Simson L. Garfinkel

Court gets Christmas spirit

Last week, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Christ-
mas, in addition to being a reli-
gious holiday, is a secular one.
The ruling permits cities and
towns to erect nativity scenes
on public land with public funds.

I think it is wonderful that the
Supreme Court has finally woken
up to the fact that we live in a
Christian country. It has been
long thought by many citizens of
this great land that this business
of separating church from state
has gotten out of hand. It is a
stain the Supreme Court can
not remove from the ground
that is unconstitutional. Unfortune-
ately, the entire Bill of Rights is constitutional by
definition.

Christmas was probably made
a holiday originally so people
would not have to work and
would instead be free to go to
church. Or perhaps it was be-
cause, to the wise old men who
did such things, Christmas was
obviously a holiday "holiday..

Whatever the reason, many
now think of Christmas as a secu-
lar holiday. People think it is
maintained by tradition and
holds little, if any, religious sig-
nificance.

Luckily the Supreme Court has
not fallen into this trap. If the
court had considered Christmas
solely a secular holiday, it would
not have allowed the construction
of nativity scenes with public
funds on public land. It still
would have allowed the construc-
tion of Santa Claus, reindeer,
"Merry Christmas!" signs and
other non-religious things that
go along with the Christmas
seasons, but not of nativity
scenes. Nativity scenes are obvi-
ously religious. They represent
the origin of the holiday, as the
court so deftly pointed out, and
thus demonstrate that Christmas
is a religious holiday by nature.

By giving its approval to pub-
licly sponsored nativity scenes,
the court has affirmed that the
Christian religion are the de
facto official religion of the Uni-
ited States. The judges understand
they cannot just come out and
say that the U.S. government is
Christian because the First Am-
endment is in the way. So they
instead try to blur the distinction
between what is religious and
what is cultural, civic, and secu-
lar.

Some people are getting pretty
excited about the Christmas rul-
ing, but I am waiting for the Su-
preme Court to come out and
let them erect crucifixions, espe-
cially around Easter. Up until now,
clvi-
scenically sponsored crucifixions
scenes have been simplistic, usu-
ally consisting of only a simple
cross: one horizontal bar and one
vertical one. Clearly, if the Su-
preme Court ruled Easter, like
Christmas, is secular in addition
to being religious, this could
change.

And just think of how it could
change! We would not have to
put up with boring old crosses
anymore. Around Easter, a new
kind of crucifixion scene could be
erected — created by a new kind
of government, government that
understands the moral neces-
sity of not separating the state
from the church.

In light of the recent decision,
I think it is wonderful that the
Supreme Court has affirmed that the
First Amendment is in the way. So they
are established, legitimate secular
holidays, we can not be far away
from winning the repeated "free
law" — laws outlawing certain
actions on Sundays — into the
constitution. Or at least from re-
pealing parts of the First Amend-
ment.

I want to get to my bid for the new
scritical to the new crucifixions,
before cities and
towns are besieged with sugges-
tions and requests. What I want
is a fully detailed statue, dripping
with bronzed blood. I want a
crown of thorns, Roman centur-
ious followers. I want everything.

While it is probably too late
for the court to rule on the Eas-
ter issue this year, there is always
Easter 1985 to think about. And
once both Christmas and Easter
are established, legitimate secular
holidays, we can not be far away
from writing the repeated "free
law" — laws outlawing certain
actions on Sundays — into the
constitution. Or at least from re-
pealing parts of the First Amend-
ment.

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