenge the values and practices of modern-day sport, but also how they might enhance the way in which we see the future of sport both in terms of its participatory and structural formation” (p.6). Nick J. WATSON (*Special Olympians as a “Prophetic Sign” to the Modern Sporting Babel*, p. 167-206) examines how athletes with disabilities may be seen as a ‘prophetic sign’ to the multibillion-dollar business of contemporary sport. Tracy J. TROTHEN (*The Technoscience Enhancement Debate in Sports: What’s Religion Got to Do with it?*, p. 207-224) argues that while normative embodiment discourse is operative in modern-day sport, it is not always visible. Jacob L. GOODSON (*The Quest for Perfection in the Sport of Baseball: The Magnanimous Individual or the Magnanimous Team?*, p. 225-249) advances the theme of sporting enhancement by exploring the philosophical arguments surrounding the use of anabolic steroids in U.S. Major League baseball. Kevin LIXEY (*The Vatican’s Game Plan for Maximizing Sport’s Educational Potential*, p. 250-268) makes a renewed call for the recognition of the role of sport in character development, with the role of the sports educator as key factor. Scott KRETCHMAR (*Hard-Won Sporting Achievements and Spiritual Humility: Are They Compatible?*, p. 269-286) investigates the philosophical underpinnings of humility and discusses its role in three world religions: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

After this essay, I am more than convinced that the attitude of the Catholic Church, along with that of other Christian churches, towards body culture and sports is still a promising and burgeoning territory!

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