

Why Jesus Isn't Allowed in the Foxholes

President Obama's supporters were outraged when the actor portraying Satan during the recent TV miniseries *The Bible* had more than a passing resemblance to Mr. Obama. Now, however, those same supporters seem determined to remove all doubt about the anti-religious bigotry underlying this administration's every official pronouncement.

In the latest outrage, a virulently anti-Christian advocacy group—with the Orwellian name of the Religious Freedom Foundation — met privately with Pentagon officials to demand that current regulations be expanded to make the proselytizing of religious beliefs a court-martial offense for anyone in uniform.

As reported by Todd Starnes in a Fox News commentary, the group's leader said, "Until the [armed services punish] a member of the military for unconstitutional religious proselytizing and oppression, we will never have the ability to stop this horrible, horrendous, dehumanizing behavior." The potential stakes included that worst of all possible worlds: "a tidal wave of fundamentalists."

Not bomb-toting Islamic fundamentalists, of course. Instead, the new prohibitions would target uniformed people holding extreme beliefs—such as maintaining a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Even worse—adhering to Christian principles, one of which is the Great Commission, "to preach the gospel to every creature." In today's politically correct and profoundly secular American society, such religious "extremism" obviously has no place, particularly with anyone in uniform. Who knows, maybe including chaplains.

It's a good thing that George Washington is dead and military

history effectively banished from our campuses. Otherwise, we might remember the general order Washington issued upon taking command of the embattled Continental Army—and in Boston, no less. The general “requires and expects of all officers and soldiers a punctual attendance at Divine services, to implore the blessing of Heaven upon the means used for our safety and defense.” In the same way, any assistant professor of government hoping to achieve tenure will likely skim over certain sections of the first president’s Farewell Address, which reads: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports.”

Among our other abandoned historical beliefs: The Founders’ thoroughly “medieval” notion that defending the nation is a common burden of citizenship. But after Sept. 11, 2001, the children and grandchildren of the Greatest Generation—with bipartisan and bicameral applause – effectively outsourced military service to the less-than-upwardly mobile. With less than 1 percent of Americans serving in uniform during the subsequent decade of war, it suddenly became easy for secular stay-at-homes to assume that spiritual solace was someone else’s problem.

The military is increasingly isolated from the society it protects, and Rep. J. Randy Forbes, Virginia Republican, has become alarmed by what he sees as a military culture turning alarmingly “hostile toward religion.” His congressional colleagues agreed, inserting a highly unusual provision into last year’s defense authorization act, aimed at protecting the moral and religious convictions of service members. Mr. Forbes’ justification: “Our men and women in the military do not leave their faith at home when they volunteer to serve, and I am committed to ensuring that they are never forced to do so.”

A revealing moment came last month during newly christened Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel’s initial appearances on Capitol

Hill. Among his most persistent questioners was Mr. Forbes, who demanded to know:

Why were unit commanders being prohibited from informing their units about religious programs offered by the chaplain's office?

Had Navy officials banned Bibles from a service hospital—and if so, why?

Why did the Air Force remove the word "God" from a unit patch?

Why had a Department of Defense training directive included Catholics, evangelicals and Mormons in the same category of religious extremists as al Qaeda?

If you understand anything about Washington, you will not be surprised that Mr. Hagel hemmed, hawed and backpedaled, apologizing for not being aware of any these issues or their answers. Not to worry, though. He promised to get back soon with answers for the record. Don't hold your breath, and don't expect to see this dust-up headlining the evening newscast.

There should be no mistaking the development of another front in the ongoing culture war characterized by anti-religious bigotry in high season. Every American should be concerned about this pattern of attacks against the conscience and convictions of our service personnel. While their individual beliefs may differ, our soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen share a common acceptance of combat's uncertainties, a tradition of faith under fire that Americans once treasured.

If chaplains and other uniformed personnel are prohibited from sharing the gospel—for whatever reason—then religious freedom will have been banished from America's military. Atheists may be on the march, but the nation's defenders can be assured there will still be none in foxholes.

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