



Aspects of Muscular Christianity in Norway and the United States

A Historiographical Comparison

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Abstract

An evaluation of Norwegian historians' scholarly works concluded that the local and national scopes with respect to impulses and processes were taken for granted. In this article this contention is questioned. A comparison is made between my doctoral thesis on Sport and Protestantism in Southern Norway and three American studies within the scholarly field of muscular Christianity restricted to three topics: theology, Sunday observance, and manliness and masculinity. First, such a comparison has never been done before, and second, it produces important results. Theology is addressed widely in all the studies and plays a significant part in the studies. Sunday observance in the two groups of studies is treated differently, due to the difference of the two contexts. Similarly, the topic of masculinity is a main theme in the U.S. studies, but is hardly mentioned in the Norwegian context.

Introduction

In this article, I make a historiographical comparison between my doctoral thesis on Sport and Protestantism in southern Norway and three important scholarly analyses of muscular Christianity in the U.S., namely those by Putney, Ladd and Mathisen, and Baker. Putney's study is the most important of the three in this regard because it resembles my study in that it is based on a doctoral thesis and focuses on a limited period in history, 1880-1920. Putney presents his task as follows:

In an attempt to focus attention on muscular Christianity as a whole, this book provides an overview of the muscular Christian movement in America at its historical peak, roughly from 1880 to 1920. After 1920, pacifism, cynicism, church decline, and the devaluation of male friendships combined to undercut muscular Christianity – at least within the mainline Protestant churches (7).

Putney's study, as well as the work of Ladd and Mathisen and others (Hoffman; Krattenmaker), are assessed as "the notable academic analyses of muscular Christianity in an American context" (Watson and Parker: 20). Ladd and Mathisen's study is "especially insightful with regards to modern-day sports ministry organizations and the use/misuse of Pauline athletic metaphors by modern muscular Christians" (Watson and Parker: 20). Baker's study is evaluated as a "scholarly and yet accessible sociohistorical analysis of the American modern sports institution" by Watson and Parker (12.) The immediate background for my choice of this project, a historiographical comparison of my doctoral thesis and some important studies in the same field from another country, is as follows.

In 2008 a report evaluating the scholarly works of Norwegian historians, holding positions at various universities and university colleges, criticized their methodology as national in terms of space and theme. The report described their work as primarily related to Norwegian history and limited to Norwegian and national historical perspectives. The local and regional focus among Norwegian historians, which very often serves as a first phase in becoming a professional historian, is likewise typically set within a national framework.

Following the evaluation of the history branch of Norwegian universities and university colleges, articles discussing the results of the evaluation were published in the two major Norwegian journals of history: *Historisk Tidsskrift* and *Heimen*. A crucial criticism was the widespread thematic and spatial methodological nationalism of Norwegian historians. In his article, "Å evaluere evaluatørene" ("Evaluating the evaluators"), Knut Kjeldstadli, professor of modern history at the University of Oslo, comments that the perspectives of Norwegian historians are local or national. He gives several reasons for this, but admits that the evaluators' criticism is partly correct (93-98). His article is important because it outlines a viable path for studying history in years to come.

One particular result of the evaluation is that The Norwegian Research Council (Norges Forskningsråd) invited groups of historians or networks at universities and colleges to apply for projects related to the evaluation report. Six historians, among whom I am one, at the University of Agder applied and received financial support for a three-year project called "Theoretical and Methodological Implications of the Questioning of the Methodological Nationalism and Localism." I use Kjeldstadli's path for the study of history as a starting point for this article. Some of the questions he poses regarding spatial methodological nationalism will be investigated with respect to three central themes (theology or specific Christian reflection; Sabbatarianism or Sunday observance; and manliness and masculinity) as they pertain to the work of Putney, Ladd and Mathisen, Baker, and myself.

1. Do Putney, Ladd and Mathisen, Baker, and Justvik take the local or national scope for granted when discussing these themes? Do they cover information that derives from and pertains beyond the borders of the local or national level? Are they blind to

- influences from abroad or to parallel development in either the localities studied or in other localities?
2. Is the local scope implicit – not explicit – in their presentation of the themes? Is the local scope thematized and analyzed?
 3. Are there comparisons with other localities, nationally and internationally, in these four works with regard to the themes? Furthermore, do these studies include intra-community relations as well as relations among national and international communities?

The themes chosen for this historiographic comparison have no relevance with respect to the evaluation of the works of Norwegian historians. My thesis is a unique contribution to the scholarly field investigating the relationship between sport and religion in Scandinavia. It describes and explains how Christians in the theologically conservative and pietistic groups viewed sports in the southernmost part of Norway during the post war period. I know of no previous studies on this topic.

This study used mainly oral informants and revealed four periods. During the first period, 1945-1953, Christians were generally skeptical of sports because sporting activities took place on Sundays. Christians thought that ordinary sport clubs were bad company for Christians because of the swearing and parties with alcohol that took place. A third element or fear was that young Christians' faith could be at stake if they became obsessed with sports. These concerns eventually waned, but the argument against Sunday sporting events continued until about 1980. Discussions about Christians' engagement in sports in general and about Sunday sports in particular involved theological reflection.

During the 1950s, the second period, rationale and conditions for Christians' participation in sports were identified. Participants had to be active in their congregation or community and they were to be missionaries among their sport mates. During the 1960s, the third period, Christians involved in sports became conscious of becoming sports idols, and there was some question as to whether or not this led to a greater focus on masculinity and manliness.

During the final period, certain mediators, strategies, and conditions for a change in Christian attitudes toward sports were identified. In the 1970s, organizations that promoted Christian participation in sports were founded, and these organizations strongly supported the theology of creation and culture that was also introduced during this period. It is important to note that until this time the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed had been the primary message delivered from Christian pulpits.

From this short summary of my thesis it can be understood that I deal with the three topics in certain ways. The central question to be asked is whether the three topics are dealt with differently in the three studies from the U.S. The denominational context is Protestant for my study and for the U.S. studies, but there might be both similarities and differences in the end.

The studies by Putney, Ladd and Mathisen, and Baker have not been linked to a scholarly field. In this article I will first briefly introduce the scholarly field of muscular

Christianity. Then, in the main section of this work I compare Norway and the U.S. based on the three topics: theology, Sunday observance, and manliness and masculinity.

Muscular Christianity in a Protestant Context¹

Due to the historical significance of the Anglo-American (and largely Protestant) movement of Victorian muscular Christianity (1850–) on modern sport, physical education and the evolution of modern “sport ministry” (i.e., neo-muscular Christian groups), there are numerous books and scholarly articles on the subject (Watson and Parker: 20).

Ladd and Mathisen’s study, which is part of the historiographical comparison, presents four models of muscular Christianity that might prove useful in understanding how this movement has developed over the past 150 years.

The Classical Model. The movement of muscular Christianity started in mid-nineteenth century England and was closely connected to the ideology and social praxis of clergyman, novelist, and journalist Charles Kingsley (1819–1875) and to lawyer, novelist, and politician Thomas Hughes (1822–1896).² The vital element in their ideology was that physical activity had the potential for building virtuous and manly characters distinguished by “fair play, respect (both for oneself and others), physical and emotional strength, perseverance, deference, subordination, obedience, discipline, loyalty, co-operation, self-control, self-sacrifice, endurance” (Collins and Parker: 194). The great impact of muscular Christianity is revealed in the development of British public schools, and later in the universities, where boys were turned into leaders of the British society and the Empire.³ Muscular Christianity

¹ Watson and Parker is the basic source for this part of the article.

² The term muscular Christianity was coined in a review in 1857 of Kingsley’s book *Two Years Ago*. Hughes’ book, *Tom Brown’s School Days*, from the same year became immensely popular, spreading the ideology of muscular Christianity. The plot takes place at Rugby School while Thomas Arnold was headmaster. Arnold introduced muscular Christianity in the public schools with the emphasis on discipline, respect, and Christian manliness.

³ In his very famous autobiography, Trappist monk, writer, peace and civil-rights activist Thomas Merton tells about his school days at a public school in Britain, around 1930 – close to 100 years after the introduction of the muscular Christian ideology: “. . . the religious teaching consisted mostly in more or less vague ethical remarks, an obscure mixture of ideals of English gentlemanliness and [the teacher’s] favorite notions of personal hygiene.” There were no lakes in the vicinity of this public school, but, in his down to earth teaching, the teacher sat on the table showing the pupils how to pull an oar. He had been to Cambridge and had been a rowing “Blue.” “His greatest sermon was on the Thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians – and a wonderful chapter indeed. But his exegesis was a bit strange. However, it was typical of him and, in a way, of his whole church.” The teacher’s interpretation of the word charity was “‘all that we mean when we call a chap a ‘gentleman.’ In other words, charity meant good sportsmanship, cricket, doing the decent thing, wearing the right kind of clothes, using the proper spoon, not being a cad or a bounder.” From the teacher at the pulpit, the boys heard: “One might go through this chapter of St. Paul and simply substitute the word ‘gentleman’ for ‘charity’ wherever it occurs. ‘If I talk with the tongues of men and of angels, and be not a gentleman, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal . . . A gentleman is patient, is kind; a gentleman envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up . . . A gentleman never falleth away’” (73).

was an important vehicle for creating good Christian gentlemen.⁴

The Evangelical Model. Three persons are important here. C. T. Studd (1860-1931), a British citizen, famous cricketer at Cambridge University, and member of All-England Eleven, was one of seven missionaries to China in 1885 (The Cambridge Seven). American evangelist D. L. Moody (1837-1899), whose ministry was closely connected to the YMCA, was another key influence in the promotion of muscular Christianity. Two historians have called him “the champion of an indigenous American brand of muscular Christianity” (Putney: 2). The last of the three is Eric Liddell (1902-1945), who refused to run a Sunday event in the 1924 Olympic Games. The 1981 film “Chariots of Fire” depicted the life of Liddell. Since 1950, we have seen a new tendency within this model. Evangelical Protestants have discovered the possibility of using sports and sports idols as a means of proselytizing. From these neo-muscular Christianity groups, a so-called sports ministry has developed.

The YMCA Model. The muscular Christian ideology soon spread to the U.S., where it gained acceptance especially through the work of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). The organization was founded in London in 1844, and seven years later the first U.S.-based YMCA was founded in Boston. Central goals of the U.S. model were caring for the poor and spreading the gospel through masculine and moral young men.

The Olympic Model. The founder of the modern Olympic Games, French aristocrat Baron Pierre de Coubertin, was decisively influenced by the muscular Christian novel *Tom Brown’s School Days* and his visit to Rugby School in 1883 (see footnote 2). Both the book and the visit had a significant role in forming his ideology (MacAloon). Coubertin wanted to change the French school system according to the basic qualities of the Arnoldian public school – liberty, morality, character, patriotism, the common good, and devotion of the elite to less fortunate countrymen. He saw sports as having fundamental importance as it influences men physically, morally, and socially, and he adopted the maxim *mens sana in corpore sano* – a sound mind in a sound body (MacAloon: 427).

Although the initial quotation at the beginning of this section claims that the muscular Christian movement was “largely Protestant,” it was not exclusively so. McGrath notes that Catholic institutions adopted principles from the movement and a range of Catholic initiatives can be related to muscular Christianity. Chandler has examined the so-called muscular Catholicism. Scholars have also examined adaptations of muscular Christianity to various world religions, such as “muscular Judaism” (Meyer), “Muscular Islam” (Smith), and “muscular Mormonism” (Kimball).

⁴ *The International Journal of the History of Sport* published a special issue called “Muscular Christianity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds” in 2006. The various articles analyzed what happened when muscular Christianity was introduced in different parts of the British Empire. Mangan’s article, “Christ and the Imperial Playing Fields: Thomas Hughes’ Ideological Heirs in Empire,” is a fascinating in-depth study of the introduction of sports, among which soccer was introduced, towards the end of the nineteenth century in Kashmir. The culturally insensitive missionary eventually had his way, despite the fact that the leather-made football was unholy to the local population. He forced them to play with serious consequences for at least one soccer player – he had to stay away from his home for a very long time after having touched the unholy leather ball. The methods used to force the pupils to play would be judged as horrible by our standards.

This brief overview presents two options for my historiographical comparison – the British or the American branch. The British context has been thoroughly studied sociohistorically, first and foremost in J. M. Mangan’s seminal work *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (1981). Three other analyses, Erdozain, D. Hall, and Vance, are thought to be relevant comparisons. I have already stated my reasons for choosing the American context.

Christian Theology Related to the Issue of Sport

To the great surprise of several scholars who had only scant knowledge of my dissertation, the commission judging my study appreciated both the amount and the quality of the theology it contains. I found myself amazed that the members of the commission – two church historians, both of whom were historians and theologians, and a sociologist of religion – stressed the value of the theological elements of my thesis. On the other hand, when I started systematically reading the three works in question in this article and other studies of muscular Christianity, I was surprised by how widespread theological elements or Christian thinking were in these studies. I say “started systematically reading” because I was not entirely unaware of the literature labeled muscular Christianity during my thesis study. While working on my thesis, I had to spend a period of time looking into relevant scholarly works, both national and international, in the field of sports and religion (mainly Protestantism), and became acquainted with a rather small number of studies from the U.S. and England (Justvik: 20-25). This highlights a main challenge addressed by professor Kjeldstadli. Many theses are quite narrow in scope and interest, which is necessary in order to deal with the subject in a scholarly way in the relatively short period of time allowed to complete a thesis. Thus, in my case, I have since begun an in-depth study of one aspect found in literature on muscular Christianity, and I expect it will develop into further studies.⁵ Kjeldstadli contributes to the solution of the problem that all aspects of a thesis cannot be dealt with by one single Ph.D. student. Scholarly projects should involve several Ph.D. students who deal with different facets and characteristics of the area of investigation. During my years as a Ph.D. student, I took part in a project concerning changes in attitudes and actions among Protestants in the southernmost part of Norway (*Gud på Sørlandet – endringer i Sørlandets religiøse liv*). I was the only student dealing with different attitudes and actions related to sports in this specific geographical area. I had to conclude my work within a limited amount of time and, therefore, was forced to restrict my focus.

I realized that the theological elements in my thesis were more extensive than anticipated. In my work, I have outlined some important features in the church history of the area I studied. The period between 1870 and 1970 is called the era of the big revivals. Small revivals occurred occasionally, but the big ones took place at 30 year intervals, the first around 1870, the second around the turn of the century and the third around 1930. No big revival was seen around 1960 (Justvik: 76-94). The most important theological topics in my

⁵ The report following the evaluation of scholarly works by Norwegian historians contains suggestions for what the members of the committee refer to as “sekundærraffinering” in Norwegian, or “secondary refinement” in English, i.e. writing articles on different parts of the thesis and thereby addressing topics that could not be dealt with during the limited time of the thesis. I have been invited to present an article for an anthology on muscular Christianity based on my thesis. This is in line with the report from the evaluators.

study are linked to the era of big revivals. At the beginning of the 20th century, Ole Hallesby, professor of theology and chairman of Norway's largest inner mission organization, gave an influential message to the religious groups to which Christian sportsmen belonged (Justvik: 51-65). His focus was the "one needful thing" – being a saved sinner; his message had four important elements: the centrality of the Cross, the Bible over all other sources, the need to experience personal conversion, and faith sharing in intense activism. An oft-cited phrase from the Bible, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2), led to Hallesby's "eschatological ethics," which is presented in his central book on Christian ethics – *Den kristelige sedelære*.⁶

The revivalistic era, which started around 1870, had a rigid focus on Hallesby's four elements for about 100 years. The decades before 1970, in particular the post-war period, was a period of transition regarding the overall message across denominations and Christian groups. The First Article of the Apostles' Creed was gradually introduced, pronouncing God's creation and man's responsibility for the health of his own body and the well-being of the creation as a whole. I argue that this change in the theology of various Christian denominations is related to the change in attitudes toward sport (Justvik: 334-45).

Since theology was not the main focus of my thesis, I did not attempt to trace any influences beyond the national level or any parallel developments in this regard. However, I did, albeit superficially, focus on such influences and developments with respect to the main question in my thesis – sport and religion in other parts of the world within Protestantism. Regardless, my investigation of theology had a national scope. The question is whether this is also true for the three studies from the U.S. Since theology is such an extensive, overwhelming topic in the three studies, I need to limit my investigation for different reasons. I use Ladd and Mathisen's book more than the other books because of its relevance to historiography. From the same work I have chosen to focus on the YMCA and revivalist D. L. Moody; the YMCA is significant for my dissertation and Moody had a great impact on the organization's theology during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

In their introduction, Ladd and Mathisen refer to a debate on the influence of the British branch of muscular Christianity on the American branch. They stress that American muscular Christianity had its own independent goal of making "the good of society better" (13). The implications of this goal on muscular Christianity was related to two theological systems – premillennialism and postmillennialism – which were of great interest and widely discussed in the U.S. around 1850 and during the latter part of the 19th century (55-56). Pre- and postmillennialism differed in their interpretation of Revelation 20. The premillennialists

⁶ A passage that is representative of Hallesby's eschatological ethics: "Christ focused his powerful and talented personality on one task only: to save sinners. He wished all his friends would do the same, and they understood his ambition. Like their master, they saw both mind and life as having a common focal point: the one needful thing. And they knew, like him, that only by such single-mindedness would it be possible to rescue their fellow human beings (Luke 12:14). Focused like sportsmen who exercise (1 Corinthians 12:24-27), they lead their lives avoiding all other tasks delaying their pilgrimage (Matthew 18:8), or preventing them from fulfilling their mission: Allowing as many people as possible to experience heaven (1 Corinthians 8:13). Like a heaven-oriented rich and joyous eternal generation, they mingle among the earthly-oriented children of this world, as a protest in both words and deeds, as this world's bad conscience. Thus they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world" (Hallesby: 113, my translation).

thought the millennium would be inaugurated by Christ's second coming and that Christians would then leave the earth for heaven. The postmillennialists had the perception that Jesus' second coming would happen after the millennium, which would be a prosperous time for people. Social reformers were attracted to the optimistic vision of the postmillennialists.

Ladd and Mathisen perceive the so-called British influence on American muscular Christianity to be a misconception, due to the impact of certain British scholars, such as P. C. McIntosh, whose 1979 book, *Fair Play, Ethics in Sport and Physical Education*, "has been referenced extensively in American works, although the author is British" (13, 247 n. 3). Ladd and Mathisen stress that, through the revivals in the U.S. during the latter part of the 1850s, the social phenomenon of making the "bad of society good" was taken by the Americans beyond the focal point of the British muscular Christianity, namely character development.

Among all the marvelous advances of Christianity either within this organization (the YMCA) or without it in this land and century or any other lands or ages, the future historian of the Church of Christ will place this movement of carrying the gospel to the body as one of the most epoch making (G. Hall: 377).

The YMCA plays a central part in developing attitudes toward sport and sports practices, or as G. Hall put it, in "carrying the gospel to the body."⁷ This includes the development of theology or Christian reflection in the face of modernity, starting with men's wish to be physically active in sports. The three American studies are very much aware of the British roots of the YMCA organization, but they are also familiar with the British background of its Christian theology with respect to how to reach out to young urban men with the gospel. Sport was definitely not part of this outreach when the YMCA was founded in 1844 in London, and the pioneers who established the first American association, the Boston YMCA in 1851, wanted it to resemble the British YMCA. Despite this fact: "Of all the organizations working to bring religion and sport closer together, none was more influential than the Young Men's Christian Association" (Putney: 64). In Baker's introduction to the chapter about the YMCA, "Praying and playing in the YMCA," his focus is on the central background of the YMCA in Britain; it was "born of Protestant piety, not of playfulness" (Baker: 42). The Christian theology behind the YMCA, first in Britain and next in the U.S., was conservative Protestant theology. The two branches developed differently; the British branch barely endorsed physical exercise programs, while the American Branch developed an institution equipped to carry the gospel of sport all over the world.

Putney's contention that the American YMCA organization was the most influential in bringing sport and religion closer together, and Baker's claim that the British roots emphasized piety rather than sport, were bound to have had theological implications throughout the latter part of the 19th century. The question is whether the two branches of the YMCA shared only a common Protestant starting point, both with respect to piety and

⁷ Granville Stanley Hall (1844-1924) was a pioneering American psychologist and educator. His interests focused on childhood development and evolutionary theory. Hall was the first president of the American Psychological Association and the first president of Clark University.

theology, at the time when the YMCA was founded in the early 1850s. Thereafter, the story of each branch differs. I am primarily interested in whether there were any theological discussions or exchanges between the British and American branches in the latter part of the 19th century.

As a starting point, it is important to stress the common ground of Protestantism in both Britain and the U.S. The so-called “Founding Fathers” of America and several generations of immigrants after them came from Britain. In the thirteen colonies, Protestant denominations in the Puritan-Calvinist tradition dominated, especially in New England, both before and after 1776. This was also true around 1850, when muscular Christianity was introduced in the U.S., i.e., “almost from its inception” (Putney: 19). It is no surprise that the first YMCA in the U.S. was founded on the east coast, in Boston. The Protestant denominations represented were “mainly Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists” (Putney: 64). The first North American YMCA Convention was held in New York (very close to New England) in 1854, with diverse geographic representation from San Francisco and Toronto. The Central Committee, headquartered in New York, was the supervising body for the YMCA’s work both nationally and internationally.

Moody is of particular importance in the further development of the theological distinctions between pre- and postmillennialism and the role of sport in the work of the YMCA. While Moody was working closely with the Chicago YMCA, from its foundation in 1858 until 1873, the local organization was “structurally and ideologically committed to evangelism, not to ‘physical work’” (Baker: 52). In 1873, he left for a two-year trip to Britain with song leader Ira D. Sankey, whom he had met some years before at a YMCA convention and invited to Chicago. Moody and Sankey made several trips to Britain in the years to come. When he returned from his first trip in 1875, he settled in his hometown Northfield, Massachusetts. “The fact that Moody promoted religion and sport at his Northfield conferences has led two historians to call him ‘the champion of an indigenous brand of muscular Christianity’” (Putney: 2). These conferences started in 1885 and helped advance muscular Christianity in America by bringing together Christian athletes. The compatibility between religion and sport emerged from these conferences.

The description of Moody given by Baker and Putney indicates that he was a homegrown muscular Christian, entirely the result of American cultural traditions, without trace of British influence. In contrast, the British influence on Moody and his theological views is of special interest and seems to be rather explicit according to Ladd and Mathisen. “Perhaps no single family affected the muscular Christian movement among evangelicals in America more than the Studds of Great Britain” (44). The wealthy tea planter Edward Studd had been converted in 1877 in Moody’s revival in England. Later, three of his sons, international cricketers, successively captains of the team from Cambridge, one of them a member of the All-England Eleven, were converted. This happened at the beginning of the 1880s, at a time when cricket was the game for gentlemen in the British Empire. Their athletic prominence gave them a platform for presenting the gospel of Jesus. “The connection between the Studd family and other evangelical Christians interested in sport is vital to understanding muscular Christianity as it developed in the United States” (Ladd and Mathisen: 46). This quotation is followed by a reference not only to the conversion of the father Studd, but also to the financial support from the most prominent cricketer, C. T.

Studd, who helped fund Moody's campaigns and his foundation, the Moody Bible Institute. One of the brothers, J. E. K. Studd, took part in one of Moody's revivals given at American colleges, which resulted in the conversion of John R. Mott and the founding of the Student Volunteer Movement, which derived from the YMCA and dealt with world mission. There were two contributions related to the Studd connection. The first was the substantial financial support for Moody's work as an evangelist, not only in the U.S. and Britain, but across the world. The second was the Studd's example, especially that of C. T. Studd, of combining sport and religion, which influenced Moody's theology. "The man who went all out to be an expert cricket player, later he went all out to glorify his Savior and extend his Kingdom" (Ladd and Mathisen: 47). Moody turned out to be a staunch premillennialist, but his encounter with the muscular Christian Studds in Britain, among other influences, seems to have changed his theology. "The stage was set, not only to make the 'good of society better' and thereby usher in the kingdom (a postmillennial emphasis) but also to make the 'bad of society good' before Jesus would return to earth (a premillennial emphasis)" (Ladd and Mathisen: 47).

Sabbatarianism or Sunday Observance

Sabbatarianism or Sunday observance is well represented in and is the common thread running through my thesis. Among the three barriers that prevented Christians from participating in sports on Sundays after World War II, Sunday observance was the one that lasted the longest, until about 1980 (Justvik: 331-34). After 1980, hardly anyone questioned Christian participation in sports on Sundays. My thesis presents the historical background of Sunday observance, from about the year 1000 when Christianity was introduced to Norway, through the past 500 years with the Norwegian Lutheran state church. Sunday observance is an extensive, strong tradition in Norwegian history (Justvik: 127-31).

I have found only one source that reflects the theological distinctions between the Calvinist-Protestant and Lutheran view of Sabbatarianism. A certain incident concerning violation of Sunday observance resulted in two articles, which even made the front page of a local newspaper (Justvik: 124-27). A local theology student, soon to graduate, had delivered a sermon and was warned by an old man in the congregation after the service: "If you play soccer today – on Sunday – you commit a sin. It is against God's commandments, and you will never have the opportunity to preach from the pulpit in this church again." In the newspaper, the theology candidate carefully presented his arguments based on both the New Testament and the most important of the five Confessions of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Augsburg Confession. Towards the end of the first of his two newspaper articles, he contended that the Lutheran view on Sabbatarianism, as he presented it, was in accordance with the view of Calvin. The problem was that, from about 1600 and onwards, a more legalistic, Old Testament point of view had developed, especially among Calvinist-Protestants in England. The theology candidate seemed to think that this strict Calvinist-Protestant view on Sabbatarianism had also influenced Lutheran Norway.

Sabbatarianism or Sunday observance is not of great importance in Putney's study. In Baker's study, however, a full chapter is devoted to the topic of "Sunday Games" (148-70). In his introduction to the chapter he states, "Between World War I and World War II, the nation underwent a massive readjustment of behavior regarding Sunday sport" (148).

However, up until this period of transition, “old Puritan prohibitions against Sunday sport remained embedded in law and public opinion” (148). The laws were repealed during the 1930s but, among conservative Protestants, “Sabbatarianism remained alive and well for at least a decade after World War II” (Baker: 148; see Ladd and Mathisen: 99ff., 147). Baker contends that immigration of Catholics and Lutherans brought more tolerant “Continental Sunday” ideas to the United States (148).

However, the discussion regarding whether or not to play on Sundays was an old one. Putney has references to this debate as far back as antebellum times – before the Civil War – when the liberal Congregationalist Reverend Horace Bushnell in his revised version of his book *Christian Nurture* in 1861, first published in 1847, declared that “religion is to be the friend of play even on the Sabbath” (quoted in Putney: 20). Putney mentions a couple of liberal ministers around the turn of the century, an Episcopal bishop and a liberal Protestant, who expressed their views on Sunday play: Sunday play is a question for the individual to decide, and that “the old prejudice against pleasure as being intrinsically evil has broken down nearly everywhere. . . The Puritan Sabbath has been definitely renounced” (58). The possibility that play and recreation might crowd out religious worship seems to be a far-fetched point of view among liberal clergymen. They claimed that religion and recreation were twins, and that “religion is recreational” (58). Between 1861 and the turn of the century, “the YMCA became an agency for Sunday activity and for greater social freedom within the culture” (Ladd and Mathisen: 42). During the 1880s, the New York branch of the YMCA arranged a series of revival meetings called “Athletic Sundays.” Aiming to attract young men who did not attend church, these meetings were attended by prominent athletes, such as A. A. Stagg and Billy Sunday, who shared their testimonies (Ladd and Mathisen: 42).

The change in Sunday observance “was deeply rooted in nineteenth-century industrial growth, new technologies, and larger, more diverse urban centers of population,” which characterized the period between the two world wars (Baker: 148). This is compatible with what is stated above about Norway with regards to reasons for the change in attitudes toward Sunday sport. On the other hand, when this change does occur, Norway, or to be more specific, Norway’s “Bible belt,” is much slower to adjust. There are reasons for this slow and delayed adjustment. The problem of Sunday games in America and in Norway’s “Bible belt” appeared at different times: modern sports were introduced in the “Bible belt” at the same time American Protestants had reconciled with Sunday sport. Another reason is linked to this early introduction of modern sports in Protestant denominations and the specific challenges these denominations were facing in the latter part of the nineteenth century – the effeminacy of Protestant churches. This will be dealt with in the next section on manliness and masculinity and sport.

We can distinguish certain differences between the three American studies and my work. A stricter view on Sunday observance until the current period is revealed in my thesis, and it seems to be more powerful and widespread in Norway than in the U.S. Both Baker and Ladd and Mathisen refer to the legal tradition in the U.S. and the passing of strict Puritan-Calvinist laws on Sunday observance. Nothing is said about the background for the legal tradition, apart from it being Puritan and thus related to Protestantism. In this regard, we may bring in Britain, which has historically had close ties to the U.S. Britain has a strong tradition of Sabbatarianism, which may have influenced the U.S. (Erdozain: 78-80). The

British influence seems probable, but it is not reflected in the three texts, apart from Baker's contention that Catholic and Lutheran immigrants brought more tolerant, "Continental Sunday" ideas to the United States (148). However, this refers to more than Britain. One interpretation might be that the Calvinist-Protestant tradition of Sabbatarianism was much stronger and stricter compared to the same tradition in Catholic and Lutheran Europe. This seems to be in line with an interpretation of the story about the theology candidate who was denied the right to give a sermon if he played soccer on a Sunday: Although the basic principles of Sunday observance of the historical 16th century Lutheranism and Calvinism are the same, emphases change over time and the Calvinist influence in Norway seems to have been fairly strong. In the Norwegian constitution of 1814, the most liberal and democratic at the time, only Lutheranism was accepted. In section 4 of the constitution, both Jews and Jesuits were explicitly denied citizenship. Around 1850, full freedom of worship was granted. After that, several non-Lutheran denominations were introduced and influenced the predominant Lutheran tradition in Norway.⁸

Manliness and Masculinity

Manliness and masculinity were not explicitly expressed in the approximately 50 interviews that served as the primary source base for my study (Justvik: 41). Some of the informants became sports idols and were admired by the religious groups to which they belonged. Some were admired in more secular parts of their communities as well. These heroes and, from about 1970, heroines played an important role in changing the attitudes about sport in the "Bible belt," and were as such agents for change (Justvik: 242-46). For obvious reasons, they were admired because of their prowess as sportsmen. They were also admired for their gospel testimonies, actively proselytizing among fellow sportsmen, refraining from drinking alcohol, and their decent behavior. However, it is difficult to relate that to manliness and masculinity. One of my colleagues asked me several times during my work on my thesis whether my male informants said anything about their athletic bodies and pride in being fit. None did – and they did not seem to be preoccupied with it.

I have to admit that my interview guide did not contain questions about manliness, masculinity, fitness, or having an athletic body. This absence of explicit questions relating to the themes already mentioned might be a central reason why my informants did not pay much attention to them. On the other hand, this may be related to another factor in a most powerful and influential religious tradition in the history of Norway, which has been referred to above in relation to Hallesby. In such a tradition and worldview, where the only focus and the overall priority was "the one needful thing," there was hardly time for heavy involvement in sports or any focus on manliness and masculinity (Justvik: 51-65, Erdozain: 43, 71).

One of my informants described a loneliness associated with being an active sportsman leading a split life – one life in his Christian denomination and another when playing soccer in the sports club. What he explained about himself as a soccer player can be interpreted as a story about manliness and masculinity. He perceived an unspoken message from the Christian community, that his choice to be part of two different worlds was a dubious

⁸ During the 1870s, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway was formed, largely influenced by the church constitution of Scottish Presbyterianism, which is related to Calvinism (see Løvlie).

challenge. This perception was closely associated with anxiety; hence he could not share his all-consuming interest in sports with anybody in his Christian denomination. “I loved to play soccer, I put so much energy into it and there was so much happiness associated with it” (Justvik: 238). In the denomination, there was also an explicit message completely in accordance with the predominant “eschatological ethics” of Hallesby: “While bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way. It holds promise for the present life and for the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:8).

The study of the muscular Christian tradition in England and the U.S. was an immense surprise with respect to how important and widespread manliness and masculinity were in the various studies. This is particularly the case in Putney’s work, but both Baker and Ladd and Mathisen have many references to manliness and masculinity in their indexes (Baker: 319; Ladd and Mathisen: 285-86). As for Putney, the phrase “manliness” is even included in the title of his work, which sheds light on the importance of this theme. The first few pages include the seminal text that introduces muscular Christianity to an American audience: The Unitarian minister T. W. Higginson – America’s premier muscular Christian – presented in 1858, in *Atlantic Monthly*, the article “Saints, and Their Bodies,” in which he wished health and manliness to be “more evident in America’s Protestant churches, which he viewed as unhealthy and unmanly” (Putney: 21, 1-2). Throughout the work, there are numerous references to manliness, unmanliness, masculine traits, and masculinization in different combinations (Putney: 291, 298).

Educated, mid-nineteenth-century Americans were exposed to English muscular Christianity almost from its inception, a fact not surprising given the tendency toward Anglophilia and access to muscular Christian novels (Putney: 19).

The novels referred to here are the works of Kingsley and Hughes, written around 1850: “adventure novels replete with high principles and manly Christian heroes” (Putney: 12; see footnote 2 above). The works of these two British authors became immensely popular, especially *Tom Brown’s School Days* (Putney: 20).⁹ The more or less concurrent importance of these authors’ novels in both Britain and the U.S. is explained by Parker and Weir:

Specific to the work of Kingsley and Hughes, however, was a belief in the power of the culture of games to combat the perceived effeminacy of society and, for that matter, of the public schools. More importantly, there was a growing concern in the mid-1800s that church congregations (and Christianity per se), were succumbing to a wave of effeminacy (Parker and Weir: 255).

In the U.S., the effeminacy of Protestantism dates back to the second half of the 18th century, and is partly a consequence of exercise being viewed as an immoral waste of time,

⁹Vance pays special attention to Christian manliness and muscular Christianity in the works of Kingsley and Hughes (78-165). Putney refers to a debate among some scholars during the 1990s, in which Vance also took part, about the works of the two authors. Despite some divergence, Vance and other scholars conclude that the authors presented unambiguous messages in their works. One such message was that male aggression was a praiseworthy element in Christianity.

consequently fostering ill health. Puritan ethics has a traditional focus on work, not pleasure. Since the latter part of the 17th century, there has been a gender imbalance – more women than men – in Protestant churches. This had been a distress among both antebellum Southern and Northern evangelicals (Putney: 2).

What sparks a strong focus on manliness in both Britain and the U.S. almost simultaneously seems to be the novels of Kingsley and Hughes. This is also revealed in the various headings in Putney's first chapter, "The Birth of a Movement." The movement is muscular Christianity and the first subheading is "Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes," dealing with the movement's starting place, Britain. Putney describes how the movement developed in the U.S. under the subheading "America's Response to Kingsley and Hughes." The initial paragraph in this section, quoted above, emphasizes the close connection between Britain and the U.S. from the formation of the muscular Christianity movement. Putney proceeds by mentioning Hughes' trip to the U.S. in the 1870s, his speech about the "Proper Limits" of muscular Christianity at Harvard College, and the foundation of the colony of Rugby, Tennessee, "which from 1880 to 1887 served to teach muscular Christianity to the sons of English immigrants" (19). The lasting impression of Hughes' work on many Americans is demonstrated in references to two sermons by well-known American ministers in commemoration of Hughes, who died in 1896. The themes of the sermons are worth mentioning here: "Tom Brown at Rugby" and "the manliness of Christ," the latter being the phrase coined by Hughes (Putney: 19).

Conclusion

We are well aware that Britain was the cradle of the muscular Christianity movement around 1850 – the basic social construction of muscular Christianity. We also see that the movement almost simultaneously spread to the U.S. However, the growth of muscular Christianity in the U.S. with respect to the three themes of theology, Sunday observance, and manliness and masculinity was not solely based on the British impact. Prior to 1850, American society had in many areas evolved into fertile ground for the introduction of the ideology of muscular Christianity.

Ladd and Mathisen acknowledge that, despite the influence of British muscular Christianity, the movement developed differently in the U.S. The work of British scholar P. C. McIntosh on physical education in Britain and its focus on character development is an important resource. Ladd and Mathisen point out that the American revivals during the late 1850s triggered the idea of making the "bad of society good," which played a part in British muscular Christianity ideology.

Despite historical differences between British and American Protestantism, there was also common ground. In both countries there were Protestant theological discussions about the "problem of pleasure," which is the title of Erdozain's seminal study. The American YMCA developed a theology related to sport and the role of sport in the work of its organization, as did D. L. Moody, one of its prominent leaders in the latter part of the 19th century. The question is whether this was a homegrown change of theology or if there was a foreign influence behind it. Moody extended his revivals to Britain several times, and wealthy tea planter Edward Studd was converted through them. Studd's sons were dedicated sportsmen who also converted to Christianity. One of the Studd brothers even became a

missionary to China. Seeing C. T. Studds' combination of sport and religion made a particular impression on Moody and influenced his theology. Studd donated the remaining portion of his inherited fortune to the founding of Moody Bible Institute. Moody had been a staunch premillennialist, but his encounter with the Studds made him more liberal-minded and open to postmillennialism.

Sabbatarianism or Sunday observance is central to my thesis, which contains a theological presentation of a Lutheran view of the Sabbath. In comparison, Sabbatarianism is not central to the three American studies, which present a Puritan-Protestant context. However, they do mention and refer to early discussions of Sunday observance and state that these discussions waned around the time of World War II, the time period at which my study starts. Despite minor differences between the three studies from the U.S. on Sunday observance, the most important is the possible influence from abroad. I contend that Britain's strong position on Sabbatarianism played an important role in American Protestant Sunday observance. However, Baker mentions "Continental Sunday" as a result of Catholic and Lutheran immigration. Catholics and Lutherans who emigrated from Europe to the U.S. were, in fact, far more liberal in their view of the Sabbath compared to Puritan-Calvinists in the U.S.

Manliness and muscularity is central to all three American studies, although it is the leitmotif in Putney's work. My thesis, on the contrary, excludes it completely. Putney traces the lack of manliness and masculinity in American society to the gender imbalance in Protestantism of 200 years ago and to the "problem of pleasure" discussions among Protestants during the latter part of the 18th century. There had been a parallel development in Britain until about 1850, and from that time the muscular Christianity ideology and movement developed on its own, without much influence from abroad. In the U.S., on the other hand, muscular Christianity influence from Britain triggered a development infused by the work of Kingsley and Hughes. In different ways, the two founding fathers are commemorated and celebrated throughout the century.

Evaluators were critical of the methodological nationalism and localism of Norwegian historians' scholarly works. Most Norwegian historians admit this to be a relevant allegation. Using my own work as a test case, I find this criticism to be true only to a certain extent. The main objective of my thesis was to complete a scholarly and conscientious study within the local field. My research located some literature on muscular Christianity and my study included short chapters on it. With this article I have responded to at least one of the evaluators' recommendations.

What is the position of the four American scholars – are they methodological nationalists? In my opinion they are not; they are very familiar with the British background of the muscular Christian ideology and movement – and not only as a background. The analysis presented in this article reveals the influence of British muscular Christianity on its American context during the latter part of the 19th century and explores the three themes of the movement in an American context.

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