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AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM AND PLAY
1865 - 1915

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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The Ohio State University
1967

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PREFACE

As a participant, student, and teacher of physical education and athletics, and as a person reared in a Protestant environment and undoubtedly influenced by the so-called "Protestant ethic," the writer has been intrigued by the relationship, positive and negative, between these two areas of life. The present study has afforded the writer the opportunity to utilize his interest in these areas. The satisfaction of increasing his own knowledge of this subject has been equalled only by the desire to make a significant contribution to contemporary America's understanding of its social heritage. With the completion of this work, the writer's first objective has been met. The success of the latter will be known in time.

A study of this magnitude necessitates no small amount of aid and cooperation from others. The writer therefore wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness and extend his appreciation to all who contributed to its successful completion.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

To the two or three generations of Protestant Americans which have grown to maturity since World War I, it has perhaps often seemed strange to read of the alleged extreme antagonism which their ancestors exhibited toward play. Their mild disbelief is not surprising when one considers the situation today. Throughout the twentieth century the Church has moved steadily farther into the field of recreation. Camping programs, athletic leagues, organized game periods at various group meetings, and even full-time recreation directors, are all evidences of a positive relationship between religion and play. The question then arises, "Why, how, and when did Protestants change their attitudes toward play?"

It is to the above question that the present research purports to address itself. More specifically, it is the purpose of this study to investigate, in depth, the changing attitudes, practices, and, to a limited degree, the influence of American Protestantism concerning recreation, during a period of immense social and intellectual ferment in organized religion. In the pursuance of his task the writer hopes to discover the answers to some, if not all, of the following questions:

1. Why were most Protestant churchmen traditionally
suspicous of play and recreation?

2. What events contributed to the change of attitude and practice on the part of Protestants?

3. To what extent did the attitudes and practices vary between denominations?

4. How and why did recreation become a part of the total church program?

5. What specific roles did recreation and play assume in the work of the churches?

6. What roles, if any, did Protestant leaders play in the recreation and physical education movements of this period?

Objectives

The following objectives will serve as guides in this study:

1. To trace the development of the attitudes and practices of American Protestantism toward recreation in general and play in particular during the fifty year period from the Civil War to the First World War.

2. To attempt to identify and assess the roles of play in the work of the Protestant churches during this period.

3. To attempt to determine and assess, to a limited degree, the influence which Protestantism exerted on our nation's recreation and play life during the period under consideration.

4. To make a contribution of an historical and sociological nature to the fields of physical education and recreation.

Delimitations

This study is limited to an investigation of the attitudes, practices, and influence of American Protestantism only, in regard to recreation and play from 1865 to 1915. This particular body was selected for study because it has traditionally been the largest and perhaps the most influential religious group in American life.

The period selected for study was chosen because it appears to
have been a time of great social and intellectual change both within and without religious circles in the United States. Following preliminary study, this writer feels that the period under investigation contains the key to understanding the changing attitudes of Protestantism toward work and play. It marked a new high in liberal thought and action within Protestantism as a whole as churchmen sought to reconcile traditional beliefs with the new social and scientific developments of the day. Prior to this period, many churches exhibited a seemingly reluctant toleration of play even in secular life. By the First World War, fifty years later, most denominations were eagerly embracing various forms of play in their overall church program.

For the purposes of this study, the concept of play will be narrowly limited to participation in games, sports, and dance. Inclusion of other recreational activities such as drama, hobby clubs, and church bazaars and socials, will be made only when they occur as an integral part of the issue or subject under discussion.

In discussing any particular phase of Protestantism one runs the risk of over-generalizing about a movement which is composed of a multitude of smaller denominations which, in turn, have their own offshoot and splinter groups. Effort will be made to point up differences as well as similarities between these groups regarding the subject at hand. Major emphasis, however, will be placed on those issues which were large enough to transcend denominational lines.
Hypotheses

As a result of the author's preliminary research and study, the following working hypotheses have been evolved:

1. Protestantism has continuously exerted influence, both negatively and positively, on the recreational patterns of Americans.

2. The fifty year period between the Civil War and the First World War is extremely significant for an understanding of the changing position of Protestantism in regard to recreation.

3. The problems of industrialization and urbanization were significant factors in moving Protestants into the field of recreation.

4. The liberalized position and active participation of Protestant leaders in regard to play significantly contributed to the successful establishment of the American physical education and recreation movements.

Procedures

Following a preliminary review of the literature to establish procedural guidelines, the writer prepared an outline based on the questions postulated on page 2. This outline served as a guide in collecting and organizing the data. Analysis and criticism of all material were necessary before an accurate, comprehensive narrative could be written and correctly documented.

The writer was fortunate in locating many primary source materials in the Ohio State University Main Library. Additional material of this nature was located in the Detroit Public Library, the Oberlin College Library, the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary Library, Columbus, Ohio, and the Ohio Wesleyan University Library. Special collections of Methodist and Mennonite historical material located at Ohio Wesleyan University and Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio, respectively, contained helpful references which the writer was unable to locate elsewhere. Librarians,
historians, archivists and other research personnel of various denominations were most helpful in supplying the author with lists of important periodicals, proceedings, and other publications which might prove fruitful to the project.

As secondary sources, the studies by Martin and Oswald proved to be of extreme value. These works trace the attitudes of the two denominations and were particularly helpful in the development of Chapter 4.

In the present work, the author has attempted to uncover and bring together as much primary source material as possible in an effort to present an accurate and complete appraisal of the subject. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge the debt to previous researchers who have contributed to our present knowledge of the history of American Protestantism, physical education, and recreation. Extensive use has been made of much of this material where it was felt necessary and appropriate. All instances of such utilization have, of course, been properly acknowledged in the form of footnotes.

Significance of the Study

Recently, there has appeared in professional periodicals and meetings a call for more research in an area tentatively referred to

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as "sociology of sport" or "sociology of play." This writer supports that call. Athletics and recreation have long played an important role in our society and, as such, qualify highly as worthy subjects of academic investigation. While sociological research is generally concerned with current issues, it cannot wholly ignore the immediate past. Indeed, a knowledge of the historical background of a particular subject or problem is absolutely necessary if one is to proceed with intellectual integrity in his investigation.

It is the expressed hope of the writer that this study of social change in one societal institution will contribute something of value to a fuller understanding of the historical roots of our own allied fields of physical education and recreation. The latter areas of study were developed out of the interest of individuals representing diverse disciplines: medicine, education, and religion. Of these three, the historical literature of our profession has devoted itself almost exclusively to the contributions of the first two. Discussion of the relationship between religion and American physical education and recreation has primarily been limited to the early colonial period and the dominance of a rigidly restrained Puritanism. Scant attention has been paid to later developments within the churches which led to a more enlightened attitude toward play. This investigation is a modest effort to fill this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER II

THE PURITAN LEGACY: WORK

A deep source of pride for Americans has long been the belief in their ability to "get things done" with little or no wasted motion. A steady diet of serious purposefulness coupled with hard work has generally been considered necessary for the attainment of this goal. The building of a nation and the creation of history's highest standard of living has left little time for anything but hard work. This general pattern for life is usually traced to the colonial period and due credit given to the stern and pious Puritan settlers.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, however, to comprehend accurately the colonial American attitude toward work and play without some understanding of its historical foundations. Thomas Hall, in his volume, The Religious Background of American Culture, contends that the basis of American Protestantism and much of American culture in general can be traced to what he terms, "the English dissenting tradition." This tradition dates from the time of John Wyclif (1324-1384) when this fiery individual first had the audacity to question the political authority of the Roman Church and the Pope. Allied with this protest was a criticism of the growing ornamentation and ceremony of the Church, particularly with regard to the administering of the sacraments which Wyclif felt to be of secondary importance to the sermon.
The Lollard movement, originating shortly after Wyclif's death, embraced and tended to exaggerate the latter's dislike of high churchism. The members of this movement developed "a deep-seated antagonism to the amusements, forms of worship and the spirit and drift of the ruling classes."\(^1\) In short, it became somewhat of a class struggle as the lower strata of the society was drawn to the movement. Hall describes these people as "the small, hard-working, rising, poor, dispossessed class, instinctively feeling its way to greater power and influence, imbued with the faith that a righteous God had called it to duty and life eternal, and full of the sense of the futility of a life of mere pleasure."\(^2\)

This basic precept was to color and greatly influence Protestantism for the next five hundred years. This element of the "English dissenting tradition" combined with the rather stern outlook of Continental Calvinism was to have, perhaps, its most important and influential manifestations in colonial America, particularly New England.

**Colonial America**

The question of what motives first prompted the early groups of settlers to leave England and Continental Europe to set sail for North America has caused conflicting opinions. The popular conception is that freedom of religion was, by and large, the primary motivating force. While there is some evidence to support this general view, it

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 34.
is felt by some American religious historians that the promise of adventure and economic gain was an even greater factor. This view finds support in the many reports by contemporaries of the "rogues and scalawags" in various settlements. It is also common knowledge that England found, in its colonies, a suitable location to exile such undesirables as thieves, vagrants and debtors. While this tended to place the devoutly religious in the minority of the population, they were able, through their cohesiveness and the ability of their leaders, to regulate successfully a great deal of the social and political life of the colonies. The resultant theocracy placed law-making as well as enforcement firmly in the hands of the clergy. The latter showed no timidity in assuming the power and soon the social life of the colonies was regulated by a set of strict, specific laws of behavior.

Without attempting to minimize the well-known attitudes and actions of the New England Puritans, it is only fair to point out that many of the measures popularly ascribed to them were, to a lesser degree, imposed in earlier colonial settlements. The first English colony in Virginia in the 1600's was not founded for religious reasons, and yet it was a crime "not to attend church services, or to blaspheme God's name, or speak against the known articles of the Christian faith." Idleness was also a cardinal sin and the act of playing, if not discreetly maintained within strict limits, was placed under great suspicion and

3 Ibid., p. 85.
5 Hall, op. cit., p. 74.
could bring severe censorship. The fact that many in the settlement were highly questionable and unruly individuals whose antipathy toward work could severely threaten the security of the group in a wilderness community was undoubtedly a major factor in the establishment of many of these rules of conduct.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that the strong Anglican influence in Virginia perhaps had somewhat of a tempering effect on the negative attitudes toward play. Weaver has noted the fact that the Anglican Church in England was actually quite liberal in its position on play. In the "Book of Sports," a proclamation of King James I in 1618, approval was given to such activities as dancing on the green, maypole festivals, leaping and vaulting, wrestling, and other recreational activities that the former Queen Elizabeth had permitted. According to Weaver, however, "the Puritans and separatists who came to America did not share the views of James regarding popular recreation."7

In New England, the stern Puritan outlook had the advantage of complete political control with the power of state enforcement. It would be wrong, however, to continue the myth that the Puritans were against play or amusement entirely. Many contemporary scholars are attempting to correct this fallacy. One religious sociologist contends that the Puritan's stand has been grossly misunderstood. He agrees

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7 Ibid.
that they did oppose the "immoderate, unreasonable diversion" as being a "waste of time," but, on the other hand, they were not against recreation, per se.\(^8\)

The Puritans were realists, and the place of recreation and diversion in their view of a useful and responsible life reflects that realism. The need for recreation was recognized as a basic part of man's makeup and was taken into account in the day's activities.\(^9\)

Another writer criticized that history which has attempted to judge frontier life by latter day values and which has failed to consider the realities of the time:

The uncharitable view of this history is to declare that these church leaders were narrow, bigoted, inhuman, and fanatic. A more understanding view is to note that law is raw in a frontier society; men who guard the religion must be strong men, commands must be stark and sharp. There is no "intellectual" in mass and little to qualify precepts. Clear dichotomies exist between work and play, good and bad, the life of good works and the life of sin. Only as society becomes complex do the grays arise between the blacks and the whites.\(^10\)

The Puritan fathers were fearful of over-indulgence, however, and did not sanction any activity performed for mere amusement or enjoyment. Expanding upon this idea, the eminent American religious historian, William Warren Sweet, states:

Contrary to popular opinion, the Puritan was unascetic. He believed that God had created the universe good, and that in spite of man's fall, the universe was still good and meant for


\(^9\) Ibid., pp. 159-160.

man's use and enjoyment. The good things of the earth, however, should be used with moderation, for there was always danger of excess on the part of the user. Their emphases was upon utility, not on enjoyment, and enjoyment always must be a by-product, not an end in itself; that the godly must love the world with "weaned affections" was a favorite expression of the Puritan clergy. Man's natural desires and passions are not wrong in themselves, but only his enslavement to them.

This fear of over-indulgence was to continue to form a basic part of the Protestant attitude toward amusements for many succeeding generations.

It is not too difficult to trace the roots of these views back to the fifteenth century Lollard movement which equated pure enjoyment of amusement with the ruling classes in the Catholic Church. It becomes even less an effort when one notes that the New England Puritans were themselves members of the same classes as the early Lollards of England. So as not to belabor and perhaps over-emphasize the above view, however, two additional points should be raised. First of all, much of the sport and other amusement of the day was not particularly uplifting, morally, spiritually, or physically. Such activities as cock-fighting and bear-baiting have never been particularly looked upon with favor in polite society and these, along with card playing and dancing were almost entirely associated with the tavern, an institution rarely embraced by Protestant leaders.

In the second place, one must remember that the philosophy of the church at this time was other-worldly directed. All endeavors must serve a higher purpose for the glorification of God and preparation of

the soul for the life hereafter. With this in mind, it was very diffi-
cult to justify a young person's urge to run care-free through the
meadows, particularly on the Sabbath. The study of psychology was yet
unknown and the virtues of free self-expression were thus left unex-
plained. If such seemingly innocent play was not justifiable, it is
not difficult to see why the more "base" activities with their attend-
dant associations were so roundly condemned.

The New England Puritans were not the only religious group to
look askance at amusements and diversions during the early colonial
period. Rivaling, and perhaps surpassing, them in sternness and piety
in life were the Quakers, situated primarily in Pennsylvania, but
scattered all along the seacoast. While lacking, in most cases, the
political power of the Puritans, they nevertheless prescribed strict
codes of behavior for themselves. One unofficial, but widely read
statement, written in 1675, proposed "that it is not lawful to use
games, sports, plays, nor among other things comedies among Christians,
under the notion of recreations, which do not agree with Christian
silence, gravity, and sobriety; for laughing, sporting, gaming, mock-
ing, jesting, vain talking, etc., is not Christian liberty, nor harm-
less mirth."

12 The writer's opposition to games and sports as proper
recreation was based on his belief that they merely satisfied man's
own "carnal lusts and appetites" at the expense of the glorification
of God. 13 He felt that such diversions "naturally tend to draw men

12Robert Barclay, An Apology for the True Christian Divinity,
13 Ibid., p. 477.
from God's fear, to make them forget heaven, death, and judgment, to foster lust, vanity, and wantonness.\textsuperscript{14}

This emphasis on sobriety and sternness of outlook and alienation to worldliness was common to literally all denominational groups throughout the colonies at this time. Generally speaking, the official church attitude was against play for play's sake. What play was indulged in by children and young people had to be done with moderation. Play by adults was particularly dis­countenanced by most groups. It was, in short, a work-oriented attitude dominated by a severe preoccupa­tion with the life hereafter. Over the next two hundred years many groups and individuals would move away from this position but traces of it would continue to provoke controversy within and between Protestant bodies.

\textit{Eighteenth Century America}

By the end of the seventeenth century, Puritan power in New England was beginning to wane while a certain degree of religious toler­ance was developing in all the colonies. Religious indifference might be a more accurate term, particularly among the more educated classes.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, new settlers from all over Northern Europe brought new and often conflicting religious beliefs.

The Puritan strength was particularly weakened because of the increasing numbers of those outside the faith. This was accentuated even more by the fact that there was a loss of spiritual vitality by

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 501.
\textsuperscript{15}Hall, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 132-4.
the second and third generations. Fewer and fewer were able to relate a conversion experience which was required for membership in the church. Since church membership was usually a prerequisite for suffrage, the political base became smaller and it became correspondingly harder to impose the church's will. With the falling of the membership requirement, the political influence of the church was further weakened. While many of the so-called "blue laws" remained in force, it was a secular duty to carry out the judgment and punishment rather than the whim of each ministerial body.

The development of a landed aristocracy likewise contributed its share to the weakening of the church's reins and to a liberalization of attitudes toward amusement and pleasure. As the frontier slowly began to move westward across the Alleghenies, life became somewhat more refined along the seacoast, particularly in the growing cities. Those who achieved a certain degree of financial comfort were then both willing and able to seek out pleasurable diversions to occupy their increasing leisure time. It was only natural then, that a broader outlook and more tolerant view of many amusements should evolve among these classes. Discussing this subject in terms of social class differences, one historian writes:

The gradual toleration in regard to all questions of conduct in colonial times was part and parcel of the growing indifference to the older standards of a life left behind in England. The theater was taboo in the lower strata of dissenting circles, but in New York and in the Southern States, and even in certain classes in Philadelphia, it gained just about the status it had in England. Nothing separates society so sharply into classes as inequality of possession, for the amusements and occupations of the wealthy are generally impossible to the poor, and as the wealth of the land increased, and as black slavery in the South
together with the temporary white slavery of indentured servants gave ever greater leisure to a small class, its world changed, and its toleration of what had been once condemned increased.\textsuperscript{16}

Early in the eighteenth century there occurred a rebirth of religious vitality which manifested itself in all of the colonies. It was a revivalistic movement which was emotional in its appeal and which crossed denominational lines. Widely condemned by the more educated classes because of many emotional excesses, the movement did serve to bring religion to the unchurched masses in America. Spread by a few evangelists such as George Whitefield who traveled throughout the country, it has been estimated that more than 30,000 were brought into some kind of religious experience.\textsuperscript{17}

The "great awakenings," as this revival movement has been called, reached their zenith in the middle and northern colonies around 1740 and slightly later in the South. From the middle of the century through the Revolutionary War and the first few decades following, deism, a rationalistic philosophy, gained favor among the upper classes. It was essentially equalitarian, affirming certain natural rights belonging to all men by virtue of their created being and was derived from sources other than the churches. The Declaration of Independence reflected this current of thought. For the most part, the men who held these views were religious, "but mostly as deists who had little concern for the churches' institutions and theologies, believing that all

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 137.

religions at heart affirmed the same truth, the existence of God and the goodness and equality of men." In many cases, deists were also members of churches. It has been estimated that "two-thirds of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Anglican laymen, essentially deist in their outlook."^19

While all of the deist philosophy did not agree with traditional church doctrine, there is little doubt that the latter was influenced by it to a degree. Dillenberger briefly discusses this relationship as it was manifested in the movement for political independence:

The churches supporting the Revolution had no difficulty accepting the Declaration of Independence. John Witherspoon, the Presbyterian divine who was president of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University, signed it. To be sure, the churches were concerned with liberty and freedom under God, rather than with "natural equality." Moreover, their understanding of man was not that of deists. Their arguments for equality took account of sin as well as dignity. For some, of course, the rationalist currents within the church made the document itself theologically correct. For different religious reasons men found themselves together in a common struggle, accepting a common declaration of independence. The roots of independence therefore were varied. Religious and so-called secular forces coalesced in the formation of the American nation. Although men often had different motivations and reasons for what they did, they found themselves united in common actions and plans.20

While the deist philosophy did not continue over a long period of time and never did reach the masses to any great extent, it, combined with the entire movement for independence, influenced, perhaps,

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18 Ibid., p. 113.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., pp. 143, 4.
one of the first cracks in the other-world emphases of the church. The
idea of man as an individual worthy of respect, connotes a preoccupa-
tion with life in this world. It maintains that the dignity of man is
important and that this dignity is dependent upon his right to the
"pursuit of happiness." The latter phrase implies that enjoyment with-
in the bounds of society's mores is a worthy goal in itself, contrary
to the traditional Protestant concepts. It took several decades how-
ever, before this philosophy, applied to play, was widely accepted and
utilized by churches.

The growing liberality of the educated classes notwithstanding,
religion for the masses remained steeped in a good deal of "hell-fire
and brimstone." Ministers continued to exhort their flocks to keep
their thoughts on the great beyond and to repel all worldliness from
their lives. During this period members of the clergy and their
followers became more specific in their condemnation of worldly prac-
tices. During and after the American Revolution many social customs
received sharp criticism from the churches. Lutherans of this time
were "opposed to expensive forms of entertainment. The theater they
considered a corrupting influence. . . . Card Playing and dancing
were considered wrong because they were a waste of time. Festivals
were regarded as sinful because they led to indulgence and wasted
money." 21

A member of the Society of Friends recalled an incident from his
childhood during the early 1700's when, in the midst of his play with
other children, he was "reached with strong conviction," and could not

21Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America,
prevent himself from bursting into tears. Firmly convinced of the sin-
fulness of his play, he could later write:

\[\ldots\] I knew I was told the truth by conviction,
\[\ldots\] for I plainly understood by clear convic-
tion and by the Holy Scriptures, which I had been trained up in the reading of, that I was
too vain and wanton; for I loved music, dancing
and playing at cards, and too much delighted
therein, and was followed with the judgments of
God therefor in the secret of my soul.\(^{22}\)

There were undoubtedly many such incidents of strong guilt feel-
ings as the natural desires of people for play came into conflict with
the religious philosophy of the day. That the conflict was not always
resolved in favor of the church is evidenced by the report that danc-
ing became a common diversion of young people between the time of the
decline of Puritanism and the American Revolution.\(^{23}\)

Sports engaged in during this period included horse racing, hunt-
ing, fishing, and individual contests of strength and skill. Organized
team games were virtually unknown and, aside from wrestling and boxing,
athletic sports were limited to a very small number of people.\(^{24}\)

New Englanders remained the most reserved in their participation,
while the middle colonies expressed more freedom. The South appeared
much more committed to the popular enjoyment of life than her northern

\(^{22}\) Joseph Walton, Incidents Illustrating the Doctrines and History
of the Society of Friends, (Philadelphia: Friends' Book Store, 1897),
p. 86.

\(^{23}\) Frances Manwaring Caulkins, History of Norwich Connecticut,
(Hartford: The author, 1866), p. 332.

\(^{24}\) Jesse Frederick Steiner, Americans at Play, (New York: McGraw-
neighbors.25 The Reverend Frances Asbury, the early Methodist leader in America, expressed distaste for the widespread state of worldliness which he observed in his journey through the South in 1795. He wrote: "The whites are worldly people and intolerably ignorant of God; playing, dancing, racing; these are their common practices and pursuits."26

During this period the colleges, which were all closely affiliated with one denomination or another, frowned upon games and sports for the students. Any recreation taken should be utilitarian. It is reported that "President Wheelock of Dartmouth recommended in 1771 that the 'students turn the course of their diversions and exercises for their health to the practice of some manual arts, or cultivation of gardens and other lands, at the proper hours of leisure and intermissions from study.'"27 Twenty-six years later, however, no less a personage than Daniel Webster could write of "playing at ball" in his free time at Dartmouth.28 In 1790, one writer described with approval the plan of the Methodist College in Maryland which provided a garden plot for the students and awarded prizes to those who produced the most vegetables from their grounds or to those who kept them in the best


27 Steiner, op. cit.

28 Holliman, op. cit., p. 65.
order. "The Methodists," he adds, "have wisely banished every species of play from their college."²⁹

Nineteenth Century America

The nineteenth century was a period of great ferment for all institutions as the new nation struggled to achieve its "manifest destiny." The frontier continued to push steadily westward and organized religion was hard put to effectively serve the new communities springing up over the mountains and across the prairies. Partial solutions to this problem were found in the revival movement which became popular after 1800, and in the use of traveling preachers called "circuit riders." The revivals, usually held periodically in various communities were occasions for not only hearing the "Word of God," but also for meeting socially with isolated neighbors, many of whom would travel one hundred miles and more to attend. Generally held over a period of several days, these revivals found preachers whipping the attendants into an emotional fever as they "wrestled with the devil" for the "saving of souls." For many people, this early camp meeting not only provided a rare opportunity for a semblance of formal worship but also became the one great social festival of the year.

The last spectacular, but amazingly successful system of the circuit rider was perfected by the Methodists. Each preacher had his own circuit of communities and was almost continuously on the road ministering to the needs of his widely scattered flock. Between his visits,

a layman from the local congregation would serve as interim preacher. In this fashion the Methodists were able to establish strong ecclesiastical ties across the frontier until eventually, each community could have its own full-time minister.  

Aside from the problems of the frontier, Protestants also became embroiled in controversy over the rise of Biblical criticism, science and the scientific method, and the new humanism which expressed confidence in man and his future. This tendency toward a more liberal theology was met by strong resistance, particularly by the more evangelical and fundamentalist groups. The effects upon the church's attitudes toward amusements, however, were hardly noticeable during the first half of the century. One historian writes of this period in the following terms: "The intolerance of the seventeenth century, rather than the liberalism of the eighteenth, swayed public opinion. It was the dark period of Victorian repression."  

While most recreations continued to be equated with a state of worldliness, it is significant to note that condemnatory statements began to dwell more on certain specific amusements. Activities such as horse racing and card playing were discouraged because of their association with gambling. Dancing was banned because of the fear of promoting promiscuous behavior, and the theater was taboo because of

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30 For excellent and exhaustive studies of the revival movement and the Methodist "circuit rider" system see, Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, (Boston; Little Brown & Co., 1958), and Hunter Dickinson Farish, The Circuit Rider Dismounts, (Richmond, Va.: The Dietz Press, 1938).  

31 Foster Rhea Dulles, America Learns to Play, (New York; Appleton-Century Co., Inc., 1940), p. 86.
the licentiousness of many of the themes presented there. Above all, each of these activities, along with many others, removed men's thoughts from God and were thus considered a waste of time.

Typical of the attitudes in this respect is the following resolution which was submitted for consideration to the 1817 General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church by Francis Scott Key, composer of "The Star Spangled Banner:"

Resolved,—That the Clergy of this Church be, and they are hereby enjoined to recommend sobriety of life and conversation to the professing members of their respective congregations, and that they be authorized and required to state it, as the opinion of this Convention, that conforming to the vain amusements of the world, frequent horse races, theatres, and public balls, playing cards, or being engaged in any other kind of gaming are inconsistent with Christian sobriety, dangerous to the morals of the members of the Church, and peculiarly unbecoming the character of communicants.32

The resolution was not approved by the House of Deputies because it was felt that adequate provision had already been made "for the purposes of Christian discipline," and therefore, there was no need for listing specific abuses.33 This action evidently did not meet with the approval of the House of Bishops, however, for they then felt it necessary to issue their own strong resolution clarifying their feelings:

The House of Bishops, solicitous for the preservation of the purity of the Church, and the piety of

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33 Ibid., p. 461.
its members are induced to impress upon the clergy the important duty, with a discreet but earnest zeal, of warning the people of their respective cures, of the danger of an indulgence in those worldly pleasures which may tend to withdraw the affections from spiritual things. And especially on the subject of gaming, of amusements involving cruelty to the brute creation, and of theatrical representations, to which some peculiar circumstances have called their attention,—they do not hesitate to express their unanimous opinion, that these amusements, as well from their licentious tendency, as from the strong temptations to vice which they afford, ought not to be frequented. And the Bishops cannot refrain from expressing their deep regret at the information that in some of our large cities, so little respect is paid to the feelings of the members of the Church, that theatrical representations are fixed for the evenings of her most solemn festivals.34

The slight difference of opinion above might very well be taken as indicative of growing disagreement between laity and the clergy in regard to amusements. The bishops felt it necessary to state firmly the official position of the Church. A similar resolution by the diocese of Virginia in 1818, was supported unanimously by the clergy, whereas the laity adopted it by a vote of only seventeen to nine.35

In the face of a very slowly growing acceptance of many amusements, individual Episcopal churchmen felt called upon to speak out against these evil tendencies. In his opening sermon at the General Convention of 1820, Bishop Richard Channing Moore stated that Christian teachers "must insist upon an abstraction from the frivolities of the world, in those who profess the religion of Jesus Christ."36

34 Ibid., p. 494.


36 Ibid., p. 108.
He further felt it necessary "to warn our people of an indulgence in those worldly pleasures, which draw the affections from spiritual things."  

Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, in his first sermon at St. George's, New York City, said, "The gay and giddy amusements of fashionable society we have considered as utterly inconsistent with Christian character. The habitual indulgence in them we have regarded as an evil living, whereby the congregation is justly and reasonably offended." Little did Dr. Tyng realize that by 1885, St. George's would be one of the outstanding "institutional" churches in the country and that dancing and billiards would be included in the program of ministry to the community.

In an effort to insure the continued "solid front" of clergy against popular amusements, the General Convention of 1832, adopted the following canon concerned with regulating the behavior of those training for the Episcopal priesthood:

The Bishop, or other Ecclesiastical authority who may have the superintendence of Candidates for Orders, shall take care that they pursue their studies diligently, and under proper direction, and that they do not indulge in any vain or trifling conduct, or in any amusements most liable to be abused to licentiousness, and to those pious and studious habits, which become those who are preparing for the ministry." 

The Episcopalians were by no means the only church body fearful of the effects of certain types of recreation. Throughout the first

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, 1832, p. 11.
half of the nineteenth century there was increased opposition toward dancing. In 1818, the pastoral letter of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, used this language:

With respect to dancing, we think it necessary to observe that however plausible it may appear to some, it is perhaps not the less dangerous on account of that plausibility. It is not from those things which the world acknowledges to be most wrong, that the greatest danger is to be apprehended to religion, especially as it relates to the young. When the practice is carried to its highest extremes, all admit the consequences to be fatal; and why not then apprehend danger, even from its incipient stages? It is certainly in all its stages a fascinating and infatuating practice. Let it once be introduced, and it is difficult to give it limits. It steals away our precious time, dissipates religious impressions, and hardens the heart.

In 1813, the Presbyterian General Assembly (New School) adopted the following resolution and reaffirmed it in 1853:

Resolved, That the fashionable amusement of promiscuous dancing is so entirely unscriptural, and eminently and exclusively, that of "the world which lieth in wickedness," and so wholly inconsistent with the spirit of Christ and with that propriety of Christian deportment and that purity of heart which his followers are bound to maintain, as to render it not only improper and injurious for professing Christians either to partake in it, or to qualify their children for it by teaching them the art; but also to call for the faithful and judicious exercise of discipline

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on the part of Church Sessions when any of
the members of their churches have been
guilty.42

In the eyes of some churchmen of the time, there was a definite
relationship between the affluence of people and their addiction to
"fashionable amusements." A contributor to a Congregational periodical
in 1819 wrote:

It is notorious that not only in the metropolis
but that also in our provincial cities and
larger towns, there are many connected with
religion societies, if not members of Christian
[sic] churches, who are in the habit occasionally,
or frequently, of mingling in the fashionable
recreations of the age, cards, dancing, mixed and
numerous assemblies, and even theatrical exhibi-
tions. They are commonly to be found among the
higher classes of tradesmen, or they are manu-
facturers, and merchants rising to opulence by
successful commerce; and throwing aside their
habits of self-denial, of abstinence, and of wise
and holy superiority to the world, just in pro-
portion to their increasing wealth, they afford
a humiliating proof of the dangerous power of
prosperity, and a lamentable forgetfulness of the
impossibility of serving God and Mammon.43

During the 1840's and '50's, the Disciples of Christ, a largely
rural frontier denomination at the time, began to show concern with
the growing worldliness of many of its members as they became more
affluent. Up to this time, most of the members of this church had
come from the lower economic rural classes and were firmly convinced
that money, and thus, many of the pleasures it could buy, was the
root of all evil.44 One pious member from Kentucky reacted in

\*2bid., pp. 524-5.
\*3Horace Bentley, "On Public Amusements," The Congregational
Magazine, II (June, 1819), p. 335.
\*4Oliver Read Whitley, Trumpet Call of Reformation, (St. Louis:
shocked disbelief to the statements of a "popular" preacher favoring social dancing in families. Following a scathing denunciation of dancing, he concluded: "The ways of Zion mourn; she weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. All her gates are desolate. . . . Is the church to tolerate . . . all this?"45

This was a question being asked by many church people of the period. Some sought to curb the participation of church members in many of the amusements by strict and severe disciplinary action. Regarding the power of the church in this matter, one journalist wrote:

*It cannot be doubted that the church has power to make improper indulgence in fashionable amusements, a ground of admonition, or of discipline, especially when the church is united in her views of duty and expediency on this subject. And if those who enter her communion know the nature of these views, they are in duty bound to conform to them; and are justly considered criminal if they grieve and offend their brethren by conduct inconsistent with the prevailing feelings of the church.*45

In 1850, the Episcopal diocese of Virginia revised its canons. By a large majority of both orders, the convention adopted a canon on "Offenders to be Admonished, or Repelled from the Lord's Table."

According to this canon, one might be forbidden to partake in Holy Communion if found guilty of:

- . . . gaming, attendance on horse racing and theatrical amusements, witnessing immodest and licentious exhibitions or shows, attending public balls, habitual neglect of public worship, or a denial of the doctrines of the gospel, as generally set forth in the authorized

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In an effort to force moral order on the frontier, the Methodist Church, generally through its local circuit rider, would hold ecclesiastical trials for the purpose of prosecuting those whose social and/or religious behavior conflicted with the teachings of the church. Little sympathy was shown for those engaging in certain popular amusements such as dancing and card playing. In addition to enforcing its ecclesiastical rules, and despite occasional abuses of this power of expulsion, the system did do its part in helping to maintain some semblance of order in an otherwise unpolicied area. Just as some of the actions of the Puritans have been defended as necessary for self-preservation in a harsh environment, so might the latter-day frontier churches be defended. Of the system of Methodist ecclesiastical trials, one historian has written:

Whether through exhortation, preaching, or legal compulsion, the circuit rider and his church sought to bring moral order to a rude, ill-mannered, frequently corrupt backwoods society. Gradually, as the frontier receded, and the restraining influences of civilization advanced, the church likewise matured, and less sensational, more sophisticated methods of enforcing the law replaced the old-fashioned ecclesiastical trial.

As the first half of the nineteenth century progressed, there began to appear more frequently a somewhat grudging recognition of the need for recreation. This recognition, however, was placed within

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47 T. G. Dashiell, Digest of the Councils of Virginia, p. 206, quoted in Chorley, Men and Movements . . . , pp. 109-110.

very circumscribed limits. Recreation was to be precisely the re-
creation of the body and spirit in order that one might return to
work with greater vigor. To one religious writer the purpose of
recreation was "increased health, vigor, and usefulness... to
rest and refresh the tired spirit, or the weary body, and thus pre-
pare for renewed and increased exertion in that work of life which
God has given us to do."49 Lest the reader interpret the statement
too literally, however, the author qualified himself with the follow-
ing:

... we were sent into this world, not for
sport and amusement but for labor; not to
enjoy and please ourselves, but to serve and
glorify God, and be useful to our fellow men.50

Another writer, agreeing that some type of amusement or recrea-
tion is necessary for all, was concerned that most people want excite-
ment and confuse it with recreation.51 This problem, he felt, was
particularly true for the people in the city who had to take public
amusements en masse. In this situation it was most important to
exercise self-control and not fall victim to excess. Amusements "must
not be allowed to become the business of life, for, if they do, they
lose their nature."52 On the other hand, overwork could likewise
lead to a craving for excitement rather than for true recreation.

50 Ibid., p. 358.
51 Hugh Davey Evans, "City Amusements," American Church Monthly,
II (August, 1857), pp. 127-130.
52 Ibid., p. 133.
He concludes, "If men are to live out their days, if the church is to be sustained in anything like the way in which she ought to be sustained, if excitement is not to take the place of recreation, . . . there must be a general relaxation in the pursuit of wealth." 53

Recognition of the need for recreation was one thing, outright advocacy of and provision for it by churchmen was another. Few were ready or willing to follow the lead of Dr. William Augustus Muhlenberg. This Episcopalian clergyman made ample provision for the physical training of the students of St. Paul's Institute and College which he founded in the 1830's in Connecticut. Opportunities for gardening, exercise in the gymnasium, and outdoor sports of all kinds were provided. The rural setting, which included a broad stretch of shore for swimming and boating, was made to order for a man who believed in the virtues of exercise. 54

In 1825, a little more than a year after its opening, the Round Hill School, in Northampton, Massachusetts, employed Dr. Charles Beck as Instructor in Latin and Gymnastics. Aside from the fact that this is the first recorded evidence of physical education in a school in the United States, it is significant to this study that Beck had been ordained as a Lutheran minister in his native Germany. Having been active in the German Turner movement under Jahn, he lost no time in

53 Ibid., p. 140.

instituting a similar program of informal gymnastics pattern after the latter's original work.55

Unfortunately, these two cases appear to be rather isolated instances. It was to be many years before such ideas would be embraced by the majority of America's educators and churchmen.

Occasionally, however, a dissenter's voice would arise to question the wholesale condemnation of the so-called popular diversions of the day and to offer alternatives for consideration. One Unitarian editor, moving against the mainstream of ecclesiastical thought, argued for the virtues of dancing separated from its more suspicious associations. He wrote:

Dancing is a healthful and harmless diversion, if it can only be kept apart from its baneful attendants, close rooms, late hours, extravagant entertainments, and the voluptuous movements which heat the blood, bewilder the senses, and are unfavorable alike to health of body and purity of heart.56

This statement undoubtedly brought down the wrath of many churchmen of the day. It was widely held that dancing, in and of itself, is evil since it tends to excite the passions of both parties as well as to encourage vainness and pompousness through show. It was considered an activity entirely beyond rescue. Indeed, many people felt it was entirely improper for the sexes to mingle for any type of recreational activity whatsoever. One can speculate, then, as to the probable reaction of many readers to the above writer's stated mistrust


of all "convivial entertainments" for young men which did not include members of the opposite sex. He reasoned that "the presence of refined and cultivated women is a humanizing restraint, and lessens every temptation to excess."57

When Thomas K. Beecher, in 1854, first assumed what proved to be a life-long pastorate in the Park Congregational Church in Elmira, New York, the following statement could be found in the church's principles of organization: "Nor will our members be allowed to attend theatres, balls, or dancing parties without subjecting themselves to the censure of the church."58 If Beecher was aware of such a statement, it was not obvious in his actions over the next half century. He continuously shocked his ministerial colleagues in the town and undoubtedly, some of his own parishioners as well. Shortly after his arrival he joined a whist club, a baseball team known as the "Lively Turtles," and also played cricket and tenpins. As far as he was concerned, "all wholesome pleasures were helpful rather than harmful."59 As though this were not enough however, he secured additional rooms in another building to carry on church work. In one of them, he placed a billiard table where he played with boys of the church after securing their promise never to play except when he was present.

Undoubtedly, Beecher's liberal habits influenced his congregation greatly. In 1875, when they moved into a new church building, the

57Ibid., p. 34.
59Ibid., p. 363.
dancing and theater prohibition was a dead letter and provision had been made for a gymnasium, library, theater, and a "romp-room" for the children which was converted into a dancing room for the young people in the evening.\(^6\) Rev. Beecher's biographer writes that despite his unorthodox views in this regard, "there is no indication that he was ever adversely criticized either by the church or by individual members. The criticism all came from the outside."\(^6\)

While Thomas Beecher's participation in games and sports was prompted by personal interest and enjoyment and seemed to be only incidentally employed to reach the youth of his community, there would be others who would seize upon play as a tool in their ministry. An early forerunner of this group was the famous evangelist, Dwight L. Moody. As a Chicago shoe salesman in the 1850's, Moody became wholly committed to the "work of the Lord." His first evangelistic work took place in a rough slum section of the city where he opened a non-denominational Sunday-school. To insure regular attendance by his young charges, Moody was not above bribery of one sort or another. New suits of clothing were promised to one group of ragged boys if they attended regularly for a year. To win over others, he would arrange picnics in the woods south of the city and run footraces with the children, much to their delight.\(^6\) To those who disapproved of such actions in the name of Christianity, he could argue that in this case, the end did justify the means. "What did it matter if 'undignified'

\(^{60}\)Ibid., p. 372.
\(^{61}\)Ibid.
\(^{62}\)Weisberger, op. cit., p. 186.
allurements were used, provided they were legitimate? If the boys and girls, given a taste of the gospel, were converted, they would need no bribes to be good thereafter, which was the thing that counted, the result. 63

In the years to come, others would refine and build upon the methods of Beecher and Moody. They too, would hear much criticism by those who felt that it was a degradation of the church when it not only sanctioned, but actually took part in the amusements of the world. The next half century, however, despite much controversy, was to bring forth a new era in the relationship between Protestantism and recreation. The Puritan legacy of work would remain the dominant theme in most American's lives, but for the first time, to a substantial degree, the church would approve of, and in many cases provide for, the enjoyment of his increasing leisure hours.
CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH AND THIS WORLD

Clearly, by the beginning of the Civil War a new climate of opinion regarding play was evolving within church-going America. Over-shadowing the entire controversy was the fact that the mainstream of American Protestantism was beginning to shed its extreme other-worldly emphasis in favor of a real concern for man in his present environment. This concern was directed toward man's physical and emotional, as well as his spiritual well-being. Typifying this new view of the work of the church, one minister wrote:

The mission of the church is not to fit men for another world only, but also make them mete to live in this. It is not so much a question as to whether he shall be able to join in the new song, but as to whether he is fit to handle the hoe, shove the plow, drive a horse, paint a picture, or preach a sermon. It may do to while away an idle moment, speculating as to whether we shall know our friends in the other world. The sterner requirement, of the broader conception of the sphere of Christianity requires us to inquire far more seriously and prayerfully as to whether we know them here.¹

The latter half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth were periods of great ferment in the social,

¹G. Clever, "The Institutional Church," The Reformed Church Review, IV, 4th series (October, 1900), pp. 495-6.
intellectual, and political life of the United States. The healing of animosities between North and South, westward expansion, the advance of science, and the problems of industrialization and urbanization were four of the major factors involved in this change. While each of these factors influenced various societal institutions, perhaps the last two had the most significance for American religion in general and Protestantism in particular. The science of biology introduced the theory of evolution; psychology acknowledged the unity of man; the new science of sociology stressed the idea of man as a social being and the importance of environmental influences on life. These scientific theories, in turn, opened new approaches to the human problems of the industrial revolution.

**Industrialization and Urbanization**

Following the Civil War, the growth of the United States assumed new dimensions. While westward migration continued at an accelerated pace, a new demographic pattern was emerging in the eastern half of the country. Manufacturing was growing enormously with the introduction of the factory system. Because this system required an abundance of cheap, low-skilled labor, the owners located their plants in or near the larger towns and cities. Expanding manufacturers who chose to keep their plants in smaller towns and villages, if successful, could count themselves responsible for the population increases in their own communities.

European immigrants as well as those Americans dissatisfied with farming flocked to these industrial centers in search of work. From
1860 to 1900, the number of cities whose population numbered eight thousand or more "increased from 141 to 547, and the proportion of townsfolk from a sixth to nearly a third."\(^2\) In addition, first or second generation foreigners comprised over two-thirds of the population in these cities.\(^3\)

This tremendous growth in the size of the urban centers was accompanied by a multitude of social and moral problems. One social historian of the period has written as follows:

... while urban life was synonymous with material and intellectual progress, it could show few corresponding triumphs in the moral field. On the contrary, the city was the hot-house of every cancerous growth—of new evils like industrial war and class hatred and of the older evils of pauperism and crime, of intemperance and vice. These maladies in the body politic threatened social pestilence as cities sprawled over the industrial regions, particularly the North Atlantic States and the Middle West.\(^4\)

One of the greatest problems for the newcomer to the city was to find adequate housing which he could afford. This was no easy matter since the availability of dwelling units was nowhere equal to the demand of the multiplying population. In addition, the scarcity of transportation within the city often meant that the low-income production workers must live within walking distance of their place of

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\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Ibid.
employment. As a result, unhealthy, crowded living conditions arose with several families sharing a single unit. To meet the need, tenement buildings were erected. Ironically, however, the demand for low-cost housing was so great, that owners were able to increase the rents (while at the same time neglecting the upkeep of the buildings). The already pitifully small pay envelope of the worker was squeezed even more by this development.

As important and basic as was the housing situation, it was still only one of several problems. Long working hours for low wages left little time for leisure enjoyment and spiritual uplift. What time was available could either be spent in worrying about how the family was to be fed and clothed the following day or by attempting to alleviate such painful thoughts through drink at the local saloon.

What should have been the one stable force in the community, the family, was placed in jeopardy by the frequency of woman and child labor excesses. Such excesses involved long working hours equal to those of the men, but, for only a fraction of the latter's low wages. Such practices tended to break down family social life as each member went his own way.

The problem of adjustment for the foreign immigrant worker was undoubtedly the hardest of all. Generally at the bottom of the wage scale, he was forced to live in the most undesirable, hence cheapest, housing areas which were rapidly becoming the slums in most cities. Added to the economic plight was his need to adapt his cultural background to a new environment. Inter-nationality conflicts and prejudices arose as several different groups sought to live in close
proximity. Quite often, conflict would arise between the immigrant parents who were trying to keep their traditional habits and customs, and their children, who were quickly assimilated into the American culture. Religious and moral ties were frequently lost by the newcomers to America. One worker for the New York Children's Aid Society wrote:

Moral ties are lessened with the religious. The intervening process which occurs here between his abandoning the old state of things and fitting himself to the new, is not favorable to morals and character.\(^5\)

Moral life in the growing slums was difficult for anyone to maintain. The above conditions were made doubly unbearable by the fact that few desirable social outlets were available to the working classes of the cities. Commercial amusement places such as saloons, pool rooms, and public dance halls lured many of the young people onto their premises despite the protestations of church and reform elements. For the children, there was no place but the streets.

In 1865, despite occasional signs to the contrary, the prevailing sentiment of Protestantism was still toward individual regeneration. Social consciousness remained a vague, suspicious concept. At the same time, a more than healthy respect was shown toward the material benefits which accrued to the successful. The often questionable practices of corporate business were frequently ignored by the

church with the rationalization that she must not concern herself
directly with the secular affairs of man. Specifically, according
to Abell,

By rigidly separating body and spirit and denying religious value to the former, Protestant thought necessarily ignored the problem of human welfare in the great cities. This attitude led to tacit approval of the rising craze for amoral wealth-getting.7

The widening gulf between the lower classes and the Protestant churches was further emphasized by the fact that many congregations, finding themselves in a rapidly changing neighborhood, began to move uptown to the more fashionable residential areas. By the end of the Civil War, nearly fifty congregations had already deserted lower New York. A similar pattern was reported in Boston.8

The lack of initiative shown by the churches in ministering to the needs of the poor while at the same time ignoring many of the practices of those in high places, quite naturally led to the growing alienation of the lower classes to the church. As late as 1895, one English churchman could write:

There are masses of the industrial classes who have no belief that she [the church] has any sympathy for their life, or interest in their lot, or share in their work or desire to help their need. And, until they believe this, they have no inclination whatever to attend to her spiritual message. They must see some plain grounds for trusting her. They must have their attention quickened. Something must be done to

6 Abell, op. cit., pp. 4-6.
7 Ibid., p. 4.
8 Ibid., p. 6.
bridge the gulf, and to bring them into neighbourly touch with the church.9

The minister of the Englewood Baptist Church in Chicago found five indictments against the church when he sought an answer to the question, "Why are so many intelligent workingmen non-churchgoers?"

1. The church is subsidized by the rich. The minister is, consequently, tongue-tied. The rich man's influence is so powerful that anything which would arouse his conscience will never unwisely escape the preacher's lips.

2. The ministry discusses themes which are stale and flat.

3. The ministry is not well enough informed on economic and social questions.

4. The workingman is not welcome in the churches of the land.

5. The church is not aggressive enough in assisting the workingman to secure his rights.10

One man questioned in the above study intimated that the church's traditional views concerning Sabbath recreation were contrary to the best interests of the laborer since Sunday was his one day off the job:

It is the disposition of many to make Sunday a day of recreation. The churches are opposed to the workingman inasmuch as the church opposes Sunday newspapers, Sunday theaters, the


Sunday opening of libraries, and every other form of the kind that would benefit the laboring class.  

While the Protestant churches were increasingly losing the support of the lower classes, the Catholic Church was prospering in the cities. This was particularly true among the immigrant groups. Abell credits this growth to the sympathy of the Roman Church with struggling humanity. "Though anxious to convert the privileged groups, Catholics always stressed their ministry to the poor." With a few exceptions, this was exactly the opposite position of the Protestants of the time.

The above problems of both the city and the Protestant churches of this period could not be long ignored if total chaos was not to occur. Fortunately for all concerned, the church was forced by pressures from both within and without to face up to the realities of the day and to assume a positive position in social reform. A new generation of young, aggressive churchmen, armed with new theological, sociological, and scientific theories was about to make itself heard. Imbued with a strong humanitarian impulse plus the realization that the very existence of Protestantism in the city was at stake, they sought to minister unto all by adhering closer to Christ's teachings of service to man.

11Ibid., pp. 625, 6.
12Abell, op. cit., p. 7.
The Awareness of the Church

Influence of Science

Humanitarianism notwithstanding, it must be acknowledged that the findings of science played a large part in prompting churches to enter the movements for social betterment. Specifically, "it was now clear that environment, past and present, conditioned all phases of human development."¹³ The religious interpretation of this theory rested upon the interdependency of body, mind, and soul and implied that "no one faculty could prosper apart from the welfare of the others."¹¹ At the turn of the century, a Quaker medical doctor could state:

We are just beginning to see that the physical, to a great degree, conditions and determines the mental, the moral and the spiritual, that all attempts to separate these, or to consider the one less worthy than the other, have brought, and will ever continue to bring discord and disaster."¹⁵

This interpretation repudiated the traditional Protestant emphasis on individual spiritual regeneration. While agreeing that the latter was undoubtedly the ultimate objective, the advocates of social Christianity maintained that little success could be expected with a person preoccupied with holding together himself and his family. Likewise, the attendant evils prevalent in a slum community could hardly

¹³Ibid., p. 81.
¹¹Ibid.
fail to affect the character of those raised in such an environment.

The Reverend William S. Rainsford, long the minister of the well
known "institutional" church, St. George's Episcopal in New York
City, expanded upon this theme in an influential secular periodical
of the late nineteenth century:

Long ago men may have suspected that environment
had much to do with growth of character, with
development for good or evil. Now we know it.
You might as well expect to destroy a field of
thistles, the evil seed of which was carried by
every passing wind over the neighboring country,
by cutting off a few thistle heads as to over­
come the manifold evils that spring from a child­
hood spent in the worst of our modern tenement
houses by leaving these sources of evil unchanged. 16

By alleviating the material ills of society, it was reasoned, man might
be prepared to look after the state of his soul. Indeed, the state of
his soul might already have improved due to a lack of hatred, bitter­
ness, and corruption at least partially the result of sordid surround­
ings.

In any event, churchmen increasingly began to recognize the im­
portance of man's physical nature and to view him in terms of whole­
ness. In 1885, a Methodist minister from the South published an
essay entitled "Christ's Education of His Body." He attempted to stress
the disciplining of Christ's physical being during the first eighteen
years. As a child at play and as an adolescent learning a manual
trade, Christ was training His body as well as His soul and mind for

(December 26, 1891), p. 10h1.
the rigors of His brief ministry. At this time this was hardly an orthodox approach to the study of Christ. It was, however, indicative of changing views of many American Protestant leaders. In an effort to point up divine justification for his position, a Baptist minister alluded to Christ's concern for the salvation of the whole man.

Addressing the Sixth Annual Baptist Congress in 1887, Dr. E. A. Woods stated:

Christianity aims to produce a perfect manhood. It sets before us a perfect man and bids us imitate him and grow into his likeness. To save the whole man and redeem humanity was the mission of Christ. Man is a complex being. He has a physical, a social, an intellectual and a religious nature. These must be developed into unity and harmony. No part of the man must be ignored—none of his faculties treated as evil, else a perfect manhood will not be attained. Conscience, intellect, will, affections, appetites, passions, all these have their place and use and are essential to perfect manhood. Some of these faculties are of a higher order and are more important than others and the higher must always reach the lower; and all together are the council of the human soul and over this council conscience must preside. It is only by the development and sanctification of the whole being that we can attain "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Science then, together with a renewed spirit of Christian service, and a desire for self-preservation, was to provide the justification for Protestantism's wholehearted entry into the social reform

17A. A. Lipscomb, "Christ's Education of His Body," Methodist Review LIXVII (September, 1885), pp. 692-713.
movement. The era of the "social gospel" (as the church-sponsored phase of the movement has come to be called) was at hand and the mainstream of Protestant work and thought was to be permanently affected.  

**Relationship to the Reform Movement**

The proper relationship, if any, of the church to the reform movement as a whole was a continuing source of controversy within religious circles. Many felt that the church should assume direct responsibility for carrying out social work. Others, however, viewed the role of the church from an inspirational standpoint. That is, the church should not hesitate to address itself from the pulpit to the social problems of the day in an effort to inspire its members to go out and serve. But, the church, as an institution, should not unduly burden itself by assuming control of a function that might be better performed by dedicated Christians working through a secular agency. Such an advocate was the Rev. Washington Gladden, popular Congregational minister and one of the acknowledged leaders of the Social Gospel. He firmly believed that the church should announce and proclaim the principles upon which society should rest. It should, however, spend its time devising methods to put them into effect. It should work through its members and admit their right to dissent. Addressing himself to this subject he wrote:

> In saying that it is not the business of the Christian Church to fashion or to run the

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social and political machinery, I should like to be understood as leaving large room for the pulpit to discuss freely a great many applications of Christian principle. The minister should be entirely free to show the bearings of these principles upon the conduct of his parishioners. The minister may advocate many things which the Church, as an organization, should not undertake to carry into effect. I do not think that it is wise for a Church to require all its members to pledge themselves to total abstinence; but the minister, if he believes in it, may wisely urge it upon his parishioners as a rule of individual conduct. I do not think that it would be wise for a Church to become a society for the promotion of profit-sharing; but the minister may point out to his parishioners the advantages of that method of distributing the products of industry, as helping to promote peace and good will.\textsuperscript{20}

What Dr. Gladden was advocating had, for the most part, been the practice during the early reform movements of the second half of the nineteenth century. There were very few cases of churches officially pioneering in reform. However, such a large number of humanitarian leaders were active church members that it could truthfully be said that "in a real sense the initiative was Christian in origin and in spirit."\textsuperscript{21} James Addison, an Episcopal historian, has traced numerous reform projects of the period to the presence of Christian convictions:

Prompted by sound social motives, usually traceable to Christian convictions, steady progress was registered in field after field. In 1866, for instance, New York established the


first municipal Board of Health. In 1870, there was organized the National Prison Association. Four years later the Women's Christian Temperance Union began its campaigning. Buffalo formed in 1877 its Charity Organization Society, and in twenty-five years there were nearly a hundred and fifty others. The American Red Cross Society was established in 1881. It was in New York City in 1886 that the first social settlement was opened, to be followed within a decade by fifty others.\[22\]

As stated previously, not all Protestants felt that the church should refrain from directly engaging in social reform projects. There were even those who believed that it was not only a right and duty, but also a necessity for the church to engage in such work. An editorial appearing in an 1886 issue of the Andover Review argued that "if the local church is the source and unit of power, it can grow and do its work only as it enlarges and multiplies its functions."\[23\] In short, a church that is not actively serving is dead!

This spirit of service prompted many big city churches to initiate social service programs to meet the needs of the communities in which they were located. In many instances these were, indeed, pioneer efforts, as there were usually no similar programs already in effect.

Rise of the Institutional Church

Although frequently criticized as a misnomer, the term "institutional" came to be applied to those churches which attempted to broaden

\[22\] Ibid.

their functions to include social service work. With one or two exceptions, the growth and development of these "working" churches took place primarily after 1880.\textsuperscript{24} They first appeared in the large urban centers of the industrial Northeast and quickly spread to other cities across the country. The vast majority of these churches were located in recently changed lower-class slum areas from which the more wealthy members had moved. Those who had moved to more fashionable areas and yet remained active in their former church usually provided the minister with the needed help, both financial and physical, necessary for the establishment of the program of service to the community. The visible success of many of these projects in addition to the new emphasis placed upon sociology in the seminaries, prompted more and more young ministers to establish such churches. A course in sociology had been a requirement at Hartford Seminary since 1880. A course in Social Ethics and sociology was established as a Department of Social Training in 1890 under the direction of Dr. Graham Taylor, who had been a pastor at Hartford, Connecticut, and a professor in Hartford Seminary. At the same time, Yale Divinity School established a professorship in Social Ethics. In 1892, a chair in Christian

\textsuperscript{24}One outstanding example of an early "working" church was the Warren Street Chapel in New York City which is reported to have carried on an institutional program from about 1837. See Edward E. Hale, "Public Amusements and Public Morality," \textit{Christian Examiner}, LXIII (July, 1857), pp. 47-65. Also, much of Thomas K. Beecher's work in Elmira, New York from 1851, could be considered a forerunner of the institutional church movement. See Chapter II, pp. 33-34 of the present work.
Sociology was established.\textsuperscript{25} It has been reported that by 1899, at least 173 institutional churches had been established in the United States.\textsuperscript{26}

What exactly was the "institutional church?" Numerous articles attempting to answer this question appeared in various religious and secular periodicals of the day. (This fact alone gives some idea of the significance of the movement.) Typical of the descriptions is the following which appeared near the turn of the century:

The Institutional Church stands for a form of religious activity developed during the last ten years, which, although still in its infancy, promises to play a potential part in the solution of many of the problems that press upon modern society. It magnifies the personal element, and aims to minister to the social, physical, and mental as well as the religious wants of those whom it seeks to reach. Its doors are open seven days in the week, and in its most ambitious form it has in its care, and as a part of its regular work, institutions, social, amusements, educational, and evangelistic, for the ministry to the whole man.\textsuperscript{27}

Commenting further on the meaning of the institutional church movement, another writer stated:

Given a religious ideal and consecration to it, the new religious movement refuses to be

\begin{footnotes}
\item[26] Abell, loc. cit., pp.
\end{footnotes}
contented with the old way of spending these on the church itself or in saving individuals for heaven. It wishes to influence the whole life of the world, to lift up human society, to purify civic life, to make the city clean, politically honest and socially pure. Having the spirit of Christ, the church is not to be contented with hearing sermons; but it must practice what it hears, live what it believes.²⁸

Practicing and living its beliefs were indeed the raison d'etre for the institutional church. It saw the key to individual salvation through the alleviation of many of the miseries of life. As a result, a broad program of social services was initiated. Church buildings were erected especially for such work. In addition to the sanctuary and usual office space, provisions were made for gymnasiums, meeting rooms, class rooms, social rooms, libraries, kitchens, etc. In many cases, separate buildings near the church itself were acquired specifically for the institutional work. More often than not, the church became the social center for the entire community.

One of the earliest, and certainly most outstanding institutional churches in the country was St. George's Episcopal in New York City. At one time a thriving, fashionable church, it had, during the middle of the nineteenth century, been in a declining state since most of its congregation had moved uptown. In 1883, the Rev. William S. Rainsford, a young Irish-born Canadian minister, was prevailed upon by the leaders of the church to assume the pastorate. As one of his conditions of acceptance, Dr. Rainsford stipulated that St. George's

must serve the community and that sufficient money must be guaranteed
to finance the work. Through the generosity and understanding of the
church vestry, which included financier, J. P. Morgan, such a program
was begun and grew to be one of the largest in the country. In addi­
tion to the church edifice, St. George's conducted its service pro­
gram from a five story Memorial House next door, the Deaconess House
across the street, and other mission rooms and houses throughout the
community.

The program of the church included clubs for boys and girls from
kindergarten through eighteen years of age. These clubs were both
recreational and educational in nature. Similar groups for men and
women were established. In 1892, an industrial school was opened for
boys and young men in order that they might learn trades in carpentry,
drawing, plumbing, printing and telegraphy.

Another large institutional church was Berkeley Temple in Boston.
The attention of non-church-going people was attracted by popular
lectures and concerts. Reading rooms and evening classes for men and
women were opened in addition to a gymnasium, lyceum work, a boys'
brigade, a sewing school, and a kindergarten. All in all, there were
approximately thirty-seven gatherings comprising from 8,000 to 12,000
people every week. In its reform work, Berkeley Temple conducted a

29 Wilson, loc. cit.
30 Ibid.
relief department for the poor, rescue work for "fallen" women, and a temperance guild of two hundred reformed men.31

While philanthropic activity, including loan bureaus, employment offices, medical services, and food and clothing distribution, was a part of the work in most institutional churches, primary attention appears to have been given to educational activities. The Rev. Oscar McCulloch of Plymouth Church in Indianapolis, began his institutional work in 1877, and placed great stress upon what he termed "educational Christianity." This included academic classes as well as manual training and physical training.32 All Souls Church in Chicago, provided a reading room and library which was always open as well as a kindergarten for neighborhood children and manual training classes for young men and boys.33 Perhaps the epitome of educational work was undertaken by Grace Baptist Church in Philadelphia. It founded Temple College and by 1896, two thousand pupils were attending it and completing instruction in a wide range of studies.34

The place of physical training and athletics in the institutional churches was generally high. Rainsford, in his autobiography, writes of the program at St. George's and his opinion of it:

Athletic work among the boys and girls I pressed in every way possible. The gymnasium

33Ibid., pp. 651-2.
34Wilson, loc. cit., p. 387.
occupied a whole floor, and to exercise wise rule and governance here I found a man after my own heart, Ernest Reinhardt. Mr. Morgan loaned a large lot at Weehawken to the men's club: a rough, rocky place enough, but all hands turned in to smooth it, and a reasonably good running track, cricket crease, and baseball ground were proudly achieved.

We fought for healthy bodies, and we fought against the chief danger, I hold it, of our American athleticism—professionalism. We produced some first-class champions in their various classes at the Metropolitan Association A. A. U. But more important far, we did something to raise the physical standard (which was quite low) of our neighborhood. And we made thousands believe that the religion we believed in had works as well as faith behind it.35

It is interesting to note that at a time when few schools of the country could boast of adequate provisions for physical education, the leaders of many churches were attempting to fill the void. St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church of New York City provided a gymnasium and conducted physical training classes for girls and women as well as boys and men.36 Two other New York City churches which conducted gymnasium classes for both sexes were the Judson Memorial Baptist Church and the Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church.37

One of the oldest institutional churches outside New York was the Jersey City Tabernacle. In 1891 it opened a People's Palace which

36 Wilson, loc. cit., p. 385.
37 Ibid.
served as a facility for wholesome "amusement and profit."\textsuperscript{38} It contained facilities for "baths, bowling, amateur theatricals, billiards, a temperance bar, military drill for both sexes, physical culture classes with a fine gymnasium in which to work, and educational and industrial classes."\textsuperscript{39} During the summer, outdoor sports were engaged in by the young men as well as the ministers of the church.

A common fear of many who observed and took part in the institutional church movement was that it would become too secularized. They felt that by becoming overly secular the church would be merely duplicating what could and should be done by other agencies. In the process, they reasoned, there was a great danger of the church relegating its unique spiritual function to a minor position and, in the end, undermining its influence with the very people it was trying to serve. In short, regardless of how many programs are carried on, a common religious thread must consciously run through them all. One scholar at the University of Chicago, while supporting the principle of the institutional church, stressed the importance of the unique role of the church within society's division of labor:

\begin{quote}
In the division of labor that characterizes society today, the school, the state, the bank has its special duties. In the same way the church . . . has but one supreme mission, and that is the religious. However much a church may employ charitable organizations, amusements, employment bureaus, a consciousness of this spiritual mission must be its
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 386.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid.
coordinating and unifying force. It is to the honor of most "institutional churches," so needed in every city and country town, that, even more clearly than many of the older sort, they make religion supreme. But to make a church a religionless mixture of civil-service reform, debating societies, gymnasiums, suppers, concerts, stereopticon lectures, good advice, refined negro minstrel shows, and dramatic entertainments, is to bring it into competition with the variety theater. And when the masses have to choose between that sort of church and its rival, if they have any sense left within their perplexed heads, they will choose the variety theater. That at least is performing its proper social function.\textsuperscript{40}

Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch, another of the leaders of the Social Gospel voiced similar fears. He felt that while the philanthropic work had given a "wholesome bent to modern church life, . . . there is always danger that the distinctively spiritual work will be crowded to one side."\textsuperscript{41} By multiplying its functions, the church might find less and less time for its spiritual ministry. This, however, was not the only danger according to Rauschenbusch. There was the question of the moral effect of charity upon people. "Wherever something is to be had for nothing, cupidity is aroused, and the spiritual work of the churches will have to be done through a clinging and blinding vapor of self-seeking and hypocrisy."\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Shailer Mathews, "Significance of the Church to the Social Movement," The American Journal of Sociology IV (March, 1899), pp. 608-9.


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
These dangers then, created true problems for the church which sought to function beyond the sanctuary and prayer-room. It was a dilemma which would continue to face many congregations, institutional, or otherwise, as they sought to make the church a more sociable and functional agency in their communities.43

What then, in the face of these dangers, was the church to do? There were faults, yes; but there was also a great need. In spite of its dangers, Rauschenbusch could write, "the institutional church is a necessary evil."44 Until society could be made wholesome for all, the church would have to maintain its multitude of functions. He continued:

The people ought to be able to provide for themselves what the churches are trying to provide for them. If the people had comfortable homes, steady work, and a margin of income for the pleasures of life, they could look out for themselves and the churches could prune off their institutional attachments . . . Make social life healthy and you can simplify church work. Let poverty and helplessness increase, and the work of the churches will increase too.45

Also recognizing the danger of assuming a steadily increasing variety of functions, Dr. Rainsford saw the institutional church only as an avant-garde of social reform. It was to point out the failure

43 Further attention will be devoted to the significance of this dilemma in regard to recreation in Chapter V.
44 Rauschenbusch, loc. cit.
of secular society and to set an example for it to follow. Expanding upon this thought he writes:

The Church of Jesus should show the way to all sorts of betterment. She cannot do the doctor's work, or the policeman's, or the teacher's, or the mayor's; but she can and should not only protest when these agencies fail in their manifest duty; but further, she must stand ready to illustrate concretely, even in a small way, what should and could be accomplished for good under the circumstances confronting her. That having been done, then let her step out from under, and let her take up some new need, some new reform.  

An example of judicious administration in this respect was reported from the minister of an institutional church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The People's Church, in an effort to serve the community, became a seven-day working institution. However, they had no wish to duplicate other community work. A men's gymnasium was therefore omitted despite many wishes to the contrary because it was felt that it might rival that of the newly opened YMCA. On the other hand, a women's gym facility was included since no other such provisions existed in the community.  

In retrospect, one can see that whether the institutional church did, indeed, provide the necessary example or not, public and private secular agencies did eventually assume responsibility for social reform. As this occurred, the church did begin to eliminate some of its more

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advanced reform functions such as the loan bureaus, evening school programs, employment services, etc. Of special significance to this study however is the fact that the era of the "Social Gospel" moved the church into greater proximity with man in his contemporary condition. Furthermore, it helped strengthen the theory that man has a right to the pursuit of material happiness in this life. Finally, it helped establish a feeling both within and without Protestant circles that physical education and the play medium could assume an important role in character as well as health development.

The Rural Scene

While industrialization and urbanization presented staggering problems to the cities and the churches therein, the rural areas were facing dilemmas of a different but related nature. The industrial and manufacturing interests in the cities were drawing more and more young people away from the farm in search of the "American Dream." The promise of riches plus the opportunity to trade the drudgery of the farm for the alleged excitement of the city lured many away from the fields. Farm life was thus affected adversely because of a shortage of workers and rural churches, in turn, felt the effect of dwindling membership. If the Protestant churches of the city were having difficulty reaching the people, then it might be said that the country churches were having difficulty finding people to reach.

Contributing to the above problem was the excessive number of different Protestant congregations within many communities. With several churches all vying for a limited number of residents it was
obvious that none would be strong enough to carry on a vital program of worship or service. To more than a few rural churchmen, the latter was most responsible for the decadent condition of many country churches. This failure to conduct a strong program of service to rural life was found to be a primary cause of the decline of the churches in a survey conducted by the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States around 1911. In one sampling of counties it was found that 65 per cent of those churches that were growing were also organizing the social and recreational life of their people. Of those that were not organizing the social and recreational life, only 12 per cent were found to be growing. In another sampling of two hundred fifty-six churches that were not organizing any form of recreation only one was found to be growing.

Undoubtedly, it was hard for many country churches to understand why they should become involved in the social life of the people. After all, the strength of American Protestantism had always come from the rural areas. Here religious conservatism had held forth against the secular pressures of the day. The spiritual emphasis had remained undefiled and repentant men were brought to their knees before the altar of Almighty God with no "nonsensical" come-ons such as baseball games and men's clubs. You either accepted or rejected the church on its own traditional merits.

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49 Ibid.
After the turn of the century, however, more interest in the problems of rural church life began to be shown. Young ministers, exposed to some of the new social theories in seminary, began to apply them in their own churches. Furthermore, the success of many city churches in this area of endeavor began to be noticed. The growing social awareness of many ministers led to the belief that the church as a stable institution of society, had an obligation to serve the community in any way possible. Through service would come the support which people give to that which they feel worthwhile. Commenting upon this subject, Henry S. Curtis, president of the Playground and Recreation Association of America stated:

The great trouble with the church in the past has been that it has been ministering to itself, seeking to run a "gospel ark" for its own members, without feeling that it owed any duty of service to the community as a whole. The reward of both men and institutions is in close proportion to the service they render.50

The need for leadership in the organization of the social life of the rural community was indeed great. The Reverend Matthew McNutt, minister of an institutional-like church in Plainfield, Illinois, felt that many boys and young men were leaving the farms not to escape hard work, but only "because there is nothing but hard work."51 Little or no provision was made for recreation. Farm life was growing

50 Ibid., p. 221.

51 The Rev. Matthew McNutt, "Recreation in a Rural Community," The Playground VI (October, 1912), p. 221.
harder because of fewer workers and larger, more complex farms which brought increased responsibility. An adequate recreational outlet for physical and nervous exhaustion was needed. 52

Addressing the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America in 1912, a minister from Long Island, New York, decried the fact that "the old forms of community gathering and of community recreation have died out--the husking bees, the log rollings, the quilting bees, and the spelling schools--and no new forms have taken their place." 53 Supporting his statement, the speaker cited findings from the Presbyterian survey referred to above; "In Davis County, Indiana, one township was found where the last dance was held seventeen years ago and the last social two years ago. Another township reported that its last picnic was held twelve years ago." 54 He concludes:

The boy growing up in a typical township in the Middle West and South today has these forms of recreation: an occasional game of baseball, usually played on Sunday, three or four dances a year, one or two ice cream suppers and oyster stews, a strawberry festival, and a Sunday school picnic. 55

The fact that the major portion of the 1912 meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America was devoted to the subject

52 Ibid.


54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., p. 234.
of recreation in rural life indicates a growing, if belated, concern for this problem. Numerous examples of churches taking active roles in providing for the social life of the community were offered. The Reverend McNutt's work in Plainfield was considered in this respect and was perhaps representative of other rural institutional-like churches across the country. After coming to a dying rural church fresh from seminary, he sought to arouse interest among the young people by organizing a singing school. This, in turn, led to the formation of many singing groups in the church plus a good chorus for the choir. A girls' missionary circle with a largely social emphasis was organized as well as an athletic club for the boys. In addition to similar clubs for the adults, an annual homecoming and picnic was arranged and a series of extension lectures and entertainments were given throughout the winter months. Within twelve years the church had erected a new $10,000 edifice, the cost of which was immediately paid. The pastor's salary was raised forty per cent, and more than $6,000 was given within a five year period to outside benevolences. Practically everyone in the community belonged to this church.\footnote{Curtis, loc. cit., pp. 218-220.}

The church at McClellandtown, Pennsylvania, was primarily a farmer's church prior to 1900. Eventually, coal mines were opened in the area and the farmers sold their land. Taking their places were Slav and Bohemian laborers brought in to work the mines. In an effort to meet the changed conditions the minister of the church persuaded
his congregation to erect a neighborhood house. The two story structure contained a gymnasium, bathrooms, toilets, dressing rooms, and steam heating apparatus on the first floor. The upper level consisted of an auditorium and a stage. The building provided a place for meetings, programs, and other forms of recreational activities. The pastor called it his "crucible for melting Slavs and Bohemians and Americans together into Christian citizenship." 57

In the village of Redwood Falls, Minnesota, one church developed three boys' clubs which were Sunday school classes on Sunday and baseball, hockey, and skiing teams during the week. 58 The pastor of a country church in Wisconsin, who was once a halfback on the University of Wisconsin football team, organized and coached a team among the young men of his parish. 59 In Hanover, New Jersey, a church found that after organizing the recreative life of the countryside, the people, instead of going to a neighboring city for their holidays, "now stay at home because their holidays are celebrated in their own community." 60

Over a period of years, then, the rural church, like its counterpart in the city, found it necessary and even desirable to move farther and farther into the secular life of its people. It found that what

57 Eastman, loc. cit., p. 235.
58 Ibid., p. 236.
59 Ibid., pp. 235-6.
60 Ibid.
was good for the community was, more often than not, also good for the church. While the problems of poverty were not as pronounced in the country as in the city, and the need for true institutional churches was certainly not as great, there was a need for an improved social atmosphere to combat the loneliness, isolation, and drudgery of farm life.
CHAPTER IV
ATTITUDES TOWARD PLAY

It has been shown that during the half-century following the Civil War, the mainstream of Protestantism came to accept the relevance of life in this world. This acceptance also affected the attitude of the church toward play. The following discussion will explore the positions maintained by various segments of American Protestantism during the period under study.

Rise of Play in America

The second half of the nineteenth century brought with it an unprecedented growth of interest in sports in the United States. Prior to 1850, there were virtually no organized athletics as we know them today. By mid-century, however, the move toward urbanization had definitely begun in the East and many became concerned that the national health was deteriorating because of a general lack of exercise. At the same time, in the rural areas, many of the informal pastimes and work-play occasions such as barn raisings and husking-bees were disappearing with the changes in the farm economy.

2Ibid.
The decade before the Civil War brought the first real popular interest in sports. The organizing of baseball clubs in the 1840's and '50's was one sign of this trend. In addition, skating and rowing achieved widespread popularity shortly before the War.³

Following the Civil War, sports interest grew at an accelerated pace. Baseball, played in practically all the army camps and behind combat lines, was spread across the country. Croquet became a popular pastime for both men and women. Archery and lawn tennis, two additional imports from England, were widely played by the upper classes. During the 1860's and '70's roller skating came into vogue, first with the upper classes and then through the rest of society as public rinks were built around the country.

Perhaps the most spectacular craze of all, however, was bicycling, which came into its own in the 1880's and '90's. By 1887, there were more than a hundred thousand cyclists, many of whom were banded together in clubs in almost every city and town in the country.⁴

The popularity of intercollegiate football, despite its early control problems, and the organization of professional baseball leagues were indicative of a growing interest in team, spectator sports. The invention of two truly American games, basketball and volleyball, in the 1890's further encouraged this trend. By the beginning of the

³Ibid., pp. 184-187.
⁴Ibid., p. 194.
First World War, high school, college, and professional athletics were a definite part of American life.

Paralleling the growth of sports was the development of the physical education and recreation movements. Concerned with the physical well-being of the youth of an increasingly industrialized and urbanized nation, educators began to recognize a need for physical activity and exercise in the school program. Furthermore, the educational benefits of play were being acknowledged. By 1915, seven states had enacted legislation requiring physical education in the public schools. By the end of World War I, eight others had passed similar laws.5

The recreation and playground movements encouraged the development of play facilities by both public and private agencies. The beginning of the modern playground movement in America is generally traced to Boston, where, in the summer of 1885, two heaps of sand were placed in the Parmenter Street Chapel and West End Nursery by the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association.6 Over the next two decades, playgrounds were established in many cities, first by philanthropic organizations and then by municipal agencies. The movement gained tremendous impetus in 1906, with the founding of The Playground Association of America. The organization has continued


6 Ibid., p. 404.
to lead the way in promoting recreation in America to this day. It has been most instrumental in proclaiming the right of children and adults to play.

The development of a general acceptance of play in America was definitely not a dramatic, overnight phenomenon. The period of the industrial revolution rewarded those with ambition and drive; those who set their sights high and labored long and hard to arrive. It was the age of Horatio Alger; of "rags to riches." Fortunes were being made in steel, oil, railroads, and banking. The capacity for hard work and an obsessive drive to succeed brought more than one child of poverty to the heights of wealth and power. Not unlike early Puritan New England, industrial America was work-oriented. The atmosphere was obvious to those who visited here. Herbert Spencer, at the close of a visit in 1882, criticized the fast-paced work emphasis and the seeming inability of Americans to relax. In place of the "gospel of work," he advocated a "gospel of relaxation." It would appear rather ironic, then, that a growth in interest in play could take place at this time.

Actually, these very developments—urbanization and industrialization—have been cited by historians as influential factors in the growth of recreation during this period. A recurring theme throughout Dulles' work, America Learns to Play, emphasizes that the inability of newly arrived city dwellers to transfer the simple country pleasures

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to the new urban environment was manifested in a demand for entertainment to relieve monotony. For the urban masses prior to 1900, a dearth of parks and play facilities led to the growth of commercial amusements such as professional athletics, public dance halls, pool rooms, saloons, and skating rinks. In one form or another, the people were going to be amused. The need for play could no longer be sublimated. "The demand of the urban democracy for amusements to take the place of the rural pastimes they could no longer enjoy was too insistent." The organization which at first outwardly denied people the opportunity for play actually, then, served to make recreation even more attractive.

Another scholar has cited the rise of technology as the factor most responsible for the growth of sports following the Civil War:

The impact of invention had a decisive influence on the rise of sport in the latter half of the century. By 1900 sport had attained an unprecedented prominence in the daily lives of millions of Americans, and this remarkable development had been achieved in great part through the steamboat, the railroad, the telegraph, the penny press, the electric light, the streetcar, the camera, the bicycle, the automobile, and the mass production of sporting goods.9

Each of these developments influenced sport in one or more ways.

The new methods of transportation not only made travel to and from

8 Dulles, loc. cit., p. 98.

athletic events easier for both spectators and participants, but also created new sports themselves—steamboat, bicycle, and auto racing, to name a few. The advances in communication made the transmitting of sports news easier and faster. The mass production of sporting goods made participation less expensive for the masses.

This same technology and industrialization also began to afford the workers more leisure time to devote to recreation. Ever so slowly, the average work week was shortened. In 1860, the average work week for those employed in non-agricultural industries was 63.3 hours. By 1910, that figure had been reduced to 50.3 hours. During the same period, the work week for agricultural workers decreased from 71 to 65 hours. Where once only the rich might have had time to take part in organized sport, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the laboring classes too, could devote time to such pleasurable pursuits. Activities which had earlier been the private domain of the upper classes—tennis, croquet, archery—were eventually taken up by the masses.

Another factor influencing the growth of the play movement was the support given by educational leaders of the day. G. Stanley Hall, John Dewey, and others began to preach the educational value of play. While the contributions of exercise to physical well-being had been known for some time, little attention had been given to the intellectual

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11 Dulles, loc. cit., Chap. XI.
and character building possibilities of recreation and physical education. By the end of the nineteenth century, E. A. Kirkpatrick, professor at the State Normal School at Fitchburg, Massachusetts, could speak of the important role of play in the education of children and as an agent for social reform. In 1907, Hall stated the position of educational developmentalism as follows, "play is the best kind of education, because it practices powers of mind and body which, in our highly specialized civilization, would never otherwise have a chance to develop." According to Van Dalen, Mitchell, and Bennett, "This justification for play no longer made it necessary to seek financial support for playgrounds wholly on the basis of preventing juvenile delinquency or keeping children off busy streets."

The growing acceptance of play by Americans in general following the Civil War definitely influenced Protestant attitudes. On the other hand, it is fair to assume that the church, while experiencing internal change, in turn exerted some influence on the play movement itself. This interaction becomes apparent as one examines the evolving attitudes of Protestantism concerning play.

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13 G. Stanley Hall, "Play and Dancing for Adolescents," The Independent LXII (February 11, 1907), pp. 355, 6.

Protestant Attitudes Toward Play

Immigrant Groups

By 1865, there were few, if any, denominations wholly condemna-
tory in their views of play. Many churchmen, both clergy and lay, were beginning to appreciate the need of man for a certain amount of pleasure and relaxation in his life. There were, however, a number of rather pietistic groups that narrowly circumscribed the acceptable limits of participation for their members. Generally speaking, these denominations served rural and quite often immigrant populations and were quite literal in their interpretation of "worldliness."

Of these groups, the Mennonites were among the most conservative. Convinced of the evilness of the world, these industrious but humble people sought a life apart where they might "labor in the vineyard of the Lord." Accustomed to hard work, they were generally suspicious and often antagonistic toward play and recreation until the turn of the century. Since that time they have continued to concern themselves with determining the propriety of various recreational activities. Between 1865 and 1955 "more than 120 conference resolutions defining and condemning worldly amusements have been passed by the various (old) Mennonite district conferences."

Charles Evan Oswald, in his investigation of sports participation

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in the Mennonite Church, cites three reasons why this group did not go along with the recreational movement of late nineteenth century America. First of all, "her rural setting did not confront her with the pressures of urbanization and industrialization."\(^{16}\) That is, unlike the urban churches which were dramatically forced to recognize the need for recreational outlets, the rural Mennonites were perhaps late in recognizing the values of play. Second, "her isolated setting divorced her from a close contact with society about her."\(^{17}\) The changing winds of American life were too distant to bear much influence.

The third and strongest reason for not following the recreational movement, according to Oswald, "was her religious stand on keeping separated from the ways of the world."\(^{18}\) One leading Mennonite spokesman in the early twentieth century explained this principle of nonconformity as meaning

\begin{quote}
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a scriptural doctrine requiring separation between the Church and the world. Believers having accepted Christ as their personal Saviour have thereby renounced their former adherence to the world with its sinful lusts and follies and are therefore not to be conformed to the world in business methods, in political affiliations,
\end{quote}
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\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
in methods of living, in dress, etc., their attitude being described in the language of inspiration as "unspotted from the world."

This doctrine of nonconformity to the world tended to place Mennonites in opposition to those things accepted by the rest of society. When recreational pursuits became popular in America, they took a vigorous stand against the movement. Illustrative of this position was the stand taken on croquet games and ten-pin-alley rolling by the Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1885:

Inasmuch as these forms of worldly amusements have become so prevalent should we not protest against members indulging in them or allowing them among them? Decided that we enter our protest against both games.

The following year, during a Mennonite regional church conference the following resolution was passed:

Since the Christian societies in general, and some of our own people have of late years allowed themselves to be enticed into places of amusements where the tastes of the most sinful and ungodly are gratified and pleased—such as the theater, circus, etc.—we feel it our duty to protest against the practice of attending the same.

The fairs annually held in nearly all parts of the country are also attended by such evils that we cannot think our members excusable in

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20 Oswald, loc. cit.

attending them. The gambling indulged in and supported by the fair, the abuse of the dumb brute in racing, the danger of the life of the riders, and the general immoral influence exerted in various ways, make it obligatory upon us to abstain from spending our time and money at the fair.

Picnics, some of which are covered with a pretense that they are under Christian supervision, we also consider hurtful to Christian principles and to be avoided. One reason is that they usually give occasion for great display of worldliness and vanity in fashionable clothing with which the children and young people are decked for the occasion, even to the extent of scanting the bread of poor children that are not sufficiently supplied with food. It is the sense of this conference that it is against the spirit, teaching and practice of Christianity as understood by the Mennonite Church to attend theaters, circuses, fairs, picnics, and other like places of amusement and worldly entertainment.22

In 1907, a church leader wrote in the Gospel Witness:

Now how about the ball game? It is something which is highly esteemed by worldly men and they will gather for miles around to see the game and to have their lusts and passions excited. Is it pleasing to God? It certainly cannot be pleasing to Him because He plainly says that those things which the world esteems highly are an abomination to Him.23

All amusements, even those considered innocent, could be labeled suspect if they led to excess and to too great concern for pleasure.

22Record of the Mennonite Conference of Missouri, Iowa and Eastern Kansas, Louisiana, Texas, North Dakota, and Minnesota, held in Missouri, Sept. 21, 1886, (located in the Goshen College Archives of Goshen, Indiana), p. 7. As quoted in Oswald, pp. 18, 19.

The Virginia Mennonite Conference minutes of August, 1861, state:

This conference being aware that the so-called innocent amusements indulged in by the young at apple-cuttings and butter-boilings, are indulged in to excess. Hence, we earnestly recommend that parents suppress these things as much as possible.24

In 1912, an article in the Gospel Herald echoed similar sentiments:

If we are crucified to the world and the world to us these things will have no charm for us. The more innocent the amusement seems to be the more dangerous to indulge in. Games and Sunday newspapers are very dangerous in the home. The younger generations are being led by our influence. Amusements to draw the children into the Sunday school are dangerous and should be avoided. Many of the descendants of the Mennonites have already been lost to the Church through so-called innocent amusements.25

In addition to the stand against conformity to the world, many individuals considered time devoted to recreational pursuits as "time unprofitably spent."26 One lay-woman expressed it in the following manner:

Surely we can spend our valuable time in other things more profitable. Think of the time

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26Oswald, loc. cit., p. 27.
that is spent in getting up worldly amusements. That of itself is enough to cause us to raise our voices against them.

God has given us a short lifetime to work for Him. If we spend every moment of our lives in doing good, we are still unprofitable servants. If we waste the precious time allotted unto us, ah, what then?

I often hear people speaking of games or plays, as being good pastimes. Is it possible that they must have something of that nature to pass their valuable time? Has God given them more time than He wants consecrated to His service? Surely not.27

On the other hand, all the pleasure needed by man could be gained by devoting oneself to the work of the Lord. As stated by one writer, "Christian joy is the natural fruit of DUTY well performed."28

In spite of the strong feelings of Mennonites against play at this time, there was some evidence of a softening of attitudes. Oswald cites the religious awakening that was taking place within the Mennonite Church at the turn of the century plus a higher standard of living, increased education, the automobile and a movement toward urban centers as factors which "markedly influenced and changed the church's attitude towards and practice of recreation."29


29Oswald, op. cit., p. 24. The religious awakening in the Mennonite Church resulted in the adoption of new methods of work such as Sunday schools, evangelism, missions, Bible conferences, young people's meetings, education and publication.
The Mennonite colleges aided in effecting this change in attitude. Physical culture classes were conducted at Elkhart Institute (later, Goshen College) in 1899. The program included work with Indian clubs, dumbbells, and wands. The exercises were to produce "graceful movement, as well as relaxation from mental strain."^30

Aside from this there was no systematic physical education program until the year 1919-20.31 Intramural and a limited extramural program of athletics was, however, conducted by the student-controlled Athletic Association from 1900 to 1924. Thereafter, these programs were delegated to a faculty committee.32 A similar student athletic association conducted an intramural program at Hesston College, Hesston, Kansas, as early as 1910. The number of games played against other colleges has always been rigidly controlled at these institutions by the Mennonite Board of Education.33

While the majority of the Mennonite Church leaders were still strongly opposed to most forms of amusement, Oswald has cited evidence that the young people were not to be continuously denied the right to play. One man recalled the games of his youth:

When I was in my teens (1912-17) and interested in sports there were no such things as highly organized well regulated games with rules based on cumulative experience. What

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31 Ibid., p. 41.
32 Ibid., p. 50.
33 Ibid., p. 83.
games were played were more or less loosely 
thrown together and usually very highly indi­
vidualized.

The most highly organized game we played 
for many years was played with a ball made of 
yarn and a bat usually a broom stick or a 
short limb—usually round—a little heavier. 
It was known as "Town" ball. Where it got its 
name I do not know unless it originally came 
from town and gradually invaded the country. 
Anyhow we always had two sides—not a certain 
number on each side—chosen by two members of 
the gang as it happened to come together in 
some field or favorable place for a "game." 
The ball was made of old yarn taken from worn 
out woolen stockings. They were usually made 
by mother or grandmother as a part of the pro­
cess of unravelling her old partially worn 
knit woolen stockings or sweaters. It was lots of 
fun, but often ended in a brawl as someone was 
accused of doing something unethical. There was 
a pitcher and a catcher. A ball caught on the 
fly or on the first bounce behind the bat or in 
the field constituted an out, also a ball cross­
ing between the runner and the base he was run­
mimg to constituted an out as well as a hit by 
the ball while running. There were no men on 
bases to catch a ball thrown to him and touch­
ing the player—less scientific. As I said 
before this was the most highly organized game 
we played . . . It seems the games frowned upon 
by the church and conservative parents were the 
more highly organized like Town ball which 
"smacked" of worldly baseball. It was taboo 
especially on Sunday.\textsuperscript{34, 35}

Baseball, in spite of the frowns of the clergy, was played by

\textsuperscript{34}Letter from Walter E. Oswald (Goshen, Indiana; December, 

\textsuperscript{35}Organized sports were indeed taboo in many Mennonite communi­
ties where, as Oswald relates, high school students had to choose 
between belonging to the school basketball team and maintaining church 
membership. See Oswald, pp. 31, 32.
the young people of many communities. One church member, looking back on the trials of such participation, writes:

As a youth I was taken to task by my home minister for playing baseball against a team from a neighboring church. I asked him what activity we could engage in and he told me, "Well, there are singing and wakes" (the sitting up of persons with a dead body). Some of us thought that the latter was a bit too irregular for a satisfactory program of recreation.36

According to one Mennonite scholar, Melvin Gingerich, church members did find frequent occasions to place more than usual emphasis upon social activity. "Weddings, singings . . ., picnics, holiday programs, visits by distant friends or relatives, traveling, public sales, family reunions, brotherhood gatherings, and other events have brought Mennonites together where they have given expression to both their serious and their carefree attitudes in a psychologically satisfying manner."37

Throughout the period under investigation, however, the ministerial leadership of the Mennonites remained generally hostile towards games and athletics. Oswald has attributed this strong opposition towards play partially to "a reaction against the abuses of recreations and sport by society."38 However, he feels that "by and large it was a

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37 Gingerich, loc. cit., p. 113.

38 Oswald, loc. cit., p. 32.
direct carry over from the strong Puritanical influences of the devil.\textsuperscript{39}

On the other hand, it is highly evident from the reports cited that secular recreational influences were beginning to affect the attitudes of the younger generation. That this presented conflict between the youth and the older generation would appear to be obvious. In the words of Oswald, the first three decades of the twentieth century were "years of recreational turmoil in the Mennonite Church."\textsuperscript{40}

The pietism of some immigrant churches was in part a reaction against the abuses of the church-state relationship in their homelands. In Sweden, where the Lutheran Church and the State were united, "church discipline was impossible and those notorious for impiety and infidelity had access to the privileges of the Church of God quite as well as the believers."\textsuperscript{41} In addition, many of the lower and middle class immigrants carried a distaste for the State Church in Sweden because of the form, ritual, and hierarchy which it entailed.\textsuperscript{42} Like the early Puritans of England and America, many people came to associate these features with the upper classes. This feeling was then transferred to include all social behavior—including love of pleasure—normally ascribed to the wealthy and ruling groups.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., pp. 32, 33.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 33.
\textsuperscript{41}Oscar N. Olson, \textit{The Augustana Lutheran Church in America}, (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Book Concern, 1950), p. 314.
Some historians have attributed the social conservatism of many immigrant clergymen to the frequent licentiousness of their people in a new land dedicated to individual freedom. One such scholar has written:

Churchmen . . . often discovered that the lives of immigrants were not always blessed by the gracious practice of new freedoms in America. The quest for liberty in a new land frequently lapsed into license. Drunkenness and moral turpitude were inviting retreats from the harsh realities of hard work and lonely lives. In such an environment some religious leaders believed that a strict Puritanical code of moral behavior was the proper antidote to counteract immorality and dissipation so prevalent among their spiritual charges.43

Many pastors, while perhaps normally quite liberal in their social views, undoubtedly often felt compelled to exercise more Puritanical restraint on their people because of these excesses. Hansen comments upon this situation in his study of The Immigrant in American History:

When the first clergy man of the faith which these foreigners had professed at home appeared upon the scene, his work was cut out for him. To baptize and confirm was not so important as to conduct a clean-up campaign. Irrespective of his past inclinations, he was forced to adopt a program of reform and forbid pastimes and pleasures that the ecclesiastical rules of his early training had condoned. Thus the immigrant church was started upon a career of Puritanism which, at first, had absolutely no connection with the saints at Boston, the fountainhead from which all such American tendencies are supposed to flow.44

43 Ibid., p. 45.
In any event, many clergymen, after arriving in the United States, sought to tighten the rules for church membership by instituting codes of social behavior. Drunkeness, card playing, dancing, and theater-attendance were the most serious and frequent offences in the eyes of the Scandinavian clergy. The pastor of the Swedish Lutheran Church in Red Wing, Minnesota, was thoroughly upset by the ungodly element in his congregation which interfered with the religious life of the church. Despairingly he wrote, "Drunkeness, card playing, and dancing are daily occurrences. Now at Christmas they intend to arrange a ball. It is very discouraging. In a word, it is evident that Satan is loose in every corner." In an effort to counteract this problem, he initiated, in 1857, a policy of refusing communion to those who continued "the use of whiskey, card playing and such course sins." A pastor in Galesburg, Illinois, likewise threatened to refuse communion to members who, in spite of his warnings and without his knowledge, attended a Christmas ball. The Reverend Lars Paul Esbjorn, the first ordained Lutheran pastor to serve the Swedish immigrants, warned in 1857, that one should try to differentiate between drinkers and dancers before refusing communion to them all. While "Scripture plainly states that drinkers, etc., shall not inherit the kingdom of

45 Olson, op. cit., p. 316.
46 Ibid., p. 317.
47 Ibid., pp. 317, 8.
God; . . . I do not find such a judgment on dancers.  His position was not based upon a fondness for such activities however. He continues:

Understand me rightly. I would neither defend nor encourage the worldly dance, but as conditions are among our people we must deal with the question reasonable and attack it only as a temptation and occasion for frivolity, recklessness and unchastity, and not label it as in itself a sin.

The latter was definitely not a majority opinion among the clergy of the Swedish community in America. T. N. Hasselquist, one of the founders of the Augustana Synod, "fought Materialism, declared that theaters were evil, tobacco a vice, dancing wicked." Furthermore, "all true friends of the Word were warned against the 'skating rinks,' which were put in the same class with the theater and the dance hall." In 1868, the Augustana Synod officially declared, "Card playing, dance, theater, and the lodge are contrary to the Word of God and true Christianity and the Synod admonishes its pastors to fight with the Sword of God's Word against these efforts to unite Christ and Belial."

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Ibid., p. 318.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Minutes, Augustana Synod, 1868, p. 25, quoted in Olson, loc. cit., p. 319.
Such a stand, while seemingly acceptable to most of the clergy and the rural members of the Synod, was certainly not altogether favorable to the intellectual and urban elements. In response to the above action, Dr. L. Bing, professor at Lund, Sweden, wrote to Pastor Hasselquist in 1869:

I believe that this resolution, expressed without qualifications, is contrary both to God's Word and the Lutheran confession. The Word of God has said nothing about these things that they in and by themselves are sin. By these remarks I do not want to defend a vain and carnal spirit, but I want the principle to be kept clear.53

Only one year earlier, Pastor Hasselquist had written of the problems encountered in organizing a congregation in New York City. While the Swedish people of the city wanted a church, they were not in agreement with the clergy on the amusement question. Hasselquist wrote:

They thought our pastors too pietistic. We have not attempted to introduce strict church discipline because there must first be something that can discipline and can be disciplined, before this is possible; but they understood from our sermons and otherwise that we did not consider it right to join Holy Communion with 'drinking, dancing and theater going.'54

In spite of such deviations, the official position of the Synod remained unchanged. "As the heirs of a pietistic tradition, the rank

53 Olson, op. cit.
and file of Augustana clergy and laity traditionally looked upon dancing as an evil which true Christians must eschew.  

Although feeble attempts were occasionally made to change this position, "the Church maintained an attitude of uncompromising opposition to dancing until after World War II."  

The Scandinavian Lutherans were not the only immigrant religious groups opposed to particular forms of popular amusement and recreation. The attitude of the Christian Reformed Church (Dutch) was consistently antagonistic to theater attendance, card playing, and dancing. It was not until 1928, however, that an official stand was taken against them.  

The Evangelical Church, a largely German denomination centered in the rural areas of Pennsylvania and the Midwest possessed similar views. While no firm rule appears to have been in existence, leaders of the church did speak out concerning the amusements which could or could not be rightly enjoyed by Christians. Roller skating, which had become very popular by 1885, was roundly condemned as "wasting the time, ruinous to the health and destructive to the soul."  

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56 Ibid.  
people particularly, were warned by many annual conferences across the country of the evil of roller skating rinks.\(^5^9\)

The Evangelical Church leaders were also alarmed at "the increasing gaiety and frivolity of the amusements and recreation of the times, especially to festivals in the churches."\(^6^0\) The General Conference of 1867, did, however, allow that picnics, excursions and similar festivities might be excusable if properly religiously guarded and conducted.\(^6^1\) Albright cites this legislation as rather remarkable because of a negative attitude toward the entire subject expressed in the episcopal message that year.\(^6^2\) Church sociables continued to reap scorn during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. "Official actions and private opinions expressed in printed articles condemned socials with games, plays and charades, as silly nonsense and as destroyers of the spiritual life."\(^6^3\)

This work-oriented attitude, reminiscent of the New England Puritan period, indicates a basic distrust of play, at least for adults. It calls man from his work and distracts his mind from heaven. One writer opposed the waste of time at parties on the grounds that the entertainments engaged in were "unworthy of the attention of an intellectual,\(^6^9\)

\(^{59}\)Ibid.

\(^{60}\)Ibid., p. 303.

\(^{61}\)Ibid.

\(^{62}\)Ibid.

\(^{63}\)Ibid., p. 311.
much less an immortal being. 64 Another writer saw no need for special "socials" in the church since sociability could be fostered within the regular services. He stated his position accordingly:

We by no means denounce the development of the social element in a congregation for it is but in keeping with the very nature of a state of grace in Christ Jesus; but this social element has ample room for its widest exercise in connection with the regular services of the church, and in other natural channels, if the occasion is only properly improved. Pure Christian sociability waits not for special "socials" but shows itself in every day life, and whenever it comes in contact with those who seem to need its ministry. 65

Not all within the Evangelical Church looked upon play as a waste of time, however. There were perhaps others who agreed with the reasoning of an article which appeared in The Evangelical Messenger in 1870:

What we need at this moment is more home amusements, home training and culture; and until fathers and mothers can be convinced of the necessity for these requisites, and urged to the adoption of them, the carnival of dissipation and crime will not abate, the young will go astray as they are now doing, and people will hold up their hands in horror at the degeneracy of the age. The youth of the United States go to perdition more frequently from neglect at home than from any other cause . . . . We venture to assert that if half the parents in the United States would give their attention, for the next ten years, to home amusements for their children—amusements which

64 The Evangelical Messenger, (1871), p. 90, quoted in Albright, loc. cit., p. 303.
should involve healthful, rational enjoyment—the coming generation would be
stronger men and women than those of any preceding generation.\textsuperscript{66}

As in other religious groups, there was no unanimity of opinion
within the Evangelical Church arrayed against play. The frequent
outbursts of leaders against such activities undoubtedly indicate a
reaction to a growing liberality among the laity. It is not at all
extravagant to assume that the growth in popularity of sports and
recreation among the general population affected the immigrant denomi-
nations as they became less isolated physically and culturally.

Amusement Legislation in Other Groups

The immigrant churches, however conservative, were not alone
in their antagonism to many forms of "popular amusement." Many in
the so-called "established" American denominations frowned upon such
worldly activities as dancing, card playing, and attendance at the
theater and circus. Indeed, some of these denominations deemed it
necessary to legislate against them.

The Presbyterian Church saw a need to reaffirm its 1843 resolu-
tion against dancing in 1867 and again in 1876.\textsuperscript{67} (See Chapter 2,
p. 26) This particular resolution called for "the faithful and

\textsuperscript{66} The Evangelical Messenger, (1870), p. 234, quoted in Albright, p. 303.

\textsuperscript{67} Digest of the Acts and Deliverances of the General Assembly
of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, (Phila-
judicious exercise of discipline on the part of Church Sessions when any of the members of their churches have been guilty." Card playing was placed in a similarly low state by the Presbyterians. The General Assembly of 1865 stated:

In respect to "the custom of fashionable card-playing," . . . represented as being countenanced in many of our Christian households, and also "participated in by members of our churches," this Assembly would affectionately exhort all the members of the Presbyterian Church to practice the most careful watchfulness in avoiding all recreations and amusements, . . . which are calculated to impair spirituality, lessen Christian influence or bring discredit upon their profession as members of the Church of Christ. 69

Interestingly, members are here "affectionately exhorted" rather than warned of discipline for participation. It would perhaps seem that the sin of card-playing was not considered as serious as dancing.

In 1872, the Methodist Church, at its General Conference, passed a resolution banning games of chance, dancing, theater-attendance, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties or balls, and patronizing dancing schools. 70 During the first one hundred years of Methodism there was no other rule concerning popular amusements than that given by the founder, John Wesley, against "the taking such diversions

68 Ibid., p. 524.
69 Ibid., p. 526.
as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus." No attempt had been made to specify exactly which activities were to be avoided. Up to a point, each member had been free to choose according to his own conscience. This, however, had not deterred many local ministers from imposing discipline upon those whose actions offended their own sense of propriety. The resolution of 1872 did, then, at least impose the same restrictions on all.

**General Objections to Certain Activities**

While only a few denominations took official disciplinary stands against particular recreational activities and amusements, many of the leaders of the other major bodies did agree that pursuits such as dancing, horse racing, card-playing, theater-attendance, professional athletics, and Sunday recreation were not desirable. Some felt the activities themselves were evil. Others feared that what might be innocent enough in itself could too easily be carried to excess. This reasoning was often applied to social dancing. Allied with this feeling was the concept of "thy brother's keeper." Still others, not unlike the Mennonites, based their opinions on the principle of non-conformity to the world. Desecration of the sabbath and a total loss of spirituality was feared as a result of Sunday recreation. Each of these positions was expressed in the writings and practices of churchmen.

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1. Fear of excess

The Reverend W. DeLoss Love, a Congregational minister, was one who advocated abstinence from those activities which easily led to excess. He wrote: "Those amusements should be discarded whose history has in general been marked by injurious excitement and excess." Card playing was attacked because, "it has a natural affiliation for something more than vivacity, for flaming excitement, for long and late hours, for gambling." The billiard saloons were condemned for "perverting and giving a mischievous growth to the feelings and tastes of many who frequent them." Furthermore, it was not "good, open-air, athletic exercise." At the same time it developed a passion for skill that tempted people to waste time and money and offered inducements to gambling and drinking. Horse racing was vaguely condemned for "cultivating an unhealthy excitement and passion for gambling with large numbers, and is otherwise mis-educating the sensibilities."

Reverend Love, however, reserved his strongest condemnation for dancing. Its tendency to excess and ability to pervert and degrade

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73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., pp. 2h0, 2h1.
75. Ibid., p. 2h1.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
the sensibilities of man made dancing totally unacceptable and beyond redemption. He wrote:

Its [dancing] high excitement will often break in upon the hours of sleep, and other laws of health. Nothing wholly innocent and harmless will so persistently commit such offences against human welfare. Injurious excitement and excess have marked its history. The knowledge that long dancing at a time, and at late hours, and in heated and close rooms, is attended with the great danger of colds and sickness, has never been sufficient to keep this amusement within due control. It has, therefore, an inherent tendency to excess, and a mis-education of the sensibilities. For any to take it in hand, thinking that they are going to reform it for all mankind, were preposterous. It is not susceptible of conversion. The less objectionable dances are likely to lead to the impure, a large portion of the low and vile will indulge in the practice with impure feelings, on purpose to gratify them, and there is something in the amusement itself to gratify their base desires and designs. With many it terribly perverts and degrades the sensibilities.78

With qualifications, a similarly dim view of social dancing was held by the relatively liberal Washington Gladden. The Congregational leader of the "social gospel" differentiated, however, between round and square dancing. Referring to the former, he wrote, "There can be no doubt that the round dances now in practice in society are essentially wrong. The waltzes and polkas and all that variety are a moral abomination."79 On the other hand, "the simple square dances, in

78 Ibid., p. 240.

private houses, where the company is select—if they do not occupy the whole evening, but are merely resorted to as one of the pastimes by which the evening may be made to pass pleasantly—are in no way sinful, but excellent, and ought to be allowed and encouraged by Christian people."\(^{80}\) Even in his acceptance of square dancing Gladden implied concern for the danger of excess. Late hours and continuous dancing and other associated evils are viewed as excesses which are all too common to many dancing parties and balls. He stated:

\[\ldots\] the evil of these balls and parties is not in the dancing (unless indeed the indecent dances already mentioned are admitted), but in the excesses and abuses connected with them; in the late hours, the gormandizing, and the drinking, and the pro­miscuous society.\(^{81}\)

Another Congregational minister felt that while dancing, as a pure pastime, might be acceptable in a properly controlled setting, it would undoubtedly lose most of its appeal when divorced from its notorious associations. Elaborating, he writes:

But dancing, minus late hours (ruinous to health), expensive fashionable dresses, champagne and ices, and the unnatural and un­beautiful whirl of the waltz (of kindred extravagances), would, I fear, be thought to have lost all its charms.\(^{82}\)

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\(^{80}\) Ibid.

\(^{81}\) Ibid.

Undoubtedly, one of the overriding considerations of many churchmen regarding social dancing was the fear of encouraging sexual promiscuity. This was perhaps the basic rationale of many for differentiating between square and round dancing, the obvious culprit being the embrace required in the latter. The Reverend T. T. Eaton, a Baptist minister from Louisville, Kentucky, was most certainly not alone when he voiced his opposition to any embracing between men and women "except in the closest relationship."  

Dr. Howard Crosby, pastor of the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, admitted that he saw no sin in dancing itself. However, he did find sin in certain forms of dancing, notably the round dances because of the necessity of the public embrace. While determining that square dances were suitably modest, he could make no such claim for those such as the waltz and the polka. He was particularly shocked by those parents who allowed their children to engage in such activities. Despairingly he wrote:

> It is a fearful thing that fashion has so perverted the sense of Christian parents as to allow this enormity to be practiced in their houses and by their children, or else to make them guilty of the grievous inconsistency of forbidding it to their children while furnishing it for the children of others. The foundation for the vast amount of domestic crime which startles us so often in its public out-croppings, was laid when parents allowed the sacredness of their...

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daughter's persons and the purity of their maiden instincts to be rudely shocked in the waltz.84

In answering a question submitted by a reader concerning the propriety of round dancing at church fairs, an editor of one religious journal stated:

We do not think a Christian should participate in the "round" dance at a church fair or elsewhere. It is a demoralizing amusement, and should be denounced by clergy in and out of the pulpit. The Chief of Police of New York asserts that three-fourths of the abandoned girls in New York were ruined through dancing.85

The fear of excess, then, was a major factor in the opposition of many to the amusements and recreational pursuits of the day. Dancing was related to sexual promiscuity, late hours, and wild parties. Card playing, horse racing and billiards were in many minds associated solely with gambling and unwholesome commercial establishments. To those most violently opposed to those activities, nothing short of total abstinence would suffice. According to this view, the majority of men would be unable to limit their participation in such pursuits and therefore, excess was inevitable.


85 "Queries and Answers; Round Dancing Ruins Girls," The Preacher and Homiletic Monthly, VI (October, 1881), p. 64.
2. Thy brother's keeper

Closely associated with the fear of excess was the view that each man has a responsibility for the moral salvation of others. While recognizing the fact that there did exist those individuals who could participate in the condemned activities without personal moral debilitation, the conservative view held that such participation ignored one's responsibility for exhibiting Christian example. In short, the actions of one man with a high degree of self-control might very well be the cause of a weaker man's fall. The former's participation, furthermore, tended to strengthen and perhaps even sanction all aspects, acceptable or not, of the pursuit. Such was the reasoning of Quaker, Jonathan Dymond in an 1890 opinion concerned with horse racing:

The turf is a strong-hold of gambling; and therefore, an efficient cause of misery and wickedness. It is an amusement of almost unmingled evil; but upon whom is the evil chargeable? Upon the fifty or one hundred persons only who bring horses or make bets? No. Every man participates who attends the course. Everyone, therefore, who is present, must take his share of the mischief and the responsibility.86

The good Reverend Love, whose fear of excess has been cited previously, was also concerned lest one man's pleasure be another's pain. Attacking card playing, dancing, billiards, and horse racing as being beyond reform, he pessimistically wrote:

Even though some may practice them safely, if others are thereby stumbled and made weak,
it should be enough to set them aside. . . . set all bounds of propriety, and with many it will soon break over into dissipation and other evils. The question is not whether the strong and watchful can hold it within bounds, but whether the mass of men will. We are not to live unto ourselves alone. Things go in this world by their tendencies, their natural proclivities; and he who by his example aids a gravitation to evil, does a wrong to his fellowmen, and an act displeasing to God.87

A similar position was taken by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1869:

Christian liberty in things indifferent is . . . distinctly recognized, but it is bounded and limited by a higher law. We must not abuse our liberty to the offense of our brethren. We must bridle our knowledge with charity. We are bidden to beware how we tamper with the sanctities of a brother's conscience, and to beware how we trifle with the necessities of a brother's weakness. The law of conscience and law of love are far more sacred and more precious and more to be regarded than the law of liberty. . . . To assert independence at the expense of wounding a brother's conscience is "to sin against Christ." It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth. . . . amusements whose tendencies are inherently and almost inevitable to excess, where the weak and the unstable may stumble and perish, and against which there is a general Christian conscience, are decisively condemned by this plain Word of God.88

87Love, loc. cit.
Such views did not evidence a high degree of faith in man to properly control his own destiny. Man is portrayed as a weak-willed being, unable to keep himself from falling victim to his own passions.

3. Worldliness

Perhaps the greatest fear of those who questioned many recreational pursuits was that it would lead people away from spirituality in an endless round of pleasure seeking. Once given a taste of pleasure through games and dance, the masses would turn their primary attention from the church as they sought to fulfill an insatiable desire for amusement. Such a view implies a concept of a church-world dichotomy. Such a view was voiced by the Reverend G. Campbell Morgan, one of the best-known Congregational ministers of both England and America in the early twentieth century. Attempting to define worldliness in one of the sermons he delivered during his thirteen year tenure at London's Westminster Chapel, he stated: "Worldliness is life lived in the dust to the forgetfulness of Deity, life that has no sense of the infinite and eternal . . ." Elaborating, he continues:

Now I see how the world is an opposing force to religion. When it so engrosses my thoughts and attention as to make me unmindful of spiritual things, when it so obtrudes itself on my attention as to capture all my thinking and make me forget God, then it opposes religion.89

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Those who argued against participation in many amusement activities because of the tendency toward worldliness actually did so because of a fear of over-indulgence or excess as discussed previously. While all things of the world could be misused in this manner, however, there were some that were more "worldly" than others. Perhaps not surprisingly, these included dancing, card playing, billiards and horse-racing. The fact that the allegedly baser elements of society (as judged by many churchmen) frequently participated in these pastimes undoubtedly influenced many negative attitudes. The location of many of these activities, therefore, was a source of concern for many. Public dance halls and amusement parks came in for a large measure of criticism. Young people were encouraged by church leaders to refrain from attending such institutions. Typical of the feeling was that expressed by one writer representing the General Synod of the Lutheran Church:

Our public amusement parks must come in for no small share of the blame for the corruption of morals. The public dancing platform and the vaudeville are schools of vice which have started thousands on the downward course to destruction. "Where the carcass is, there the eagles are gathered." Men flock where they find what their sinful hearts desire, and "evil communications corrupt good manners."90

The Reverend G. U. Wenner, a Lutheran pastor, summed up the position of his own church when he stated: "In our congregation it

is well understood that our young people must not be seen at places of amusement where the world's people meet."91

One view held that while evil and good in amusements is largely determined by the intent of the individual, certain activities do tend to harden one and turn one away from Christianity and therefore can indeed be called evil. At the same time, the argument continued, the resulting evil is made possible by one's predisposition to it, often unknown to a person's conscious being. In short, certain activities bring out the worst in man. In support of this position, one Congregational churchman wrote:

Anything whereby we become susceptible to unholy impressions reveals a wrong intention, however secret or subtle, and as this intention strengthens itself by its exercise, every exercise which reveals it should cease. Whether balls, theatres, card-playing, etc., are proper amusements, will therefore at once be answered if we notice whether they are pursued with a proper intention, and if there be any doubt respecting this, it can be solved by noticing whether there is thus displayed an increasing zest, or a growing aversion to religious things.92

Supporting this position, the Reverend Love wrote, "Those amusements have a pernicious effect on the sensibilities that unfit the

91 G. U. Wenner, "The Care of the Young of the Church," The Quarterly Review of the Evangelical Lutheran Church VI (July, 1876), p. 441.

mind for the serious engagements and religious services of a Christian life."\textsuperscript{93} The frivolity of dancing and card-playing was blamed for keeping young people from evening prayer services and, eventually, Sunday worship.\textsuperscript{94} Games of chance and feats of skill were similarly worldly evils because of the serious appeal to Divine providence in the casting of lots.\textsuperscript{95} Love feared that such activity tended "to profane and dissipate [sic] the reverential feeling that appeals to God for his [sic] guidance in all the minutiae of life."\textsuperscript{96} In 1891, the Presbyterian General Assembly found card playing and all other games of chance to be in themselves sinful since men were forced to call on God for luck. The statement concluded:

As a matter of fact or reality there is no such thing as chance. In the place of what men call chance is the living God, omnipresent and omniscient. An appeal to God without serious cause is profane. . . .

The standard by which right and wrong are determined is the moral law of God. Whether a responsible creature's act is right or not is to be determined by his real relations to God in the act. His relation to God exists. He refers to the nonentity chance for decision, a matter which God only can and does determine. Hence his appeal proves to be an appeal to God,

\textsuperscript{93}\textit{Love, loc. cit.}, pp. 241, 242.
\textsuperscript{94}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{95}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 243, 244.
\textsuperscript{96}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 244.
without proper cause is profane.97

This same Presbyterian body, not unlike the Mennonites, summed up the proper relation which Christians should sustain to the world in the statement, "Be not conformed to this world." Elaborating on this, the report continues:

The separation involved in non-conformity is from worldliness— from the worldly spirit. It is a demand that the whole tone, and bent, and current, and spirit of the Christian life shall be different from that of the worldly life— so different that it shall be manifest to the world that the people of God are pilgrims and strangers on the earth; that they are walking with God; that they are a peculiar people, called out of the world while still remaining in it; God's witnesses; living epistles; the salt of the earth; distinctive, chosen, set apart, recognizable everywhere as having been with Jesus, and as holy in all manner of conversation. Let Christians apply to their lives this one central, prominent, Gospel idea of non-conformity, let them press it on all their conduct until they give unmistakable exhibition of the spirit of these unmistakable words of Christ and the apostles, and it will go very far to settle this whole question of rational or irrational amusements.98

A final argument against the worldliness of many amusement activities alluded to the sacredness of time and the trust man has to use it wisely and profitably. Proponents of this view maintained that the presence of misery and unrest in the world made it incumbent for all Christians to devote all of their energies to the task of

98 Ibid., pp. 527, 528.
alleviating these conditions. There was no time available for the
self-gratification of play. Addressing himself to this subject, one
Quaker wrote:

As to the expenditures of time and money,
it will be said that a man has a right to employ
both as he chooses; but he has no such right.
Obligations apply just as truly to the mode of
applying leisure and property, as to the use
which a man may make of a pound of arsenic. . .
Such is the state of mankind, so great is the
amount of misery and degradation, and so great
are the effects of money and active philanthropy
in ameliorating the condition of our species,
that it is no light thing for a man to employ his
time and property upon vain and needless gratifi-
cation.99

4. Sabbath desecration

Opposition to Sunday play was not restricted to any particular
activity. As one of the last bastions of Puritan theology, the quiet,
reserved Sabbath was championed by many as a spiritual necessity.
Worldly enjoyment, it was felt, "profanes and desecrates the Lord's
Day."100 Furthermore, by permitting some to play, others were forced
to work. As a result, such activity was attacked on religious, social,
and ethical grounds.101 Sunday baseball, the Sunday opening of parks,

99 Dymond, loc. cit., p. 7.

100 William Wackernagel, "The Sunday Question," The Lutheran
Church Review XIII (July, 1894), p. 208.

101 Wilbur F. Crafts, "John Stuart Mill on Sunday Amusements,"
museums, and public recreation sites were all opposed for these reasons. Above all, however, it was felt that the increased secular activity on the Sabbath was responsible for a lessening of church attendance. One country minister declared that "church work in the country is greatly interfered with on account of the Sunday excursion and Sunday ball game, but more especially with Sunday visiting and big Sunday dinners." The availability of such modern modes of travel as the bicycle and automobile were particularly blamed for making "inroads upon church attendance in the country" as well as the city.

The increased popularity of Sunday athletics likewise received condemnation from many quarters. Some were alarmed at the "growing custom of taking boys to the golf links Sundays for the whole day, thus depriving them of religious training." One Mennonite writer after asking his readers, "Is the Sunday ball game right?" facetiously answered, "If it is, why should not ministers, Sunday school teachers and everybody leave the Sunday school and go and play ball?"

Many churchmen felt that the end result of such liberal Sunday behavior was "sure to lead to a complete abandonment of the sacred

103 Ibid.
104 "Compelling Sunday Work," Lutheran Church Work I (July 11, 1912), p. 3.
claims of the day." In the words of one historian, it was possibly a "trend of the times" when a recommendation to the Maine Methodist Conference that some time be allowed on Sunday for "such recreation as brings real rest to the body and soul," was defeated by the delegates. It appears that the majority of the Conference agreed with the delegate who declared that the committee offering the recommendation "was knocking the foundations out of the Methodist church, and it was drifting to hell."

Whether or not the church lost its foundations, however, it did lose its exclusive "claims on the day." As the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth began, the time for worship was restricted to only a part of the day. Increasingly, in spite of widespread clerical opposition, Sunday became a time for re-creation in the broadest sense of the word.

While most of the objections to particular types of recreational activities fell under the four headings discussed above, there were other matters which elicited special concern from churchmen. Among these were church fairs, college football, and professional athletics. The question of church fairs is discussed in the following chapter and need not be elaborated upon at this point other than to classify it as a source of some objection.

108 Ibid.
College football. College football, which became increasingly popular during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, received widespread criticism from several quarters because of alleged brutality. Several institutions banned the sport and others threatened to follow suit because of the mounting incidence of serious injury to the players. Many Protestant leaders voiced criticism of the game because of its roughness as well as the betting which often accompanied a particularly well-publicized match.

The game between Harvard and Yale in 1894, received perhaps the most attention when several players from both sides left with injuries incurred from outright slugging. It has been reported that J. H. Garrison, a leader of the Disciples of Christ during the latter three decades of the nineteenth century, felt that "football harmed the body as much as the theatre damaged the soul."\textsuperscript{109} In a letter to his son, then a student at Yale, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
I have read the accounts of the Yale-Harvard football game and judge it to have been altogether too brutal for civilized people. . . . The rules of that game will have to be modified or it is doomed in this country. The human body is too sacred a thing to be exposed wantonly to such treatment.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

Another minister publicly voiced his indignation at the Yale-Harvard game in an article in a secular magazine:

\begin{quote}
How long is this national disgrace to continue? At present it is debauching our colleges
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{110}Ibid.
making our choicest young men prize-fighters, on whom the interest of the sports of the land centers, and on whom they bet their cesterces, and it is teaching our young ladies even to delight in scenes of unspeakable rudeness. It is high time that civil law stepped in and broke up such demoralizing exhibitions.\textsuperscript{111}

Following the turn of the century, one finds an evident decrease in the amount of criticism leveled toward college football by church leaders. One might assume that one significant reason for this occurrence was in the greater faculty control and rule changes affecting roughness which took place at this time.

Professional athletics. Professional athletics, which developed during the second half of the nineteenth century, likewise received criticism at the hands of many churchmen as well as other reformers. The most frequent objections revolved around the intrusion of the gambling element and the practice of playing games on Sunday, when people were free from work.\textsuperscript{112}

Another moral objection was raised because men were being paid to play games. There were those who feared with the Reverend Eustance R. Condor, that play would lose its spontaneity if made too scientific or professionalized.

\begin{itemize}
\item I am apt to think that in proportion as our amusements lose spontaneity and extemporaneous
\end{itemize}


\textsuperscript{112}Dulles, loc. cit., pp. 190, 207-209.
liberty, and become scientific, as chess, for example, or professional, as cricket, or fashionable and stereotyped, as ballroom dancing, the less healthy and real they are, and the more any germs of danger which lurk within them are developed. 113

At a time when many within the church were just beginning to accept the validity of the need for play as re-creation, the rise of professional athletics undoubtedly confirmed their innermost doubts and fears. The alleged moral quality of many of the athletes likewise contributed to a distrust of the entire institution. The very nature of the occupation necessitated a great deal of traveling and polite society has generally reserved a special niche of distrust for those with few positive roots, i.e., the stigma of the traveling salesman, etc. Warranted or not, gambling, drinking and the general stigma of commercial amusements were attached to professional sports. It was not until well into the twentieth century that this image began to change.

The Liberal Position

Objections to Legislation

Despite the objections of many to certain specified activities, the majority view was steadily moving toward a less authoritarian role for the church in guiding the social life of its members. Opposition to church bans on specific amusements was increasing in most denominations, including those which had such bans in effect.

113Condor, et. al., loc cit., p. 545.
Perhaps the most controversial of the amusement bans was that passed by the Methodist Church, North in 1872, against card-playing, dancing, and theater-attendance. Despite attacks by critics within and without Methodism, the ban remained in effect until 1924, through the efforts of the conservative wing of the church. Since Methodism had grown to become one of the largest Protestant denominations in America, the stand received widespread publicity and became the focal point of the controversy. Secular as well as denominational periodicals printed articles and editorials on the subject. Efforts were put forth at every four-year General Conference from 1876 to 1924, to rescind the ban.  

While the opposition to bans on specific activities was based on several factors, the primary objection was the lack of respect given to the individual's conscience. In an age in which popular emphasis was given to personal independence, the church was finding it increasingly difficult to legislate social behavior. A growing number of religious leaders were aware of this conflict and began to speak out in favor of broad principles as opposed to specific bans. Urging the complete abrogation of the amusement legislation of his church, one Methodist, prior to the General Conference of 1892, suggested that the ban was "un-Protestant" in its character. He wrote: "It is an accepted principle of Protestantism that the Bible alone furnishes an authoritative and sufficient rule of faith both for the

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11h. Martin, op. cit., presents a detailed description and discussion of the efforts to rescind the ban at each of the General Conferences.
church and the individual believer." Furthermore, "this legislation is to be objected to on the ground that no General Conference is wise enough to legislate specifically for the government of individual Christian conduct." The writer supported his latter position by recalling the great debate which accompanied its original passage. There were then, as later, a number of differences of opinion with regard to the subject. His proposed solution to the matter was to rescind the ban and remand the whole question to Wesley's original broad principle which asked the members of the church to take only "such diversions as can be used in the name of the Lord Jesus." This principle, he felt, was the only justifiable position a church could take because of its simplicity, comprehensiveness, and universality. Above all, it "takes the highest ground possible on the question at issue, placing it where it properly belongs, on the individual conscience."

In a 1904 magazine symposium, eight prominent churchmen representing several denominations, including Methodism, discussed the stand taken by the Methodist Church. The participants concurred that

116 Ibid., p. 378.
117 Ibid., pp. 388, 389.
118 Ibid., p. 389.
a diversion is good or evil depending upon the circumstances surrounding the particular event. Each person should decide for himself, according to his own conscience, whether or not to participate. Each individual's personal convictions would guide his judgment.119

The above view was not entirely new. Others had been voicing similar sentiments over the previous forty years. Dr. J. Seelye, a Congregational minister, was one who held strong doubts as to the efficacy of certain amusements such as dancing, card-playing and theater-attendance. Yet, writing in 1866, he admitted that "our best means of repressing wrong amusements will be in cultivating the heart. . . . frivolous amusements will be discarded by a soul no longer frivolous."120 While obviously exhibiting the traditional prejudice against these activities, Dr. Seelye nevertheless recognized the limitations of the ban.

That same year, the Presbyterian, Dr. Howard Crosby, himself opposed to round dancing and gambling, intimated the difficulties of over-simplification as a result of laws and bans. In his treatise he raised the question, "Ought games to be used which are generally used for gambling, but which we would use without gambling?"121 Answering his own query, he wrote:

As a rule, yes. The sin is in the gambling, not in the game. If you leave out the gambling,

120Seelye, loc. cit.
you leave out the sin. There may be a question of simple propriety in taste or a question of expediency, but those questions . . . are to be decided not by a general law, but by individual conscience and the special dictation of the Holy Spirit.122

In 1879, the denominational journal, The Congregationalist, invited four ministers of that group to present their views on the subject of amusements. Significantly, all four agreed that specific bans were unsuitable and that guidance based upon broad principles was much to be preferred. The Reverend Henry Allon, stressing the importance of the individual conscience, tended to negate the fears of those who would condemn an activity for all because of its possible harm to some. He stated:

That . . . which is harmful for one man may be innocent for another. Each individual thing must be judged by the individual man as to its influence upon his own religious character and feeling.123

The Reverend D. Jones Hamer, another participant in the symposium, called for the establishment of broad principles in order that people might be taught to distinguish between right and wrong:

We need, then, set up no jealous bar against this or that recreation, or any amusement which is really such, and for all their life they will be capable of judging the wrong and right of things, also of the expediency of this or that, in a way which the most

122Ibid.

123Condor, et. al., loc. cit., p. 663.
In 1887, the Reverend C. H. Watson addressed the Sixth Annual Baptist Congress upon the subject, "The Proper Attitude of the Church Toward Amusements." Taking a stand against church bans the speaker referred to his time as "the age of man," in which the latter is seeking to rule himself. He suggested that, as a result, the church must take an approach different than the traditional negative abolition of amusements. Elaborating, he said:

Time was, when we could shut the question out of the church with sweeping prohibitions; wave off its perplexities with some snap-rule of arbitrariness. That time has passed. Now, we must let nature make out her case, give her the credit of telling the truth. Tell the truth ourselves. Put ourselves in happy agreement with the truth, to secure a high issue of spiritual character.

Sharing the same speaker's platform was the Reverend E. A. Woods. Agreeing with Watson as to the futility of amusement legislation, he too defended the right of the individual to determine his own behavior patterns in this respect. The role of the church was to suggest broad principles by which a person could be guided. If a man found undesirable temptations connected with any amusement too

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124 Ibid., p. 553.

125 C. H. Watson, "The Proper Attitude of the Church Toward Amusements," Sixth Annual Baptist Congress, Proceedings, VT (1887), p. 120.

126 Ibid.
great to withstand, he should turn from that activity. Based upon this premise he suggested a proper role for the Church:

It would seem therefore, that it is not the province of the church to legislate upon the question of amusements; neither negatively to denounce and forbid them, or positively to establish and defend them. But rather to so develop the Christian life in its members, that they shall be a law unto themselves; not so much to hold them up by rule and precept as to teach them to walk alone, and thus grow strong; to teach them to live for the best things only, and thus bring them into the high dignity of sons and daughters of the living God.

Those opposed to amusement legislation often cited the fact that the Bible itself does not attempt to pin-point and differentiate between particular activities. One Presbyterian writer noted that "while the Bible lays down great and essential principles to control practical life, it leaves their application to the circumstances of particular persons, the demands of each age, and the judgment of the enlightened conscience." Aside from the question of conscience, amusement bans were considered by many to be practically unwritable, unenforceable and perennially incomplete. The above writer flatly stated, "It is not

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128 Ibid., p. 142.
possible for the Church to draw a line between amusements lawful and unlawful. "130 Elaborating upon this thesis, he wrote:

It would be difficult to find two persons who would draw the same dividing line between the lawful and the unlawful. Mark the limit where you please, and it will be found in some degree arbitrary, and therefore inconsistent with itself. The square dance shades off into the round dance, the private home party into the larger social company, and that in turn merges into the public ball and midnight revelry. . . . The Church, if it must legislate upon the subject, stands apparently between two alternatives, neither of which it can afford to take. Excepting certain obviously debased and debasing extravagances from which every Christian conscience revolts, the Church would seem to be reduced to the necessity of choosing one or the other horn of an embarrassing dilemma; either it must say that all amusements are unlawful, or that all are lawful. The only escape for the Church would be to refuse to invade the province of personal Christian liberty, and to remand the whole question to the bar of individual conscience.131

The attempts by churches to list and categorize amusements according to their appropriateness was termed impossible and farcical by some. If card-playing, dancing and other activities were to be wholly condemned because of certain problems of excess and association, then, it was reasoned, an interminable list of other games and pastimes could be included. At the Methodist General Conference of 1900, one member attempted to reduce to absurdity the minute regulation

130 Ibid., p. 142.
131 Ibid., pp. 710, 711.
of conduct included in the 1872 amusement ban. He moved to amend it by adding to the condemned list the following:

- Opera, grand opera, living pictures, tableaux, charades, prizefights, bull fights, dog fights, cock fights, yachting, roller-skating, football, baseball, curling, and playing the following games: Backgammon, billiards, checkers, chess, dice, croquet, polo, pool, golf, lawn tennis, cricket, one o'clock, two o'clock, shinney, la crosse, old sow, pillow, Denmark, blind-man's buff, prison goal, tug-of-war, crokinole, matador, raffling, crap-shooting, pitching quoits, archery, tenpins, shuffleboard, bicycling, grab-bags, basket-ball, houseball, handup baltie collie, crackabout, over the barn, house over or hally over, corner-ball, black baby, marbles, game of authors, and that dangerous game of chance of casting lots for seats of General Conference delegates.\(^\text{132}\)

One Methodist, writing prior to the General Conference of 1892, noted the impracticality of ruling on specific activities. "The General Conference," he writes, "instead of sitting for a month once in four years, would need to be in continuous session."\(^\text{133}\) The mere growth of amusements would greatly contribute to the problem, for:

The age is inventive. The devil is constantly devising new evil amusements. It seems clear that the General Conference

\(^{132}\)"The Methodist Church and Amusements," Outlook (May 2, 1908), p. 10. Also reported in "The Methodist Conference," Outlook LXV (June 2, 1900), 239.

\(^{133}\)Mains, loc. cit., p. 388.
would have to employ professional experts to decide on the moral quality of amuse-
ments.134

Facetiously, he added that if the legislation was to be retained, it should be made more complete. In addition, a list of approved amuse-
ments might be appropriate.135

There were those too, who feared that such bans could eventually undo the good work of the church. One writer, shortly after the Civil War, saw amusement bans as a possible cause and result of denomi-
national or class prejudice, "especially in country towns where sec-
tarian feeling has some sway."136 Citing possible examples, he wrote:

The Methodists, perhaps, will not have tea-
parties with a dance at the close, because the Universalists do that sort of thing; or the Orthodox frown on tableaux vivants be-
cause the Unitarians approve of them.137

The Reverend T. T. Eaton, speaking before the Baptist Congress of 1887, feared that the spiritual life of the people might be dis-
torted if time and effort were expended denouncing specific sins. He stated his position accordingly:

If we spend our time denouncing special sins, the people will lose sight of the fact that they are guilty and helpless before a holy God, with no claim upon His mercy, and richly de-
serving His wrath. Those not guilty of the specific sin denounced will begin to thank God

134Ibid.
135Ibid., p. 387.
137Ibid.
they are not as other men; and those who are guilty will in their own minds excuse themselves. Therefore words from the pulpit about any particular form of vice or sinful amusement should be few, but earnest. The Church can express her opinion of such things best and most emphatically by her wholesome discipline of those who walk disorderly.\(^{138}\)

Others saw a negative play attitude as a detriment to the task of bringing new people into the Church. Many Methodists were becoming concerned with this aspect and felt that their church was being stereotyped as antisocial. Mains feared that the amusement ban was making Methodists more rigid and out of sympathy with human nature than was actually the case. He strongly felt that "the embodiment of this legislation in our book of Discipline exposes the Methodist Episcopal Church to a damaging popular aversion."\(^{139}\)

A Methodist minister's wife, expressing her displeasure with the ban, felt that it was causing the church to lose its restraint and some degree of control over these activities. Further, she felt that it was causing many otherwise good church members to feel sneaky about something in which they really saw no harm.\(^{140}\) This woman, writing anonymously for obvious reasons, perhaps expressed

\(^{138}\)Eaton, loc. cit., p. 134.

\(^{139}\)Mains, loc. cit., p. 380.

\(^{140}\)A Methodist Woman, "Worldly Amusements," The Independent LX (March 22, 1906), pp. 72-5.
the feelings of a majority of church-going Americans, Methodist or others, when she stated:

... I wish the government of our Church could be changed so that little children could go to circuses and see the clown without injuring the consciences or reputations of their parents as Church members; so that our young men and maidens could dance to their hearts' content; so that we old people could play cards, and so that we all could go and see a good drama now and then.\footnote{Ibid., p. 674.}

Washington Gladden was opposed to the church drawing the line between the clean and unclean in amusements. He felt it far wiser to give up these questions and instead, insist upon a few general principles such as the following:

1. Amusement is not an end, but a means—a means of refreshing the mind and replenishing the strength of the body; when it begins to be the principal thing for which one lives, or when, in pursuing it, the mental powers are enfeebled and the bodily health impaired, it falls under just condemnation.

2. Amusements that consume the hours which ought to be sacred to sleep are, therefore, censurable.

3. Amusements that call us away from work which we are bound to do are pernicious, just to the extent to which they cause us to be neglectful or unfaithful.

4. Amusements that rouse or stimulate morbid appetites or unlawful passions, or that cause us to be restless or discontented, are always to be avoided.
5. Any indulgence in amusement which has a tendency to weaken our respect for the great interests of character, or to loosen our hold on the eternal verities of the spiritual realm, is, so far forth, a damage to us.1h2

Others of this more liberal persuasion also sought to substitute broad principles in place of specific bans. If people were to choose proper amusements for themselves, they would need guidelines consistent with their religious training. One Congregationalist, as early as 1867, summarized his conception of what position the church should take in regard to recreation:

1. We must not only concede, but recognize the need which human nature has of amusement and recreation.

2. It is not the province of the ministry or the churches to draw lines restricting individual liberty.

3. Different persons need different forms of recreation. Some need excitement while others need quiet.

4. Recreation should be under the control of Christian principle and be made subservient to holy living.1h3

A Baptist, the Reverend C. H. Watson, suggested that "the Proper Attitude of the Church towards Amusements is defined in three words: Recognition, Discrimination, Direction."1h4

1. The church must recognize that the necessity for amusements is grounded in the nature of man.

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1h4 Watson, loc. cit.
2. Discrimination - The church, through its recognition of man's need of play, must be discriminating and not condemn all amusement. The church must give straight-forward, conclusive reasons for discountenancing any amusement. She must remember that excesses can and do occur in many phases of life-politics, work, religion, eating, drinking, etc. The excesses, not the act itself, are to be condemned.

3. Direction - wise control. To show what amusements are for. To direct by teaching, leading, utilizing tendencies that cannot be annihilated, making them tide youth over to that character that insures real manhood. To lead through these means to the end, when, for pleasure, the character is sufficient unto itself.\textsuperscript{145}

In assuming the above attitude then, the church would require the task of educator rather than dictator. The development of principles for the guidance of individuals would be the major function. Outlining this task, Watson stated:

\begin{quote}
The church thus chooses the task of infinite difficulty in preference to the easy and monotonous echoing of prohibitions that do not prohibit; chooses to direct rather than forbid; to instruct a conscience in every man that will know the rightful limit of his own indulgence; to make him master instead of slave; to change his experience into wisdom, his wisdom into strength, his strength into a deep delight in ministering good, out of which the long array of youthful pleasures have disappeared just as the stars slip away in the morning.\textsuperscript{146}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{145}Ibid., pp. 120-5.
\textsuperscript{146}Ibid., p. 128.
The Quaker, Jonathan Dymond, while unqualifiedly stating his opposition to horse racing, hunting, fishing and the excessive spending of time and money on leisure pursuits, based his decisions upon certain principles and was not at all hesitant about suggesting them to fellow Christians. He wrote:

In estimating the propriety, or rather the lawfulness of a given amusement, it may safely be laid down, that none is lawful of which the aggregate consequences are injurious to morals;—nor, if its effects upon the immediate agents are, in general, morally bad;—nor, if it occasions needless pain and misery to men or to animals;—nor, lastly, if it occupies much time, or is attended with much expense.147

Speaking twenty-two years later, another Quaker, Amos J. Peaslee, stated his belief that "the early Quakers did have an unnecessary tendency to be indiscriminately hostile toward those things in life which make for joy, for buoyancy of spirit, and for a keener sense of the pleasures of existence, as we understand those terms today."148 Recognizing that the Society of Friends had, in the past adopted an extreme Puritanical attitude towards recreation, he felt that this position "was not of the essence of Quakerism."149 He maintained that new standards had come to be applied to recreation by which the latter could be judged. Elaborating, he stated:

We gauge them, not by abstract laws, but by the test of experience. If, certain acts

147Dymond, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
149Ibid.
or courses of conduct have proved in the long run not to be helpful, or to be positively injurious, we condemn them as being at least stupid. If, on the other hand, certain acts or courses of conduct which we had previously classified as "harmful diversions," have proved to have a real, recreative value, we have removed them from that category, and have placed them in the category of educational influences, or of proper expressions of our lives.150

The famous Congregationalist, Lyman Abbott, expressed his opinion that there is nothing inherently right or wrong in any recreational activity. The judgment depends upon the purpose and the surroundings.151 Declining to condemn or endorse any particular activity he concluded:

The broad principle of life seems to me to be this; to have some work in hand in which one is interested, either because the work is interesting or because the product of the work is worthwhile; and to take that form of recreation which is best fitted to re-create the body, mind, and spirit, when exhausted by its toil, and so fit it for resumption of serious work on the morrow. No recreation is wrong which really does re-create. No recreation is right which does not re-create. But in the choice of recreation everyone should have regard for his social surroundings and the effect of his life and example on others.152

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150 Ibid.


152 Ibid., p. 608.
Sunday recreation

The Protestant attitude toward Sunday play, throughout the period under study was, as indicated earlier, largely negative. Play, in general, while finding increasing approval among churchmen, only with difficulty, gained acceptance as a worthy activity for even a Sabbath afternoon following church. For many workers, however, Sunday was the only time available for pleasant diversion. Those active in the labor movement found themselves in a rather ironic position. They were wholly aligned with the clergy in their opposition to Sunday labor. On the other hand, they found themselves at opposite poles regarding Sunday play. While a large portion of the Protestant clergy viewed Sunday as wholly for worship and meditation, most labor leaders argued for the freedom of the working man to use the day as he saw fit. If this included an afternoon ball game or a stroll in the park, so be it!

Dulles gives a great deal of the credit for the lifting of Sabbath restrictions to the immigrant groups, particularly the Germans, who brought with them the customs of the Continental Sunday. Picnics and beer-garden entertainments became a Sunday feature wherever...

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153 For a rather complete discussion of the Sabbath controversy during this period see, Francis P. Weisenburger, *Triumph of Faith*, (Richmond, Virginia: William Byrd Press, Inc.), Chapter VII.


they had settled in large numbers. Their example was soon followed by others "and the practice of making the day primarily an occasion for recreation spread rapidly after mid-century among working people." Following the turn of the century, additional pressure was applied by others in the secular community. Caspar Whitney, the noted sports journalist, was certain that, "there are ways to incite men to Christian living other than merely preaching the gospel to them, and the one which leads to the outdoor world returns the largest number of converts." Arguing for a Sunday of worship and recreation, he distinguished between Christians and religionists and deplored "the biased activity of the latter in seeking to deprive the work-a-day world of its one-day opportunity to get into the open for recreation."

Similar feelings were expressed by Joseph Lee as the president of the Playground Association of America. In his opinion, laws prohibiting such activities as hunting and fishing on Sundays were rich men's laws, as only the wealthy could afford such activity during the work week. At the same time, according to Lee, the lack of play

156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
159 Ibid., p. 383.
on Sunday was a common cause of idleness and hence lawlessness among youth. Recognizing a noble purpose in the Sabbath he concluded:

The whole purpose of Sunday is a chance to grow and live. It is the one day consecrated and set aside by nature and by man, to such fulfillment of our humanity as the necessities of our weekday labor cannot afford. When on the top of long hours of sterilizing work, we impose this Sunday law to rob the mature worker and the growing youth of this one day in which nature might have had her part in them, to make them strong and beautiful and happy, we have sinned against nature and the spirit of Sunday, the brightest and happiest of our institutions.

One writer, in the influential *Atlantic Monthly*, went so far as to suggest that the church could legitimately provide recreation on Sunday, when warranted by need, if it were necessary to make men "more capable of appropriating the benefits of religion.

Such action, he reasoned, "would thereby regain the respect and allegiance of the masses . . ."  

In spite of the widespread opposition of conservative religion to Sunday play, more than one minister questioned the basis for the church's negative position. The Reverend William Rainsford found Sunday conditions in New York "intolerable" during the last two decades.

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of the nineteenth century. As a result, he felt, more than a few people had completely turned their backs on the church. The laws were particularly harsh for youth, he felt. As a result, a boy denied the right to play "... pockets his ball and hides his bat, but takes a mental oath that churches, Sunday Schools, and all parsons are his natural enemies." 164

In 1910, a writer in a Lutheran periodical dared ask the question, "Why should it be considered a sin to visit our parks, art galleries, and museums on the Lord's day, so long as it does not interfere with our attendance at divine services?" 165 The distinguished Reverend Lyman Abbott, upon examining the Fourth Commandment found that it forbids work and nothing else, including "innocent and healthful recreation." 166 While acknowledging the propriety of keeping the day "holy to the Lord," such holiness, he argued, "is not inconsistent with festivity and rejoicing." 167 To Abbott, it was incongruous to accept an inconsistency between worship and play on the Sabbath. Such clerical views, if not in the majority, were at least indicative of another impending change in Protestant attitudes.

167 Ibid.
Recognition of the value of play

Toward the end of the nineteenth century a recognition of the value of play was made by an increasing number of churchmen. It was viewed as something more than mere folly to fill one's idle moments. This recognition evolved throughout the period under study and contributed toward the church's acceptance of play.

As early as 1868, an article entitled, "Amusements and the Church," matter-of-factly included the statement, "To human life Play is as normal as Work." The writer hastened to add that play is not always the peer of work; that they are not always equal. However, "in their respective place, each is legitimate, and neither may be neglected without evil result."

Recognition was beginning to be paid to the fact "that labor itself demands intervals of rest and recreation." Underscoring this statement, a writer for the American Church Review, replied in 1872, to the critics of amusements and recreation as follows:

We prefer to meet the objection by the plain statement that amusements are necessary, and that a healthy humanity can no more do without food, drink, or sleep, and that only by drawing arbitrary

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168 W. W. Patton, "Amusements and the Church," Hours at Home VII (September, 1868), p. 117.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
and conventional lines, and calling things
by false names, can the anti-amusement theory
be propped up. 171

Five years later, commenting upon recreation and amusements
in his small book, The Christian Way, Gladden viewed them as "indispensable
adjuncts of social life," necessary for young and old alike: 172

Young people need them and so do old people;
the rich want them, and not less do the poor.
The business man, loaded with cares and goaded
by anxieties, requires occasional relaxation;
the laboring man, whose toil is monotonous,
and whose life is desolate, wants some pleas­
sant pastime now and then in which he can for­
get himself. Rest is not enough; the mind
needs diversion. 173

The value of play, as perceived by churchmen at this time, cen­
tered primarily around its therapeutic effects on people overburdened
by work. One minister, in the early 1880's, flatly stated: "Amuse­
ments properly belong to those who, because of the weight of serious
business, need recreation." 174 One might, perhaps, legitimately
theorize from these comments that this early emphasis on the antidotal
value of play was merely a reaction to the work phobia of the immediate
past. Those who saw the danger in an excessively work-oriented

171 "Popular Amusements," American Church Review XXIV (October,
1872), p. 539.

and Company, 1877), p. 112.

173 Ibid., pp. 112-3.

174 Robert B. Hull, "Proper Amusements," The Preacher and
environment quite naturally pointed to the possible tempering effects of recreational activities. As many of the traditional prejudices were overcome, however, attention began to focus on the deeper values of play.

Although occasional reference was made by churchmen to the educational possibilities of play prior to 1900, little serious consideration appears to have been given to this avenue for moral education and self-fulfillment until several years after the turn of the century. In 1910, addressing the Fourth Playground Congress of the Playground Association of America, Dr. George William Knox, a clergyman and professor at Union Theological Seminary, spoke on the contributions of play to man's fullest and highest enjoyment of life. He undoubtedly shocked many of his clerical peers by stating:

Play is, ultimately, doing the thing I like to do, for its own sake. Play brings out my own character to the full, the deepest part of it to the full.175

A midwestern Episcopal bishop, Dr. Anson Rogers Graves, recalled his own fond memories of hunting and fishing trips during his period as rector of Gethsemane Church in Minneapolis, during the 1880's. "Those trips with the rowing and out-of-door life, were very invigorating and of the greatest benefit to me."176 Likewise, Dr. William Rainsford, late in life, recalled longingly, his one pleasant experience

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at dancing as a youth in 1867. He was keenly disappointed by his parents' refusal to allow him to take dancing lessons on the grounds that this activity was "too worldly and not good for the soul." 177

Commenting upon his own position, he wrote:

A young thing that wants to dance and has never been taught to dance and dance well misses, I think, much in life that we cannot afford to miss. If he does not care to learn, even then I am inclined to think that unless there is extreme repugnance both dancing and music should be insisted upon. 178

In 1910, Professor Carl E. Seashore, of the State University of Iowa, set forth the radical thesis that play and religion have a common interaction. He contended that "play is a preparation for religious life, and one of the chief means of its realization. We become religious through play and to be religious is often to play." 179

In other words, play is a means of self-expression and contributes to the total growth and development of the individual. Relating this theory to religion he continued:

Religious life is the crown of life. It is the richest and most varied of our natures; yet it involves no faculty which is specifically religious. It is through our senses, our memory, our reasoning, our feelings, and our actions that we are religious. Then if

\[177\] Rainsford, loc. cit., p. 58.
\[178\] Ibid., p. 59.
play is the means of growth and a large
source of enjoyment, ... it is this
for religious life just as it is for social,
ethical, or business life.\footnote{ibid.}

The process of self-fulfillment had traditionally been the pri-
vate function of religion (or so believed the churchmen). According
to this view one would seek in vain if he searched for such fulfill-
ment outside the church.

Much the same attitude had been held toward moral education.
Character and morality were developed through traditional religious
practices: church attendance, prayer, Bible study, etc. Few clergy-
men could be convinced that frivolous play held any more value than
diverting one's mind for a brief moment from more serious pursuits
and for keeping youth occupied and out of mischief. By 1912, how-
ever, one minister could discuss the value of play to character
building in boys as follows: "... the value of undirected play in
cultivating initiative, resourcefulness, and imagination, especially
in children, is worth bearing in mind."\footnote{Allan Hoben, "The Ethical Value of Organized Play," \textit{Biblical World} XXXIX (March, 1912), p. 175.} He did, on the other hand,
recognize the limitations of both play and religion in this respect.
"One must grant also," he writes, "that play is not always enlisted
in the service of morality. But neither is religion. Both may be."\footnote{Ibid.}
Similar recognition was given play two years later by a Methodist, The Reverend Harry F. Ward. He wrote:

Religion is concerned today with character rather than with creed, with conduct rather than with ordinances, and we are learning from the people who are studying the question that there is no stronger means for the building of character than to take hold of the desire for recreation and to use it constructively.183

This statement sums up the direction in which American Protestantism moved during the fifty years following the Civil War. From a generally suspicious view of play and amusement, churchmen arrived at a position of acceptance. Indeed, it was more than acceptance. Through the realization of the values of play came a readiness and willingness to include it in the work of the church.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY IN RECREATION

The general move toward the recognition and acceptance of play by the church and its leaders was accompanied by another controversy: what, if any, responsibility does the church have in providing recreation for its own members and the community as a whole? Is this merely a secular responsibility, or is there a role for the church? If the latter is true, what is to be the nature of the role? Should the church open its doors for recreational purposes or should it confine its efforts to encouraging the community at large to assume such responsibility? What should be the relationship between the church and service organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association? These and other questions were widely debated by churchmen as they attempted to relate the work of the church to a fast-changing society.

The Nature of the Responsibility

The fact that many churches were beginning to include recreational activities in their programs naturally brought forth criticism from the traditionally conservative elements within the fellowship. Attacking and ridiculing the popular sociables, fairs, suppers and
festivals in the churches, Dr. William Bayard Hale wrote in 1896:

> We are not informed that the Church at Ephesus or Philippi every advertised a bazaar, a clam-bake, or a strawberry social. We have no information that St. Paul was accustomed to give stereopticon lectures, Barnabas operating the lantern. It is not clearly established that St. Athanasius ever arranged a kirmess, a broom-drill, or a pink tea.

In his survey he found numerous instances of churches seeking to entertain their members while at the same time raising money through amusements. He concluded that "the world does not need the church as a purveyor of vaudeville." \(^2\)

The inclusion of special play facilities in church buildings, while extremely popular in many quarters was not countenanced by all churchmen however. Illustrating this fact is the following news item which appeared in an 1889 issue of Harper's Weekly:

> Rev. Dr. Donald, Rector of the Church of the Ascension in this city [New York], is too conservative an Episcopalian to believe in bowling-alleys, gymnasiums, billiard tables, kitchens, etc., as church adjuncts, which, he says, transform churches into "houses of amusement or clubs of physical comfort."\(^3\)

Not all of those opposed to church sponsored recreation, however were antagonistic toward play in general. Indeed, a sizeable number

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\(^2\) Ibid.

were quite cognizant of the role and value of play in life. On the other hand, they honestly questioned the place of the church in sponsoring and housing such activity, regardless of the motives. The practice of using play as a "drawing card" by the church received particular attention. One Baptist minister felt it would be useless to attract sinners to God through amusements. He wrote:

It is claimed that if the Church will amuse the people they will be attracted to worship, and that we ought to do all we can to make the Gospel attractive. This is to forget the real nature of sin. 'The carnal heart is enmity against God,' and will not be pleased with a Gospel which enforces God's claims to man's obedience.\(^4\)

Another Baptist, the Reverend A. G. Upham, saw church sponsored amusements as being inconsistent with a religious spirit of self-sacrifice. Addressing the Twenty-first Annual Baptist Congress in 1903, he stated:

Church-going today is largely secularized. Everything in church worship and work is arranged with the idea of drawing men to church by anything that will work. And so it comes to pass that we are seeking to win men to the most spiritual religion the world has ever seen, by secular attractions. Have we forgotten the promise of our Lord: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me?' The spirit of true worship is not self-indulgence, but self-sacrifice, and it is just as secular

to go to church to be entertained as it
is to go to the opera to be entertained. 5

Clarifying his position, he concluded: "Undoubtedly there is a place
in human life for entertainments and entertainers, but that place
is not the house and the worship of Almighty God." 6

Similar feelings were expressed almost a decade later by the
editor of the Sunday School Times in Philadelphia. Fearing a loss
of spirituality in the church as a result of sponsoring secular activi­
ties, while at the same time acknowledging the latter's attractiveness, he asked, "... is there also any possibility of its being
based on a fundamental mistake, and that it is aimed by Satan at the
very heart of the life of the Church, and intended by him to defeat
the sole purpose for which the Church in the world exists?" 7 To
illustrate his point, he posed the following situation and questions:

Suppose a local church, say, of 300
persons, all of whom are living daily in
the same riches of the overcoming, wit­
nessing power of Jesus Christ that Paul
knew, were set down in any town or city
of this land, and minister and people
 commenced their daily life and held their
church services in the fullness of this
apostolic power. Suppose the ministers
preaching were supported by the daily
prayers of those 300. ... Would the com­
munity in which that church worked be likely
to be attracted to its services? And would

6 Ibid.
pool-tables and shuffle-boards be likely to add to the drawing power of that church?

Another writer, decrying the overuse of entertainment to draw people to church, facetiously wrote:

In Jesus' day the Kingdom of God suffered violence and men of violence were to take it by force. Nowadays some of us think that its violence is a feature of men's dinners and its capture a duty of basketball teams. When these fail we still hope to introduce religion surreptitiously between stereopticon slides and to deeper foreign mission enthusiasm by pageants.  

While recognizing the responsibility of many churches to meet a community need for "rational entertainment," the above writer feared proliferation and over-emphasis. He asked: "But is entertainment the real function of the church?" Answering his own question, he replied:

If such were the case the church is already outgrown. It cannot compete with commercialized amusements or with municipal playgrounds.

And it will be rightfully outgrown, for it will have ceased to do the thing which as a church it ought to do: bring men and God together for the salvation of men.  

Even the rather liberal Washington Gladden voiced similar concern as to the role of the church in providing play. It it became

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8Ibid.
10Ibid.
too involved in performing this function, he reasoned, it would lose
sight of its more serious and important duties of ministering to the
soul. Elaborating, he wrote:

Let me say at the outset that the churches
are doing already all that they ought to do in
the way of furnishing amusements of various
kinds in connection with their own organizations
and in their own houses of worship. The church
sociable has become a recognized institution; and,
in spite of certain scandalous reports, its in­
fluence, on the whole, has been salutary. It is
certain, however, that the churches have gone
fully as far in this direction as it is safe for
them to go. It is not the business of the Church
to organize dramatic troupes or minstrel com­
panies for the amusement of the people in its
own edifice. The proper function of the Church
is that of teaching and moral influence; and when
it goes extensively into the show business, it is
apt to lose its hold upon the more serious
interests with which it is charged. The duty of
the Church, with respect to the provision and
direction of popular amusements, will be discharged,
if at all, as its duty to the unfortunates of the
community is discharged,—by inspiring and form­
ing outside agencies to do this very thing. . . .
When it is said that the Church ought to provide
wholesome diversions for the people, it is meant,
therefore, that the Church ought to stir up the
intelligent and benevolent men and women under
its influence to attend to this matter, and ought
to make them feel that this is one of the duties
resting on them as Christians.11

This duty, according to Gladden, was based primarily on man's need for
play. Therefore, he reasoned, it was "the duty of the Christian in
society to take hold of this department of life and Christianize it."12

11 Washington Gladden, "Christianity and Popular Amusements,"
The Century XXIX (January, 1885), pp. 386-7.

Those in agreement with Gladden's latter premise were many. It would appear, however, that the majority of this group favored meeting this "duty" through actual church-sponsored activities. They saw it as an opportunity to provide alternatives other than the often disreputable commercial amusements, as a means of rescuing possibly innocent activities from sordid and questionable associations, and as a means of drawing non-church-goers within their fellowship.

Providing Recreational Substitutes

Those who recognized the place and value of play in life were not oblivious to the numerous undesirable forms of amusement in society. Indeed, because of their concern for the recreational welfare of people, it might be reasonably assumed that they were even more aware of the abuses than were those whose view of play was totally negative. It was precisely this concern which led many to the conclusion that the church was obligated to offer recreational substitutes to counter the attraction of many of the allegedly undesirable amusements available in the marketplace of the day. In the opinion of one Congregational editor, writing shortly before the end of the Civil War, "the culture of . . . a social spirit in our churches would furnish a much needed protection from worldly and evil amusements to which so many of our professedly religious people now resort for pleasurable excitement."\(^{13}\) Clarifying his position, he continued:

The church ought to provide, within the circle

of Christian propriety and consistency, all the recreations which its adherents need. It is thus alone that the power of temptation to frivolous and demoralizing pleasures can be neutralized inside the distinctively Christian community. . . . its social life should draw the world to its associations instead of the reverse.14

Another writer, during the same decade offered a similar suggestion. Seeing the Christian Church as a powerful, significant institution, he felt that it could no longer be content to stand back and criticize. By precept and example "it must give the world not only regenerated individuals, but a regenerated literature, science, philosophy, art, worship, morality, and society, adapted to human wants in all their variety." "Therefore," he continued,

it must not ignore the subject of amusements, nor play the ascetic, nor simply criticize and complain; but it must provide pure, varied, and sufficient recreations, in doors and out of doors, for the daytime and for the evening, for the two sexes, singly and jointly, for mind and body, for those outside of the Church as well as for those within.15

In order to keep the younger people, especially those living in boarding homes, from the undesirable commercial establishments, the writer suggested that churches provide rooms for "social recreation"

14Ibid., pp. 545-6.

in the form of games and music. Justifying such action he concluded:

Such arrangements might be made a means of grace, in withdrawing the young from temptation, and bringing them under Christian influence, as truly as prayer-meetings or tract distribution.\textsuperscript{16}

Addressing himself to "The Positive Side of The Amusement Question," the Reverend F. E. Clark of Boston, presented his concept of the role of the "ideal church" in the social life of its members. He felt that the church should elevate the amusement which Satan "dissipates and degrades."\textsuperscript{17} Concerned with the social plight of the rural young man or woman working and living in the city as well as the children of the community, Reverend Clark suggested that the church has a responsibility to open its doors for recreation. Reading rooms, game rooms, and even playfields were included in his plan. Concerning the latter, he emphatically stated his position in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
It will not have merely a narrow, little, cramped yard, with other buildings crowding it on every side. It will have a generous playground connected with it, where the boys can have a base-ball game, and the girls can have their croquet and lawn tennis.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Through such a program Reverend Clark visualized a ten-fold increase in the power of the church "to fight the immoral-amusement devil that now she has."\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, he concluded, "... she will be

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Homiletic Review} X (October, 1885), p. 356.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 357.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
carrying out Christ's principles; she will be overcoming evil with
good."

Recognizing the need of people for recreational opportunities
and yet aware of the dearth of desirable, wholesome outlets, other
churchmen began to support the concept of church recreation. Writing
in the Homiletic Review during the last decade of the century, one
clergyman stated: "I trust even we shall see the dawning of the day
when the devil will no longer monopolize the grand opportunities in
recreation which the Church should control." Another minister,
the Reverend Royal L. Melendy of Chicago, after investigating the
"saloon problem" in that city at the turn of the century, entreated
people not to totally condemn the saloon-keeper or the men who visit
it since they are providing a social outlet for many young men where
there is no other. Instead, he felt the churches should take a cue
from the saloons and offer the same sociability under more wholesome
conditions. Voicing similar concern over a decade later, a layman
asked: "Isn't it better to bring the family group into the neighbor-
hood group, and then house this neighborhood group wholesomely, than
to send the boys to the streets, the girls to the dance-halls, the
fathers to the saloons, and the mothers to loneliness?"

20 Ibid.
Another writer, Richard Henry Edwards, likewise saw value in utilizing the family unit in building the social life of the church. In his small book, Popular Amusements, Edwards advocated the use of the church building for recreational purposes to substitute for many of the commercial amusements with their attendant evils. He wrote:

In the churches the family group is still the natural unit, and great numbers of young people in city and country meet for social pleasures under the best conditions. The importance of this democratic yet safe-guarded social life can hardly be over-emphasized. If the churches were to utilize to the full their natural advantages for the extension of their social activities and reassert with new power their established opposition to class distinctions and their historic emphasis upon the religious life as a life of joy, they could take the lead among the constructive agencies active on this phase of the problem.24

Rescuing Recreational Activities

It was felt by many religious and lay leaders that while offering wholesome substitutes for many activities, the church could also redeem or rescue some which were deemed harmful as generally conducted. If conducted and controlled by the church, it was reasoned, the worst elements of the activity could be eliminated and only the desirable ones maintained. In the words of one Congregational minister, "Watch as we may, warn as we may, if we do not rescue such amusements from

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evil surroundings, the temptation they present will again and again overwhelm."²⁵

Those who advocated the policy of utilizing some of the more suspect activities recognized their inherent attraction to people. Assuming that the attraction would not suffer because of the removal of the less desirable features and associations, it was felt that the church as well as the individual and society would benefit. The church could put to good use those things which the world used for ill. The individual could safely participate in activities such as billiards, bowling and even card playing and dancing without fear of corrupting influences. Society as a whole could appreciate the removal of sources of corruption from its midst. Expressing such a viewpoint the above minister wrote:

We must offer recreative substitutes for that which we condemn. If the Christian Church so willed it, these things, including, I believe, the theatre, could be redeemed and cleansed; and how much our Christian work would be helped by the extermination of sources of corruption and the purifying of the public taste, who can estimate?²⁶

In 1881, one Unitarian woman criticized the conservative attitude of so many Christians on the subject of amusements. "Here, if

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 555-6.
anywhere," she wrote, "is practical work to be done." In a charge to her readers, she continued:

If the existing popular amusements are unsatisfactory, make them better, or put others equally amusing in their place. If the public taste is low, raise it. Who else is to do it? Little by little, it must be done, but keep on raising it. Never forget the sugar. It is a tremendous lever; and by and by, before you know it, your child, of whatever age, will have outgrown the taste for a diet of sugar, and lo! largely through the love of amusement, which God gives his creatures, will have come a precious sweetening of the spirit, an investment for later years of that priceless treasure, a child-like temper, which helps in its way to fit one, and to keep one fit, for the kingdom of heaven.

A Congregational minister in an academy town in Maine wrote to the editors of Outlook in 1897, asking how he might continue to ally himself with the boys in the school on athletic contests without repelling them entirely. Specifically, he was concerned with the growth of semi-professionalism and the "win at any cost" attitude in the schools. Mr. Caspar Whitney, editor of the "Amateur Sport" section of Harper's Weekly and eventual editor of Outing, an influential sporting journal, was enlisted to answer the clergyman's question. It was Whitney's belief that the minister is "... morally bound to deal carefully and wisely with the subject of amateur athletics." By


28 Ibid.

remaining indifferent to athletics, he reasoned, the minister could hold himself "responsible for the pernicious results which come from athletics badly conducted or not conducted at all." On the other hand, by openly allying himself with athletics for boys he could utilize a ready medium for instilling desirable values which in turn could aid in ridding sport of its undesirable features. He wrote:

The way for us to get rid of some of the evils of intercollegiate and interscholastic football is to have ... ministers ... get hold of the boys in his town, play football and baseball and basket-ball with them, ride the bicycle with them, play tennis with them, arrange track athletic contests, and so teach them habits of regular life, of careful eating, of sound sleeping, of avoiding dissipation and carousing, of manliness, honor, straightforwardness, and a willingness to play according to agreement and without taking unfair advantage. In this way, in my opinion, the ministers of the country might exert an influence upon young men the force of which at present they do not seem to understand.

Dr. G. Stanley Hall, the brilliant educator and psychologist, also saw a role for the church and minister in raising the dance to an acceptable level. Hall, a firm believer in the value of play and dance to the growth and education of adolescents, applauded the efforts of the schools in this direction. Calling for the churches to take part, he wrote: "I think ... that a selected course of dances of the essentially historic type, ... far above and almost the direct

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30Ibid.
31Ibid., p. 183.
antithesis of the ballet, cakewalk, and the ballroom dances, ought to be taught in church parlors and vestries, of course under proper supervision."\(^{32}\) Justifying his viewpoint, he continued:

Has the Church no duty to rescue dancing from its present degradation and should it rest content with pouring out the child with the bath? Does it forget that dancing originated in the religious instinct and was a form of religious service and that it is still capable of teaching reverence, awe, worship, that love of God is just as capable of motor expression as is romantic love? Not only this, but the present tendencies lead us to believe that this is inevitable and that in the near future. What we want first of all is more knowledge of what dancing has meant and can do, and I appeal to young clergymen and to directors of Y. M. C. A. associations to bestir and inform themselves, for the time is not far distant, unless I am mistaken, when they will be called upon to act in this matter.\(^{33}\)

The above comments indicate a recognition by those outside the church hierarchy of the potentially valuable role to be played by churchmen in shaping the recreational attitudes and tastes of their people. Rather than merely condemning certain activities as basically unclean, the latter were asked to help in restoring and maintaining them on an acceptable level. The mere fact that a New England minister asked for advice on his role in the play of the boys in his congregation is somewhat indicative of a recognition of the need for play and a desire to aid in this direction.

\(^{32}\) G. Stanley Hall, "Play and Dancing for Adolescents," *The Independent* LXII (February 14, 1907), p. 358.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.
Play as a Drawing Card

Considering the rather natural appeal of play to people, it was perhaps inevitable that it should be seen as a possible means of bringing young people into the church. The city churches in particular, as discussed in Chapter III, were conscious of the fact that their traditional social aloofness was not appealing to large groups of young people. A desire to reach these individuals prompted many churchmen to advocate the use of recreation in the work of the church. Writing in 1889, the Reverend Charles A. Dickinson, affiliated with Berkeley Temple in Boston, expressed the view that "if it be true that a large class of people need to be diverted from the world before they can be converted to Christ, then let this subject of diversion have its legitimate and honored place in the administration of the church."\(^{34}\) Basing his argument upon the belief that "amusements can be made a secular means to reach a spiritual end," he wrote:

> If the boys can be kept from the streets and the saloons by innocent games and pure reading matter provided by the church; if young men can be reached through athletics and manly sports; if worldly men and women can be brought into touch with Christian life and character through the social instincts; then let every church have its reading-rooms, gymnasium, ball ground and social gathering; but in all of these places let it be made manifest that the church, while it desires to please, desires most of all to develop Christian manhood and womanhood.\(^{35}\)

\(^{34}\)Charles A. Dickinson, "Problem of the Modern City Church,"*Andover Review* XII (October, 1889), p. 367.

\(^{35}\)Ibid.
In spite of his rather strong belief in the potential value of play to the work of the church, however, Dickinson had certain reservations concerning its universal use:

All effective instruments must be handled with care. The objections urged against church amusements are mainly due to a hap-hazard policy of managing them. If not held by a strong hand as a means to an end, they are in danger of becoming mere aimless frivolities. If the pastor does not feel that he is master of the situation in this, as in all other departments, it would be wiser for him to leave it out of his scheme of church work.36

Such views, as has been shown, did not receive universal acceptance. The "institutional" churches, in particular, received a good deal of criticism for their work in amusing people. Replying to this criticism, the editor of the influential Methodist organ, The Northwestern Christian Advocate, wrote:

If amusing young people aids to save them, the work is fully and gloriously worthy the church which Jesus Christ founded for the benefit of "lost sheep." The church that does not proffer its attractions to the active minds of young people today in order to get a grip on those young people's souls tomorrow, would do well to read its charter.37

The appearance of this statement in a publication of the allegedly socially conservative Methodist Episcopal Church was undoubtedly a shock to many people both within and without the denomination.

36 Ibid.
37 "Amusements and the Churches," Literary Digest XII (December 21, 1895), p. 228.
In allowing recreation within the church, the minister was often given an otherwise unavailable opportunity to meet many people from the community. At a Presbyterian Conference held in the winter of 1905, an open discussion followed the presentation of a paper dealing with "The Church's Method of Reaching Men." One clergyman, the Reverend Robert Clements, called the group's attention to the very real problem faced by the minister attempting to come in contact with the young man of his neighborhood:

If he [the minister] goes to his home the young man is not there, and he [the minister] is the one man in the community who may not go to the club or the dance, where the young man is. The Christian laity ought so to arrange its social life that the minister may have many social opportunities to meet the young people.38

The "Christian laity," however, were not always prepared to open the doors of their churches to the people of the community for the purpose of providing a place of recreation. Occasionally, it was felt that a question of propriety was involved in connection with the use of the social rooms of the church for many activities. Raising this point, the Reverend Clements caustically commented: "Elders who smoke, play billiards and ten-pins and cards, oppose having a smoking room or a billiard table or a bowling alley for the men of the church, because it is not proper even though they know the young men can thus

38 C. Waldo Cherry, "The Church's Method of Reaching Men," The Auburn Seminary Record XI (March, 1905), p. 27.
be brought under the wholesome influence of the Church."\textsuperscript{39} Obviously opposed to this position, he stated his view in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
I do not plead for the removal of all landmarks, but I do plead for the removal of all barriers in our work for men, that are erected by conventional propriety. Surely church officers and church members ought not to object to those things in the social rooms of the church which they freely allow and do in the social rooms of their own homes. We must put to one side our primness and our merely conventional proprieties, and be all things to all men, if by any means we may win some.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

**The Church and Play in Practice**

The early movement of the church into the field of recreation was not merely a bantering of words. A number of churches throughout the country had been incorporating some aspect of play into their programs long before the turn of the century. The recreational work of several individual churches, including the "institutional," has been discussed in a previous chapter.

An examination of the work of several students of the history of physical education and athletics reveals that many of the denominational colleges set precedents for their churches by allowing, and later encouraging, the students to provide themselves with opportunities for recreation. It is significant, perhaps, to note the fact that, generally, the highest administrative posts and trustee positions were largely filled by clergymen. Upon founding Bethany College in Bethany,

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 27-8.

\textsuperscript{40}\textit{Ibid.}
West Virginia in 1840, Alexander Campbell, a leader of the Disciples of Christ stated, "It is the paramount object of this Institution to educate the youth of the community placed under its care in harmony with the genius of human nature and in accordance with the whole constitution of man, as a physical, intellectual and moral being."\(^{41}\)

Dunlap, in his "History of Men's Physical Education and Athletics at Bethany College," comments that "despite Campbell's statement concerning 'education in accordance with the physical,' Bethany's early sporting activities were unorganized and spontaneous."\(^{42}\)

Nevertheless, organized athletics at Bethany were begun in the 1870's with a representative baseball team. Football arrived in 1894, and a basketball team was organized in 1906.\(^{43}\) Further evidence of the administration's, and indirectly the denomination's, encouragement of participation is the fact that a gymnasium was fitted up in an existing building in 1890 as a result of a $200 gift from the president of the college.\(^{44}\)

As early as 1856, the Lutheran Board of Directors of what is now Capital University, in Columbus, Ohio, gave permission to the students to use part of the college grounds for exercise and recreation. The boys of the school were also allowed to play ball and


\(^{42}\)Ibid.

\(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 19.

\(^{44}\)Ibid., pp. 37-8.
other games in a neighboring park.\textsuperscript{45} In the 1870's the faculty recognized that further emphasis on exercise was needed and attempted to encourage full participation. It is reported that "the Housefather would at times roust out certain individuals, not in sympathy with physical exercises, and require them to join in the activities or go for a walk."\textsuperscript{46}

At Muskingum College, a small Presbyterian school in New Concord, Ohio, loosely organized athletics were under the control of the students until about 1900, with no overt clerical objection reported.\textsuperscript{47} Likewise, at Otterbein College, founded by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in Westerville, Ohio, no clerical antagonism was evidenced when, in 1860, the boys sought permission to use a corner of the campus for playing ball.\textsuperscript{48} In fact, recognition of a need for exercise is indicated by an earlier statement of the Executive Committee on June 26, 1855: "regular exercise in the open

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 14.
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air is positively required of all; either by manual labor or gymnastics." It should be noted however, that the organization of several match games with other colleges beginning in 1882, was frowned upon by the faculty because of fear of injury and neglect of studies. From the evidence available, there were no religious objections to these athletic contests.

The Central Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, purchased Ohio Northern University in 1898. The evidence, according to one writer, indicates that while there was no declaration of support for intercollegiate athletics, neither was there an "edict against them, as there was against dancing, card playing and the frequenting of immoral places." "Thus," concludes the writer, "by 1900, intercollegiate sports at Ohio Northern became a very important part of the extra-curricular activities of the students."

As athletics and physical education grew in popularity at the colleges and universities throughout the country following the Civil War, so too were they assimilated into the work of many churches. The practice of outfitting gymnasiums, organizing teams and leagues, and offering physical training classes became a standard pattern among

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\[49\] Ibid., p. 6.
\[50\] Ibid., p. 10.
\[52\] Ibid.
the "institutional" churches of large cities and small between the 1880's and 1920.\(^5\) The popular appeal of such a program led to its adoption in numerous other churches which could not truly be called "institutional" in the generally accepted use of that term. Several examples of this phenomenon have been cited in Chapter III. Literally thousands of such cases could be listed. In Chicago, it has been reported that by 1910, over two hundred churches were members of a federated athletic organization which supervised numerous Bible-class and church-school athletic leagues.\(^5\) At the 1916 Conference of the Federal Council of Churches it was reported that "such organizations exist in about one hundred and forty different cities in the United States."\(^5\)

By the end of 1915, the Social Service Commission of the Protestant Episcopal diocese of Philadelphia, found that forty of the over eighty parishes of that diocese were equipped with gymnasiums. A specific break-down of the activities offered yields the following information:

1. Twenty-six parishes have basket-ball;

2. Twenty-nine parishes have frequent supervised dances, in some cases with employed teachers;

\(^5\) See Chapter III of the present work.


\(^5\) Ibid.
3. Sixteen parishes have classes in calisthenics;

4. Fifteen own stereopticons and have frequent lantern lectures;

5. Four have motion pictures;

6. Other forms of recreation: dramatic entertainments (reported by all parishes), Boy scout patrols, military drill, baseball teams, summer-camps and outings, shuffleboard, bowling-alleys, pool-and billiard-tables, bathing facilities, reading-and game-rooms, social gatherings of parishioners and others, kindergartens, outdoor playgrounds, tennis courts.56

At the same time, the Detroit diocese could boast of twenty-two churches with gymnasiums. In addition, six others were renting gymnasiums for their members. Eighteen church teams were combined in basketball leagues, and six churches employed athletic directors to supervise all games.57 As further proof of the popularity of this movement, it is reported that the physical director of the Detroit Young Men's Christian Association "established a normal class for the training of young men who are expecting to take up gymnasium instruction as a regular part of their church-work or for those who are already instructing churchmen and wish to obtain more theory and practice as teachers of athletics . . . "58

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57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
The Episcopalians were not the only Detroit Protestants with an interest in recreation. Throughout the first several years of the new century, the Detroit Board of Education was besieged with requests for the use of the three high school gymnasiums by various church basketball teams. In 1907, the Young Men's Christian Association of Detroit organized a Sunday School Athletic League which has carried on successfully to the present day. This league supervised basketball and softball, and, with over ninety churches participating, was "represented by upwards of one hundred and twenty-five teams."

Similar instances could be cited for hundreds of other communities during this period. At this point it will suffice to conclude that by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, it was no longer an unusual occurrence for a church to support athletic teams or even to provide the necessary facilities.

The appeal of the outdoors to many youth was seen by some churchmen as a possible means by which the church could reach and serve the people. While organized church camping, as it is known today, was a development of later years, it nevertheless can claim roots in the


61 For detailed descriptions of the programs of a number of churches in the U. S. see, Herbert Wright Gates, Recreation and the Church, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1917).
late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the first three individuals to establish a summer camp in America, according to available records, was a minister. In 1880, the Reverend George W. Hinckley, pastor of a church in West Hartford, Connecticut, took seven boys from his parish to a camp in Rhode Island.\(^6\) A few years later, the Reverend Mr. Hinckley founded the Good Will Farm for boys, located at Hinckley, Maine. This camp "took the form of an Assembly with a daily program consisting of 'sane and sensible' religious periods; an educational program; swimming, baseball, tennis in the afternoon, and sings, talks and entertainments in the evening.\(^6\)

Over the next several years similar projects were attempted by other individuals, both clergy and laymen, as well as by churches and affiliated groups. Ernest Balch, founder of the first organized camp in the United States—Camp Chocorua, 1881-1889—placed great emphasis on the spiritual training of the boys under his charge. Describing the chapel at Camp Chocorua, Miss Elizabeth Balch, a half-sister of the founder wrote:

The Camp Chapel was carefully designed, the Altar a huge boulder raised into place, upon which was a large cross made of white birch. The lecturn, a rock finely shaped by nature, was finished out of the lade. The


\(^{6,3}\)Henry William Gibson, The History of Organized Camping, (Boston: 1936), unpaged.
Altar, on Sundays, was dressed with leaves and flowers by the boys. A procession in cotta and cassock, came down the pathway singing hymns. The Episcopal service was used by Mr. Balch. The offerings went to different charities. 64

In 1882, a Cambridge Theological Seminary student, William Ford Nichols, opened a Camp Harvard at Stow, Massachusetts. It is reported that the program of this camp was similar to that of Camp Chocorua. 65 In 1885, Camp Bald Head, the first Y. M. C. A. camp, was founded by Sumner F. Dudley. 66

The first edition of Porter's A Handbook of Summer Camps, although published in 1924, gives a rather sketchy picture of other early efforts to establish religiously oriented camps. The Young Women's Bible Training Movement of Albany, New York, "was a pioneer in camping for girls." 67 This organization established, in 1898, Camp Altamont, in the Helderberg Mountains. The camp was founded for "self-supporting girls and young women." 68 By 1924, the camp was being conducted by the Y. W. C. A. with the same guiding purpose.

The Order of Sir Galahad, an organization for boys in the Episcopal Church, established Camp O-At-Ka, at East Sebago, Maine, in

64Ibid.
65Ibid.
66Ibid.
68Ibid.
1900, as the official camp of the Order. Under the direction of the Reverend Ernest J. Dennen, the camp endeavored to develop the Galahad tradition and loyalty to its orders and ways, which were:

... to interpret religion to the boys in terms of recreational and other interests, by rituals, initiations, vows, pageants and service. In carrying out this ideal it tries to shape its program so that the boys are helped to make their religion real, their morals clean, their bodies strong and their minds keen.

Obviously, the church camping movement, at this stage, was in its infancy. A truly organized camping program, within most denominations, was to be a product of later years. These early beginnings in camping, however, are further indications that the church recognized a need and place for recreation in its total work.

Church Leadership in the Recreation and Physical Education Movements

Fortunately, perhaps, for the recreation and physical education movements in the United States, many churchmen were not content merely to bring play into the church. They recognized the limitations of their institutions in providing for the recreational needs of the entire community. While acknowledging the church's share of the responsibility for this aspect of life, they nevertheless believed that it

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
was a duty of the entire community. To this end, many clergymen willingly opened the doors of their churches for recreation as an example or "guiding light" to the neighborhood at large. The "institutional" churches, previously cited, were largely based upon this foundation.

One of the first documented instances of a deliberate church-sponsored recreational service to the community occurred in 1868. In the summer of that year "an outdoor children's playground was established under the auspices of the old First Church of Boston in the yard of a public school near Copley Square and in connection with a vacation school maintained at that place." Rainwater dates the beginning of the playground movement in America as 1885, when the sand gardens were opened in the yards of the West End Nursery and Parmenter Street Chapel in Boston. One year later, sand was also placed in the yard of the Warrenton Street Chapel.

Such early instances of religious concern for the play-life of the community served as a prelude to the impending flood of clerical support for neighborhood playgrounds and physical education in the schools. Two men of the cloth demonstrated their interest in the latter movement by their attendance and participation at the first meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Physical Education.

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72 Ibid., pp. 22-3.
in 1885, at Adelphi Academy in Brooklyn, New York. The famous Brooklyn minister, T. DeWitt Talmadge, opened the session with "a prayer for divine guidance." Of perhaps greater significance to this study is the fact that the first speaker of the day was also a minister; the Reverend Edward P. Thwing, at that time the president of the New York Academy of Anthropology. The Reverend Mr. Thwing's interest and enthusiasm was evidently noted by the other delegates since, by the end of the day, he found himself elected one of three vice-presidents of the fledgling organization.\footnote{Bruce L. Bennett and Mabel Lee, "This is Our Heritage," \textit{Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation} XXXI (April, 1960), p. 27.}

Occasionally, similar support for physical education found its way into denominational journals and meetings. In 1889, a writer for the Unitarian Review criticized past church attitudes toward play and pleaded for the adoption of such a program in the schools. Arguing that Christian theology had, in the past, been generally misleading in its attitude toward the body, he wrote:

Well, we have gone on to treat the body vilely enough to make life a desert drear. We have continuously stumbled along the stony roadway of this life because our eyes were fixed on heaven, and not on the path before us. Many a man has lost his way to heaven because of these boulders which we should have moved out of the way. And have not the most saintly been delayed a little on their vertical course starward, because of liver complaints which a moral man who exercised properly--and a man who does
not exercise properly is not a moral man—would not have had ... 74

Evidencing the same concern eleven years later, a Quaker medical doctor made a "Plea for the Education of the Body," before the Society of Friends' General Conference of 1900. 75 He too, placed much of the blame for the continuing neglect of the body on the past attitudes and teachings of the church. For too long, he felt, people had shunned personal responsibility in caring for their physical beings while blaming "Divine Providence" for any disastrous ailments. "Physical righteousness, like virtue, might be self-evolved; it cannot be imputed or imparted." 76 Concerning the relationship of the church to physical education, he had no doubts. Removing the subject from the realm of the material, he stated:

... it is a religious question, and the cause of morals and religion cannot progress at a steady and adequate pace until the world pays due respect and reverence to that most beautiful and wondrous of structures, the human body. 77

Such religious support for physical education undoubtedly played a role in its eventual acceptance by the people and their representatives.

76Ibid., p. 311
77Ibid., p. 310.
on the school boards across America. The most superficial survey of the period, however, would tend to indicate that the playground and recreation movements received the bulk of the socially-minded churchmen's attention. And, the secular leaders of these movements were certainly not opposed to such cooperation. On the contrary, such help was openly encouraged and solicited.

The noted pioneer in American recreation, Henry S. Curtis, had no doubts as to the role and duty of the church.

If it be the purpose of Christianity to promote human brotherhood, or, in more common terms, real friendship among men, then it is no less the duty of the Church to promote sociability and friendliness than it is to hold church services.78

Recognizing the need of most communities for leadership in this area, numerous churchmen acknowledged the duty of the church in sharing such a task and in prodding the people to provide public recreation. At the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, the assembly directed its attention to the recreation problems of rural America. It was felt by one ministerial speaker that organized recreation programs were essential because of the "shifting and decreasing rural population."79 Aware of the need for an organization behind such an endeavor, the Reverend Fred E.


79Fred E. Eastman, "Rural Recreation Through the Church," The Playground VI (October, 1912), p. 234.
Eastman proposed that the church initiate the program with the hope that others would soon assume the task:

It is to be hoped that some day the school will be able to furnish the community recreation, but until that day comes it is a duty of the church, the largest and most elastic organization in the community . . . , to do what it can to supply the need of its people.80

At the same meeting, another clerical speaker, the Reverend Walter B. Dickenson of Kalamazoo, Michigan addressed himself to the need for rural recreation centers. He advocated such centers as a means of not only providing play, but also of developing higher standards of citizenship. "The rural recreation center," he stated, "may be a significant and powerful means in lifting the standard not only of a conception but of that which is more important, of the standard of actual living for all within its radius of influence."81

A Methodist, The Reverend Harry F. Ward, felt that, "the church has no more desire to assume the task of providing the recreational life of the community than it has to assume the control of any other part of community life."82

80 Ibid.
On the other hand, he was not averse to "insisting that the community must provide adequate and proper recreation for all the children of the community."\textsuperscript{83}

Richard Henry Edwards, wrote of the tremendous need for people of high moral and ethical integrity to supervise public recreation. Obviously in support of public recreation, Edwards deemed it a part of Christianity's responsibility to provide such leaders from among its people:

It is this high quality of play leadership which, in the actual outworking of the recreation movement, will largely determine the effectiveness of public facilities for recreation in competition with commercial amusement resorts and parks. If the best public opinion and moral responsibility can actually control the supervision of these facilities and take the lead in public recreation, then low commercial offerings can either be driven out of business or forced to raise their standards.\textsuperscript{84}

One writer, in answer to the question, "What can the minister do?", outlined a number of necessary and proper roles:

He can help educate the church out of a negative or indifferent attitude toward the absorbing play-interests of childhood and youth. He can publicly indorse and encourage movements to provide for this interest of young life and may often co-operate in the organization and management of such movements. . . . He can partly meet the demand through clubs and societies organized in connection

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 373.

with his own church. He can plead for a real and longer childhood in behalf of Christ's little ones who are often sacrificed through commercial greed, un-Christian business ambition, educational blindness, and ignorance. He can preach a gospel that does not set the body over against the soul, science over against the Bible, and the church over against normal life; but embraces every child of man in an imperial redemption which is environmental and social as well as individual, physical as well as spiritual. In short, he can study and serve his community, not as one who must keep an organization alive at whatever cost, but as one who must inspire and lead others to obey the Master whose only reply to our repeated protestations of love is, "Feed my lambs." 85

Such service to the community was, in many instances, an actuality as churchmen found themselves increasingly involved in the social problems of their neighborhoods. In New York City, the New York Society for Parks and Playgrounds was incorporated in 1890, with the support of clergymen, some of whom became charter members. 86 The Society opened its first playground in 1891, at Ninety-Ninth Street and Second Avenue. The Playground was "equipped with swings, see-saws, small wagons, wheelbarrows, shovels, footballs, flags, drums, banners, and a sand- pile." 87 The opening of the playground brought forth publicity and enthusiasm. The religious support for this project was evidently


87 Ibid.
quite strong. It is reported that, "on Saturday, November 21, 1891, twenty-seven prominent Jewish Rabbis spoke before their congregations on the need for playgrounds for children, and the next day one hundred clergymen preached on the same theme."  

The large cities were not the only sites of church involvement in community recreational needs. The rural areas were equally in need of such facilities and the churches and their ministers were frequently at the fore in initiating recreational programs. Indeed, the churches have traditionally provided a social outlet for the inhabitants of rural areas. The popularity of church socials, strawberry festivals, pageants and other such programs during the late nineteenth century is evidence of this role of the country church.

Following the turn of the century, however, there were many who felt that the informal role of the church as the social center of the countryside was not sufficient to meet the total recreational needs of the people. As a result, efforts were put forth in communities across the country to meet this need.

In Kentfield, California, a few years following the turn of the century, a community social center was established for the purpose of improving the social life of the rural community. The Tamalpais Centre was the gift of a prominent local family. Of significance to the present study is the fact that the dean of the Centre was a local

88 Ibid., p. 5.
minister, the Reverend Ernest Bradley. The Centre provided facilities and organizational leadership for clubs as well as establishing playground space and sports facilities for all ages. In addition, the Centre conducted a non-sectarian Sunday-school and made available buildings and grounds for all unaffiliated groups of the area.

The Reverend E. Frazer Bell, pastor in an Adirondack summer resort with about four hundred permanent inhabitants, found the usual dearth of things to do in a small village during the winter. After organizing an athletic club for boys, the minister, a former Y. M. C. A. physical director, helped them raise money for a gymnasium for the town. Revealing his feelings on this subject, the Reverend Mr. Bell commented:

I am very much interested, of course, in the physical development of my young people, believing that proper conditions physically are very essential to proper moral and spiritual conditions.90

In Stafford Springs, Connecticut, a town of a little more than five thousand, "a proposal to open a gymnasium, game, and reading room for the boys of one of the Protestant churches was enlarged to include all the population so far as its interest and support could be won."91 As a result, a non-sectarian club was formed with a nine-man board of

90"Recreation Through the Church in Keene Valley, New York," The Playground VI (October, 1912), p. 247.

directors including representatives of all the churches, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish. Once a week the facilities were made available to the women and girls. Money to run the club was obtained by subscription, and, according to one of the ministers, club leaders continuously worked for additional community recreation facilities.

The Reverend Lyman G. Cosand of Barclay, Kansas, urged the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor to build a playground on the church grounds for the use of a Junior Christian Endeavor on Saturday afternoons. It was then decided to have it open for the entire community one night a month, at which time refreshments were served by some organization of the church or community.

A similar program was instituted by the pastor of the First Congregational Church of North Stonington, Connecticut. The Reverend Frederic M. Hollister and his wife had general supervision of the work on the church's playground, to which all of the children of the community were welcome. The yard contained homemade apparatus swings, see-saws, a sliding board, trapeze and ropes. Two paid teachers were directly in charge of the children.

The cases cited above were by no means isolated exceptions. The development of community recreation programs in the city churches was

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92 Ibid., p. 349.
93 Ibid.
94 "Year Book Letters," The Playground VIII (June, 1914), p. 112.
95 Ibid., pp. 112-3.
matched by the efforts of rural churchmen. In support of this con-
tention, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America
released the findings of a "Study of the Country Pastor's Relation
to Community Recreation." G. Frederick Wells, a representative of
the Federal Council of Churches, presented these findings in an
address to the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation
Association of America in 1912. They were:

1. The country pastors of our land are
foremost among the local leaders in
recreative rural play. "Where rural
playgrounds exist the cases are excep-
tional where the ministers are not
either the leaders, or vitally inter-
ested."

2. "The rural parish house, as the church
social center for the community, is
becoming increasingly prevalent.

3. "The rural picnic is probably as often
the church or Sunday school picnic as
the holiday of the public schools or
the grange. If the latter is the case
the priest, the rector and the dominie
are never far distant.

4. "While the direct leadership of the
pastor and church in community recrea-
tion is usually normal, the indirect
creative leadership or inspiration by
the church of such undertakings is both
normal and ideal."

Emphasizing the significance of these findings, Wells concluded

96 G. Frederick Wells, "The Country Pastor and Community Recrea-
tion: Instances and Results," The Playground VI (October, 1912),
pp. 238-247.
his remarks by commenting upon the importance of the rural minister's community service:

The true measure of a country pastor's power of moral and spiritual leadership of community life is the measure of his ability as either the direct or indirect engineer of community recreation. The wise country pastor, and he is not forever to be in the minority, discovers his play problem by means of the social or the sociological survey of the community. He solves this problem by means of the practice of the social or the community program for his church. And thus he becomes a social leader not only in the field of community building, but in the field of nation building.97

Church Relationship to the Y. M. C. A. 98

A further, if perhaps somewhat indirect, contribution of Protestantism in the recreation movement in the United States has been its cooperation and support of the work of the Young Men's Christian Association. The Y. M. C. A., as an independent lay organization dedicated to religious work among young men, was first organized in 1851 in Boston. Its early emphasis was restricted to Bible study and evangelical work. According to Hopkins, "interest in physical work first appeared in the second half of the 1850's."99

97 Ibid., pp. 246-7.

98 The writer, after much deliberation, elected to focus his primary attention upon the relationship of the church and the Y.M.C.A. rather than the Y.W.C.A. and Boy and Girl Scout movements. Justification for this action rests on the fact that the Y.M.C.A. during the period under study, was the Protestant lay agency most directly and deeply involved in play.

appears to have been the first to seriously propose such work for the Y. M. C. A. Early in the decade he stated:

There ought to be gymnastic grounds and good bowling alleys, in connection with reading rooms, in every ward of the city, under judicious management, where, for a small fee, every young man might find various wholesome exercises, and withal good society, without the temptations which surround all the alleys and rooms of the city, kept for bowling and billiards. It seems surprising, while so many young men's associations are organized, whose main trouble it is to find something to do, that some Christian association should not undertake this important reformation, and give to the young men of our cities the means of physical vigor and health, separate from temptations to vice. It would be a very gospel.100

In 1856, the Brooklyn Association's Board of Managers met to consider setting up a gymnasium. It was not until 1859, however, under the leadership of the youthful Lyman Abbott and the continued interest of Beecher that the Brooklyn Y. M. C. A. made a serious effort to obtain a gymnasium by the device of selling shares at ten dollars each. Unfortunately, the scheme did not succeed because of the outbreak of the Civil War.101

Over the next several decades recreational work was undertaken by a number of Associations throughout the country. Evidence of the increasing importance of this area of the Association's work is seen in the fact that both basketball and volleyball were developed by members of the physical training staff of the Y. M. C. A. college at
Springfield, Massachusetts in the 1890's. Both sports proved to be most popular as recreational activities in the churches of America. This emphasis was evidently a late nineteenth century development however, since criticism of the Y. M. C. A.'s lack of leadership in this area was voiced periodically by the liberally oriented clergy. Dr. William S. Rainsford, shortly after his arrival at St. George's Episcopal Church in New York City in 1883, was invited to address the annual meeting of the Y. M. C. A. Feeling that the 'Y', in those days, "was far too goody-goody," he pleaded "for larger and better gymnasiums, for billiard tables, and a roomy and well-ventilated smoking room in every Y. M. C. A. building in New York." The leadership present was not wholly enthusiastic about his views, but, as Rainsford proudly stated, "Billiard tables and smoking rooms and splendid gymnasiums came--not immediately, but they came!" It should perhaps be noted however, that that was the first and last time Dr. Rainsford was asked to address the New York Y. M. C. A. 

Dr. Rainsford was not alone among the clergy in advocating a greater emphasis on recreation within the Associations. In 1890, the Reverend W. S. Marquis, of Rock Island, Illinois, conducted a survey among a large number of ministers and Y. M. C. A. secretaries in an


103 Ibid., p. 336.

104 Ibid.
effort to determine the value of the 'Y' to the religious life of young men. Generally speaking, the ministers agreed that,

the Y. M. C. A.'s were valuable in providing for young men wholesome leisure-time activities that involve the practice of Christian morals, gave valuable training for life, and brought young men within the influence of Christian men; and in providing practical counsel on Christian living in work and play.105

During the 1890's athletics came to play a more important role in the total program of the Y. M. C. A. It has been reported that "in 1895, by authorization of the International Convention of that year, the Athletic League of the North American Associations was formed, for the development and promotion of clean sport in athletics."106 The physical department then extended its influence beyond the circle of Association membership by organizing similar leagues among Sunday-schools and church clubs.107 The latter development was a most outstanding service provided to the churches by the Associations. It provided a means of holding the interest of the youth through the week as well as a means of introducing non-churchgoing youth to the church itself.108

107 Ibid., p. 171.
Wiley reports a great deal of cooperation between the "institu­tional" churches and the Y. M. C. A.'s, from 1905 to 1920. "The anticipated competition between Y. M. C. A.'s and so-called 'institu­tional churches' never developed extensively." During the early years of the twentieth century the institutional equipment in­vestment in churches in New York City exceeded that of the Y. M. C. A. by three and one half million dollars. While the building of institutional churches continued, however, sentiment gradually "turned in favor of utilizing the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A. so that between 1905 and 1920 the Y. M. C. A.'s enjoyed an unprecedented building era." The Associations attempted to assist the churches that main­tained recreational facilities by acting in an advisory capacity and by helping them to secure leaders and supervisors. In some instances, Wiley reports, "the Associations eventually undertook the management of such church facilities and used them for the benefit of the rest of the community, as well as for the immediate constituencies of the churches." By 1915, the Y. M. C. A. could boast of 707 gymnasiums, 307 athletic fields, 400 swimming pools, and 4,645 summer camps in North

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109 Ibid., p. 111.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
America. It would appear that a substantial and influential part of the Protestant lay leadership had come to accept play as a legitimate interest in life.

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113 "Recreation in the Church," Literary Digest, LIII (July 29, 1916), p. 256. The writer was unable to verify the figure given for the number of summer camps operated by the Y. M. C. A. in North America in 1915. The figure of 4,645, however, appears to be somewhat high.
CHAPTER VI

THE ROLE OF PLAY IN THE CHURCH

The role of the church in the early recreation movement, it has
been shown, was indeed varied. Likewise, play, when incorporated into
the work of the church, assumed a number of functions. In the preced­
ing chapter it was noted that the proponents of church recreation em­
phasized at least three possibly worthwhile purposes for such activity:
1) as a substitute for undesirable pursuits, 2) as a means of re­
deeming certain basically innocent amusements from corrupt influence,
and 3) as a means of recruiting new church members. Closer examina­
tion, however, reveals a somewhat larger variety of roles through
which recreation began to serve the church and its people. These roles
can be classified under four broad headings:

1. Community outreach - the extension of the church into the
community for the purposes of service and recruitment.

2. Fellowship - promotion of social intercourse among the church
members.

3. Christian education

4. Financial - fund raising
Community Outreach

The church with an organized recreational program was indeed providing a service to its members and perhaps the entire community by offering a desired activity otherwise often unavailable in an acceptable form. The writer would suggest that service was the primary concern of the so-called "institutional" church. This type of ministry came into being to meet the social service needs, including recreational, not otherwise satisfied. As one minister of such a church stated: "The Institutional church recognizes that it must meet the legitimate demands of life in its widest sense."¹ Of the Reverend Charles Dickenson's work at Boston's Berkeley Temple, it has been written:

The cardinal thought in all Mr. Dickenson's work is that of ministration. The church, as he understands it, does not exist for itself, but as a means of helping men and as the true method of realizing the Spirit of Jesus Christ in the life of the present time.²

The Tabernacle Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, maintained what might be termed a parish house. The "People's Palace," as it was called, was deemed "a broad philanthropic movement designed to pour sunshine into the hearts of thousands who are doomed to lives of poverty and toil . . ."³ The extensive work of the Reverend

¹C. Clever, "The Institutional Church," The Reformed Church Review IV (October, 1900), p. 496.
³Ibid., p. 658.
Rainsford and his staff at New York's St. George's Episcopal was likewise, primarily motivated by a sense of service. ¹

The "institutional" churches were certainly not the only ones, however, to offer play as a means of service. As has been previously illustrated, churches large and small, urban and rural, included, to one degree or another, some form of recreation. In Chicago during the latter half of the 1890's, the Episcopal city mission opened a number of playrooms during July and August in the Sunday-school rooms of churches or halls. ² In 1912, the following sign was placed in the church yard of the Chapel of the Intercession, Trinity Parish, on upper Broadway in New York City:

THIS CHURCH

Invites the Mothers of the Neighborhood to
Use its Little Children's Play-Garden

THE PUBLIC WELCOMED TO THESE GROUNDS  
Especially Mothers and Children

No toys or apparatus were provided although seats were available for the mothers and nurses. The children played in the dirt and with one another. ³


One church, in the small Colorado mining town of New Castle, offered athletic classes for both men and women in addition to making a gymnasium and billiard and pool room available. The latter served as an alternative to the only other establishment offering such facilities: the saloon.  

The Auburn Seminary (Presbyterian) in 1907 opened for the first time the Seminary athletic fields as a public playground for the summer. Reportedly, the administration had wanted to take such action earlier but had been unable to secure the services of a competent physical director. In announcing its decision, the Seminary emphasized its hope for the project as well as its willingness to provide this service:

The children will not only have the freedom and joy of sport, and the vigor that comes from it, but they will learn more than one lesson of character. The playground will contribute to their true education. The Seminary is happy to make this contribution to the social welfare of the boys and girls of our city.

The spirit of service was, undoubtedly a primary motivating factor in first leading churchmen to provide recreation for the people. The above examples, in addition to those previously cited, adequately attest to that fact.


While reaching out to serve the community, it was noted by many churchmen, new souls might be won through the attraction of play. The use of play as a "drawing card," as discussed in the preceding chapter, appears, in fact, to have been a major consideration of more than a few church leaders. Indeed, the minister who did not include this point when encouraging some form of church recreation was rare. Representative of this position is the following statement made by one rural minister:

It [recreation] holds the young people, it gets a leverage on those outside the church and, if the recreation facilities are offered in the church building or on its grounds, it gets the people in the habit of coming to church for something besides funerals, preaching services, and temperance orations.

Speaking from his own vast experience in rural church recreation, the Reverend M. B. McNutt of Plainfield, Illinois, expressed the same conviction with the somewhat more succinct statement, "There is many a one who comes to play and remains to pray." To him, it was easy as well as proper "to get a boy—even a bad boy into an athletic club, which may be made the first step into the church and into the Christian life."

In stressing the need for adaptability in the organization of

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9 Fred E. Eastman, "Rural Recreation Through the Church," The Playground VI (October, 1912), p. 234.
10 "Recreation in a Rural Community," The Playground VI (October, 1912), p. 221.
11 Ibid.
the church, one Presbyterian writer exhibited an awareness of the problem of encouraging young people into a church society when they have no present interest in its spiritual ministrations. Feeling that many youths might be won to at least an "associated relationship" through more attractive privileges such as a glee club or tramping club, he suggested: "Go as low as need be, but bind the club to the religious group that it may be but a stepping-stone to the higher circle."\(^\text{12}\)

The latter statement, it may well be surmised, was looked askance by more than one church elder. To "go as low as need be" reeks with a suggestion of impropriety. To the Reverend Silas E. Persons, however, it was undoubtedly a proposal of some merit. Some surely felt that he descended too low when he decided to keep his Sunday school class of teen-age boys together by inviting them to the parsonage one night a week to play pool, after which they engaged in a thirty minute Bible study period.\(^\text{13}\)

The entire concept of active community outreach was relatively new to American Protestantism beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. During this same period it has presumably been established that a noticeable positive change in attitude by the church toward play occurred. It is interesting and significant, therefore,


\(^{13}\) Silas E. Persons, "Rural Recreation Through the Church," *The Playground* VI (March, 1913), p. 458.
to note the role given to recreation in the community outreach programs of a large part of American Protestantism.

Fellowship

A second major purpose and/or outcome of church recreation at this time was the strengthening of fellowship within the congregation. This too, was found to benefit the church as well as its members. As one clergyman put it, "... there is a selfish reason why the church should offer recreation of some sort,—because it aids the church. It enlivens the people, and a lively church never came from a sluggish people."\(^{11}\) Apparently impressed with his own observations, a German writer, Dr. Albert Haas, was also moved to cite the social life of the church as one of the secular factors contributing to the active life of the church in the United States.\(^{15}\)

One indication of the popularity of church social functions is the fact that both religious and secular periodicals began inserting articles with "hints" and suggestions for successful socials and entertainments. One, The Ladies Home Journal, ran such an article as a regular feature for some time shortly after the turn of the century. In 1906, as a result of its popularity, the editors of the magazine published the feature in book form under the title, Church Sociables and Entertainments. Obviously, the editors had more than an academic interest in the promotion of church social life. Nevertheless,

\(^{11}\) Eastman, loc. cit.

\(^{15}\) "Secular Motives for Going to Church," The American Review of Reviews XLI (February, 1910), pp. 222-3.
the arguments they advanced in encouraging its development merit consid­
eration since they failed to differ perceptibly with those of many
clergymen of the day:

The perfection of social life should be found
in connection with the church. There all arti-
ficial divisions of class may be temporarily
obliterated. Rich and poor, cultured and
ignorant--so they be decent in person and man-
ner--may, on common ground of church fellow-
ship, for an occasional hour or two, find it
agreeable to talk together. They will dis-
cover in one another a surprising number of
good qualities, and be stimulated and refreshed
by another's gifts. In the church "sociable"
the latent and the hidden talents of the quiet
members of the congregation may be drawn out,
and the timid may be inspired with a willing-
ness to contribute something to the general
enjoyment.16

The Reverend J. Lyon Caughy, a Presbyterian from Rochester, New
York, represented a church whose men's Bible class numbered close to
five hundred. It was the Reverend Caughy's contention that the suc-
cess of the class was based on four elements:

1. The personality of the teacher.
2. The character of the teaching.
3. The element of fellowship and
   association, and the entertainment
   which is provided through them.
4. The interest that is taken in ath-
   letic enterprises and events.17


17 C. Waldo Cherry, "The Church's Method of Reaching Men," The
   Auburn Seminary Record I (March, 1907), p. 28.
A Sunday-school athletic league, an outdoor athletic meet, a mid-winter festival, and a spring field day were typical activities of this organization. In addition, some of the young men's classes maintained their own social rooms and frequently the men from various classes would meet at a local bowling alley for friendly competition.

The practice of providing a social period at various church functions became a rather common occurrence. Such an approach, it was felt, helped meet one's social and spiritual needs. The organization of youth groups and men's clubs undoubtedly contributed to this trend. In some cases, even church conferences and conventions sought to formally incorporate recreational fellowship as a part of the total program. The Friends' General Conference, held at Cape May, New Jersey, in the summer of 1916, is a most appropriate case in point. The following is a complete list of recreational events occurring during the Conference:

1st day (Friday) - Tombstone Golf Tournament at the Cape May Golf Club. Informal excursions to Cape May Point and to Sewell's Point. Bathing.

2nd day (Saturday) - Beach Gymkhana. Races and sports.

3rd day (Sunday) - None listed

4th day (Monday) - Afternoon: Baseball games on the Cape May Baseball Field. for boys, girls and men.

5th day (Tuesday) - Afternoon: Progressive and Round Robin Tennis Tournament at the Corinthian Yacht Club. Evening: Marshmallow
toast on the beach.
Moonlight bathing.

6th day (Wednesday) - Afternoon: Sailing party on the Inlet.19

The fellowship of the delegates, it must be admitted, was well planned for by the leaders. In light of some of the earlier attitudes of the Quakers, the above is most significant and can perhaps be used as a yardstick to measure the change of most of Protestantism over the preceding half-century.

**Christian Education**

The role of play in the Christian Education program of most churches during the period under study was rather vague and varied. As indicated previously, a number of church leaders were cognizant of the potential educational values of play. One stated purpose of such church sponsored activities as athletics and camping was that they could be utilized in teaching good sportsmanship, fair play, cooperation and other such virtuous behavior traits if properly supervised. The program at the Episcopal Camp O-At-Ka was characteristic in this respect. As noted in the previous chapter, the camp endeavored "... to interpret religion to the boys in terms of recreational and other interests ... so that the boys are helped to make their religion real, their bodies strong and their minds keen."20

More often than not, however, it appears that the church leaders

perceived the major contribution of play to the Christian Education program to be that of a "drawing-card" and palliative. As frequently noted earlier, a social emphasis was considered quite effective in attracting people, particularly the young, to the church. Once there, a continuing emphasis on fellowship and sociability was considered essential.

**Financial Benefits**

The popularity of church sociables such as suppers, strawberry festivals, ice cream socials, bazaars, fairs, and pageants has been noted previously. Particularly popular in the rural areas, the activity afforded a pleasant opportunity for church members as well as outsiders to visit informally. At the same time, it was often regarded as a prime method of meeting church expenses. Through free will offerings or admission charges, financial support for the work of the church could be painlessly extracted.

The value of such an approach to many smaller churches cannot be overestimated. In the words of one rural pastor, "It is hard to tell where the church would be today if it were not for the oyster or the strawberry. They have saved many a church from the financial scrap-heap." For those churches not yet aware of these possibilities, the editors of *The Ladies Home Journal*, offered the following advice:

> No live church can afford to be behind the times in such matters, for the social life

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21Eastman, loc. cit., pp. 234-5.
of churches and their various auxiliary societies must depend largely upon the help such entertainments can give, and, in many, yes the majority of cases, the financial life draws a goodly measure of its sustenance from these sources. 

... It takes money, and plenty of it, too, to feed the real, vital, energetic life of a wide-awake, up-and-doing church. Hence the need of church suppers and fairs.\textsuperscript{22}

The role of play in raising money for the church was, however, limited in most cases to the social functions cited above. Athletic programs were not, it appears, carried on for profit. Any financial income derived from admission receipts were used to support and carry on the program itself.

\textsuperscript{22}Church Sociables and Entertainments, pp. 9, 10.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The first two centuries of American history saw Protestant Christianity play a great role in shaping the culture of the nation. During the early colonial period Protestantism, through its various theocracies, exerted its most severe and dramatic influence. The church, however, continued to mold public opinion on social matters for generations after its decline as a potent political force.

The official attitude of Protestantism toward play and amusements appears to have been largely negative for most of this period. Reasons for this prejudice toward play were varied. One of the most frequently voiced objections of church leaders was that participation would withdraw one's affections from spiritual things. "Be ye not conformed to the world," was the guiding principle of the day. The children of God were merely strangers passing through this world. They were not to be side-tracked by the "worldly" pastimes of other men.

The fear of overindulgence in the pleasures of the world was another reason for the opposition of the clergy. A real danger existed, they believed, in the fact that man, through his own moral weakness,
might become addicted to a life of amusement. Therefore, it was better to completely abstain from indulging in those activities which might tend to licentiousness, namely, dancing, card playing, horse-racing, theater attendance, etc. The field sports of hunting and fishing were often included in such a list because of the feeling that they brutalized man and hardened the heart. On the latter point, however, there was widespread disagreement.

Further justification for much of the intense opposition to play has been attributed to the need for hard work with little leisure in a frontier society. In addition, a certain degree of class antagonism came to be directed toward the members of the upper social levels who did have time for enjoyable diversions.

As the frontier moved west after 1800, life became somewhat less arduous in the older states. Interest in many sports and other amusements increased among the populous and public opinion gradually began to exhibit a change. While clerical denunciations continued to pour forth, signs began to appear that pointed toward a recognition by the church of the importance of recreation in man's life. Rather than sweeping denunciations of play in general, the attacks were directed at specific activities which, through the years, had come to have undesirable associations. Differentiation was made between "innocent diversion" and those which tended toward licentiousness. Regardless of the type, however, every activity was to be taken in moderation. Some ministers even began to question the legitimacy of the opposition to dancing and card playing if their objectionable features were removed.
By the beginning of the Civil War a new climate of opinion regarding play was evolving within church-going America. Overshadowing the entire controversy was the fact that the mainstream of American Protestantism was beginning to shed its extreme otherworldly emphasis in favor of a real concern for man in his present environment. This concern was directed toward man's physical and emotional, as well as his spiritual well-being.

The social awareness of the churches found several problems upon which to focus during the years following the Civil War. The rapid growth of cities presented perhaps the most serious crises. Overpopulated slums, low wages, woman and child labor excesses, intercultural adjustments for the immigrant, and an appalling lack of suitable social outlets were among the most obvious evils. As one of the few agencies equipped to assume responsibility, the church soon found itself embroiled in social reform movements.

Traditionally bound to a theory of individual regeneration alone, the church had found itself growing more and more alienated from the downtrodden of the city. Added to this was the fact that the Roman Catholic Church was gaining influence among this class because of its demonstrated interest in their problems. Armed with the latest scientific theories in sociology, biology, and psychology, a new generation of young Protestant ministers, imbued with a zeal for service, sought to meet the situation directly with "the conviction that the well-being of men required the transformation of the social environment as well as the changing of individuals."1

The development of the "Social Gospel" marked the real beginning of the church's move into the community to minister unto the physical and social as well as the spiritual needs of the people. The most dramatic and perhaps most effective tool of these workers was the "institutional church." Utilizing a broad program of services, these churches were usually quite effective both in ministering to the people and in "winning them for Christ."

The churches in the rural areas of the United States were likewise faced with problems during this period. A declining population and an overabundance of small congregations in many communities forced the abandonment of numerous churches and a loss of the effectiveness of many others. By the turn of the century, many rural churchmen began to see a need for the church to take a more active role in community life. Like their city brethren, they were motivated by a spirit of service as well as defense. They felt that if the social life of rural America could be improved, there would be less inclination on the part of the young to depart for the city. In addition they began to see the educational possibilities in social and recreational activities.

While the years following the Civil War saw the developing of a number of social problems, they also brought increasing popularity to various forms of play. Both sports participation and spectator interest grew with the nation. The technological and industrial revolution, while creating an obvious need for recreational outlets, also contributed to its growth through the development of the mass media, mass transportation and mass production. In addition, an air of respectability was given to play when educators, medical experts and
social workers began to extol its health and educational virtues.

The attitude of the various Protestant denominations toward play was greatly affected during this period. Acknowledging the individual exceptions, one can trace an evolving pattern from general suspicion to selective discrimination to reliance on broad principles in determining proper amusements. This pattern appeared in practically all groups. Indeed, one would find it difficult to differentiate greatly between the attitudes and practices of most denominations of the time. As with many present-day church controversies, it appears that the differences within groups far exceeded those between them.

Antagonism to "popular, worldly amusements" appears to have been most strongly maintained in the primarily rural immigrant denominations. However, similar stands were frequently taken by other "established" American groups. The Methodists and Presbyterians deemed it necessary to pass legislation citing particular activities as definitely un-Christian. Many individual churchmen in various denominations also spoke out against these same activities. Their objections were based upon several factors, among which were: 1) a fear of an amusement leading to excess in time, effort, money, and merriment; 2) a fear of leading others astray by one's own participation in a "questionable" amusement; and 3) a fear of worldliness and a resulting alienation toward spiritual things. In addition, there was frequent criticism of collegiate football and professional athletics as well as play on the Sabbath.

On the other hand, there developed during this period a growing aversion on the part of many to the paternalistic role of the church
in dictating social behavior. Of particular concern were the various amusement bans, official and unofficial, of some churches. The criticism of these bans was primarily based on the following points: 1) a lack of respect shown for the individual conscience; 2) a lack of scriptural support for the bans; 3) the bans were considered to be practically unwriteable, unenforceable and, moreover, incomplete; and 4) it was feared that such stands could undo much of the good work of the churches. In place of the specific discriminatory bans, these critics generally advocated the development of broad principles, consistent with scriptural teaching, to guide people in their selection of activities.

Finally, and perhaps most significant, was the growing belief among churchmen in the value of play. Following the lead of many educators, they began to recognize the possibilities of play in the character education of youth as well as a leavening agent in the lives of adults.

The question of the church's responsibility in recreation provided another controversy among churchmen. A few, of course, were completely opposed to play, under church auspices or not. Another group, wholly positive in its attitudes toward play and recreation, nevertheless was opposed to the church assuming responsibility for directly providing recreational facilities. Those within this group felt that the church was not assuming its proper function by serving as a recreation center. The role which they did see for the church was that of inspiring its members to initiate such programs independently.
A third position, maintained by perhaps a majority, saw recreation as a legitimate and even necessary part of the work of the church. Church sponsored recreation, they felt, could serve the interests of the church as well as the individual and society. Specifically, church sponsored activities could: 1) provide wholesome substitutes for some of the less desirable commercial entertainments; 2) rescue certain amusements which had become associated with a corrupt environment; and 3) be used as a means of recruiting non-churchgoers, particularly among the youth.

The evidence appears to indicate that the latter position was widely accepted. Denominational colleges contributed extensively to the early development of intercollegiate athletics and physical education. Churches in both city and rural areas began equipping their own gymnasiums and social rooms and fielding athletic teams. Camping programs, while not so extensive as we know them today, were first developed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

In addition to providing recreation directly, American Protestantism contributed much to the community recreation and school physical education movements. By instituting programs of their own, many churches served as examples to the community. Numerous churchmen, both clergy and lay, were in the forefront of the drives for community sponsored recreation. By addressing themselves to the subject both in and out of the pulpit, clergymen in many areas of the country could claim some measure of credit for the eventual success of the movements.

The development of the Y. M. C. A. during this period can be considered a most significant contribution of Protestantism to recreation in the United States. Operating as an independent organization
of laymen, the Y. M. C. A., through its Physical Department, made it possible for many churches to carry on recreational programs. At the same time, the 'Y' often stood as the foremost institution providing for the recreational needs of the total community.

The role of play in the life of the church during the period under study was varied. Four broad areas in which play purported to make a contribution have been identified:

(1) Community Outreach. Through this phase of its work, the church sought to serve the people in the community and to bring them under its influence. Play was often provided to meet the people's recreational needs in an acceptable form. At the same time, the offering of such activities within the control of the church served as a means of drawing nonchurchgoers into the "fold."

(2) Fellowship. It was found by many churchmen that by strengthening the bond of fellowship of the congregation through attention to its social life, the church itself was made more vital and alive. Simultaneously, it was felt, the individual was benefitted both spiritually and socially.

(3) Christian Education. Play was seen to contribute to the Christian Education program directly and indirectly. In those instances where enlightened leadership was present, games were used as a means of teaching ethical behavior. In the majority of cases, however, it appears that the play medium was primarily used first, to bring youth into contact with the church, and then to keep them there.

(4) Financial Benefits. It was quickly discovered that play could make a definite contribution to the financial support of churches.
Through various "social" activities such as festivals, fairs, pageants, and suppers, funds could be readily obtained to carry out the work of the church.

More often than not, the above contributions of play were made simultaneously. Although major emphasis might be placed on one facet at a given time, other purposes were undoubtedly served. The role of play in the churches was, and is, multi-faceted.

Conclusions

This investigation has attempted to systematically identify and record the numerous events which marked the changes in attitude and practice of American Protestantism toward play during the half century between the Civil War and the First World War. As a result of the findings of this study and based upon the questions set forth in Chapter I, the following conclusions are offered:

1. Why were most Protestant churchmen traditionally suspicious of play and recreation? It was widely felt that participation in play might tend to withdraw one's affections from spiritual things. A preoccupation with the life hereafter left little time for concern with the pleasures of this world. Any time in addition to that required for earning a livelihood was to be spend in prayerful meditation and worship.

Also, there was a feeling that play and its resultant pleasure might be addictive due to man's inherent moral weakness. Therefore, it was considered better to completely abstain from indulging in those activities which might tend to licentiousness.
A practical consideration taken into account by many frontier churchmen was the fact that hard work was required on the part of everyone in order that all might survive in an often hostile environment. Time spent in play was usually considered time wasted.

There is some evidence to support the theory that class antagonism played some part in the negative attitude of many clergymen and laymen. This was particularly evident in those denominations which drew their strength from the lower socio-economic classes. The latter usually had little leisure time to devote to the pursuit of pleasure through sport and games. The growing upper classes, on the other hand, had both the time and the inclination, and thus became the idle, decadent targets of criticism of the conservative elements.

Finally, many play activities were opposed because of their undesirable associations. Many were totally associated with the tavern and gambling. Dancing was opposed because of its sexual overtones and field sports were often criticized on the basis of cruelty to animal life.

2. What events contributed to the change of attitude and practice on the part of Protestants? First of all, by the end of the Civil War, many forms of play achieved widespread public popularity. The well-traveled soldiers carried new games from one location to another and finally back home. The development of mass communication, mass transportation and mass production contributed to the increased popularity. Church leaders, lay and clergy, being human, were not immune to the contagion of play. Thus, in many quarters, the church's attitudes moved with the people's.
Secondly, an increased standard of living gave more time for activities other than work. As the standard of living rose for an individual, play often became less sinister and more inviting, in spite of one's background and training.

A third, and perhaps more obvious reason for the church's change in attitude, lay in its new concern for man's life in this world. Shedding much of its other-worldly emphasis, the church recognized the problems of man in this world and sought to alleviate them. Such concern led to a natural sympathy for the man seeking a bit of pleasure in life. Recognizing man's need for play, the church found sufficient reason for softening and changing its attitude.

The support given to play by other "respectable" elements in society also helped in turning the church. The medical, educational, and social work professions lent their support by emphasizing benefits to one's physical, mental and moral health. As a result, many churchmen were convinced of the value of play in life.

3. To what extent did the attitudes and practices vary between denominations? Generally speaking, it would appear that the rural and/or immigrant denominations were more conservative and slower to change in their attitudes toward play, particularly those activities deemed somewhat questionable, than were the urban and perhaps wealthier groups. To speak in terms of denominational differences, however, is somewhat difficult when one considers the fact that most denominations included a cross-section, of some degree, of the population. Therefore, it is the conclusion of this writer that the
greatest differences of opinion in regard to this subject were to be found within, rather than between, denominations.

4. How and why did recreation become a part of the total church program? Recreation became a part of the total church program when its value to man and the church was recognized. Early in the period under study, it was recognized by many that little or no provision for the wholesome recreation of the masses was being provided. As the church began to acknowledge its social responsibilities, it included play as a service to its people.

At the same time, many saw an opportunity for the church to make an appeal to those outside its fellowship. Through play in various forms, nonchurchgoers were brought into the church and, hopefully, influenced to stay.

5. What specific roles did recreation and play assume in the work of the churches? The writer has identified four broad areas in which play purported to make a contribution to church life. These areas have been listed and discussed in the Summary (pp. 201-202). They are:

(1) Community Outreach - service and evangelism.
(2) Fellowship - strengthening the social life of the church and its members.
(3) Christian Education - the religious teaching program.
(4) Financial Benefits - fund raising social activities.

6. What roles, if any, did Protestant leaders play in the recreation and physical education movements of this period? Evidence has been presented to support the contention that Protestant leadership
played an important role in the early movements for community recreation and school physical education. The programs of many churches, urban and rural, included the first regularly scheduled physical education classes for children and adults. The "institutional" churches were particularly valuable in this respect. Among the founders of the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education were two prominent New York clergymen. Many of the first efforts to establish community playgrounds and recreation centers were sponsored and/or encouraged by churches and their leaders. The Young Men's Christian Association, encouraged by the clergy and administered by laymen, contributed immensely to the recreational life of America. Many of the pioneer camping experiments were conducted by clergymen or churches. It was the expressed hope of most of these church leaders that their actions would encourage other segments of the community to assume the responsibility for public recreation. That community recreation and school physical education did become a reality is as much a tribute to the churchmen as it is to the governmental officials who eventually supported such measures.

As a result of the writer's preliminary research and study, four working hypotheses were evolved:

1. Protestantism has continuously exerted influence, both negatively and positively, on the recreational patterns of Americans.

2. The fifty year period between the Civil War and the First World War is extremely significant for an understanding of the changing position of Protestantism in regard to recreation.
3. The problems of industrialization and urbanization were significant factors in moving Protestants into the field of recreation.

4. The liberalized position and active participation of Protestant leaders in regard to play significantly contributed to the successful establishment of the American physical education and recreation movements.

On the basis of the research findings, all four hypotheses are accepted.

In regard to the changing views of the church, one student of American Protestantism has written:

The history of Christian theology is always the record of a continuous conversation, carried on within the church and the world in which it lives. Thus the development of theology is always a dual movement, an expression of the inner life of the community of faith as it acknowledges the presence of God in Jesus Christ, and at the same time a partial reflection of the contemporary world. It is the effort of this community to understand itself and to make clear the nature of its faith -- in relation to the thought and life of earlier generations, in relation to new insights into the meaning of the gospel, and in relation to the perspectives of the world to which the community proclaims the gospel. The faith is thus continually restated both as a function of the church's hearing of the Word of God and as a response to the problems of a new age.

During the period under study, the faith of American Protestantism was restated in terms of its relationship with the world. The "Word of God" was heard in a new way and the church responded admirably, in a number of instances, to the problems of the new age. The benefit to man, to society and to the church has been, indeed, significant.

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