

Brit Hume and Witnessing for Christ

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As most Americans know by now, on January 3, 2010, TV news anchorman Brit Hume committed the equivalent of the politically correct (PC) world's unpardonable sin. During a panel discussion show on Fox News, Hume was asked what advice he would give golfer Tiger Woods, recently scandalized for having numerous adulterous affairs. To the horror of many, Hume replied,

Tiger Woods will recover as a golfer. Whether he can recover as a person, I think is a very open question, and it's a tragic situation with him. He's lost his family, it's not clear to me whether he'll be able to have a relationship with his children, but the Tiger Woods that emerges once the news value dies out of this scandal, the extent to which he can recover, it seems to me, depends on his faith. He's said to be a Buddhist, I don't think that faith offers the kind of forgiveness and redemption that is offered by the Christian faith, so my message to Tiger would be "Tiger, turn to the Christian faith, and you can make a total recovery and be a great example to the world."

Shock and horror! How dare Hume, *when asked for his opinion*, actually *give his opinion*? After all, the United States of America is not a land of free speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press, is it? Well, actually, yes it is. But it is getting harder each day to believe it.

Jonathan Chait, writing in *The New Republic*, says that he doubts that Hume's defenders "would be happy to see, say, Muslims going on television to blame Mark Sanford's Christianity for his adultery and urge him to convert to Islam" ("Man's Inhumanity To Hume" <http://www.tnr.com/blog/jonathan-chait/mans-inhumanity-hume>). Perhaps some might not be happy. But they would be wrong. In this country, every view deserves a hearing, and Christians who are confident in their faith won't feel threatened by a Muslim expressing his view. So, judging from the reactions to Hume's words, it is the non-Christians who are lacking confidence.

The outcry against Hume for "denigrating" Woods' religion and proselytizing his own was swift and vicious. Nevertheless, Hume held

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firm. On the *O'Reilly Factor*, Hume again stated concerning Woods, that "he needs something that Christianity especially provides and that is redemption and forgiveness. I think that Jesus Christ offers Tiger Woods something that Tiger Woods badly needs."

Eve Tahmincioglu, writing in the *Huffington Post* proclaimed, "The fact that a journalist—and I use that term loosely as it pertains to Hume—would go on a national news show and put down another high-profile individual's faith should tell all of us that religious bigotry, and bigotry as a whole, is a growing problem in this country" ("Beware the Brit Humes in your office" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eve-tahmincioglu/beware-the-brit-humes-in_b_415579.html). Cathy Lynn Grossman, who is (rather ironically, I think) Faith and Reason columnist for *USA Today*, called Hume's advice "trash talk" and classified it under the scholarly sounding label "religious triumphalism" ("Jews spit; Hume trash talks. Can children [of God] behave?" <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/Religion/post/2010/01/jerusalem-spitting-brit-hume-christianity-evangelism-/1>).

Yet, when analyzed, what Hume said was accurate, loving, and, quite frankly, very mild. Hume said that he doesn't think that Buddhism offers the kind of forgiveness and redemption that is offered by the Christian faith. This is absolutely dead-on. In an AP article by Tamara Lush, Stephen Prothero, author of *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't* and chair of the religion department at Boston University, comments on Hume's statement: "You have the law of karma, so no matter what Woods says or does, he is going to have to pay for whatever wrongs he's done," said Prothero. "There's no accountant in the sky wiping sins off your balance sheet, like there is in Christianity" (see "Comments by Fox's Brit Hume upset some Buddhists" http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100107/ap_on_re/us_rel_tiger_woods_buddhism). It seems to me that Hume and Prothero are saying the same thing: Buddhism does not offer the kind of forgiveness and redemption that is offered by the Christian faith. What is so terrible about saying this? It is a statement of fact. You would hear the same thing in any college or even high school comparative religion class.

Next, after accurately evaluating the difference between Buddhism and Christianity, with the implication that in Christianity Woods can find forgiveness and redemption, Hume said, "Tiger, turn to the Christian faith, and you can make a total recovery and be a great example to the world." Is that "rude and crass," as blogger Jay Bookman accused ("Brit Hume playing the persecuted victim card" [2](http://blogs.ajc.com/jay-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

bookman-blog/2010/01/07/brit-hume-playing-the-persecuted-victim-card/), or is it love and concern? I would say the latter, wouldn't you?

I would also say it was mild. Compare it, for example, with what Stephen said to the Jews: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51); or with what Paul said to the Athenians: "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious [read, "very religious" but of the wrong kind].... And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:22, 30); or even to Jesus' statements to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, where He criticized their religious practices on at least thirteen points and called them hypocrites seven times. Neither Stephen, nor Paul, nor Jesus Himself put political correctness or social politeness above telling people the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Leaving people wallow in their sins while they believe a religion that will never save them out of their sins is not love. It is love to tell people the only way to be saved. Jesus claimed absolute exclusivity in salvation: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Speaking of Jesus, Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Is this "religious triumphalism"? Most certainly it is! "But to God be the thanks who in Christ ever heads our triumphal procession, and by our hands waves in every place that sweet incense, the knowledge of Him" (2 Corinthians 2:14, *Weymouth New Testament*). But is it cruel, harsh, and uncaring? Anything but. Jesus said that the reason He sent Paul to people of other religions was, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). Those who are not Christians are in darkness and cannot and will not receive forgiveness of sins. But the cure is simple: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Those of us who know this feel compelled to spread this news. If you knew of a cure for cancer, wouldn't you tell people? No other religion offers complete forgiveness of all sins upon repentance.

Showing off a rather extreme ignorance, Tom Shales wrote in the *Washington Post* that Brit Hume's comments "sounded a little like one of those Verizon vs. AT&T commercials—our brand is better than your

brand—except that Hume was comparing two of the world's great religions, not a couple of greedy communications conglomerates. Further, is it really his job to run around trying to drum up new business? He doesn't really have the authority, does he, unless one believes that every Christian by mandate must proselytize?" ("Brit Hume's off message: Have faith, Tiger Woods, as long as it's Christianity"<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/04/AR2010010403101.html>).

One has to wonder whether Shales can really have been serious. Has he never read, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20), and, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16)? "Authority?" Acts 8:1 immediately follows the death of Stephen: "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles." Notice that it says "they were all scattered," meaning all the Christians, "except the apostles." Now read Acts 11:19-21, which speaks of the same circumstances: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." Remember, these were not the apostles, but ordinary Christians. What more authority did they need? Yes, Mr. Shales, every Christian does have a mandate to proselytize.

Okay, Tom Shales may be ignorant of the Bible. But it hardly seems likely that a newspaper columnist can have lived such a sheltered life that he is ignorant of the fact that we face proselytizing every day. In fact, it is a major part of media. Even if we exclude the obvious proselytizing for products and services in commercials, don't we continually hear Democrats and Republicans, presidents and members of congress, nonprofits and corporate heads, greens, reds, scientists, and, yes, newspaper columnists proselytizing for their points of view?

And so the quaint notion that, I think, probably dates to nineteenth century genteel society that we should not speak of religion in public, and which some people want to keep alive for the sake of avoiding their own personal embarrassment, is plain and simple discrimination. It is an old-fashioned double-standard that must be swept away to the dustbin where it belongs. It is time to put on notice the hypocrites who call others who exercise their right to free speech bigots. Let's just simply ignore these narrow-minded Christophobes who blow up over a TV news anchorman who is a Christian putting his loyalty to His Lord and his concern for a fellow human being above what is "polite" or "appropriate." We Christians have freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press in this country. It is time we confidently used these freedoms to the full to tell Tiger Woods and millions of others who are laboring under their sins about our Lord. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).