“The Mirror of All Perfection”: Jesus and the Strongman in America, 1893–1920

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Notes

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8. Ibid., 2, 16.
11. Paul Harvey and Edward J. Blum, The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Stephen Prothero and Richard Wightman Fox have also written cultural histories of Jesus in America. See Prothero, American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004); and Fox, American Jesus: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession (New York: HarperOne, 2005). In brief, muscular Christianity refers to a broad range of practices and institutions that arose after the American Civil War that concerned attracting men into American churches. Putney traces the conceptual origins of muscular Christianity in the United States to the English author Thomas Hughes, whose 1857 novel, Tom Brown’s School Days, was based on his own experiences at the Rugby School in the 1830s and that popularized the pedagogy attributed (somewhat incorrectly) to the Rugby educator Thomas Arnold. The American abolitionist and Unitarian minister Thomas Wentworth Higginson is largely credited for articulating the American version of muscular Christianity in his 1858 Atlantic Monthly essay, “Saints and Their Bodies.” Over the next several decades, various Protestant denominations sought to reinvigorate American churches, long presumed to be characterized by the “natural” sentimentality of women and ministers, by attracting men into the pews. While attention has been paid to muscular Christianity as a cultural phenomenon, and to Jesus as a cultural and national icon, few studies have endeavored to explore muscular Christianity from the vantage of visual culture, an approach that invites consideration of visual habits that traverse rather than reinscribe cultural arenas. See Putney, Muscular Christianity; and Bederman, Manliness and Civilization. On a limited, but probative, treatment of


13. Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy, citing Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge, describe the “interocular field” that “is structured so that each site or setting for the disciplining of the public gaze is to some degree affected by the viewer’s experiences of the other sites.” My attention to visual habits draws on this Bakhtinian paradigm but also works to critique the ubiquity of a “public gaze” that traverses these fields. See Jay and Ramaswamy, eds., *Empires of Vision: A Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 27.


18. “Sandow Is a Wonder.”


22. “Strongest Man in the World.”


27. “Lightning Photographs.”


29. Mathews, *Album of Carte-de-Visite*, 60. There is also evidence that suggests that turn-of-the-century Americans were increasingly comfortable with disrobing in front of the camera. The historian Roberta J. Frank argues that by the 1890s, in fact, “it was not at all unusual to find photographs of seminude athletes and illustrations of fig-adorned males in a host of books and periodicals” (“Physiology and Anatomy Are Destiny!? Brains, Bodies, and Exercise in Nineteenth Century American Thought,” *Journal of Sport History* 18 [1991]: 55).


32. Harvard University’s archives indicate at least seventy-one separate institutions where Sargent collected his anthropometric data. Significantly, the data specifically exclude Harvard students from the record.
38. Josiah C. Nott et al., Types of Mankind; or, Ethnological Researches Based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races (Philadelphia, 1857), lxviii.
40. Elspeth H. Brown’s excellent analysis of Eadweard Muybridge’s University of Pennsylvania study in the 1880s persuasively demonstrates another site where race, scientific discourse, and masculinity were generated in tandem through photographic technology and practices of representation. See Brown, “Racialising the Virile Body: Eadweard Muybridge’s Locomotion Studies, 1883–1887,” Gender & History 17 (November 2005): 627–56.
41. Seaver, Anthropometry and Physical Examination, 58.
42. Sargent, Physical Culture, 66.
43. Bourget, Outre-Mer, 61.
46. Sandow, Strength and How to Obtain It, 86.
47. Kohen to Sandow, September 19, 1896, in Sandow, Strength and How to Obtain It, 53–54.
50. Seaver, Anthropometry and Physical Examination, 49–70.
52. Ibid.
59. See, for instance, the advertisement for “Sandow’s Great Offer” in The Congregationalist and Christian World, September 6, 1902.
60. Robert Warren Conant, The Virility of Christ: A New View, a Book for Men (Chicago: Robert Warren Conant, 1915), 11. Large portions of this text were initially published in Conant, The Manly Christ: A New View (Chicago:
Robert Warren Conant, 1904). For a brief sketch of Conant’s biography, see also “Dr. R. W. Conant, Teacher Many Years, Is Dead,” Chicago Daily Tribune, July 11, 1930.

64. Conant, Manly Christ, 8–9.
65. Conant, Virility of Christ, 14, 29, 59, 92, 103.
67. Conant, Virility of Christ, 244–45.
69. Ibid., 259.
70. Conant, Manly Christ, 51–57, 237.
71. Jason Noble Pierce, The Masculine Power of Christ; or, Christ Measured as a Man (Boston: Pilgrim, 1912), 1, 4, 10–13.
72. Case, Masculine in Religion, 119.