

Having just returned from more than two weeks in the Southwest, where the Amerind heritage & presence are stronger than in my Northeast, I happened upon this cold letter in UNITED CHURCH NEWS (Apr/92). Why do I think we need a drop in temperature? Because I'm convinced that warm feelings for the Amerinds have damaged them, done them more harm than good. We've all become convinced of the need to escape from sentimentality into "tough love." We need now, I believe, toward all our minorities, **cool love**--unpatronizing, unconditionally rational, un"affirmative" affection & alliance toward "liberty and justice for all." And in saying so, I'm willing to be called racist, classist, elitist, unjust, &--worst!--insensitive.

1 In THE DISUNITING OF AMERICA, Arthur Schlesinger rightly bemoans multiculturalism's devastation of our nation's fundamental, founding core--"m" meaning the mindless promotion of every subculture in toto as of equal value, & therefore worthy of equal attention, with any other subculture & with the core culture.

2 Multiculturalists, in this negative sense, push the guilt-&-shame buttons especially vis-a-vis three groups viewed as specially abused: Jews (thus, the annual Shoah-Holocaust weep-in), blacks (thus, Martin Luther King Day), & Amerinds (thus, the counterdemonstrations on Thanksgiving Day & Columbus Day). (I've participated in many demonstration & counterdemonstrations: I'm not against them in principle.)

3 When so much has gone wrong with "advanced" societies, primitivism's romantic appeal is stronger. Classical "golden age" thinking when ancient Greece was disintegrating. Rousseau's "noble savage" (yes, fed by tales of Amerinds) when the French Revolution was about to sweep away the ancien regime. Britain's 18th-19th-c. revolt against luxury, sophistication, & a degenerate nobility (eg, Sam. Richardson's CLARISSA--a this-month PBS/TV three-segment release--which, in his DICTIONARY, Sam. Johnson quoted 97 times, almost double the number from the next-most-quoted work). America's own Tarzan (1914-), whose venue is Africa but whose father was a British aristocrat!....Older primitivisms merge with modern romanticisms, all of which merge with naturalism (Mother Nature, freedom from civilization's trammels, biospheric health). Now the whole package is being neatly wrapped & merchandised as golden-age-ante Goddess nature-culture affirmation.

4 Our media today, under control of the secular elite, are neoprimitivist, playing to the public's nostalgia for simpler times, when life was closer to the earth. Up with the Indians (Amerinds), down with the Jews--er, I mean the Christians. (In liberal circles, it's fashionable to say it's antisemitic to point out Jews' disproportionate influence in the media. When the media slurs biblical religion, it's always the Christian forms thereof.) Amerind pagan religion--the only religion our tax-dollars are used to promote--is praised, Christianity dispraised.

4 The question this Thinksheet raises is, What's the optimal human distance from the earth? Zero, said some of our 1960s hippies--but zero always turns out to be unfriendly to humanity, to truly human life. Also antihuman is 100%: the denial of earth, including celibacy movements here & there throughout history East & West. Biblical religion says higher than "the beasts" but "lower than the angels," which means much lower than God.

backtalk

Repentance is 'bogus'

Authentic repentance includes reparation, ideally restoration.

I took the land from the Amerinds and don't intend to give it back. Therefore, I'm not in a moral position to repent of Columbus.

Further, the councils of churches and the UCC don't intend to give the land back to the Amerinds, so their call for Columbus-quincentenary repentance is bogus and hypocritical.

But, of course, I'm not against Amerind demonstrations against Columbus in 1992. Losers always and everywhere should have the right to complain.

"Justice and peace" needs more profound analysis and understanding than it's now getting in our denomination.

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5 In comparison with biblical religion, Amerind pagan religion is earth-bound. The essence of all Sinic religion is obedient **harmony** with cosmic law--as it appears in Taoism (harmony of opposites), in Confucianism (harmony in human society), in Amerindism (harmony with the seasons of nature in a given place).

Since viable societies combine the maintenance of a symbolic world with historical flexibility, or form with freedom, & Sinic societies punish the creative as disharmonious, Amerinds would rather die than change, & change resistance leads to degeneracy, a sad word befitting most Amerind settlements in the Americas today. But note:

(1) The natives, native Americans, Amerinds--most of them prefer to call themselves "Indians," but I can't do it because it's not PC--always have had, in their religion, a dimension of transcendence (in Chinese, "ti"-heaven transcending "li" as earth's obedience to heaven). Heaven, the Great Spirit, is, unlike earth, Mother Earth, portable--as YHWH was portable when removed, in 587-6 BC/BCE, from Judah to Babylon (though the masculine numinous [transcendence] was far stronger in the latter than the feminine numinous [immanence], thus greatly exceeding the former in portability).

(2) The media, including most Amerind museums, downplay the success of Christian missions among the Amerinds. Catholic missions thrived till, here & there, Spanish commercial interests abused the natives; Jn. Eliot's seven Puritan "praying towns" were successes till King Philip's War; Black Elk combined Amerind shamanism with Christian catechesis....In Phoenix's great Heard Museum, I found few traces of Christian influence: one case, + a small-print note that the heart of the kachina-doll collection was by a Mennonite missionary (kachinas being ancestral-spirit "intermediators between us and the Creator"). Present Amerind religion is presented as purely pagan, as in the introductory film's statement that "The stars are the mighty spirits which guide and direct us." The rich white couple who founded the museum did so, the bronze plaque says, "To preserve the cultural heritage of those whose arts and crafts have so enriched our lives." All EC (esthetically correct), but against optimal distance from the earth.