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Bill O’Reilly And Ben Stein Call For More Religion In Public Life

by Simon Brown

*The Religious Right is still trying to sell Americans on the idea that merging religion and government is just the thing to turn this country around in a hurry, and now they’re getting some assistance from two media personalities: Bill O’Reilly and Ben Stein. In an interview on NBC’s “Today Show,” Fox News host O’Reilly said Americans are tired of secularism.*

Simon, O'Reilly is probably right. Since 75% of Americans are Christians, I have no doubt they are tired of hearing us ridicule them for having an imaginary friend; but not nearly as tired as we are ... of hearing about their imaginary friend.

*O'Reilly said “I think people are fed up with secularism. It gets just to be too much.”*

*So what is O’Reilly’s answer to this supposedly excessive secularism? Teaching “Judeo-Christian” values in schools, naturally.*

Simon, ask O'Reilly which values he follows: the Judeo value of "an eye for an eye" or the Christian value of "turn the other cheek." Ask O'Reilly about the values of slavery and genocide. And ask him when he thinks we should begin stoning people again for committing adultery. But before he answers, you might want to remind O'Reilly about that sordid affair he was involved in, while married, that cost him about 5 million dollars to make it go away.

*O’Reilly said “Kids, if they live in a secular home and go to public school don’t know anything about Jesus.”*

Simon, that's almost as stupid as when O'Reilly admitted he couldn't figure out how the tides worked. I would bet my last jujube that there isn't a kid in America who doesn't know who Jesus is.

*“Our Constitution was forged on Judeo-Christian philosophy and tradition.”*

Simon, O'Reilly might have a point there. Our Constitution, like Judeo-Christian philosophy, never uttered a word against the institution of slavery.

Not only that, but the Bible sets the value of a woman at between one-half and two-thirds that of a man (depending on age); while the Constitution had to be amended to allow women the right to vote.

So yeah, I can see some similarities there. The difference is, the Constitution was amended in both cases to correct these vile practices ... while the Bible was not.

*O’Reilly’s evidence for this is a little thin: He cited the presence of Moses holding the Ten Commandments inside the U.S. Supreme Court, but the court’s website says that display contains many historical lawgivers. It is intended to show the evolution of the laws over centuries and nothing more.*

Simon, if they posted the real 10 Commandments (the permanent set in Exodus 34) that God gave to Moses after Moses smashed the originals, then everyone could see how goofy, their sick little religion really is.

*O’Reilly’s argument raised a red flag for NBC’s Matt Lauer, who conducted the interview. He told O’Reilly that he went to public schools and still managed to learn about Christianity.*

Simon, good for Matt Lauer. It's good to see that Lauer isn't afraid of tall people.

*O’Reilly responded “You shouldn’t have to go seek it. It’s part of our history and it’s part of our heritage."*

Simon, like most Christians, O'Reilly just proved he doesn't know what's in his own Bible. Here are some verses that prove that you should have to "go seek it":

http://www.openbible.info/topics/seeking\_god

*O'Reilly continued "People, kids need to know what Judeo-Christian tradition is."*

Simon, I agree with Bill. Everyone should learn about the horrors in the Christian Bible, from slavery to genocide, and from genital mutilation to animal sacrifice. Everyone should see these things, if for no other reason, than to see just how far humanity has come.

*O'Reilly continued "Because that’s what all of our laws are based on. That’s what the country’s philosophy is based on.”*

Simon, which laws is O'Reilly referring to? Most of our laws and Democratic principles come from the famous Greek statesman, Solon ... not from Jesus Christ.

And what does Bill mean by our country's "philosophy?" I didn't know we had a national philosophy.

*Of course O’Reilly is wrong on that. The U.S. Constitution has no basis in religion. After all, people are free to ignore the Sabbath or disobey most of the other Ten Commandments with no legal consequences.*

Simon, good point.

*O’Reilly also asserted that students should learn about the history of Jesus’ life, though not the divine elements that are the basis for Christianity. That, too, left Lauer skeptical.*

Simon, and how does O'Reilly propose hiding the divine elements of Jesus from the kids? Won't it be kind of hard to explain the "walking on water" part, without attributing it to divine power?

*Lauer asked if it’s possible to teach about the historic Jesus without proselytizing. O’Reilly agreed that proselytizing should not occur in public schools and said it can be left to faculty to make sure that does not happen.*

Simon, they are not allowed to proselytize now and look how many problems we have with proselytization. Obviously, it cannot be left to faculty to ensure that it doesn't happen.

*That is an extremely optimistic view, as the temptation to proselytize would be too great for some to resist.*

*Back in the 1970s, O’Reilly had a brief career teaching in a Catholic school, so it seems he fancies himself something of an education expert. Not long ago he tried to convince President Barack Obama to support vouchers. The president was not convinced.*

*He jumped back into the education debate again today because there just happens to be a new edition of his book for sale, Killing Jesus: A History (now with illustrations!). O’Reilly seemingly wants to turn it into a public school textbook, so he’s pushing the idea that students can learn about Jesus without learning about religion.*

Simon, I don't think I can take anymore of O'Reilly's nonsense. Every time I'm forced to watch a video about Fox News, my brain screams for a rape kit.

What about Ben Stein?

*As for Ben Stein, he said church-state separation is bad for America,*

Well Simon, we know it's bad for Christians. They've been fighting it since our nation's inception. Over 200 years later, and the battle is still raging as Ghost Worshipers mount constant attacks against the First Amendment and the Wall of Separation.

*and Stein also said that if God is returned to public life, then poverty could be eradicated.*

Simon, ask Stein "If poverty is a punishment for apostasy, why aren't all poor people Atheists? Why does God punish devout believers with poverty at an even greater rate than nonbelievers?"

*Stein is a Columbia-educated economist and Yale-educated attorney turned actor*

Simon, it's like James Randi said "Just cause you're educated ... doesn't mean you're smart."

*Stein has a bit of a checkered history. He wrote speeches for the Nixon White House (we know how that ended) and he spoke at Jerry Falwell Jr.’s Liberty University in 2012. He also once hocked a shady credit reporting service called freescore.com in a series of commercials. You may know Stein from his appearance in the ‘80s classic “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,” or his stint hosting a Comedy Central game show “Win Ben Stein’s Money” from 1997-2003.*

*In a recent column for the right wing American Spectator, Stein said poverty in America really isn’t so bad.*

*Stein said “Now, real poverty, where Americans lack cars or air conditioning or solid food is extremely rare. Yes, the government designates many tens of millions as poor, but they almost always have indoor plumbing and they are super nourished as opposed to mal-nourished. They get food stamps. They get free medical care. They get vouchers for many of the needs of life.”*

Simon, you might want to point out to Stein that his Republican party is doing everything in their power to take those safety nets away from the poor. The only reason they are still there is due to the efforts of Democrats. But now that we live in a plutocracy, it's difficult to say how much longer those nets will be in place.

*So what, according to Stein is really holding low-income individuals back? Bad habits.*

*Stein said “My humble observation is that most long-term poverty is caused by self-sabotage by individuals. Drug use. Drunkenness. Having children without a family structure. Gambling. Poor work habits. Disastrously unfortunate appearance. Above all, and counted in the preceding list, psychological problems (very much including basic laziness) cause people to be unemployed, have poor or no work habits, and enter and stay in poverty.”*

Simon, even in cases where it is entirely the person's fault for their predicament, they still should be entitled to help. To believe otherwise, like Stein, is to be devoid of human decency.

Here's an interesting angle, Simon: I'm an Atheist and Stein is a Bible-believing Jew, yet in that last paragraph of Stein's ... Jesus would side with me. I know - because He said so in His book.

*In the end, Stein said all these problems could magically go away if God were a part of public policy.*

Simon, God has had thousands of years to solve poverty yet it hasn't gone away. During most of that time, God wasn't just a part of public policy - He was public policy. In Islam everything is about God yet they are the poorest people on Earth. It's time to dump the magic and a government restricted to Ghost Worshipers who seek answers from invisible friends, and instead, start finding real solutions by including scientists and other rational people.

*Stein said “What will make the genuinely poor stop sabotaging themselves? Maybe, just maybe, if we let God back into the public forum it would help. I have seen spiritual solutions work miracles.”*

Simon, ask Ben to name one. Ask Ben why millions of desperately-praying Christians are unable to sway their God to help America rise out of this recession? Why does He ignore them?

As for being removed from the public forum, I assume he means school prayer. That was simply a case of America finally enforcing its Constitution. Something it should have been doing from the beginning.

*Stein is not a fool, but his remarks are shockingly cruel and callous.*

Simon, actually Stein's remarks are not so shocking for a one-percenter. In fact, they are pretty much what I expect. After all, these are the same people who are willing to destroy the planet rather than diminish their oil profits.

*The impoverished are not simply lazy, mentally-ill drug addicts. Poverty is a complex thing, which Stein well knows. If anyone is lazy, it’s Stein – he’s making tired arguments instead of putting forth real solutions to a complex problem.*

Simon, that's because Stein is a shill. His job is to hide real solutions so that the rich can continue stealing everything that isn't nailed down. Real solutions mean shutting down the plutocracy and creating a moral society in which everyone shares. That is not an acceptable solution to Stein and his rich friends.

*But let’s consider Stein’s absurd idea that religion could end poverty. Where is the evidence for that? In the Middle Ages when church and state were one, poverty was rampant. The serfs slaving away for their feudal lords probably prayed regularly, and they remained impoverished because social welfare programs did not yet exist.*

*O’Reilly and Stein are both woefully off base. A dose of their old-time religion is not the answer to America’s public woes, and injecting God into government activities isn’t going to fix anything. The ills of the United States are not going to be solved easily, which is why we need real thinkers to get to work – not simply “pray-the-problem-away” charlatans.*

Simon, I couldn't have said it better myself.

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Scientists solve the riddle of zebras' stripes

Why do zebras have black and white stripes, is a question that has intrigued scientists and spectators for centuries.

Many hypotheses for zebra stripes have been proposed since Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin debated the problem 120 years ago.

These include:

 1. A form of camouflage

 2. Disrupting predatory attack by visually confusing carnivores

 3. A mechanism of heat management

 4. Having a social function

 5. Avoiding ectoparasite attack, such as from biting flies

After analyzing the five hypotheses, scientists ruled out all but one: they found that biting flies, including horseflies and tsetse flies, are the evolutionary driver for zebra's stripes. Experimental work had previously shown that such flies tend to avoid black-and-white striped surfaces.

The team mapped the geographic distributions of the seven different species of zebras, horses and asses, and of their subspecies, noting the thickness, locations, and intensity of their stripes on several parts of their bodies. Their next step was to compare these animals' geographic ranges with different variables, including woodland areas, ranges of large predators, temperature, and the geographic distribution of biting flies. They then examined where the striped animals and these variables overlapped.

There was greater striping on areas of the body in those parts of the world where there was more annoyance from biting flies. They found that striping is highly associated with several consecutive months of ideal conditions for horsefly reproduction.

Why would zebras evolve to have stripes whereas other hooved mammals did not? The study found that, unlike other African hooved mammals living in the same areas as zebras, zebra hair is shorter than the mouthpart length of biting flies, so zebras may be particularly susceptible to annoyance by biting flies.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

Paula Kirby

Kirby is a former Christian, a writer, a consultant and project manager, specializing in freethinking and secular organizations. She lives in Scotland.

"An atheist life, well lived, leads to the only kind of afterlife

there is any evidence for whatsoever:

the immortality of living on

in the fond memories of those who loved us."