NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Gerson on Hume on Tiger

Michael Sean Winters | Jan. 11, 2010 NCR Today

Michael Gerson is sometimes a lonely voice for faith-inspired input in the Washington Post? op-ed pages. Sometimes, alas, the inspiration is lacking. His column from last week [1], defending Brit Hume?s proselytizing on Fox News, didn?t seem worthy of a comment but then my ride home from the archives today was interrupted by his repeating his claims on my favorite radio show, Michel Martin?s ?Tell Me More. [2]?

Gerson contends that it is a faux-pluralism that insists there is no place for statements of faith in the public discourse of the nation. Yes, and the Sun rises in the East. Agreed. But, the problem with Hume?s urging Tiger Woods to abandon his Buddhism in favor of Christianity because the latter offers more in the way of redemption and forgiveness was not that the Hume?s urging was religious. The problem is that it was ridiculous.

As I mentioned at the time, no pastor would counsel a person in crisis to abandon their religious faith, whatever it is, and start down a thoroughly unfamiliar spiritual road unless the person asked for such a new path. And, indeed, Hume is not a counselor, faith-based or otherwise. He is a news commentator. What made his remarks foolish is that they amounted to saying ?My religion is better than the one you have now? which is not the stuff of consolation, still less of effective proselytizing. It was pulled out of thin air and plunked into the conversation. Gerson, in his column, relates a personal story about a tragedy in Hume?s past, and how his Christian faith helped him through that personal crisis. But, Hume did not share that personal story. There is a reason that Christian pastors do not usually use the term ?proselytize? and instead speak of ?evangelization.? Had Hume shown how the Gospel had helped him, his words would not have been met with such derision.

Gerson admits that there are situations where proselytizing is a problem, that we don?t want a teacher proselytizing a student, or an employer an employee, because the power relationship skews the persuasion of a free-thinking soul that evangelization entails. He notes that Hume is a semi-retired newsman and Woods is a zillionaire athlete. But, being an ?expert commentator? on Fox News is not thing either: It assumes a degree of expertise. I know, I know. Never put the words ?expert? in the same sentence as the words ?Fox News.?

In short, the problem with Hume?s comments is not that they amounted to evangelization in the public square. The problem is that, to paraphrase the First Letter of Peter, Hume failed to give an account of the hope that is within him. He just said, ?Try it my way.? Gerson is fighting a phantom and defending a fraud.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/22/2014 - 15:33*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/gerson-hume-tiger

Links:
[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/07/AR2010010703244.html
[2] http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=46