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Hume says anti-Christian bias fueled backlash

by Kevin Eckstrom

WASHINGTON -- Fox News analyst Brit Hume, who was both widely praised and criticized for suggesting that golfer Tiger Woods should embrace Christianity to find true "redemption," said he fell victim to widespread media bias against Christianity.

"Instead of urging that Tiger Woods turn to Christianity, if I had said what he needed to do was to strengthen his Buddhist commitment or turn to Hinduism, I don't think anybody would have said a word," Hume told *Christianity Today's* Sarah Pulliam Bailey.

"It's Christ and Christianity that get people stirred up."

Hume also suggested that other public figures -- including Republican politicians and evangelical leaders -- who have strayed from their marital vows, should follow the same advice he gave to Woods.

"Christianity is a religion for sinners," Hume said. "Christianity is not about the salvation of perfect people. Christianity is a way for people who are not perfect to be saved. What [South Carolina Gov.] Mark Sanford needs is not less Christianity. He needs more of it."

Hume was slammed in the blogosphere and by media outlets for suggesting that Woods leave his reported Buddhist faith and "turn to the Christian faith" because Buddhism does not offer the same kind of "forgiveness and redemption" for his alleged philandering.

Others, however, have defended Hume, including the Rev. Frank Page, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, who agreed with Hume's "politically incorrect" remarks. "In Christ, Tiger Woods can find true redemption, forgiveness and restoration ...," Page told Baptist Press.

Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, also

defended Hume, writing that "[f]ree, autonomous individuals not only have the right to hold whatever beliefs they wish, they also have the right to change those beliefs and to persuade others to change as well."

Hume, in the *Christianity Today* interview, said he would continue to use his Fox News perch to spread the gospel as he deemed "appropriate."

"I don't want to practice a faith that I'm afraid to proclaim. I don't want to be a closet Christian," he said. "I'm not going to stand on the street with a megaphone. My principal responsibility at Fox News isn't to proselytize. But occasionally a mention of faith seems to me to be appropriate. When those occasions come, I'll do it."

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