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C.S. Lewis at the 2012 London Olympics: Reflections on Pride and Humility

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Abstract

This paper provides a theological analysis of modern professional sport, in particular the modern Olympic Games, in light of some of C.S. Lewis's writings on pride and humility. This is prefaced with an analysis of the nature and character of 'human competition' in the sporting context and its potential positive and negative consequences. We conclude by suggesting that the modern professional sports *institution* and the Olympic movement, while possessing many positive and enriching attributes, requires "wholesale spiritual rehabilitation" due in-part to both individual and national pride. However, we also believe that the modern Olympic Games that are characterized by passionate international sports competition, has many positive and life-affirming attributes and that there is hope of a lasting "legacy", the prayer of Lord Coe!

Keywords: professional competitive sport; modern Olympic Games; pride and humility; C.S. Lewis; London 2012.

Introduction

> "In an era where more heroes and role models are needed to inspire our young people… Eric Liddell's…decision to sacrifice his strong chance of winning the Olympic Games blue ribbon 100 meters sprint event because the competition clashed with his Christian beliefs continues to fascinate and capture the imagination…and resonates with our vision to use the power of the Olympic and Paralympic games in London 2012 to inspire change…and…lives through sport – as Liddell has done in his own way".
>
> Lord Sebastian Coe, Chairperson, London 2012 Olympics Organising Committee[1]

Perhaps Lord Coe has a similar vision to the late Pope John Paul II who fully understood the cultural significance of sport, calling it a "paradigm of mass psychology" (Feeney 1995: 80). During his pontificate, in one of 120 addresses to Olympic Committees and able-bodied and disabled athletes, he championed the role of sport as a vehicle that "contributes constructively to the harmonious and complete development of man, body and soul" (Feeney 1995: 60). The Vatican has also recently identified the need to provide theological reflection on sport, which is arguably the most pervasive cultural phenomenon at the beginning of the 21st Century, and thus has established an office for 'Church and Sport' (2004-) within the pontifical Council for the laity and has subsequently run three international seminars on sport-faith themes (e.g., Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2011). According to Glatz (2004: 12), their vision is to foster "a culture of sport" that is "…an instrument of peace and brotherhood among peoples".

Unfortunately, the reality of big-business competitive sport in the Western world, especially America, is a far cry from such a utopia. Scholars note that "problems in the sports culture (cheating, rule violations, ego exaggeration) came to fruition in the 1920s

[1] Cited in the foreword to Keddie's (2007: 12) biography of Eric Liddell.

and affected sport for the remainder of the twentieth century" (Ladd and Mathisen, 1999: 93). This corruption and perversion that sport readily exhibits has been highlighted in recent scholarship examining the ethical, anthropological and Christian theological aspects of the modern professional sport (e.g., Watson and Parker, 2012a; Parry, Nesti and Watson, 2011; Hoffman, 2010; Deardorff and White, 2008), the Olympic movement (Vachicouras, 2004; Vondey, 2003; Baker, 2000; Harker, 1996), Paralympics (Watson, forthcoming; Gard and Fitzegerald, 2008; Howe, 2008) and Special Olympics (Watson, 2012).

So, it would seem that there exists for many a deep underlying belief system in sport that is laden with values that John Paul II reminded us "may be used for other purposes, with the danger of corruption and decadence" (Feeney 1995: 64). According to Piltz (1995), the reduction in fair play and sportsmanship is rooted amongst other things in a philosophy of "winning is the only thing" or to "win at all costs". In terms of this popular dictum, most notably attributed to Vince Lombardi,[2] it is a conviction that the sport world adopts this view in order to make sense of the many dimensions of the sport reality. When winning becomes the principle of "being" for competition (and for life), it may have a baneful effect on the experience and personal identity of the athlete, coach or fan (Watson, 2011).

Hence, we agree, and argue with Mathisen (2002: 30) that there is a real need to start to "think biblically and theologically about sport", if we are to uncover the roots of the ethical and moral dilemmas in this pervasive modern institution. Further evidence of this need is demonstrated by that fact that when renowned Olympics scholar and administrator, Richard Pound (2011), recently provided a research agenda for Olympic reform, but out of 42 questions that he proposed for scholars, students and post-graduate research, not one mentioned spirituality or religion. Therefore, this chapter will provide a Christian ethical and theological analysis of the "cult of winning" in competitive sports and the Olympic movement, drawing in part, on the writings of C.S. Lewis.

We propose that the foundational source of "alienation" and "win at all costs" attitude, can only be fully understood through an examination of underlying spiritual issues, in particular the individual and national sin of pride. Although we will not be critiquing sport competition *per se*, some preliminary discussion will be necessary as "questions about the importance of winning are closely tied to but not identical with questions about the value of competition" (Simon, 1991: 13). Our first task is then to briefly examine the nature of sport and competition and the reasons for the distortion of competition and pursuit of winning in modern professional sport.

Modern Sport and the Olympic Games: Competition and "Winning at-all-Costs"

Sport, as defined by many sport philosophers, "is a form of play [or should be], a competitive, rule-governed activity that human beings freely choose to engage"

[2]Readers should be aware that Lombardi's well used (or abused) quote has oft being used out of context to justify simplistic arguments against competition *per se*. Lombardi was a well-known professional American football coach, who in varying ways advocated the importance of winning, with the his quote becoming frequently cited in sports ethics analyses.

(Clifford & Feezel 1997: 11). Furthermore, since this is a competitive activity, inherent in its structure is the exercise of skills and strategies directed toward meeting a goal(s) in which athletic performances are evaluated and assessed by the particular standards of a specific sport (Sherif 1976). In short, competition involves a serious challenge or contest, in the original Greek the *agon*[3] between players resulting in a winner and loser - a *zero-sum* situation. From this, some scholars have seriously questioned the moral value of competition in sport and other institutions *per se* (e.g., Kohn, 1992), arguing that it usually has negative consequences for the loser(s). Nonetheless, there seems to be a general consensus among sport philosophers, psychologists and theologians that competition in most human endeavours, when correctly understood, provides the opportunity for self-discovery, experiencing excellence and even building social and national relations. This last point is demonstrated by Nelson Mandela's use of the 1995 Rugby World Cup during his presidency. In an astute political manoeuvre on the path to "nation building and reconciliation", President Mandela advocated the notion of South Africa playing as "One Team, One Nation" against the New Zealand All Blacks, to help combat the horrors of the apartheid regime (Steenveld and Strelitz, 1998). In no small way, he was successful with victory for the Springboks acting as a seed of national unity and reconciliation between sectarian groups.

Etymologically, the word competition derives from the Latin *com-petito,* to strive or question together (Hyland, 1988). Idealistically, competition in sport can then be conceived as a "mutually acceptable quest for excellence", in which opponents *cooperate* to bring the best out in one another. On a positive note, Simon (1991: 33) believes, as we do, that competition in sport is ethically defensible and that the "meeting of the demands athletes place upon their talents often involves beauty, courage, dedication, and passion". This said, the finely balanced dialectic of sport competition, which often involves 'intense passion", also carries the ever present risk that "such intensity will devolve into alienation and violence" (Hyland, 1988: 177). Or as, Robert Nye (1973: 88) comments in his psycho-social account of competition, "…any type of competition . . . contains the seeds for mutual hostility", at a personal, group and national level that we argue is rooted in pride.

Indeed, the world of child and youth and professional competitive sport is replete with stories of corruption, overtraining and burnout, over-zealous parents living out unfulfilled dreams vicariously through their offspring, eating disorders and nationalistic fervour (David, 2005). Similarly, in elite professional sport this life-view, fuelled by unbridled free-market capitalism that characterises big-business sport, the Olympic Games and other sporting mega-events (Overman, 2011), often results in a wide-range of moral and ethical dilemmas. These include alienation in relationships, nationalistic and political issues and propaganda, violence, drug doping, abusive elite/Olympic development academies, trans-humanist notions of athletes through genetic-enhancement technologies, trash talk, abuse of officials, greed, racism and financial irregularities (Trothen, 2011; Lenskyj, 2008; Tomlinson and Young, 2006; Miah, 2004).

Thus, it can be legitimately argued that for some athletes and fans, modern sport, especially the dimension of winning with its many potential extrinsic rewards, has

[3]For a scholarly but accessible analysis of the Greek concept of *agon*, see Pfitzner (1967).

become a "ritualised obsession", and even a vehicle for "immortalising the self" in which athletes and coaches will go to extreme lengths to win (Grimshaw, 2000). A major theme in past writings on the sport-religion interface is how scholars have in varying ways attempted to demonstrate the similarities and parallels between modern sport experience (both for participants and spectators) and primordial and modern religious rites, rituals and symbols. In turn, they have championed a "religion of sport", in the guise of sport *as* a "natural religion", "popular religion", "civil religion or "folk religion" (Mathisen, 2005b). In a post-Christian culture, this "ritualizing of culture" and the resultant "theologies of society", Grimshaw observes is symptomatic of the modern tendency to perpetuate "the notion of universal religious archetypes" (Grimshaw, 2000: 95).

Following the critique of Higgs and Braswell (2004), we would argue sport is *not* by definition formally a religion. Nonetheless, worldviews operate from the heart and thus a human being can conscript a cultural activity like sport to try and answer these most fundamental questions. In this case when sport is inflated or substituted for religion then it has become an idol (Ward, 2011; White, 2008; Moltmann, 1989). At a theological level, this means that the idea and application of "win at all costs" ethic in modern sporting culture, becomes the soil in which the personal (of athlete, coach, parent or fan) and structural sins (of institutions) of pride and idolatry are born. Our next task is then to provide a theological analysis of competition in sport and discussion of these points. A particular focus will be on the sin of pride, which the great 20th century scholar, C.S. Lewis (1997/1952: 100), called the "Great Sin" the "essential vice, the utmost evil . . . the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called humility".

Pride and Humility in Competitive Sport

While acknowledging that studies in sport philosophy, psychology (Walker, 1980; Nye, 1973), anthropology (Mead, 1937) and religious studies (Newman, 1989) have greatly contributed to our understanding of human competition, we propose there is something far darker and more insidious at the root of the problems in modern sport. Although western culture has largely rejected the notion of an evil force in the universe that is diametrically opposed to a supernatural God and His purpose in the world, this is a fundamental part of the Christian story. As Hamilton (2003: 7) notes in his theological critique of modern sport, we must recognize that "the [root] cause of evil in the limited microcosm of sport is the same as that which is the cosmic cause of evil".

Theologically, because of the spiritual crisis we all share with Adam, Reinhold Niebuhr (1964: 178) declared that "man is insecure and involved in natural contingency; he seeks to overcome his insecurity by a will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creatureliness". In sport, when winning is the primary aim of the athlete or coach, we see the desperate and even bizarre attempts by athletes and coaches to address the angst of their human predicament by doing anything and everything to reach their goal and bolster their identity and sense of significance. It is this driven, single-minded striving to "win at all costs" that often leads to boasting of achievements, alienation of others (i.e., opponents and family members) and violence and cheating in sport, which we maintain flows from a prideful heart.

Considering that the postmodern consciousness is characteristically self-centered and self-sufficient and the world of sport is a naturally competitive environment, the potential for pride to corrupt and alienate is ever present. “Pride is *essentially* competitive above all other vices”, wrote C.S. Lewis (1997/1952: 101), that is, any human endeavour that involves competition, also presents the *temptation* for individuals to become prideful. Nowhere is this temptation more prominent than in American culture, in which the quest to be “better than” has reached “exaggerated, often ludicrous proportions” (Kohn, 1992: 2-3). Lombardi himself once stated. “the zeal to be first in everything has always been American, to win and to win and to win”[4] In arguably his most well-known book, *Mere Christianity* (1997/1952), Lewis illustrates the often subtle dynamics of human pride that can be applied to competitive sport:

> “It was through Pride that the devil [an external evil force] became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind. Does this seem exaggerated? If so, think it over. In fact, if you want to find out how proud you are the easiest way is to ask yourself, 'How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronise me, or show off?' The point is that each person's pride is in competition with everyone else's pride. Two of a trade never agree [consider bitter rivals in sport or academia] . . . Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man . . . people are proud of being richer, cleverer, or better looking [or better at sport] than others . . . It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest . . . for of course, power is what pride really enjoys: there is nothing makes a man feel so superior to others . . . It is a terrible thing that the worst of all the vices can smuggle itself into the very centre of our religious life . . . as pride is direct from hell, it is purely spiritual, consequently it is far more deadly and subtle . . . Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense (101-104).”

In concluding his discussion of pride, Lewis (1997/1952), makes a number of qualifying statements that are important in our examination of pride in sport, that is, not all forms of pride are evil and unhealthy. Pertinent examples he gives include: the 'pleasure of being praised' (e.g., by a parent, friend, coach, fan, teacher etc) as long as this feeling does not result in self-adulation and vanity; parents pride in their children (e.g., for sports performance or achievement) that Lewis describes as a ‘warm hearted admiration for’. This healthy admiration can, however, easily dissolve into parents living their life vicariously through their children's sport, academic, or musical achievements; a prideful and damaging scenario that Overman (1997) and many others argue is rife in American sport. “Parents relive personal successes and failures in their children. They use children as an extension of their own ego needs, seeking reassurance of their own sense of self-worth in their children” (244) remarks Overman. In light of Lewis’ call for moderation in how we understand pride, it is vital not to “throw the baby out with the bath water” and demonize competitive sport and physical activity altogether, as for example did some sections of the Medieval Church and the seventeenth century English Puritans reformers.[5]

[4]Cited in Overman (1997: 226).

[5]For documentation of the Puritan dislike for sport see Mathisen (2005b) and for discussion of the role of

In remaining true to our thesis though, we maintain with Williams (2004: 7) that in modern sport "the real battlefield is not the game, the playing field, but in us, in our hearts and minds, ultimately our will to right or wrong. It is a battle for control of self - to play toward excellence and control of self to play fairly within the rules and the spirit of the contest". We believe that pride for Lewis runs against all three parts of morality (i.e., personal, social and God's purposes) and thus, it is at the core of how the human machine goes wrong[6]. Pride not only indicates something has gone wrong internally with the moral agent herself (personal), but pride precludes fair play among human beings (social) especially in sport, and pride subverts God's intended end for us to flourish as image bearers (purpose). With reference to Lewis's conception of 'social sin', Higgs (1982: 179) observes that '…whether communist, democratic, or fascist, modern governments have one thing in common – a reliance upon sports to define and bolster national pride' (Higgs, 1982: 179). The Olympic Games are then a potential vehicle for nationalism, pride and idolatry (see Llewellyn, 2011) that is clearly illustrated in Niebuhr's description of 'group pride':

> 'Collective pride is…man's last, and in some respects most pathetic, effort to deny the determinate and contingent character of his existence: The very essence of human sin is in it. This form of human sin is also most fruitful of human guilt, that is, of objective social and historical evil. Prophetic religion had its very inception in a conflict with national self-deification. Beginning with Amos, all the great Hebrew prophets challenged the simple deification between God and the nation, or the naïve confidence of the nation in its exclusive relation to God…Judgment would overtake not only Israel but every nation, including the great nations who were used for the moment to execute divine judgment upon Israel but were also equally guilty of exalting themselves beyond measure (Is. 47; Jer. 25: 15; Ez. 24-39)'
>
> (Niebuhr, 1949, cited in Menninger, 1973: 135-136)

In explaining the dynamics of group pride, Menninger (1973: 136) notes that '…soon individuals have identified themselves with the group (and thus with God) and…Anything the group leaders decide to do is right'. The individual sin of pride is then often inculcated through a nation's cultural norms that are strongly influenced by the governing authorities of the land and thus sports institutions, as Higgs (1982) argues.

In regard to, Lewis's personal dimensions of sin, catholic psychologist, Paul Vitz (1994/1977: 91), states in his trenchant critique of humanistic psychology, the struggle between the "relentless and single-minded search for and glorification of the self [rooted in pride]" which "is at direct cross purposes with the Christian injunction to lose the self [to seek humility]". From a theological perspective, the principal enemy in this

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sport and play in medieval times see Hoffman (2010). Hoffman makes the important point that medieval theologians, especially after (and including) Aquinas, were on the whole open to play and sport due to their positive theology of the body, with some strict provisos of course.

[6]See Lewis's (1997/1952) discussion on The Three Parts of Morality.

battle in sport is the oft *deeply seated* and *unconscious* vice of pride, deeply seated in that pride is something that most people, including Christians, fail to see in themselves but *hate* in others (Lewis, 1997/1952). We must however guard against simplistic arguments that attribute all moral wrongs in sport, or everyday life, to pride that is induced by an external evil force.

Hinting at this, Lewis in his clever and imaginative work, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942: 9), famously warned against the "two equal and opposite errors" into which our race can fall concerning evil. These are, for people to "disbelieve in its existence" or to have an "unhealthy interest in it" (rather than focusing on, and trusting in, the goodness, love and grace of God) and in turn often attempt to relinquish their responsibility (i.e., their free-will to choose) for wrong behavior by blaming this external evil force. We concur with Kohn (1992: 97) who states, "the reasons for trying to be successful at the price of other people's failure are numerous and multilayered" but would also point to the spiritual dimension. Thus, we hold to the idea that pride is at the root of much wrong in sport and that humility, "the virtue opposite to that in Christian morals" (Lewis, 1997/1952: 100) is the principal remedy.

For those within the Christian tradition the ultimate act of humility was that the God of the universe should enter the world by sending his son to reconcile us to himself through the crucifixion and resurrection (2 Cor. 5: 18-19). Humility was the very essence of Jesus character: "learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matt. 11: 29). He exhibited the fruits of the spirit described in Galatians (5: 22-25),[7] "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control", in His very being and in his relations to others. Consider, are these virtues normally found, or easily practiced, in modern sporting contests? In comparing and contrasting the fruits of the "Holy spirit" with the modern "sporting spirit", scholars, Higgs and Braswell (2004: 262) suggest not:

> "How do you prepare for an agonic [contest] event for months by rigorous training, defeat a worthy opponent in public contest for a worldly prize and glory, and still be an example of "gentleness" and "meekness," to name only a couple of the famous "fruit"? Is this also as difficult to do as a camel going through "the eye of a needle"? To make matters more complicated, what if the winning athlete in question makes a quarter of a billion dollars per decade?"

We are in agreement with the authors' in-so-much that the modern professional sporting arena is perhaps not a place where humility and love are common currency and the "system of competitive sport" certainly does not encourage these virtues. However, we do feel that Higgs and Braswell (2004), while explicitly adopting a metaphorical approach in their scholarly and thought provoking book, at times overstate and dichotomize various aspects of the relationship between sport and religion. For example, they contend that "it is not realistic (or fair) to expect sports to build the fruits of the spirit defined by Paul" (262). To be sure, sporting contests should never replace the well-worn paths of prayer, study, fellowship and worship as methods for gaining

[7]All biblical quotations are taken from the NIV International Bible Society (Ed.). (2002) *Bible: New International Version*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

intimacy with God and developing the fruits of the spirit. But we do see them as *potential* places of learning and virtuous character development, in which athletes can learn about different forms of love, patience, compassion and self-sacrifice. This potential is of course predicated on whether or not the athlete or coach is "actively seeking the good", that is, a humble, gracious and respectful approach to others when engaged in sport contests and in relations with others.

On this note, Andrew Murray, in his classic devotional text, *Humility* (1982) describes below how it is "insignificances of daily life", especially in our relations with others that reflect our true character and state of heart in sport (Watson, 2011: Proverbs 4: 23; Matthew 12: 34). It is relationships, in particular with people who "irritate and trouble us" (Murray, 1982: 63) that are often the "crucible of sanctification", that is, the means to developing virtues listed in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians (5: 22-25). Following this, it could then be argued that in sporting contests, including those of a physical and aggressive nature, there is a possibility of nurturing virtues in an athlete's character, rather than engendering pride. However, along with Higgs and Braswell (2004) we contend that the "acid test" for the athlete in any competitive sporting encounter, is whether they come away having learned something about themselves and others and with *a commitment to change* and grow in humility and virtuous character. This is in contrast to an athlete's prideful quest for "victory at all costs" that leads to the alienation of others and paradoxically, often physical, psychological and spiritual harm to themselves.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this paper has been to reflect theologically on big-business competitive sports, in particular the "win at all costs" ethic that dominates modern commercialized sports and the institution of the Olympic Games. Within a balanced theology of leisure, sport competition can be an immensely positive endeavor for individuals and even a potential means of reconciliation and friendship between communities and nations. This view, in-part, supports the strategic *Legacy Action Plan*,[8] which the London 2012 Organizing Committee, under the Leadership of Lord Coe, has implemented and which promises a wide-range of social, environmental, health, economic and cultural (e.g., London 2012 Festival) benefits from hosting the summer Olympics and Paralympics. These "Legacy" claims have, nevertheless, come under rigorous scrutiny in the media and academy, with systematic reviews identifying numerous concerns, not least, the financing of a mega-event in a climate of economic retrenchment and a lack of empirical evidence to support the oft-cited hypothesis that hosting the games will lead to increased sport and physical activity participation and enhanced health *across the population* (Gold and Gold, 2009; Weed, Cored and Fiore, 2009; Girginov and Hills, 2008; Coalter, 2007). Generally, this body of work does, however, provide a hopeful prognosis, in regard to the worth and value of hosting the 2012 Olympiad, if based on flimsy evidence.

On a positive note, we agree with Ryken (2004: 44), who advocates that the Olympic Games have the potential to be a "…force for good. They celebrate the strength, beauty

[8]For the official London 2012, *Legacy Action Plan*, see: http://www.london2012.com/legacy-after-the-games

and agility of the human body. They revel in the vitality of youth…they bring people together". Too often these ideals are, however, marred by the sin of individual and national pride (i.e., nationalism), which we have argued has a metaphysical source and is the foundational but not exclusive cause of much of the wrong in professional and youth sport. Williams (2004: 18) encapsulates the finely balanced dialectic that exists in sport in stating that sport "…has the potential to bring out the best or worst. It can tempt one to be extremely proud or bring one to the point of humility. It can easily arouse anger and hatred or evoke deep respect and even self-sacrificing love".

It seems that pride, which as C.S. Lewis advocates is competitive in its essence, has significantly contributed to the "win at all costs" attitude and concurrently idolatry in modern sport. This is a system we maintain requires "wholesale spiritual rehabilitation" and a good starting point for change would be the promotion of the virtues such of humility, love, self-sacrifice, respect and honor. At present, however, the evidence strongly suggests that for many involved in big-time professional sport and children and youth sport (especially parents and coaches), pride and its frequently damaging consequences hold court. What then is the answer to this dilemma? As "affecting change within the world of big-time, competitive sport . . . is a daunting prospect" (Mathisen, 2005a), but one it is argued needs urgent attention. In the run-up to London 2012, the British multi-denominational Church sports organization, *More Than Gold* (MTG)[9], is offering a Christian voice and means of outreach, hospitality and service at the games. As insecure Christians can sometimes be hypercritical about the "…dark and ugly aspects of a person, or institution at the expense of their noble and valuable facets" (Manning, 2005: 104), MTG then are a welcome force for good. In addition to Church initiatives and the emerging body of scholarship and research on the relationship between Christianity and sports, there are also promising signs that individuals and groups[10] are beginning to recognise the widespread damage that is being done within the confines of what is arguably the most popular form of recreation in the western world.

Nonetheless, any radical and lasting change in the modern sporting arena we maintain will only evolve from the spiritual transformation of the hearts of individual men and women. This begins, as Lewis tells us, in "taking the first step" of humbling ourselves (1 Pt. 5: 5-6) and acknowledging that sport and the Olympic institution occupies a number of floors in our modern Tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 1-9; Revelation 18) , as has been argued by Watson (2012) and Stringfellow (2004/1973). "If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him [her] the first step. The first step is to realise that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed", Lewis (1997/1952: 106) notes.

At the heart of this modern myth is the belief that humanity can save itself and does not need a saviour in the form of a transcendent God. Prophetic voices, such as Blake,

[9]*More than Gold*: http://www.morethangold.org.uk/

[10]In addition to increasing research and scholarship (see Watson and Parker, 2012b), a number of research centers, peer-review journals and Church initiatives have emerged in recent times. For example, the *Centre for the Study of Sport, Spirituality and Religion* (2009 - , University of Gloucestershire, see: http://www.glos.ac.uk/research/dse/cssr/Pages/default.aspx) and the *International Journal of Religion and Sport* (Mercer University Press, USA).

Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, Pascal and in the twentieth century, C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton, have all given dire warnings about the modern myth and our prideful and idolatrous quest to create, and to be, our own Gods (i.e., modern sporting demi-gods). Perhaps it is time for those involved in administering sport and the structures of the Church, especially those in positions of power and influence, such as the members of International Olympic Committee (IOC) and leaders of major Church denominations, to accept that the "false myths", as Lewis called them, have all proved ineffective in combating the moral and social fragmentation in wider society (Walker, 1996) and sport.

For those embedded in the post-modern world of sport, which is constructed from socio-cultural norms and reinforced and manipulated by the mass media, this idea may be a little too piercing and thus quickly dispatched to the caverns of the mind, and consequently they will continue to "travel with the carnival" (Middleton and Walsh, 1995: 61). This is the "herd mentality" that Kierkegaard wrote extensively on. "The crowd *is* untruth. It either produces impenitence and irresponsibility or it weakens the individual's sense of responsibility by placing it in a fractional category" (Moore, 1999: 243). We do hope however, that all those involved in sport may search their hearts and perhaps consider what C.S. Lewis famously called the "Deep Magic", "the Myth that became Fact" (Lewis, 1944: 31)--the story of a God who humbled himself in the most unimaginable way that we might know his love and guidance in every dimension of our lives, including sport.

> "But what does it all mean?" asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer. — "It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards." (Lewis, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 2001/1950: 176)

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