



a
acm
L'Hermetan

18

Investigations d'Anthropologie Prospective

INVESTIGATIONS D'ANTHROPOLOGIE PROSPECTIVE



CORPS, RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ

Anne-Laure **Zwilling**



Cette publication a bénéficié du soutien financier de l'Institut d'études avancées de l'Université de Strasbourg, dans le cadre du fellowship « (Re)penser la religion au plurIEL : vers une nouvelle anthropologie historique des formes et des dynamiques de la religion » du professeur Lionel Obadia à qui cet ouvrage doit beaucoup.

Nous remercions Marie-Jo Morant, Catherine Zimmerlin, et surtout Jérémie Legrand, pour leur relecture attentive.

D/2019/4910/39

ISBN : 978-2-8061-0473-1

© Academia-L'Harmattan s.a.
Grand'Place, 29
B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE

Tous droits de reproduction, d'adaptation ou de traduction, par quelque procédé que ce soit, réservés pour tous pays sans l'autorisation de l'éditeur ou de ses ayants droit.

www.editions-academia.be

Suffering in, for, and with Christ: Faithful CrossFit Bodies

10

Alexander Darius **Ornella**

³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings,

because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.

⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Romans 5:3-5).

1. Introduction

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13) is a popular bible verse and one can find a number of online resources dedicated to the contemplation of the verse (see, for example UpChurch, 2015). The ambivalence of the word "strengthen", which can mean mental or physical strength, is not only present in the English translation, but already in the Greek

original, “πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με”. *ἰσχύω* can mean to have the ability, to be strong and healthy, or to be powerful; and *ἐνδυναμοῦντί* can mean to make strong, to gain strength, to become stronger, or to regain one's strength. With these references to physical strength, it should then come as no surprise that biblical verses such as Phil 4:13 are highly popular among Christian athletes (for example NBA.com, 2015).

Sports and the profession of faith by celebrity athletes can be a means to evangelize and reach out to people that Christian communities, in particular evangelical, might otherwise not reach (e.g. the mission statement of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes: FCA n.d.). Motivations for these public professions of faith, however, are not only rooted in an attempt to reach out but can transcend a mere bearing witness to one's faith and become a performative act that transforms the practice of sport into a living-out-of, experiencing of, and embodying scripture, an act of prayer and embodied worship.

The embodied and fleshly – even carnal – experiencing of scripture in and through the practice of sport becomes particularly evident among some Christians within the increasingly popular high intensity fitness regime CrossFit. CrossFit, as company, was officially founded in 2000 by Greg Glassman, though the (mythical) genesis can be traced back much further (Ornella, 2015). It promotes functional fitness and combines bodyweight exercises, elements from Olympic lifting and gymnastics. The high intensity workouts are usually done in small groups in one-hour long classes. Because of their intensity, the workouts are often as much about physical strength and endurance as they are about mental toughness, i. e. the mental strength to keep going, to embrace the “dark place” even if one's body is in pain. Although CrossFit was not founded as “Christian sport” (though it promotes a range of values and could be described as ethical system), over the years a range of Christian practices and communities have emerged within the sport. Drawing on writings and statements of Christian athletes in the CrossFit community, and the iconography produced by these practices, this paper will explore the relationship between the practice of the sport and religion. In these writings and visual products, the topic of pain and suffering both

in the sport and in scripture is often central. As such, this paper will look at how Christians relate the notion of suffering in the Bible to suffering during CrossFit workouts. I argue that through the suffering during these workouts, scripture becomes alive, fleshly, and carnal allowing Christian athletes to enter a mystical union with the suffering Jesus. To do so, this paper will first look at sport as meaningful practice, then explore the theology of suffering in evangelicalism, and finally analyze athletes' writings to link the meaningful practice of sport to a theology of suffering.

A brief note on methodology is important. This is a small scale, non-representative, qualitative study of references to Jesus' suffering in the visual and textual material produced by some Christian athletes. The analysis employs a close reading of the texts and the iconography and is informed by thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). All material used in this study is publicly accessible either on blogs, websites, published auto-biographies, or public social media accounts. In line with thematic analysis, the material chosen was guided by the analytic interest in the intersection between suffering in sports and religion. As such, all the material used addresses both suffering in scripture and suffering and pain during exercise. Since the examples are rooted in Evangelical Christianity, an Evangelical theological approach to suffering has been employed as interpretative framework for the textual and visual material.

Even though this paper focuses on suffering and pain, I do not mean to suggest that Christian CrossFitters solely focus on suffering or that all Christian CrossFitters establish a link between their sport and their beliefs. Social media, such as Instagram, feature a number of examples where Christian CrossFitters refer to Christ's resurrection or the joy the faithful can experience through their knowledge of being children of God, but these references are not the object of the present study. A final note on bias: I am an avid CrossFitter¹ myself and am approaching my research as a sympathetic (yet hopefully still critical) insider. I have not gone native for my research, but started CrossFit and noticed a range of practices

1. More about my research on CrossFit can be found online: <http://ornella.info/crossfit>.

that sparked my interest as theologian and religious studies scholar.

2. The Meaning of (and in) Sport and Sport and Religion

Public discourses on sport often evolve around individual and communal health benefits of sport, including the financial relief a healthy and active lifestyle and healthier citizens might bring to strained public finances. In its publications, the public National Health Service NHS in the UK, for example, focuses on the health benefits of sport (NHS, 2015), and a report from the UK Department for Culture, Media & Sport points to the positive impact of sport on the individual's health, a reduction in number of GP visits, financial savings for the NHS England, and pro-social behavior (Fujiwara et al., 2015). Government reports that explore *why* people engage with sports and culture focus more on more technical questions, such as how age, childhood experiences, educational, financial background, or gender might influence the engagement with culture and sports (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2013). The English Sports Council, *Sport England*, acknowledges social aspects of sports such as pro-social behavior, social cohesion, and the impact of sport on lifelong learning (*Sport England n.d.*).

While the more technical aspects of sport engagement might be valuable and insightful, they perceive sport mostly as a tool or vehicle to achieve certain ends. They render invisible that sport can be a meaningful practice people engage with for a range of different reasons. That is, people might very well decide to become active *in order to* improve their health, body composition, or to achieve that six pack look, but people might still find value in sport that goes beyond the mere instrumentality. In fact, meaning can be found in and attributed to sports on a range of levels and aspects, such as fun, the impact on sports on our appearance, the social and community aspects, or mental recreation (Seippel, 2006, p. 54), or social transformation. Ørnulf Seippel (2006, p. 53)

argues that despite the increasing rationalization and marketization of sport, fun is still one of the most important factors for why people play sports. Gender, class, and age have an impact on the value people see in sports, too. The older people get, the more instrumental an approach to sport they seem to adopt, yet the relationship between fun and instrumentality as motivations for doing sports remains complex and complicated (Seippel, 2006, pp. 54-56, p. 62). While among participants in Seippel's study expressivity was not the top reason for participants (and ranked higher among working class participants) (Seippel, 2006, p. 59), he argues that in a postmodern context and with new sports emerging, research should look at "*sport as expressive action*" (Seippel, 2006, p. 53). For the understanding of expressive action, I follow Monika Betzler (2009, 290): "Expressive actions are actions that an agent is drawn to by strongly felt emotional states. The emotions that give rise to them are typically rationally grounded in what the agent has come to value and identify himself by. Their strong motivational potential causes the agent to act them out." This being-grounded in values and the acting out of values and emotions is a particularly relevant perspective for exploring the relationship between sport and meaning in general and sport and religion in particular. Sport might express, uncover, and give rise to aspects of faith otherwise not possible. Sport might contribute to the fleshly and sensual experience of aspects of faith and could thus be considered as a sensual religious practice.

Scholars have argued for quite some time that there is a dynamic and close relationship between sports, religion, and spirituality. Approaches range from looking at sports as religion (fanculture, sacred spaces, etc), to spirituality and prayer in sports, or sports ministry (Watson and Parker, 2014). These approaches show that the relationship between sport, religion, and spirituality is a complex one and that sport and religion can be both instrumental and meaningful practice. Sport can be a vehicle to reach out and evangelize, as public professions of faith of prominent athletes and organizations such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes show (Hoffman, 1985, p. 67; Watson, 2007a, pp. 88-92). Sport, however, may be able to contribute to one's spiritual life, become a spiritual experience and point towards the trans-

cendent (Kelly, 2011, p. 173), though some scholars, such as Watson (2007b, p. 113) remain critical that sports can provide access to the holy in Rudolf Otto's sense. Religion and spirituality, too, can be a mere tool or a more important aspect of sport practice. Pre-game locker room prayers, for example, can function as "ultimate psyche-up" (Hoffman, 1985, p. 67; Hoffman, 2011, p. 38) while spirituality, spiritual awareness, and religious practices sometimes function as "performance-enhancement techniques" (Watson and Nesti, 2005, p. 232; Crust, 2006).

In support for merging religion and sports, faithful and scholars often draw on Paul's athletic metaphors, such as in 2 Tim 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Higgs (1983, pp. 65-67), however, warns us of a sportive interpretation of Paul's metaphor and argues that he merely used this symbolic language to speak to his ancient audience so used to the presence of sports in public and religious life. As such, Higgs (1983, 62f.) is a critic of the "sanctification" of sports and the "secularization" of religion, but by doing so, he presupposes very specific (and narrow) understandings of both domains. He (Higgs, 1983, p. 63) identifies three areas in which sports and religion have often overlapped: "Muscular Christianity, holy play, and spiritual exercises" and – broadly – links Muscular Christianity to Protestantism, holy play to pagan practices, and spiritual exercises to Catholicism. In Muscular Christianity, Higgs (1983, p. 64) argues, "emotion becomes a significant factor in salvational work, while for the spiritual exercitant emotion must be drained away before the encounter with the holy that prepares one for service in the world." The denominational link Higgs establishes is interesting in the context of the present study. While the religious practices and imagery analyzed in this article are infused with an evangelical theological understanding of suffering, CrossFit – to use a denominational analogy – with its hierarchies (despite the emphasis on its non-hierarchical structure), rituals, liturgies (the Open, until 2018 the Regionals, from 2019 the Sanctionals, the Games), symbols, icons, and "saints", and most importantly its claim of universality rather resonates with the structures and symbolism of Catholicism.

Sport can be a powerful generator of meaning and provide a framework of values and narratives through which athletes and fans alike make sense of their experiences. In that sense, sport can function in similar ways to traditional religions and a number of scholars have pointed to elements sport and religion share in common (Chidester, 2005, viii; Novak, 1992; Price, 1992; Price, 2001; Chandler, 1992). It is also important to keep in mind that Hoffman (1985, p. 68f.) warns us not to confuse different modes of mutual appropriation between sports and religion. I want to move beyond the discussion about functional parallels between sport and religion and am interested not only in the "trend toward reconceptualizing sport as a mode of religious expression" (Hoffman, 1985, p. 65), but in how religious narratives become sensual and tangible through sports and how sports offers a laboratory – to draw on Paul Ricoeur – for acting out religious narratives. In particular CrossFit, as I will show below, offers such a space for making tangible and acting out religious idea and can thus be seen as such a "mode of religious expression".

3. Theology of Suffering

Pain and suffering are an inevitable – and one could argue essential – part of being and having body. Yet today, pain is something undesirable, something that reminds us of our fragile bodies, something that gets in the way of enjoying life. What remains forgotten is the crucial role pain and suffering have played in identity negotiations. "The experience of pain has historically been a key means through which individuals develop religious identities" (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 18). Today, Mellor and Shilling identify a shift in the authority over the interpretation of pain and suffering away from religion towards "the bio-political sacred" (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 72). These, quite appealing, bio-medical narratives evolve around the unnecessary of pain, the power of pain-relief and anaesthetics, and the underlying message that no one needs to suffer (often forgetting those with chronic pain conditions, for example). In this context, pain is

something science and technology can solve or manage (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 73).² Yet, pain always resists these technicization attempts because, as Mellor and Shilling argue, “religious and cultural norms still shape people’s views of the *value* of pain. Pain, in some contexts at least, is viewed positively and the authority of bio-medicine has been contested” (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 73). For example, pain (such as in the context of illness) can contribute to a spiritual transformation (Norris, 2009).

The relationship between pain, suffering, and Christianity has, of course, a long and complicated history and goes back to Biblical narratives and early Christian practices of self-representation. Early Christianity in particular exhibited a central concern with pain – and not necessarily for the risks involved of being a Christian, which, as recent scholarship suggests, was more complex than traditional accounts of early Christianity suggest (Moss, 2012). In fact, early Christianity made pain and suffering a central part of their practices of self-representation towards fellow Christians and Pagan others (Perkins, 1995, p. 15, 23, 25; Heimerl, 2015, pp. 182-184) and presented the idea of the “Christian as sufferer” (Perkins, 1995, p. 24) as key concept. Early Christian texts communicated the idea that “to be a Christian was to suffer and die” (Perkins, 1995, p. 24). In his letter to the Philippians, Polycarp of Smyrna (2nd cent. CE) calls his audience to imitate Christ: “Let us then be imitators of His patience; and if we suffer for His name’s sake, let us glorify Him. For He has set us this example in Himself, and we have believed that such is the case” (Polycarp 2nd cent. CE, ch. 8; Perkins, 1995, p. 24). The bottom line is, as Perkins argues, that early Christians both were known for and presented themselves to not shy away from death and endure pain and suffering (Perkins 1995, 22f.).

The close relationship between pain, suffering, and death and Christian practice found ever new ways to manifest itself in medieval times. In particular the desire to imitate Christ’s suffering

2. This move away from pain, Mellor and Shilling argue, is entangled both with secularization and Christian ideas about moral education and Christian ideas of a world without pain; that the world can be “saved from pain” (Mellor and Shilling 2014, 78, 89f.).

during his passion and crucifixion manifested itself in crucifixion piety and a range of body practices with self-inflicted pain at their center. The self-infliction of pain was seen as religious practice to experience the transcendent (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, pp. 83-85).

Bio-medicine and its promises have weakened the link between pain and religious experience. In fact, any religiously inspired attempts to self-induce pain are typically viewed with suspicion (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 78). Pain as a means (or enabler) of religious experience, however, is not completely absent in contemporary religious practice. The

"idea of a 'path to God through the Cross' can not only help individuals find religious meaning in afflictions, including terminal illness, but can also open the way for broader religious engagements with pain. In contrast to the medicalized reduction of pain to stimuli, what we have here are experiences of pain made meaningful and also, crucially, socially and culturally productive. This occurs through a religious cosmology and practices that prompt a very specific alignment and co-constitution of the stimuli and feelings of pain, and the classifications/reflections about pain" (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 86).

Indeed, faith has the potential to give meaning (and thus make bearable) to otherwise meaningless suffering (Norris, 2009, p. 32). There are, of course, different kinds of pain and suffering, differences between voluntary and involuntary pain, all eschewing easy identifications between pain, suffering, meaning, and religion.

While pain is not necessarily a prerequisite for mystical, religious, spiritual experiences (Nikkel, 2010, p. 390), self-inflicted pain has been an important aspect of religious practice across religious traditions (Glucklich, 2001, pp. 11-39). The interpretation of such "sacred pain" and "religious ways of hurting", as Glucklich (2001, p. 11) calls it, is challenged by the medicalization of pain that understands pain as purely medical or psychological problem (Glucklich, 2001, p. 7). Yet, throughout history, mystics often perceived pain to be a means for fostering and experiencing an intimate community with Christ. Historically, in particular in

medieval mysticism, pain has been an important element of spiritual practice. The disciplining of the body and the self-infliction of pain often included practices such as the mortification of the body or limiting one's sleep (Flynn, 1996, p. 257).

Pain, however, was not the only means for such an intimate encounter with God, rather, it was part of a sensual spectrum mystics drew on. In particular, women mystics relied on their senses to experience God and express their encounters with the transcendent. These sensual and bodily experiences and imagery included eating, drinking, caressing, or imagining Christ as baby or bridegroom (Milhaven, 1989, p. 346, 351, 359f.). "The women staying with Christ in his passion and death become one with him suffering. The women weep with Mary sorrowing. They laugh with the joy of the Baby in their arms" (Milhaven, 1989, p. 356). In other words, women mystics used and relied on all their senses and bodily experiences in encountering God and making sense of such encounters (Bynum, 1995, p. 26). J. Giles Milhaven (1989, pp. 341-343, p. 349f.) calls this "bodily knowing", a form of devotion that does not just merely rely on the body but is body in itself, it is encountering and knowing the divine through and in the senses.

"The women's physical experience did not express anything. It was itself. They held Christ physically. That was the whole thing. That was the wonderful, longed for, enjoyed, whole thing. ... But the miracle was that it was, analogously but truly, a physical eating of him, nursing of him, making love with him, holding him dead, etc. They felt they possessed and experienced Christ through bodily perceptions, bodily interactions and bodily feelings, through holding, giving suck, eating, orgasm, etc" (Milhaven, 1989, p. 349f.).

In the process of bodily knowing, pain takes on special significance because of the effect it has on our bodies. "In intense pain, [...] the human mind can focus on no object other than its own suffering. For the mystic seeking to chain the human mind in order to acquire a higher, more perfect form of understanding, pain provided the necessary psychic shackle" (Flynn, 1996, p. 274). And indeed, several mystics such as Catherine of Siena or Julia of

Norwich emphasized pain and suffering and saw it as a means for an intimate community with Jesus (Glucklich, 2001, p. 29).

The notion of pain and suffering is still important today within several Christian communities that perceive of pain as a bodily sensations that can foster religious experiences (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 74). In particular in the USA, Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker (2003, pp. 13-26) argue, the idea of penal substitution has enjoyed increasing popularity over the last two centuries. In particular in evangelical theology, the emphasis on both Jesus' death and suffering and a personal relationship with Jesus contribute to a very personal understanding of Jesus' pain and its purpose: "The salvation Jesus brought is primarily personal and spiritual" (Demarest, 2006, p. 26) delivering the individual from "sin, death, and divine wrath" (Demarest, 2006, p. 28). The emphasis on pain and suffering is rooted in Jesus' suffering and its implication for how to live life. Bruce A. Demarest (2006, p. 194), an Evangelical theologian with a focus on spiritual formation, writes:

"How blessed it is to realize that Christ took my place on the cross and was forsaken of God for *me*. For *my* sins he bore in his body the penalty required by a holy and just God. He appeased the divine wrath directed against *my* transgressions. [...] Christ's suffering and death at Calvary was a very personal and individualized event. While impaled on the cross his suffering eye was on the world, but it was also lovingly directed toward *you*".

Jesus' suffering and death on the cross cannot remain without consequences but has transformative power and calls for a life of humility, Demarest (2006, p. 196) argues. The cross also calls for endurance in whatever challenges life might bring. In fact, while the faithful might not see the immediate reason for having to face obstacles, they are part of God's plan to guide and parent his people: "Following Christ's example, disciples will endure scorn, abuse, and unjust suffering patiently for the glory of God, as Jesus did. Such trials are God's means of promoting godly character" (Demarest, 2006, p. 198) Because Jesus suffered and died, so, too, must those who follow his calling. Drawing on 1 Peter, Demarest (2006, p. 231) reminds the reader that those who follow Christ,

must also follow his example in his obedient suffering and sacrifice. "Christians are called to a life of perseverance in suffering. Our fleshly nature is such that we seek comfort and convenience rather than endurance through hardship and pain." In fact, earthly (and one could argue bodily) life is not one for pleasure but an opportunity to earn life everlasting: "God has called us to gain the heavenly prize. Our divine vocation is not a life of ease and pleasure, but one of self-denial as we strive for the heavenly goal" (Demarest, 2006, p. 231)

Following Christ demands one's full commitment: "The only appropriate response to the One who gave his life for us is to give our all to him. Anything less than full surrender fails to express the gratitude we owe" (Demarest, 2006, p. 272). Yet, many Christians and converts, according to Demarest, might not be fully aware of the full significance of what it means to be Christian. Becoming and being Christian, he (2006, p. 273) points out, is all too easy today and grace often promised at low cost: "In this day of cheap grace and easy-believism, contemporary evangelists and disciple-makers must summon sinners to believe, repent, trust, commit, obey, and faithfully follow Jesus Christ. We must call pre-Christians to embrace Christ as definitive Teacher, as unique Savior, and as absolute Lord."

Following Christ cannot remain a spiritual practice that is interior or inwardly only. Rather, the belief in Jesus as savior must become embodied practice. "Christian believers need to become outwardly and practically what they are inwardly and spiritually. We need to give loving, tangible expression to the spiritual unity that exists among us in the body of Christ" (Demarest, 2006, p. 343). Only if believers follow and imitate Jesus will they "grow in holistic holiness" (Demarest, 2006, p. 429). Drawing on a range of New Testament passages, this fellowship and imitation of Christ includes, according to Demarest (2006, p. 429), among others: generosity, forgiveness, or perseverance, dedicating one's life to the service to others, self-denial, "warfare against the powers of darkness (Matt 16:23; Mark 1:13), submission to the will of God (Mark 14:36; John 4:34; Luke 23:46), and a lifestyle of suffering (Matt 20:22-23; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 2:21-23) [...] his life of prayer [...] and his contemplation of the cross". Pain and suffering, however,

seems at the center of the fellowship of Christ. The battle against evil forces is not restricted to a spiritual battle in an attempt to overcome temptation or to live a life according to the Gospels, but includes a bodily investment. The body, in a sense, becomes a focal point of the spiritual battle. "To progress in the Christian life believers must mortify the flesh, contend against Satan, and grow in spiritual graces" (Demarest, 2006, p. 461). There are various ways we could interpret these passages. On the one hand, they seem to suggest a disregard of the body, something Christianity is regularly accused of (Isherwood and Stuart, 1998). On the other hand, in evangelicalism, there is a strong emphasis on emotions and sensations. God speaks to the individual, touches them, grabs them, not only metaphorically but in a very real and bodily sense (Luhrmann, 2012, p. 163). As such, Demarest's emphasis on the mortification of the flesh seems to suggest that the battle against evil is not only a spiritual one, nor is it only one that must be enacted and lived out in society, but it is a battle that must be felt and experienced in and through one's own body.

We must be careful, however, with linking bodily pain as a requirement for following Christ. As Mark Slatter (2015, p. 35) argues, suffering as a means to follow Christ "does not mean setting out to intentionally replicate Christ's suffering." Rather, suffering must be seen as a consequence of following Christ and become witness of the Gospel (Slatter 2015, p. 35). Yet, in evangelical theology, the body seems to have an ambivalent, albeit crucial role. Believers are called to mortify the flesh, yet the body is absolutely essential in and for the spiritual battle but also for spiritual growth. Body, though it must be mortified, seems so crucial that it is safe to say there cannot be spiritual growth and fellowship of Christ without body.

4. A Spirituality of Suffering among Christian CrossFitters?

CrossFit (despite the word "cross" in its name) is not a religious fitness initiative, though with its increasing popularity over the

past few years, it has not remained alien to the infusion of religion (Ornella, 2015). In particular in the United States, we can find a number of top level CrossFit athletes who are professed Christians. Looking at the perfectly sculpted bodies we see in CrossFit, we could approach the topic of CrossFit and Christianity from the perspective of “muscular Christianity”, however, I am more interested in expressions of and reflections on pain and suffering, and how bodies-in-pain become interwoven with religious ideas.

4.1. Humbled Daily

Humbled Daily (humbleddaily.com) is a small apparel company run by two brothers, Quinn and Caleb, and their friend Jared, with the intent to bring faith and fitness together and give it a visual expression through their designs. The “Vision” page (Humbled Daily 2016a) explains their motivation and makes it clear that they have a passion for both, faith and fitness, and both go hand in hand with each other, they are not separate realms: “We live for Jesus Christ, heavy barbells and the pursuit to grow strong in both. Our apparel is driven by the humbling experience each of these provide and built with careful attention to function and detail.” According to that page, they do not want to create yet another product with what sounds like a meaningful slogan but to rethink clothing into something new and different entirely: “to serve as something far more than clothing”. What exactly this “far more” is remains unspecified, yet the page gives us a hint: for the glory of God: “all for the glory and honor of the One who poured out His life for us, Jesus Christ.” So far, nothing yet really seems to emphasize the pain in CrossFit and link it to Jesus’ suffering.

The trading name of the company, Humbled Daily, and the gym equipment Quinn, Jared, and Caleb mention, the barbell, offer an entry point to explore the link between CrossFit and weightlifting and pain and suffering. The Olympic barbell weighs 20kg for men and 15kg for women and can, in its simplicity, easily go unnoticed or merely be seen as just a piece of iron. Yet, in spite – or because – of its simplicity, the barbell is often perceived as an object of beauty, something that can inspire awe. It is thought of as being able to teach the athlete something about life and reveal

something about the athlete's personality: the "barbell doesn't lie" and "how you lift shows who you are in life" (BarbellShrugged 2014, 47:30min) is something one comes across in reflections of weightlifting coaches. Former world champion powerlifter Travis Mash (2014) makes the relationship between the barbell and life very explicit: "The Barbell has taught me about the good and bad that I possess as a human". The barbell, loaded with such meaning, is part of the Humbled Daily company logo forming an X with a nail forming the second part of the X.³ Similar to the barbell, the nail in its simplicity is a not so subtle reference to the crucifixion and Jesus' suffering on the cross. The YouTube video Humbled Daily (2015) has produced, further explores the link between the barbell and the nail. At the beginning of the video, we see an image of three empty crosses cross-cut with an athlete at a gym tying his shoes and approaching a barbell. Towards the end of the video, Quinn, Jared, and Caleb tell us that Christ had "paid the ultimate price" for our wrongdoings and that "before the cross he stood humbled." They point out that throughout his time of preaching, Jesus faced rejection: "And when I learned of the actions that he took, it undoubtedly changed me, in fact, because of it, I'm humbled...daily." Immediately after "humbled...daily", the video cuts to the logo of the company, the barbell and the nail, with the three crosses on a hill we saw at the beginning of the video as the background. While the imagery lacks overtly references to painful workouts that send athletes to their dark places, the logo renders visible that for some religious CrossFitters or weightlifters, the barbell and what it stands for and Jesus and his passion, or in other words the barbell and the nail/cross, go hand in hand. In a way, the imagery attempts to say that both are a natural fit, they blend together, belong together. The barbell and the nail both achieve similar aims, to instill gratitude, humbleness, and teach about life. This is also what the three entrepreneurs express with what they say in the Youtube video: that they "work

3. Humbled Daily is not the only group that adapts and modifies two crossed barbells. As an example for a non-religious logo, the Barbell Cartel, another apparel company, for example, uses the crossed barbells as their logo, too, and have replaced one barbell with a rifle, cf. BARBELL CARTEL, « The Barbell Cartel », <http://thebarbellcartel.com/>, consulté le 06.06.2016.

hard and stay humble through our faith and our fitness". What makes this message very personal and – again – brings in Jesus' suffering, is the nail. The text on a crucifixion picture posted on the Humbled Daily Facebook page reads: "it was not nails that held you on that tree [...] it was my sin" (Humbled Daily 2016b).

There are other companies that sell Christian gym apparel, such as Fit For Him FFH (2016). While the language uses words like "armor", the discourse of pain and suffering seems to be mostly absent from their visual presentation and discourses.

4.2. Being One With Christ

The relationship between enduring painful workouts, strengthening the athletes ability to endure and suffer through pain, and Jesus' suffering can become embodied spiritual practice in working out. Among the numerous examples we can find on, for example, Instagram that explicate that relationship, one day in the Christian year stands out: Good Friday. Some Christian CrossFitters have done particularly mental and physically grueling workouts not necessarily to replicate or imitate Jesus' suffering, but as reminder of his bodily suffering and endurance and as spiritual practice. In 2014, Faith Rx'd, the most visible Christian community within CrossFit, posted a Good Friday Workout on Facebook consisting of Fran (a grueling combination of thrusters and pull-ups), followed by an 800m barbell carry walk, followed by 100 burpees with the comment: "After hours of being beaten, Jesus walked approx 800m bearing His cross to die on it. In remembrance of all HE did for us, we will suffer through this grueling workout" (Faith Rx'd 2014 - the following quotes come from the same Facebook post and are publicly accessible). Being a CrossFitter myself, I associate the following with this mini-narrative: after being beaten by Fran, the athlete carries a 43kg heavy barbell for 800m and then endures death by burpees. The comments on the Facebook post show that a number of athletes who performed the workout did see it as some sort of spiritual practice that did not only help them reflect on what happened on Good Friday, but they experienced the workout as something that brought them closer to Christ. One user writes: "I've read, heard

about and taught on the sacrifice of Christ, but never connected with it like this before! Was conscious of the beatings, Him carrying the cross, then hanging on the cross while stumbling through it." Another user seconds these thoughts and writes: "continually prayed throughout definately [sic!] made me feel closer to Christ. Remember what today represents and the sacrifices made so that we could live!" There are, of course, a number of comments that merely say something like "let's do this" or "looks awesome" or more critical ones like: "Sounds like catholic self flagellation. Hum not so sure about this idea." But for a number of people who took the time to make a comment, performing this workout seemed to equal real worship: "I couldn't begin to imagine the pain Christ went through" and "Such an awesome way to worship on Good Friday!"

None of these quotes suggests that the athletes aim to suffer like Jesus did because they express the awareness that Jesus paid the ultimate price, was the ultimate sacrifice, that he did not self-inflict pain out of some masochistic yearning. Rather, he suffered for humanity's sake so that humanity may be free. Therefore, these workouts can be seen as prayer and as a way for the athlete to enter a mystical union with Christ. The logic of the design of CrossFit workouts supports such an interpretation. In CrossFit, workouts are (usually) not randomly designed but follow an inner logic, an aesthetics of sorts. Classic CrossFit WODs (Workout of the Day) often follow certain schemes for the number of repetitions, e.g. 21-15-9, or 100-80-60-40-20, other CrossFitters design WODs based on life events, e.g. such as a birthday or the birth of a child. If a Christian CrossFit coach designs a Good Friday WOD, they would draw on the rich pool of Biblical Symbols and narratives to create the rep scheme. The above mentioned Good Friday WOD consisting of Fran, the barbell carry walk, and 100 burpees is such an example. Even though only the distance for the barbell carry is made sense of in terms of the distance Jesus is thought of having carried the cross (though the distance is subject to debate), the WOD in its entirety speaks of and expresses the suffering found in biblical texts. Another example is the "Jesus WOD" that is influenced by the 14 stations of the cross: 14 rounds of several barbell exercises and athletes were encouraged to not drop the

bar between rounds except after round 3, 6, and 9 (CrossFit Reign n.d.; CrossFit Templum, 2015). In the Stations of the Cross prayer, the third, sixth, and ninth station reflect on Jesus falling under the weight of the cross. As such, designing such a religious WOD must be seen not (at least not necessarily) as a way of how to instill the most pain onto those who do the workouts, but as a religious, reflective, indeed prayer practice in itself.

Athletes perceive religiously inspired WODs as a form of a mystical union with the suffering Christ. Athletes who have performed these workouts and appreciated them as a form of worship on Good Friday, prompt an interesting question about the kind of worship this might be. Speaking from my own Catholic background, unless the church had access to an outdoors Stations of the Cross path or the church building allowed the congregation to move around in the church (many Catholic churches have artwork dedicated to the 14 stations across the church), the praying usually happened with the parishioners sitting in the pews reflecting on Jesus suffering. These Christian CrossFitters, however, do not sit in pews or walk around, they engage in a rather painful workout routine. I can only speak for myself, but when I perform a particularly painful CrossFit WOD, the world around me vanishes, I am unable to tell (or remember) if there is music on or not, and all I can think of is how much I might dislike the workout and how badly I want it to end. I am not sure if I could pray or reflect much during such a workout. Yet, if we take seriously the claims of these Christian CrossFitters – and I think we must –, it poses the question of the nature of prayer and meditation. It might be a very different form of prayer and meditation compared to prayer and meditation in church. Yet, some faithful experience and describe it as prayer and meditation nonetheless, it is bodily prayer and meditation. Of course, all prayer and meditation is bodily practice because prayer often includes body language and involves moving the body or trying to sit still. Yet, the emphasis might be more on reflecting on and thinking about Biblical texts. A Good Friday workout, in contrast, seems to turn the focus to the body and turn the body itself into prayer. The body does not only “do” prayer, but it becomes prayer, it becomes worship. It is not through an imitation of Jesus’ suffering that ath-

letes enter into a mystical union with the suffering Jesus, but through their body – and as such they themselves – become worship. Milhaven (1989, p. 364) argues that “One knows oneself uniquely in experiencing [...] pain. One knows another uniquely in sharing that pain.” Scarry (1987, p. 4) argues that pain cannot be shared: “Whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language.” Whether or not pain is shareable, I do not want to discuss at this point. But it seems that the pain and the suffering some Christian CrossFit athletes embrace during a Good Friday WODs achieves something that spoken or written language might not be able to achieve. If pain, as Milhaven argues, indeed contributes to the knowing of oneself and the knowing of another, then Christian CrossFitters might get to know and encounter Jesus in ways traditional prayer or worship might not enable them to. These painful forms of prayer and worship, then, can indeed form a religious and intimate religious experience. By learning something about them they might learn something about their faith. As such, they enter into this mystical union with Jesus who, just before he died, cried out: “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” – “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

4.3. Pain in Sports as Training in Christian Life

The continuous exposure to and practice of suffering in CrossFit offers a fruitful link between the sport of CrossFit and religious practice for some Christians. Reflecting on pain and suffering both in CrossFit and in Christianity, FaithRx'd author Spencer Arnold writes that CrossFit athletes enter the CrossFit box with the expectation that the workout will be painful and that they will only become better if they learn to embrace the pain (CoachArnold (Spencer Arnold), 2016). “I think the biggest difference in elite athletes and mediocre athletes can be found in the delight of suffering. The understanding that suffering is a normative piece of their lives” (CoachArnold (Spencer Arnold), 2016). Yet, he wonders why many Christians seem to be particularly keen on avoiding suffering even though Jesus, in Matthew 5:10-12, calls those who are being persecuted or suffer from injustice, “blessed”.

"Ironically, Christians do not seem to embrace the same mindset when faced with daily suffering in their own lives. The idea that suffering would be a standard part of the Christian experience not only is not attractive to most Christians but we run from it" (CoachArnold (Spencer Arnold), 2016). Even more so, he argues that a Christian who does not know suffering might lack in something fundamental to Christianity: "Make no mistake, if your Christian experience has been devoid of suffering the Bible would tell you that your Christian experience has been devoid of Christ" (CoachArnold (Spencer Arnold), 2016). Arnold Spencer does not suggest that the (voluntary, one must add) pain and suffering during CrossFit workouts can replace or match the kind of suffering due to persecution or rejection Jesus had in mind when he called those who suffer blessed. He critically asks, though, why "we" embrace the pain in the gym while at the same time trying to avoid "inevitable suffering" in life. After all, CrossFitters, he argues, should know that only by embracing suffering, one becomes a better and stronger athlete, or a more holy person.

The narrative of CrossFit includes the idea to prepare athletes for whatever life might throw at them: "The program prepares trainees for any physical contingency – not only for the unknown but for the unknowable, too." (CrossFit HQ, 2016). This aspect of preparation and the idea that what the athlete does in the box might have relevance beyond the box offers a link between the sport of CrossFit and Christian practice. The visual style of images such as in the blog post "A Powerful Shot" (Conzelman, 2014; 2016) where we see an athlete performing a barbell carry of a Good Friday WOD might suggest that some Christian athletes perform these workouts simply in an attempt to imitate or subject oneself to pain and suffering for a limited amount of time in a controlled environment. However, when we take seriously the way these Christian CrossFitters make sense of pain in sport and link it to their faith, a more complex picture emerges. Spencer Arnold (CoachArnold (Spencer Arnold), 2016) argues that "This is not to say we should seek out suffering but the Bible clearly commands believers to embrace and rejoice in the midst of inevitable suffering. This is our Christian experience and God promises that He

will remain faithful to us in the midst of it and refine us through it." When CrossFit aims to prepare athletes for any physical contingencies, for some Christian CrossFitters, the sport can be one way to train a certain Christian lifestyle, a training in suffering. The training in the controlled environment of the box cannot replace or come close to what some people might have to endure in life, but it might help the individual Christians, as Arnold seems to suggest, not to run from it, but learn to embrace it and grow through it.

5. A Mystical Union with the Suffering Jesus?

Making sense of sport as a form of worship is not a new phenomenon nor is it unique to CrossFit. Already in his 1985 article, Hoffman (1985, 71f.) identifies a subculture within Evangelicalism where athletes describe their physical exercise as form of worship. Critically, he reminds us to not too readily accept the idea of sport as form of religious worship or an arena of religious experience. "A runner may describe a marathon as 'a worship experience,' but one is left to guess what might be the symbolic connections between the ritual of running and the religious system of which it is a part. [...] Do liturgical interpretations change with a change in running style?" (Hofman ,1985, p. 71).

Pierre Bourdieu (1978, p. 820) suggests to understand the full range of sports available as "*a supply intended to meet a social demand*." What then, we have to ask, does CrossFit offer or supply that some Christian athletes might find in CrossFit more so than in other sports? In order to answer that question, we have to look at the bodies of Christian CrossFitters, what they do with their bodies, and how they make sense of their bodily practices.

None of the examples discussed above seem to make a (mystical) union between the suffering athlete and the suffering Jesus overtly explicit. The parallels seem to evolve more around preaching the message of the gospel, teaching humbleness, and finding different ways for worship that extend beyond the walls of a church building. The emphasis on pain might strike the modern

reader as odd, but serves as pivotal element between the sport and faith. CrossFit workouts are particularly able to send the athlete regularly, repeatedly, and within a short amount of time into their “dark places” and by doing so, it trains the athlete to be strong both physically and mentally. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 190) argues that the body “transforms ideas into things”. The intimate connection between body, pain, faith, ideas, and religious narratives, and the painful bodily experiences some Christian CrossFit athletes make need to be understood as genuine experiences and expressions of faith. Glucklich (2001, p. 6) points to the centrality of the experience of pain: “Religious pain produces states of consciousness, and cognitive-emotional changes, that affect the identity of the individual subject and her sense of belonging to a larger community or to a more fundamental state of being. More succinctly, pain strengthens the religious person’s bond with God and with other persons.” I do not mean to suggest that Christian CrossFitters try to recreate Jesus’ passion (though some may well do), but most express that their pain pales in comparison to what Jesus had to endure. Yet, when we take serious Glucklich’s point that pain strengthens a believer’s bond with God, then something happens with a Christian athlete when they subject themselves to pain on Good Friday, when they encounter visual cues that link the box and their sport with their faith, such as in the Humbled Daily logo. Rooted in Evangelicalism is the conviction that God wants to have an intimate relationship with the individual, that they develop that relationship through prayer, and that the individual can not only encounter but experience God. Luhrman (2012, p. 163) argues that “when evangelicals say that God speaks to them through the Bible, they mean that when they are reading, they will have a physical, emotional response to a passage”. Similarly, sports can become a starting point for spiritual reflection and a site where biblical values come to life and become tangible for the athlete. In his FaithRx’d blog post “Faith Workout: The Strength It Takes to Follow”, Chip Pugh (2015) invites Christian CrossFitters to take their exercise experience as starting point and reflect on “1- How have you been willing to suffer to experience positive benefits in your fitness?”. He then links this experience to suffer and the ability to endure it to

the individual's spiritual life and their calling to bear witness to God: "2- How have you been blessed from experiencing suffering in your spiritual life?" and "3- How have you suffered when trying to spread the gospel?". Doing so, the CrossFit box becomes a spiritual training ground, a way to set present a tradition of discipleship. The pain experienced in the box, then, transcends the physical and can foster an intimate and mystical union with God in general and the suffering Jesus in particular.

The narratives of the workout, too, contribute to forming this mystical union with the suffering Jesus. Paul Ricoeur (1984, p. 57) argues that "[i]f, in fact, human action can be narrated, it is because it is always already articulated by signs, rules, and norms. It is always already symbolically mediated." CrossFit is enriched with signs, symbols, rules, norms, and expected standards. If we understand CrossFit workouts, in particular the Good Friday WODs, as creative-poetic, narrative expression, then they can become a means to re-tell the passion narrative drawing on symbols and practices athletes expose themselves and perform on a daily basis. For athletes, the performance of these narratives becomes a form of prayer. However, this enactment is more than just "real worship", but through body and the experience of pain, time and space collapse in order to give room to this intimate encounter with Jesus on Calvary. In this collapse of time and space, the suffering Jesus becomes present for these Christian CrossFitters allowing them to experience a crucial aspect of their faith in ways that might not be possible with words. As such, these performed prayers, these performed worships, might give "words" to something that might be difficult to express in words.

We might find another reason for the link between pain in sport and Christian practice in the way contemporary societies approach (or avoid) pain today. Green and Baker (2003, p. 26) identify a rhetorical dramatization of Jesus' suffering within certain strands of Christianity in the USA so the individual believer can avoid suffering. This diagnosis seems to resonate well with Mellor and Shilling's analysis discussed above that pain and suffering have been medicalized and thus lost much of their meaning. If the pain, suffering, and the death of Jesus is a central element in the Christian history of salvation, but believers are

unable to relate to pain and suffering as something that can hold meaning, what does this mean for living and practicing Christianity? For many CrossFitters, the physical and mental pain, enduring that pain, and overcoming it are an important part of their experience of the sports. One cannot but wonder if in today's medicalized society in which pain and suffering have lost much of their value, CrossFit is popular among some Christians because it can provide a way to rediscover suffering and its value – even if this rediscovery happens in a controlled environment? Maybe emulating pain and suffering is then a way to better understand what it might mean to suffer.

Pursuing embodied religious experiences of pain is, of course, not limited to Evangelical Christianity. We can also find approaches that link pain and suffering in sports with the cross in the Catholic tradition. Jared Zimmerer (2014), a Catholic and founder of Strength for the Kingdom, for example, compares "The curious measure of a barbell's innate ability to bid us where few have entered is that it is in direct relation to the cross which Christ commands us to carry." Another example is the increasing popularity to walk the Camino de Santiago offering religious and non-religious people alike an opportunity to feel one's body, to leave behind the everyday (Egan 2011).

The embodied practice of CrossFit, however, does resonate with a number of ideas in evangelical theology. Demarest (2006, p. 339) reminds Christians that they "can and ought to see the Lord with their heart." CrossFit, the narratives around the workouts, and the motivations for doing these workouts, then can be understood as a form of "seeing" through the body through physical exercise. Demarest (2006, p. 340) further proposes that biblical narratives "suggest that Christians in union with Christ practice a true mysticism. [...] But union with Christ is mystical, first, in the sense that it is a mystery not fully explicable in human language and concepts [...] The biblical data suggest that Christian mysticism has at least three dimensions. We can safely affirm (1) a relational mysticism, whereby believers enter into the holy of holies to engage and commune with the Father and the Son through the Spirit..." CrossFit, the workouts and narratives around these workouts athletes can create, and enduring and suffering through these workouts, then,

can be a means for Christians to practice such a mystical union with Christ. CrossFit becomes an embodied form of relational mysticism through which an encounter and communion with God can become possible.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barbell Cartel, « The Barbell Cartel », <<http://thebarbellcartel.com/>>, accessed 06.06.2016.
- Barbell Shrugged, 27.01.2014, « Lessons Learned From Barbell Training w/World Champion Powerlifter Travis Mash of Weightlifting Talk – EPISODE 97 », *Barbell Shrugged*, <<http://daily.barbellshrugged.com/lessons-learned-from-barbell-training-wworld-champion-powerlifter-travis-mash-of-weightlifting-talk-episode-97/>>, accessed 21.04.2016.
- Betzler M., 21.05.2009, « Expressive Actions », *Inquiry : An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 52 (3), pp. 272-292. Online: DOI: 10.1080/00201740902917143.
- Bourdieu P., 01.12.1978, « Sport and social class », *Social Science Information*, 17 (6), pp. 819-840. Online: DOI: 10.1177/053901847801700603.
- Braun V. and Clarke V., 2006, « Using thematic analysis in psychology », *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), pp. 77-101. Online: DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Bynum C., 10.1995, « Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective », *Critical Inquiry*, 22 (1), pp. 1-33. Online: DOI: 10.1086/448780.
- Chandler J. M., 1992, « Sport is not a Religion », in Hoffman S. J. (ed.), *Sport and religion*, Champaign, Ill, Human Kinetics Books.
- Chidester D., 2005, *Authentic fakes: religion and American popular culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- CoachArnold (Spencer A.), 06.02.2016, « Normative Suffering », *Faith Rx'd*, <<http://faithrx.org/normative-suffering/>>, accessed 22.02.2016.
- Conzelman J., 18.03.2016, « Good Friday Workout », *Faith Rx'd*, <<http://faithrx.org/good-friday-workout/>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- Conzelman J., 27.05.2014, « A Powerful Shot », *Faith Rx'd*, <<http://faithrx.org/powerful-shot/>>, accessed 25.04.2016.
- CrossFit HQ, 2016, « What is CrossFit - CrossFit: Forging Elite Fitness », <<https://www.crossfit.com/what-is-crossfit>>, accessed 25.04.2016.

- CrossFit Reign, « Good Friday Jesus WOD », Text, *CrossFit Reign*, <<http://www.crossfitreign.com/crossfit-blog/detail/good-friday-jesus-wod/>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- CrossFit Templum, 03.04.2015, « Good Friday "Jesus WOD" », <<http://www.crossfittemplum.com/good-friday-jesus-wod/>>, accessed 23.04.2016.
- Crust L., 2006, « Challenging the 'Myth' of a Spiritual Dimension in Sport », *The Online Journal of Sport Psychology*, 8 (2), pp. 17-31.
- Demarest B. A., 2006, *The cross and salvation: the doctrine of Salvation*, Wheaton, Ill, Crossway Books, coll. Foundations of evangelical theology.
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 01.03.2013, « CASE programme: understanding the drivers, impacts and value of engagement in culture and sport - Publications - GOV.UK », <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/case-programme-understanding-the-drivers-impacts-and-value-of-engagement-in-culture-and-sport>>, accessed 01.03.2016.
- Egan K., 2011, « "I want to feel the Camino in my legs": Trajectories of Walking on the Camino de Santiago », in Fedele A. et Blanes R. L (eds), *Encounters of body and soul in contemporary religious practices*, New York, Berghahn Books, pp. 3-22.
- Faith Rx'd, 17.04.2014, « Join us for the Good Friday WOD this Friday at noon! », <<https://www.facebook.com/FaithRxd/photos/a.604114012962666.1073741826.593032747404126/751233891584010/>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- FCA – Fellowship of Christian Athletes, « Vision & Mission », *Fellowship of Christian Athletes*, <<http://www.fca.org/aboutus/who-we-are/mission-vision>>, accessed 29.02.2016.
- Fit For Him, 2016, « Welcome », *FIT FOR HIM*, <<http://www.fitforhim.com/>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- Flynn M., 1996, « The Spiritual Uses of Pain in Spanish Mysticism », *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LXIV (2), pp. 257-278. Online: DOI : 10.1093/jaarel/LXIV.2.257.
- Fujiwara D., Kudrna L., Laffan K. et al., 03.2015, « Further analysis to value the health and educational benefits of sport and culture », Department for Culture, Media & Sport. Online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446273/Health_and_educational_benefits_of_sport_and_culture.pdf>, accessed 01.03.2016.

- Glucklich A., 2001, *Sacred pain: hurting the body for the sake of the soul*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Green J. B. et Baker M. D., 2003, *Recovering the scandal of the cross: the atonement in New Testament and contemporary contexts*, U.K, Carlisle, Paternoster.
- Greene R., 2015, « Jail Time for Air Squats? USREPS' Scheme to Stop CrossFit », *THE RUSSELLS*, <<https://therussells.crossfit.com/2015/05/14/jail-time-for-air-squats-usreps-schemes-to-stop-crossfit/>>, accessed 20.04.2016.
- Heimerl T., 2015, « Ascetic Athletes: The Hero-Body in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema », in Ornella A. D. (ed.), *Making Humans: Religious, Technological and Aesthetic Perspectives*, Oxford, Inter-Disciplinary Press, pp. 181-193.
- Higgs R. J., 1983, « Muscular Christianity, Holy Play, and Spiritual Exercises: Confusion about Christ in Sports and Religion », *Arete – The Journal of Sport Literature*, I (1), pp. 59-85.
- Hoffman S. J., 2011, « Prayers out of Bounds », in Parry J., Nesti M. et Watson N. J. (eds), *Theology, Ethics and Transcendence in Sports*, New York, Routledge, pp. 35-63.
- Hoffman S. J., 1985, « Evangelicalism and the Revitalization of Religious Ritual in Sport », *Arete – The Journal of Sport Literature*, II (2), pp. 63-87.
- Humbled Daily, 25.03.2016, « Slow Down. Remember. », <<https://www.facebook.com/humbleddaily/photos/pb.877046475666256.-2207520000.1461323663./962940360410200/?type=3&size=640%2C640&fbid=962940360410200>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- Humbled Daily, 2016, « Vision », *Humbled Daily™*, <<http://www.humbleddaily.com/pages/about-us>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- Humbled Daily, 03.08.2015, « To Be Humbled », YouTube, <<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE29xchY79xohwdby4RzyrQ>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- Isherwood L. and Stuart E., 1998, *Introducing body theology*, Sheffield, Sheffield Acad. Press, 1998, coll. Introductions in feminist theology 2.
- Kelly Patrick S. J., 2011, « Flow, Sort and the Spiritual Life », in Parry J., Nesti M. et Watson N. J. (eds), *Theology, Ethics and Transcendence in Sports*, New York, Routledge, pp. 163-177.

- Luhrmann T. M., 2012, *When God talks back: understanding the American evangelical relationship with God*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf.
- Mash T., 05.12.2014, « The Barbell Life », <<http://www.thebarbelllife.com/the-barbell-life/>>, accessed 22.04.2016.
- McCarty P., 2015, « Breaking Down the CrossFit, #SugarKills, and Coke Debate », *Breaking Muscle*, <<http://breakingmuscle.com/functional-fitness/breaking-down-the-crossfit-sugarkills-and-coke-debate>>, accessed 20.04.2016.
- Mellor P. A. and Shilling C., 2014, *Sociology of the sacred: religion, embodiment and social change*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.
- Merleau-Ponty M., 2002, *Phenomenology of Perception*, London, Routledge.
- Milhaven J. G., 1989, « A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing: Women's Experience and Men's Thought », *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LVII (2), pp. 341-372. Online: DOI : 10.1093/jaarel/LVII.2.341.
- Moss C. R., 2012, *Ancient Christian martyrdom. Diverse practices, theologies, and traditions*, New Haven, Yale University Press. Online: <<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10570993>>, accessed 12.03.2016.
- NBA.com, 08.01.2015, « Under Armour Debuts Stephen Curry's First Signature Shoe », *Golden State Warriors*, <<http://www.nba.com/warriors/news/under-armour-debuts-stephen-currys-first-signature-shoe>>, accessed 26.02.2016.
- NHS, 13.07.2015, « Benefits of exercise - Live Well - NHS Choices », <<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/Whybeactive.aspx>>, accessed 29.02.2016.
- Nikkel D., 09.2010, « Negotiating the Nature of Mystical Experience, Guided by James and Tillich », *Sophia*, 49 (3), pp. 375-392. Online: DOI : 10.1007/s11841-010-0191-7.
- Norris R. S., 03.2009, « The paradox of healing pain », *Religion*, 39 (1), pp. 22-33. Online: DOI : 10.1016/j.religion.2008.03.007.
- Novak M., 1992, « The Natural Religion », in Hoffman Shirl J. (ed.), *Sport and religion*, Champaign, Ill, Human Kinetics Books, pp. 35-42.
- Ornella A. D., 29.07.2015, « Clothed with Strength: Meaningful Material Practices in the Sport of CrossFit », *Material Religions*, <<http://materialreligions.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/clothed-with-strength-meaningful.html>>, accessed 29.02.2016.

- Perkins J., 1995, *The suffering self : pain and narrative representation in early Christian era*, London / New York, Routledge.
- Polycarp, 2nd cent. CE, *The Epistel of Polycarp to the Philippians*. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iv.ii.viii.html>>.
- Price J. L., 2001, « Fervent Faith: Sport as Religion in America », in Price J. L. (ed.), *From season to season : sports as American religion*, 1st ed., Macon, Ga, Mercer University Press, pp. 3-11.
- Price J. L., 1992, « The Super Bowl as Religious Festival », in Hoffman Shirl J. (ed.), *Sport and religion*, Champaign, Ill, Human Kinetics Books, pp. 13-15.
- Pugh C., 27.05.2015, « Faith Workout: The Strength it Takes to Follow », *Faith Rx'd*, <<http://faithrx'd.org/faith-workout-the-strength-it-takes-to-follow/>>, accessed 25.04.2016.
- Ricœur P., 1984, *Time and narrative*, Vol I, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Scarry E., 1987, *The body in pain : the making and unmaking of the world*, New York, NY, Oxford Univ. Press, 1987.
- Seippel Ø., 01.2006, « The Meanings of Sport: Fun, Health, Beauty or Community? », *Sport in Society*, 9 (1), pp. 51-70. Online: DOI: 10.1080/17430430500355790.
- Slatter M., 2015, *Insights while suffering: with a view to the cross and resurrection*, New York, Peter Lang.
- Sport England, « Social value of sport (CASE) », <<http://www.sportengland.org/research/benefits-of-sport/social-value-of-sport/>>, accessed 01.03.2016.
- UpChurch J., 06.04.2015, « 3 Surprising Ways I Can Do All Things through Christ Who Strengthens Me - Explore the Bible », *Bible Study Tools*, <<http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/explore-the-bible/3-surprising-ways-i-can-do-all-things-through-christ-who-strengthens-me.html>>, accessed 26.02.2016.
- Watson N. J., 2007a, « Muscular Christianity in the modern age: "Winning for Christ" or "playing for glory"? », in Parry J., Nesti M., Robinson S. et al. (eds), *Sport and Spirituality. An Introduction*, London, Routledge, pp. 80-94.
- Watson N. J., 2007b, « Nature and Transcendence: The mystical and sublime in extreme sports », in Parry J., Nesti M., Robinson S. et al. (éds), *Sport and Spirituality. An Introduction*, London, Routledge, pp. 95-115.

- Watson N. J. and Nesti M., 2005, « The Role of Spirituality in Sport Psychology Consulting: An Analysis and Integrative Review of Literature », *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 17 (3), pp. 228-239. Online: DOI : 10.1080/10413200591010102.
- Watson N. J. and Parker A., 2014, *Sport and the Christian religion : a systematic review of literature*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Zimmerer J., 22.05.2014, « Iron Philosophy: The Barbell and The Cross », <<http://www.jaredzimmerer.com/blog/2014/5/22/iron-philosophy-the-barbell-and-the-cross>>, accessed 21.04.2016.