

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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November 24, 2015

***Via U.S. Mail and Email:*** klugar@ahla.com

Ms. Katherine Lugar  
President and CEO  
American Hotel & Lodging Association  
1250 I Street, N.W.  
Suite 1100  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Please offer bible-free rooms

Dear Ms. Lugar:

On behalf of the 23,000 members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, we're writing to urge you to offer bible-free rooms, just as establishments now offer smoke-free rooms.

It's time that the lodging industry just says NO to the Gideons. The Gideon Society is exploiting hotels and motels to proselytize a captive audience.

Today almost one in four adult U.S. citizens — and one in three young people — identify as nonreligious. “Nones,” those who have no religion, are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population based on religious identification (*America's Changing Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015). Significantly, about 70% of your international guests are not Christian (*The Global Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center, December 18, 2012).

Gideons International, which places bibles in your establishments, is an association of male Protestant evangelicals. Its website states that it is “dedicated to telling people about Jesus through sharing personally and by providing Bibles and New Testaments.” The hotel industry's “blessing” of the Protestant text over all others thus may alienate not only nonreligious guests and non-Christians of other faiths, but even Catholics, as exemplified by the controversy that hit Pittsburgh hotels in September when the pope visited.

It's simply bad business to promote divisive religious teachings to a diverse clientele.

Many of your guests are freethinkers — atheists, agnostics, skeptics or Nones — who are offended to be charged high fees only to be proselytized in the privacy of their own bedrooms, to be told, for instance, that they are “fools” who can do no good (Psalm 14:1). The nonreligious find it inhospitable for the hospitality industry to promote a book calling for

killing nonbelievers, apostates, gays, 'stubborn sons,' and women who transgress biblical double standards.

The bible actually makes gruesome bedtime reading. Millions of men, women and children have been harmed by bible teachings and primitive beliefs in ever-lasting torment, original sin, human sacrifice, lethal or self mutilating 'tests of faith,' and religious bigotry. The bible calls for stoning to death gays, for corporal punishment of children and preaches women's inferiority and submissiveness.

Bigots, child molesters, rapists, even slaveholders can find bible verses that justify or mandate their crimes. For these and other reasons, many of us object to renting a hotel room only to be greeted by a bible.

We encourage hotels and motels wishing to serve customers in possible crisis to offer a list of local (including secular) resources. The hotel industry may wish to follow the lead of Gansevoort Hotel Group, which, to provide a friendlier environment, removed religious materials from rooms, but offers such materials to guests upon request.

Please join the growing number of other inclusive hotels — which include boutique hotels, Soho Grand Hotel, New York's Mercer Hotel, Kimpton Hotels — that have stopped serving as a conduit for Protestant missionaries. Travelodge Hotels (UK) laudably removed bibles from more than 500 hotels last August "in order not to discriminate against any religion."

Those who must read the bible every day will surely take precautions to travel with their own copies. The rest of us deserve a break from mindless evangelizing when we are on vacation.

We look forward to hearing from you about our request at your earliest convenience.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker

ALG/DB:als