

On Tiger and Haiti, Christians can't stay silent

Religion burst into the news recently in two widely divergent ways.

Brit Hume of Fox News said on the air that Tiger Woods, thought to be a Buddhist, ought to become a Christian. The Christian faith, said Hume, offers forgiveness, and a route back to wholeness as a husband and father. Hume's thoughts were succinct and genuine, expressing concern for Woods' soul and his relationships, rather than for his golf game.

One could almost hear the secular critics sharpening their knives. Tom Shales, TV critic for *The Washington Post*, said, "Darts of derision should be aimed at Hume. . . . The remark will probably rank . . . as one of the most ridiculous of the year." He was particularly irked that Hume would try and tell someone what his religious belief should be. (See Page 14.)

The second burst of religion in the news came in the days following the Haitian earthquake. Among the scores of news interviews with victims and relief workers, it quickly became obvious that many of those involved in Haiti are employees or volunteers for Christian missions, Christian orphanages or Christian relief agencies.

Not only that, but the lists of places to donate were heavily populated by Christian groups. There were the denominational agencies run by the Nazarenes, Baptists, Mennonites, Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians and The Salvation Army. There were Jewish groups and Catholic groups, and Habitat for Humanity. And there were freestanding groups, large and small. Among them: World Concern, World Hope, World Vision, World Relief, Compassion International, Samaritan's Purse, Operation Blessing and Mercy Corps. And all across the U.S., there were congregations organizing food and fund drives.

If Tom Shales was insulted by Brit Hume's comments about Tiger, he should have burst a blood vessel at this large-scale Christian intrusion into the affairs of Haiti, a sovereign nation. But of course, he was silent about this particular flexing of religious muscle.

But why should he be silent? After all, the impulse that led Hume to offer help to a fallen golfer buried by a sexual disaster, is the very

same impulse that leads a relief agency to help a fallen Haitian child buried by a natural disaster. There is no difference. The motivation is summed up well in 1 John 4:19, which says: "We love, because He first loved us."

In his attack piece on Hume, Shales asked: "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?"

As a matter of fact, that's exactly it: Christians *are* under a mandate to spread the Good News of the Gospel. Sometimes it's done by deed, sometimes by word. Whatever the circumstances deem appropriate.

A committed non-Christian with a different view about all of this is the radio talk-show host Michael Medved, an orthodox Jew who speaks often in Christian circles, and therefore is often presented with the Christian Gospel. He understands why Christians are compelled to witness about their faith. He says that if someone genuinely believes there is a bridge out ahead on the road he's driving, he appreciates hearing about it, even though he has a different opinion on the matter. It shows that people care about him, he concludes.

What Tom Shales shows by his nastiness toward Brit Hume is something that is so typical of people in the American Left today — free speech is fine, as long as it's speech they agree with. It's not just that they oppose the Christian's opinion; they oppose the Christian's right to voice his opinion.

That is the truly dangerous thing. ●

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