

Travelodge chain removes bibles from all hotel rooms



The budget hotel Travelodge has admitted that it has removed Bibles from its rooms despite receiving no complaints from customers about their presence.

Representatives of the 500-strong chain claim that inclusion of the Bibles, donated by the Gideon Society, no longer reflect Britain's growing "multicultural society".

A Travelodge spokesman said: "This decision was based on customer research and the fact that we live in a multicultural society.

"Therefore, in order not to discriminate against any religion, customers who would like a Bible can pick a copy from any Travelodge reception desk while staying at the hotel."

However, the Daily Mail reported that when they asked to borrow a Bible from the Battersea branch in South London, the receptionist said none were available and advised them to use the hotel's free WiFi internet connection to "read it online".

"To date, Travelodge has not received any customer feedback regarding this decision," the spokesman added.

The Catholic Union (CU), a leading lay organisation of the Church, described the action as "bizarre and sinister".

CU chairman Robert Rigby said: "The Bible is a hallmark of our European and indeed, to some extent, our global culture.

"For countless people, the Bible is a source of encouragement, comfort and indeed prayer.

"Such a move on the part of Travelodge is likely to do little to bolster its budget image, displaying as it does a corporate view and appreciation of strictly secular values, over the more human and emotional aspects of its clientele and others".

Mr Rigby also added that there were many aspects attached to removing the Bible that would affect travelling Catholics.

“It contains some of the most stirring accounts of the history of a people’s growing relationship with God, as well as pieces of the most sublime love poetry ever written,” he said.

“For countless people, the Bible is a source of encouragement, comfort and, indeed, prayer.”

Other major hotel chains, including Premier Inn and Holiday Inn, confirmed that Bibles are still available in their rooms.

Bibles have been placed in British hotel rooms for the past 126 years. The tradition began with the Commercial Travellers’ Christian Association (CTCA), founded in 1888, which donated Bibles to hotels around the country.

Acknowledging the CTCA’s contribution to spreading the gospel, the practice was then adopted by the Gideon Society. The charity distributes Bibles in 194 countries to other large institutions, such as hospitals and prisons, along with hotels.

Elsewhere, the US Navy has been forced to backtrack after its own decision to remove Bibles from guest houses near its bases.

In June, officials ordered housekeepers at thousands of Navy-owned guest lodges near its bases to remove the Bibles and any other ‘religious materials’ from their rooms.

However, public outcry, prompted by a social media alert from the American Family Association and protests by the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, led the top brass to change tack, and Bibles have now been put into the rooms.

Claire Bennett - Catholic Universe