



The Real Reason Why O'Reilly's "Bible Thumping" Remarks Matter

Last week, while speaking with fellow Fox personality Megyn Kelly, Bill O'Reilly catapulted himself into the center of controversy when he asserted that the opponents of "gay marriage" do nothing but "thump the Bible."

O'Reilly said that "the compelling argument was on the side of homosexuals." The latter make "the compelling argument" that "we're Americans. We just want to be treated like everybody else." In meeting this tour de force, O'Reilly continued, "The other side hasn't been able to do anything but thump the Bible." Kelly agreed.

With lightning-quick speed, O'Reilly's remarks raised the ire of "the conservative movement" — that of both its base and some of its most notable representatives.



Admittedly, I am among those O'Reilly rattled. But this has less to do with his use of the expression "thump the Bible" and more to do with his claim that the opponents of so-called "gay marriage" *do nothing but* thump the Bible. The latter just simply isn't true.

O'Reilly must know this, in which case he speaks dishonestly. On the other hand, if, by some remote chance, he doesn't know this, then he is woefully unqualified to even weigh in on the marriage issue, not to mention hold down a position as a very visible, and very audible, commentator.

In short, with respect to this issue, at any rate, it is either dishonesty or ignorance from which O'Reilly's judgment springs.

I suspect that it is true that most (American) opponents of gay marriage are moved by biblical considerations. However, contra O'Reilly, it is most certainly not the case that they "thump the Bible." While conscripting Fox News colleagues Megyn Kelly, Laura Ingraham, and Charles Krauthammer in the service of damage control, O'Reilly explained that, in his estimation, to "thump" the Bible is to cite it without further ado.

Unfortunately for O'Reilly, by his own lights, there has been little to no Bible thumping on the part of the defenders of marriage.

The enemies of gay marriage have insisted that never in the history of the human race has "the definition" of marriage referred to the union of members of the same sex. They have leveled the slippery slope argument that once we "redefine" marriage to include homosexuals, we will then have no option but to permit polygamy and other morally troublesome marital arrangements. They have argued that gay marriage will divest traditional marriage of its time-honored position of privilege by reducing it



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to just another alternative.

Granted (as this opponent of gay marriage has noted on more than one occasion), these are indeed *bad* arguments. But they *are* arguments. No Bible thumping here. In fact, there isn't even any referencing of the Bible to be found in these lines of reason.

Anyone who is in the slightest informed about this marriage issue must know that O'Reilly's remark about the argumentative strategy of the forces for traditional marriage is emphatically false.

So, why did he say it? I submit two theories that might answer this question.

First, O'Reilly may very well actually favor gay marriage. For all his talk of the evils of "secular progressivism" and the virtues of "traditionalism" — i.e. "the folks" — this is not at all a stretch. After all, he did say that the proponents of gay marriage have, not just the stronger argument on their side, but "the *compelling* argument." A compelling argument is intellectually impossible to resist.

O'Reilly may have had some other idea of "compelling" in mind. Yet he seemed to have been awfully impressed with the argument in question. Is it so unreasonable to think that it got to him? If it did, then perhaps he was engaging here in an all-too-common political strategy whereby one advances one's own team by reducing its competitor to a one-dimensional straw man.

Second, to anyone who has watched O'Reilly for any length of time, it is painfully obvious that he aches to be viewed as a "respectable" journalist by the Left. Toward this end, he not infrequently says things about those on the Right that sound at once stupid and dishonest. It isn't that the Right, to say nothing of "the conservative movement," is immune to legitimate criticism. Yet O'Reilly's criticisms, far from sounding legitimate, almost always strike the ear as thoughtless.

His latest Bible-thumping remarks dovetail seamlessly into this pattern.

Ultimately, though, it doesn't much matter why O'Reilly said what he did. What matters is that his conservative critics understand why O'Reilly deserves their anger. What matters is that they understand that it isn't his allegation that they "thump the Bible" that should upset them, but the wildly false allegation that *they do nothing but* thump the Bible while debating gay marriage.



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