

# 5 Caveats While Watching Super Bowl Spectacle

I must confess: I rarely watch the Super Bowl.

I am usually on a plane (with very few others, mercifully) when the big game comes on. I am used to hearing the score from pilots, and I always wonder if they are really watching in the cockpit.

I am not a great football fan, far from knowledgeable, and I do not appreciate the idolatry of the male form it represents.

Yet, I actually watched the whole thing last evening and found the well-played game riveting, with some caveats.

I did not appreciate hearing Martin Luther King Jr.'s voice appropriated to sell trucks; that was a despicable vulgarism of what it means to serve. I could do with fewer commercials altogether, for they do interrupt the flow of the game.

I would appreciate seeing a black owner sitting in the fancy seats.

I would like to see fewer scantily clad women - actually none - cheering the men on.

I would prefer that the sport not leave players with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a degenerative brain disorder associated with repetitive head trauma.

Most of all, I would like to see God's name invoked with more nuance as people search for words to express their exhilaration. I do not recall any on the losing team speaking of divine assistance - or interest. It appears God is always on the side of the winners.

Revered former president of Fuller Seminary, Richard Mouw, made the sly suggestion that God would be watching the Super Bowl.

He argued that "God cares much about how the game is actually played. And it is not simply about how the players treat each other as competitors. It's also about

the physical prowess that is on display in a well-played game.”

I guess I was watching in good company!

As the lectionary reading turned to Isaiah 40 on Sunday, many Philadelphia fans took comfort in the hallowed words, “They shall mount up with wings like eagles” (Isaiah 40:31b), finding the imprimatur they were seeking.

Their team prevailed, not because of divine intervention or favoritism, but by sheer grit and relentless action and, perhaps, a little luck.

Did they win with energy granted by God? Surely, just as those who lost drew upon God-given resources.

The annual gladiatorial spectacle has come and gone, and the distraction it provided is supplanted by the daily drama of Washington.

The most valuable aspect of the game may have been its capacity to draw our attention away from seething politicians and the news cycle they drive.

Football is a game, voluntarily pursued. Politics also resembles a game, at times, but the stakes are so much higher.

While God may not prefer a party, God surely cares about outcomes that impact human flourishing.

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