



Willamette Freethinker



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Corvallis Secular Society (CSS) is a Humanist and Freethought society for all nontheists of good will.

CSS is affiliated with the American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH).

From the Editor:

I got up that morning, same as always, and after stumbling around a bit trying to wake up, crawled into the shower as Angela started to wake up and flip on the TV. About halfway through the shower, she opened the door to the bathroom and said, "Something is going on. I'm not sure what, but..."

I finished my shower as quickly as I could, and came into the bedroom, where we tried to make sense of what was happening on the screen. Finally, some footage appeared... We sat and watched, stunned, wondering if we were actually under attack from another country. Wondering if it were possible we might be about to die. (Highly unlikely -- anybody that bombs Albany, Oregon, Really Seriously Missed wherever they were actually shooting for...)

It's been five years now.

Five years ago, Bush was already being recognized as a disaster of a President, and well on his way to being forgotten by history. Thanks to the defection of Jim Jeffords, Democrats had regained control of the Senate, and thus had the power (barely) to keep Bush from doing much damage. Bush's "election" had cost him; he didn't have much "moral authority".

Five years ago, America was unafraid. We still went about our business as usual. The economy had taken a sharp downturn shortly after Bush's election, but we were still America, still a democracy, still respected in the world.

Five years ago, four planes were hijacked by nineteen men, and changed all that.

And for five years, this tragedy has been covered up, lied about, and used for partisan political gain. The Republicans have claimed that dissent is treason, allegiance to Bush is patriotism, declared war on sovereign nations, and imprisoned and tortured innocent people, all to advance their own private agendas.

They were right about one thing. Everything DID change on 9/11. But they are the ones who changed it.

Reed Byers
Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

Announcements

Fall Equinox Potluck

Any excuse for a potluck! Remember to come an hour early on Saturday, and bring a dish to share.

Nancy Powell case overturned by Oregon Supreme Court

Nancy Powell, CSS friend and former president of United States Atheists in Portland, just had her court victory against the Boy Scouts overruled. See page 4 for details...

CSS Meetings and Events

Calendar:

Saturday, Sept 16th 1:00-4:00 CSS potluck
Saturday, Oct 21st 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Nov 18th 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting

Regular meeting time:

Third Saturday of each month, from 2:00-4:00 pm.

Regular meeting location:

Corl House (3975 NW Witham Hill Dr, Corvallis).

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From the President

Researching the Nonreligious Community and the Meaning of Humanism: Part 2 of 2

In last month's column, I began a presentation of the correspondence I've had recently with Frank L. Pasquale, Ph.D. This month is the conclusion of that correspondence. As I wrote last month:

"Frank L. Pasquale, Ph.D., is a research associate with the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture, at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. Dr. Pasquale is a social psychologist and cultural anthropologist. He lives in Portland, Oregon, and is currently researching nonreligious people in the Pacific Northwest. These he defines as those "whose ways of thinking are substantially or affirmatively 'naturalistic,' 'nonreligious,' or 'non-transcendental'." As very little research has been done on the nonreligious members of American society, his attempt to remove the veil of invisibility that hides this large minority of Americans is most welcome.

"On Saturday, July 15, Dr. Pasquale attended the meeting of Corvallis Secular Society, just as he has attended or will attend the meetings of other local Atheist/Freethought/Humanist groups in the region. He introduced his research, and we were able to discuss our worldviews. He has subsequently mailed a survey to each member of CSS, as he has done or will do to members of other Pacific Northwest secular groups."

Dr. Pasquale emailed me on August 26, noting that, for Corvallis Secular Society, he has received "34 completed surveys out of 43 distributed, for a very strong response rate of 79 percent. Many thanks, indeed!" I previously noted that "each survey returned has value, and makes the study more representative....It is important that the voice of the nonreligious community be heard!" Good job, CSS members and newsletter subscribers!

Dear John,

July 29, 2006

Thanks for encouraging CSS members to complete and return the survey. It is VERY important, I find, to let people know it's coming, remind them to complete & return it while they have it (before the stated deadline), and then, urge them again to do so even after the deadline (if there are some outstanding). I'll let you know how returns flow in so we can jointly decide how many reminders & urges may be warranted.

Just met with reps (about 40) of several "nonreligious" groups in Seattle last night in a unique session in which their varying "beliefs" and definitions of key terms were

shared. You would have found it fascinating. I was able to give a blurb about the research and all raising their hands about participating. I am heartened. Of course, somewhere down the road I will have a virtual mountain of data to analyze. But this is GOOD!

Re: my article. I understand your positions. One thing that is not clear to me is whether you concur with my observation that the common thread among philosophical uses of "humanism" is a priority placed on human understanding and well-being, here and now, regardless of additional metaphysical beliefs the various "types" of humanists may (or may not) hold.

Let me know. I look forward to receiving your letter & reviewing the enclosures.

Best,

FLP

Frank —

July 31, 2006

My copy (and my wife's copy) of your survey arrived in today's mail. We'll fill them out promptly and mail them back to you. In a moment, I'll remind CSS members to do the same.

Your meeting with reps of nonreligious groups in Seattle must have been fascinating; I would love to have heard the varying points of view and definitions of terms. Although relatively few in number, members of nonreligious groups can expend a surprising amount of time and energy defining and defending the terms they use to describe themselves. (This is why I didn't like the introduction of the term "bright" as a description of the nonreligious. Whatever the merits of the term, it would soon, I predicted, just be added to the list of defining terms. This has happened.) At the same time, it is refreshing to see so much independent thought among the nonreligious. (Atheists, Humanists, and the like do NOT refer to themselves as "sheep"!)

You wrote the following: "One thing that is not clear to me is whether you concur with my observation that the common thread among philosophical uses of 'humanism' is a priority placed on human understanding and well-being, here and now, regardless of additional metaphysical beliefs the various 'types' of humanists may (or may not) hold."

I think that placing the highest priority on human understanding and well-being is a defining characteristic of humanism. One who considers human well-being important, but not as important as obeying the commands of a supreme being, is not a humanist of any sort, in my view. Such a person may, of course, be a kind person, just the same: it has been said that kindly believers believe in a humane and loving god, and vindictive, moralistic people believe in a cruel, judgmental god. Or as Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg has said, "With or without religion, you will have good people doing good things, and evil people doing evil things, but for good people to do evil things, that takes religion."

However, to my mind, there is more to humanism than putting a high priority on human welfare. What is also essential is rationalism: "a view that reason and experience rather than the nonrational are the fundamental criteria in the solution of problems" (*Merriam-Webster*), and in the gaining of all knowledge. Unless demonstrated to be true, metaphysical beliefs (of or relating to the transcendent or to a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses; SUPERNATURAL) (*M-W*) are irrational and in conflict with humanism. Hence, I personally would not consider a person who holds supernatural or paranormal beliefs to be a humanist, no matter how nice he or she is. Others, of course, may define "humanist" differently. There is no way to "prove" which definition is correct. A definition of a term is simply a description of how large numbers people use that term, not a statement of how they should use it.

This reminds me of a conversation I had with a conservative Christian. He stated that life begins at the "moment" of conception. He did not like my view that "life" is continuous, and so does NOT begin: unfertilized eggs and sperm cells are alive. (Nor did he like my observation that conception is a process that takes a finite amount of time, not one that occurs in a "moment"). I said to him that if he meant that a life (the life of an individual) begins in the process of fertilization, I still disagree. There is more to a person than protoplasm (there is also sensing and thinking), and so I define the beginning of the life of an individual to be his or her birth. He liked even less my next observation: that the moment a life begins is not a question of fact that can be researched and proven. Rather, it is a matter of definition: it is a matter of value or "belief," not of fact.

Frank, I'm glad you're doing this research! Nonreligious citizens are a significant and growing portion of our society, and the virtual ignoring of the nonreligious in the United States needs to come to an end. I don't know how social scientists could have allowed this to happen. I, and many others, I'm sure, are eagerly looking forward to learning the results of your research.

— John

John Dearing
President of CSS

Pope's Top Exorcist Says Harry Potter is 'King of Darkness'

by Canadian Broadcasting Corp, 9/3/2006

Pope Benedict XVI's chief exorcist, Rev. Gabriele Amorth, has called fictional wizard-in-training Harry Potter the "king of darkness, the devil."

Amorth made the statement about the star of the best-selling children's series by British author J. K. Rowling during an interview with Vatican Radio during the week.

"Magic is always a turn to the devil," said the Roman Catholic priest, according to Britain's Daily Mail newspaper.

Amorth, who is also the president of the International Association of Exorcists, said the series contains many positive references to "the satanic art" of magic and makes no distinction between black and white magic.

The Harry Potter series has sold more than 300 million copies worldwide and four of the books have been made into films.

Rowling has revealed that two main characters will die in the seventh and last instalment, due to be published soon. It's expected to include a showdown between the teen wizard and his malevolent nemesis, Lord Voldemort.

"A price has to be paid, we are dealing with pure evil here," Rowling said during a British chat show interview.

Amorth compared the Potter character to dictators Stalin and Hitler, saying they were possessed by the devil.

"You can tell by their behavior and their actions, from the horrors they committed and the atrocities that were committed on their orders. That's why we need to defend society from demons," said Amorth, who has reportedly performed 30,000 exorcisms.

Pope also slammed Potter

Amorth's criticisms of Potter weren't the first to emerge from the Catholic Church, which has never been a fan of the series.

Benedict voiced his disapproval of the character and series before he became Pope in April 2005.

Then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of Germany, he wrote a supportive letter in 2005 to the author of a book Harry Potter — Good or Evil? In it, sociologist Gabriele Kuby had argued that Harry Potter series distorts young people's ideas about the battle of good versus evil.

"It is good that you enlighten people about Harry Potter because those are subtle seductions, which act unnoticed and by this deeply distort Christianity in the soul before it can grow properly," Ratzinger told Kuby in his letter.

Court: Mandatory Scout Recruiting Session OK

by Tim Fought, Associated Press, 9/9/2006

[Editor's Note: Nancy Powell's long and hard-fought victory keeping the Boy Scouts from recruiting in public schools, has just been overturned by the state Supreme Court. As John says, this is yet another example of judges abandoning the law, reason, and impartiality in order to vote their prejudices.]

PORTLAND — A Portland elementary school didn't discriminate against an atheist first-grader by requiring his presence at a Boy Scout recruiting session held at lunch time, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled on Friday.

The Scout oath requires members "to do my duty to God and my country," but simply providing information to pupils in public schools isn't discrimination under Oregon Law, the court said.

Reversing the state appeals court, the justices denied the claim of atheist Nancy Powell, whose son, Remington, was in Harvey Scott Elementary School when the dispute began in 1996.

The state Supreme Court said the Boy Scout recruiting process treated all students equally.

"It is in the later enrollment in the organization that the Boy Scouts differentiate among those who do not profess a belief in the deity and those who do," the court said. "That enrollment, however, is not done by the school district, nor is it done in any public elementary school activity."

Dissenting, Justice Rives Kistler said the Scouts told the pupils any boy could join, but that wasn't true.

"That offer, both in fact and in operation, divided the elementary school children into two groups: those whose religious views agreed with the Scouts' views and those whose views did not," he wrote.

David Fidanque, executive director of the Oregon ACLU, whose lawyers argued for the Powells, called the decision "a shameful day for Oregon. This decision does not follow the spirit of Oregon's anti-discrimination laws."

He pointed to a footnote in which the court said it didn't see how state law "prohibits an organization, even a hate group, from making a neutral presentation to students, or how such a presentation, even by a hate group, necessarily would subject a person to differential treatment or discrimination."

He said the long court fight, and the controversy over the Scouts' stand on gays, have changed public perception of the Scouts, and many school districts have curtailed recruiting.

"We feel good now that nobody now denies that the Boy Scouts are permeated with discrimination," he said.

"We are doing nothing illegal," responded Don Cornell, director of field service for the regional Cascade Pacific Council of the Boy Scouts of America. "The right to free association has been fundamental to America since its founding."

He said the Scouts have literature distributed in schools, and that's still one component of its membership-building.

The Boy Scouts of America said in a statement that free-speech rights and federal legislation require groups to have equal access to school facilities.

"Giving Boy Scouts equal access is not discrimination," said spokesman Robert H. Bork Jr. "It is the law."

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Newspaper Letter

The following letter by CSS President John Dearing was printed in *The New York Times* on Sept 8, 2006.

To the Editor:

"In Search of Accurate Vote Totals" noted that voting accuracy remains a problem nationwide. Oregon has the solution.

Voting problems include voter intimidation, going to the wrong place to vote, failure of voting machines, lost ballots, no reliable paper trail with electronic voting, employees not being able to get away from work to vote, and so on. In Oregon, we have shown that all this is unnecessary.

In 1998 voters passed a measure directing all elections to be conducted by mail. We vote at our leisure in the privacy of our homes. This affords the voter the time to study the often complex measures on the ballot, and to vote over a period of hours or days, if desired.

Oregon has a high rate of voter participation and almost zero fraud. Our vote-by-mail procedure has been successful, and should be emulated by other states.

John S. Dearing Corvallis, Ore., Sept. 5, 2006

Voice of an Angel

9/11: Trying to Forget

It's been five years since nineteen men hijacked four planes and flew them into the World Trade Centers, the Pentagon and, thanks to the actions of a few brave souls, crashed into a field on it's way to Washington D.C., killing around 3,000 people. The Earth has made five trips around the sun since that day and we humans feel a need to relive this horror — well SOME of us do. Others would just as well forget the day — others like myself.

Maybe we should reflect on what has happened since 9/11/01, namely the wars in the Middle East. As of 9/11/06, three thousand American soldiers have been killed — which happens to be about the same number of people killed on 9/11/01. That's not even touching on the estimated 100,000 civilian deaths. What day does the world set aside to remember all those people?

Should we be doing all this "remembrance" stuff at all? How long does this go on for? What groups of people get "time" set aside for them? Do we just remember Americans? Are we saying that other people aren't worth our thoughts? How about those killed in Darfur? The Tsunami? Earthquakes? Do we see the problem here? If we can't learn to move on, all we end up becoming is some kind of culture of death, stuck in the past — wallowing in it.

It's really starting to feel like we are celebrating all this tragedy. Maybe that's not far from the truth. We have people in power who are using the events of 9/11/01 for their own political purposes. They are like Vampires, who in efforts to manipulate the public, suck all the blood from this tragedy they can. Year after year they stand in front of the gaping wound of Ground Zero and proudly declare "Never Again" and "God Bless America" and other tired phrases they never cease regurgitating.

The media, too, is glad to play their part. To quote a friend "so much of the coverage of great national catastrophes strikes me as shallow, simplistic and over sentimentalized." Over and over they play the scenes of

the planes hitting the towers and then collapse into rubble. Each year you can't turn on the news without being subjected to these images and each year we become more numb to it all.

Yes, I am sick of all this "remembrance". Reliving these tragedies just can't be healthy for anyone. I'm not saying we should never think about these events, but do we have

to have these weeks long "celebration" of them? I suppose that as long as politicians have something to gain from the rotting corpse of 9/11/01, it will be propped up and paraded around. (I can't help but think about how the Russians kept Lenin's body on display for years after his death.) It's almost ghoulish.

SOMEONE has to say "enough is enough" and I'll happily stick my neck out and say "WHEN!" To quote another friend who was flying on 9/11/01: "some folks want us to remember September 11. Personally, I'm trying to forget." So....move along....nothing to see here....

Angela Byers

CSS Treasurer & Webmaster



If we can't learn to move on, all we end up becoming is some kind of culture of death, stuck in the past — wallowing in it.

My last vestige of "hands off religion" respect disappeared in the smoke and choking dust of September 11th 2001, followed by the "National Day of Prayer," when prelates and pastors did their tremulous Martin Luther King impersonations and urged people of mutually incompatible faiths to hold hands, united in homage to the very force that caused the problem in the first place.

— Richard Dawkins,
The Devil's Chaplain (2004)

Entrapped by Tolerance: Humanism in the Netherlands

by Floris van den Berg,
Secular Humanism Online News

The doctrine of tolerance and, foremost, respecting cultural and religious diversity cannot easily cope with those who claim the right to intolerance, especially within the same society. In Dutch society, an Islamic core is developing fast. The Islamic community has its own clubhouses, mosques, societies, media, shops, and publicly funded Islamic schools. There are Islamic primary schools and high schools, and there is even an unofficial Islamic university. Intellectuals are struggling with the notion of what tolerance means. The "politically correct" attitude is that cultures and religions should be autonomous as groups. It is thought that financing religious organizations might promote the emancipation of Islamic women and their integration in Dutch society. It is thought that the only way to get Islamic women out of their houses is by way of religious activities.

Humanists especially seem to be unwilling to take a hard line, that is, to take the individual's autonomy seriously and not submerge the individual in the group. Unfortunately, there is a fuzzy separation of church and state in Dutch law. A small group of independent intellectuals, such as Dutch philosopher Paul Cliteur and the Dutch Freethought Organization (De Vrije Gedachte), tries to convince the public of the importance of a strict separation of church and state and especially nonreligious state education for all children. But it is hard to even enter the arena of public discourse with this kind of opinions. Although Paul Cliteur is a well-known public intellectual, he is considered to be an "enlightenment fundamentalist," who is narrow-minded and extreme and not willing to compromise.

Dutch organized humanism has lost its orientation by taking the path of multiculturalism and thereby forgetting the essence of humanism: the freedom of the individual—not the group.

Church Fires Teacher for Being Woman

by Associated Press, 8/21/2006

WATERTOWN, N.Y. (AP) — The minister of a church that dismissed a female Sunday School teacher after adopting what it called a literal interpretation of the Bible says a woman can perform any job — outside of the church.

The First Baptist Church dismissed Mary Lambert on Aug. 9 with a letter explaining that the church had adopted an interpretation that prohibits women from teaching men. She had taught there for 54 years.

The letter quoted the first epistle to Timothy: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

The Rev. Timothy LaBouf, who also serves on the Watertown City Council, issued a statement saying his stance against women teaching men in Sunday school would not affect his decisions as a city leader in Watertown, where all five members of the council are men but the city manager who runs the city's day-to-day operations is a woman.

"I believe that a woman can perform any job and fulfill any responsibility that she desires to" outside of the church, LaBouf wrote Saturday.

Mayor Jeffrey Graham, however, was bothered by the reasons given Lambert's dismissal.

"If what's said in that letter reflects the councilman's views, those are disturbing remarks in this day and age," Graham said. "Maybe they wouldn't have been disturbing 500 years ago, but they are now."

Lambert has publicly criticized the decision, but the church did not publicly address the matter until Saturday, a day after its board met.

In a statement, the board said other issues were behind Lambert's dismissal, but it did not say what they were.

THIS MODERN WORLD



Pastor Leaves After Church Turns Away Biracial Boy

by Charity Gordon, *NE Mississippi Daily Journal*, 8/19/2006

SALTILLO, MISSISSIPPI — Twelve-year-old Joe recently asked Jesus to live in his heart.

Yet the church where Joe accepted his Savior not even two weeks before will no longer allow the biracial boy to enter.

On Aug. 6, during its scheduled Sunday night business meeting, Fellowship Baptist Church in Saltillo voted not to accept blacks within the church. More specifically, the congregation also voted Joe out and said he could not return.

That evening Fellowship Baptist did not just say goodbye to Joe and an entire race of humans. With that decision the church's pastor, the Rev. John Stevens, resigned, and at least one other family decided not to return to the Baptist Missionary Alliance congregation that averages 30 people.

The church was "afraid Joe might come with his people and have blacks in the church," Stevens said. "I could not go along with that. There would always be a wall between us, so I resigned that night."

Cliff Hardy, an officer with the Tupelo Police Department, left the church, too. He and his family had been going to Fellowship Baptist for about a year and had been praying about becoming members there.

"I was asking the Lord to lead us," Hardy said.

The police officer says there are good people at Fellowship Baptist, and the Bible was preached there.

However, "You see, my best friend is a black man," he said. "I wouldn't be comfortable going to a place where I couldn't ask my best friend to go to church with me."

Hardy says he knows there are still a lot of folks who are not comfortable with people from other races, there is still a lot of holdover from the past, there is still a lot of fear.

"But that's not what Christ died for," he said. Jesus' death and resurrection "is supposed to be a uniting force, not a separating thing."

We're all God's children'

In July Joe moved in with his uncle and aunt, Saltillo residents Jason and Melinda Kirk. The Kirks, who had been attending Fellowship Baptist for almost five months, were Joe's temporary guardians until recently, when his stepmother moved here from Ohio.

During the week of July 23-26, Fellowship Baptist held revival services, and on July 26, Joe became a Christian.

The following Sunday, people at the church asked the Kirks if they would become members, and the family started praying about it.

The next Sunday morning, Aug. 6, the Kirks went to church. When company arrived at their house that afternoon, they decided not to go to the 143-year-old church that night.

Later that evening, the Kirks received a phone call from their pastor, Stevens, who said Joe had been voted out of the church and could not come back. The minister, 72, who has now retired, said he had resigned from the church over the decision.

Joe overheard the telephone conversation.

"We explained to him that everybody didn't feel like that," Melinda Kirk said. "But it really bothered him. He felt like our pastor had to quit his job because of him."

The Kirks reassured their nephew that Stevens was just standing up for

what is right.

"People have got to realize we're all God's children," Jason Kirk said. "It's not God so loved the white people; it's God so loved the world."

Since Stevens' resignation, one church member who was not at the Aug. 6 meeting has called the former pastor and told him he was in favor of what he did. Stevens estimates 80 percent of the church is against having blacks in the congregation.

"It's between them and God," police officer Hardy said. "I love those folks, but I can't agree with them."

Fellowship Baptist Church members were contacted for this article but declined to comment.

With that decision the church's pastor, the Rev. John Stevens, resigned, and at least one other family decided not to return to the Baptist Missionary Alliance congregation that averages 30 people.

"Finding that no religion is based on facts and cannot be true, I began to reflect what must be the condition of mankind trained from infancy to believe in error."

— Robert Owen

Christian Zealots Destroy Ancient Arctic Petroglyphs

by Randy Boswell, *CanWest News Service*, 8/26/2006

Canada's only major Arctic petroglyph site — a 1,500-year-old gallery of mysterious faces carved into a soapstone ridge on a tiny island off of Quebec's northern coast — has been ransacked by vandals in what the region's top archeologist suspects was a religiously motivated attack by devout Christians from a nearby Inuit community.

For years, heritage advocates have sought special protection for the ancient etchings at Qajartalik Island, located about one hour by boat from the 500-resident village of Kangiqsujuaq. Experts believe they were created by the extinct Dorset culture, an artistically advanced civilization that occupied much of the eastern Arctic before they were killed or driven away by the Thule ancestors of modern Inuit.

More than 170 mask-like images, animal shapes and other symbols have been recorded on the island since the 1960s. Studies suggest Qajartalik was a sacred place, used for Dorset spiritual ceremonies and coming-of-age rituals.

But the site has been dubbed "the Island of the Stone Devils" because some of the faces — possibly depicting a Dorset shaman in religious costume — appear to be adorned with horns. In the past, crosses have been scratched on the "pagan" petroglyphs and some area residents have told researchers they believe the site is infested with evil spirits.

Long-running negotiations between Nunavut, Quebec and the federal government over the ownership of the Hudson Strait islands has delayed for a decade plans to protect the cultural treasure, which Arctic scholars have touted as a natural candidate to become a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Two ancient African rock art sites achieved that status earlier this summer, and Canada recently short-listed Alberta's Writing-on-Stone petroglyphs for a UNESCO designation.

Now, dreams of global renown for Qajartalik may be dashed after a visit to the island last month by Quebec cultural officials revealed extensive damage to the prehistoric drawings, including deep gouges across many of the faces.

"This is a world-class site," a despondent Robert Frechette, director of the nearby Pingualuit provincial park in the Nunavik region of northern Quebec, told CanWest News Service on Friday.

"I first visited the island 12 years ago and I can see that every time it's deteriorated," he said, describing how tourist looting and natural erosion of the site's soft soapstone first prompted preservation proposals in the 1990s.

"But this time I was quite amazed. Someone has taken some parts of the rock away. There's graffiti. And someone has been carving with an axe or something sharp in the grooves of the faces. It's pretty bad."

...the site has been dubbed "the Island of the Stone Devils" because some of the faces — possibly depicting a Dorset shaman in religious costume — appear to be adorned with horns.

Daniel Gendron, chief archeologist with the Inukjuak-based Avataq Cultural Institute, the key promoter of indigenous history and identity in Nunavik, said the latest vandalism at Qajartalik follows the pattern of previous attacks by members of what he called "a very strong

movement" of conservative Christians in Kangiqsujuaq and several other Inuit communities in northern Quebec.

Kangiqsujuaq's mayor, Mary Pilurtoot, said she hadn't been informed of fresh damage at the site and doubted "something religious" would have been involved.

"Recently, it's not the case," she said, suggesting that most of the deterioration at the site has been "caused by nature."

But Gendron recalls travelling to the Qajartalik with a local hunter who "refused to set foot on the island" for fear of disturbing its spirits. Some Inuit remain convinced that "it's the devil" who controls Qajartalik, Gendron said.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments, he added, "have refused to do anything about this site" before the jurisdiction of offshore islands is settled, possibly by 2007.

"Now, it may be too late."

**My country is the world,
and my religion is to do good.**

— Thomas Paine

President Signs Bill to Save San Diego Cross

by Tony Perry, *LA Times*, 8/15/2006

SAN DIEGO — President Bush on Monday signed a bill designed to save the cross atop Mt. Soledad here from being removed, but both sides in the 17-year court battle predicted more politicking and litigating before the fate of the cross is finally decided.

Bush signed a bill sponsored by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-El Cajon) that designates the 43-foot cross and the city land beneath it as a federal war memorial under control of the Department of Defense.

A federal judge in May declared the cross a violation of the constitutional separation of church and state and ordered it removed by Aug. 2. That order was stayed last month by the U.S. Supreme Court until other legal issues can be resolved.

Cross proponents believe that shifting ownership of the land to the federal government will invalidate the judge's ruling and make it more difficult for opponents to prevail because the U.S. Constitution is more flexible about religious icons on federal property than the state Constitution is about city land.

"We've gone from a sure victory for the opponents to what is now a long shot for them," said Hunter soon after the closed Oval Office ceremony in which Bush signed the bill.

"The U.S. Constitution stands between the opponents and victory," said Hunter, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. "This is a great day for veterans."

But San Diego attorney James McElroy, who has represented an atheist Vietnam veteran in the long fight to have the cross removed, said the shift in ownership will not matter. McElroy said several decisions in other cases involving crosses on federal land support his position.

"The cross on Mt. Soledad shows a preference for Christian veterans over non-Christian veterans who have fought and died for their country, and that's wrong," McElroy said.

Anticipating that Bush would sign the bill, McElroy filed a request with federal court in San Diego last week to declare that switching ownership does not change a previous ruling that the presence of the cross on public land is unconstitutional under the state Constitution.

The order to remove the cross was made in May by U.S. District Judge Gordon Thompson, but adding a new defendant — the federal government — means the case will have to be assigned to a different judge, McElroy said. U.S. District Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz said he will hold a hearing next month and issue a ruling within weeks.

The cross, erected in 1954 as a memorial to military personnel killed in Korea and the two world wars, has long enjoyed enormous popular support in this military

community. Voters have twice endorsed measures to keep the cross, visible from Interstate 5, atop what is one of the most prominent hilltops in San Diego.

Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-Carlsbad) said he fears that forcing the removal of the cross could lead to court-ordered removals of crosses at other locations, including veterans cemeteries. "What's next?" Bilbray said. "Remove the crosses at Arlington or Normandy?"

McElroy said the "Arlington argument" misses the point that courts have made: The size and location of a cross are significant in deciding whether it violates the constitutional separation of church and state. At Arlington, he noted, some graves are marked by stars of David.

"At Mt. Soledad, the cross is all that people see from a distance," he said, noting that the war memorial plaques at the base of the cross can't be seen from Interstate 5.

Although weary of the court fight — and the legal bills that have run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars — city officials have retained their support for legislators and private groups trying to find a way to keep the cross from being removed.

Mayor Jerry Sanders, at a news conference at the foot of the cross Monday afternoon, restated his view that the cross has become integral to the social fabric of San Diego. Sanders said he was glad the federal government would "take the lead in preserving the integrity of the memorial."

Under the bill, the federal government will negotiate a price for the land beneath the cross. If an agreement cannot be reached, the government will use its power of condemnation. Responsibility for the maintenance of the cross will stay with the Mt. Soledad Memorial Assn., a private group.

The cross fight has made for some odd political pairings. Two Democratic representatives, Bob Filner of Chula Vista and Susan Davis of San Diego, voted against Hunter's bill; but California's two U.S. senators, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer — also Democrats — supported it.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said Bush's action is "a great signal to our veterans that we will not forget the sacrifices that they made during the time of conflict."

City officials have tried various strategies to keep the cross atop Mt. Soledad. A measure to have the land sold to a private group was struck down when the courts decided the sale was rigged to exclude groups that might want to remove the cross. Before the Hunter legislation, the City Council had rejected the idea of selling the property to the federal government.

"This is their last chance," McElroy said of the Hunter bill. "We're moving closer to finality."

Prometheus

by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1773

Translated by Michael Hamburger, in *Goethe, Selected Poems*, edited by Christopher Middleton, 1983

Cover your heaven, Zeus,
 With cloudy vapors
 And like a boy
 beheading thistles
 Practice on oaks and mountain peaks—
 Still you must leave
 My earth intact
 And my small hovel, which you did not
 build,
 And this my hearth
 Whose glowing heat
 You envy me.

I know of nothing more wretched
 Under the sun than you gods!
 Meagerly you nourish
 Your majesty
 On dues of sacrifice
 And breath of prayer
 And would suffer want
 But for children and beggars,
 Poor hopeful fools.

Once too, a child,
 Not knowing where to turn,
 I raised bewildered eyes
 Up to the sun, as if above there were
 An ear to hear my complaint,
 A heart like mine
 To take pity on the oppressed.

Who helped me
 Against the Titans' arrogance?
 Who rescued me from death,
 From slavery?
 Did not my holy and glowing heart,
 Unaided, accomplish all?
 And did it not, young and good,
 Cheated, glow thankfulness
 For its safety to him, to the sleeper
 above?

I pay homage to you? For what?
 Have you ever relieved
 The burdened man's anguish?
 Have you ever assuaged
 The frightened man's tears?
 Was it not omnipotent Time
 That forged me into manhood,
 And eternal Fate,
 My masters and yours?

Or did you think perhaps
 That I should hate this life,
 Flee into deserts
 Because not all
 The blossoms of dream grew ripe?

Here I sit, forming men
 In my image,
 A race to resemble me:
 To suffer, to weep,
 To enjoy, to be glad—
 And never to heed you,
 Like me!

Source:

<http://www.freeinquiry.com/prometheus.html>

[The website <http://www.freeinquiry.com> is well worth visiting; it is not associated with *Free Inquiry* magazine or the Council for Secular Humanism.]

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