



Ben Carson Has No Idea What Separation Of Church And State Means

Photo above: White House shot of Trump cabinet meeting from 2018.

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Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson raised a few eyebrows earlier this week when he referenced separation of church and state during an opening prayer before a cabinet meeting.

During the prayer, Carson thanked God for President Donald Trump adding that he appreciates Trump's advisers who "help us all to recognize as a nation that separation of church and state means that the church does not dominate the state, and it means the state does not dominate the church."

That part's not so bad, but Carson followed with this: "It doesn't mean that they cannot work together to promote godly principles."

Well, no, it means exactly that. For the government to take on the task of promoting "godly principles," it would first have to determine what's godly and what's not. It would have to elevate one version of faith over others and never be neutral on matters of theology. That sort of thing might fly in the Republic of Gilead but not here. Nothing could be more dangerous.

Furthermore, this administration has an appalling record on separation of religion and government. As Americans United President and CEO Rachel Laser told the associated Press, Carson's remark is "hypocritical and does a disservice to this constitutional principle."

Added Laser, "Church-state separation means that all Americans have the right to believe or not, as long as they don't harm others. This administration's policies and rhetoric, by contrast, privilege a narrow set of religious views above all others."

Laser's comments appeared in newspapers and online news nationwide. It was the third time in recent weeks that AU has taken on Trump administration officials for trashing church-state separation. AU criticized Attorney General William Barr for delivering an appalling talk assailing secular government of State Mike Pompeo gave a proselytizing speech on "Being a Christian Leader" to an audience in Tennessee. Americans United has requested that the department's Inspector General's Office investigate the talk.

It's probably no coincidence that this administration, which is under scrutiny for a growing scandal that threatens to culminate in Trump's impeachment, is desperately trying to bury its misdeeds under a cloak of religiosity. But Carson and his fellow Trump travelers have forgotten one important thing: that church-state separation is a real, vital constitutional principle – one that rebukes them at every turn.

<https://www.au.org/blogs/ben-carson-prayer>

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