**Atheists Forgetting the Meaning of Freedom**

By Ben Carson

August 19, 2014

Many people in this country were shocked when the U.S. Navy recently announced the removal of all Bibles from military hotels under their control. This was in response to pressure from the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](http://www.washingtontimes.com/topics/freedom-from-religion-foundation/), a well-known atheist group.

The surprise is not the hypocritical stance of the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](http://www.washingtontimes.com/topics/freedom-from-religion-foundation/), but rather the fact that an established bulwark of American strength and patriotism caved to a self-serving group of religious fanatics. This last sentence may seem out of place if you don’t realize that atheism is actually a religion. Like traditional religions, atheism requires strong conviction. In the case of atheists, it’s the belief that there is no God and that all things can be proven by science. It is extremely hypocritical of the [foundation](http://www.washingtontimes.com/topics/freedom-from-religion-foundation/) to request the removal of Bibles from hotel rooms on the basis of their contention that the presence of Bibles indicates that the government is choosing one religion over another. If they really thought about it, they would realize that removal of religious materials imposes their religion on everyone else.

Some atheists argue that there should be a library or cachet of religious material at the check-in desk of a hotel from which any guest could order a Bible, Torah or Koran for their reading pleasure. No favoritism would be shown through such a system, and those who reject the idea of God would not have to be offended. This is like saying there shouldn’t be certain brands of bottled water in hotel rooms because there may be guests who prefer a different type of water or who are offended by bottled water and think that everybody should be drinking tap water. The logical answer to such absurdity would, of course, be that the offended individual could bring his own water or simply ignore the brand of water that he does not care for.

As a nation, we must avoid the paralysis of hypersensitivity, which will allow us to get nothing done because virtually everything offends someone. We need to distribute “big boy” pants widely to help the whiners learn to focus their energy in a productive way. We must also go back and read the Constitution, including the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of religion. It says nothing about freedom from religion and, in fact, if you go back and look at the context and the lives of those involved in the crafting of our founding documents, it is quite apparent that they strongly believed in allowing their faith to guide their lives. This has nothing to do with imposing one’s beliefs on someone else.

Those of us who do believe in God can hope and pray that at some point, the secular progressives will come to understand that they must abide by the same rules with which they attempt to control others. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the philosophy of “live and let live.” America was designed to be a free country, where people could live as they pleased and pursue their dreams as long as they didn’t infringe upon the rights of others. By continually broadening the definition of infringement on the rights of others, the purveyors of division will succeed in destroying our nation — but only if we continue to cater to their divisive rhetoric.

Liberty and justice for all has worked extremely well for an extended period of time, and there is no reason to upset the equilibrium by endowing the hypersensitive complainers in our society with more power than everyone else. Thankfully, the Navy quickly realized its mistake and restored the Bible to its lodges. Maybe now we can deal with the real issues that threaten our safety.

*Ben S. Carson is professor emeritus of neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University and author of the new book “One Nation: What We Can All Do To Save America’s Future” (Sentinel).*

[Washington Times – Atheists Forgetting the Meaning of Freedom by Ben Carson](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/aug/19/carson-forgetting-the-meaning-of-freedom/)