

Ambiguity is the word for all "land claims" and "clear titles" on this shrinking planet. Israel's clear title to "Israel"-land is unchallenged, because the folk in relation to whom the Israelites-paleo were "immigrants" now exist only in the lower strata reached by the archeologist's spade. My clear title to a piece of Cape Cod is "clear" because in the township are no Indians challenging it, though in a contiguous township live Indians whose continuing existence makes ambiguous the land claims of all non-Indians living in the township: "our" Indians of Barnstable Township are all safely dead, dead as the biblical Canaanites. Arabs are immigrants in the "Holy Land" relative to the Jews, who were immigrants into Canaan but became the natives with the dying off and absorption of the Canaanites.... This thinksheet is a meditation for truth and against sentimental neo-mythology vis-a-vis America as "promised land" and "land claim," upon reading pp.1238-1241 of the 20 Dec 78 CHRISTIAN CENTURY.

1. America was/is "promised land," in various sense of promise, for all peoples who've arrived here in the past twenty millenia (assuming none did before that). Considering (as the CENTURY material does) on the first two of the Red-White-Black-Brown-Yellow waves, what to call them? Eastern-hemisphere immgrants are "Indians" (an ignorant, wrong-guess name), "Indamers," "Amerinds," "Red Men" ("Red Persons" or just "Reds"?--not the latter, for that's for Communists), "Aborigenes" (but are they direct descendants of the first wave?), "Natives" (but, in addition to being warped with missionary-imperialistic connotata, all are natives who were born here, so I am a native and many "Indians" aren't), "Native Americans" (political connotation, but the same objection to "native"). The coeval problem is what to call Whites vis-a-vis "Indians." I don't like "Whites," but that's what the Indians called us (or "Palefaces"). "Europeans" would fit me, for my ancestors come from eight areas of Europe-Britain, but some Whites came from Asia and N.Africa. We are all from the Western Hemisphere if W.H. is defined appropriately, but that term is coeval-codefined with Eastern Hemisphere, and geographical dictionaries are ambiguous on the matter. I can't accept Dale Stover's designation "Immigrants," for that puts us down vis-a-vis the Indians, who were also immigrants, as ethnogeography teaches.
2. I'm piqued by the sentimental hypocrisy of opposing the Israelis vis-a-vis the interloping (since the 7th c.) Arabs while defending the Amerinds vis-a-vis us interloping (since the 17th c.) Whites. The CENTURY material does not do this, but its sentimental neo-mythological mentality is consonant with this posture--reverse-prejudice putting the worst face on "us" and the best face on "them." In this masochistic self-victimization, truth also is victimized. And when truth is twisted in the interest of tolerance and love, violence rather than penitence is the historic prediction.
3. Stover does not claim that Amerinds and Others (which I'll call all the rest of us Americans) have much to learn from each other, but only that we Others have much to learn from the Amerinds. Now, it is clear that the Amerinds have refused to learn much from us, but has that been a virtue? The acquisitive dimension of non-Amerind Americans is urban, beginning about seven millenia ago with the birth of the city in Mesopotamia: is Stover saying that city and acqusitivity are separable? No evidence for this. Is he saying we can live in cities with rural-nonacquisitive psyches? Or that we should give up living in cities? And what of the fact that the Amerinds' ancestors, the Chinese, are now becoming more urban-acquisitive?
4. Truth-twisting romanticism in "the movements" is my wide concern here. Narrowly, look at the lie in deFord's poem "To an Indian Schoolboy" whose teacher teaches him that he's "always" (used twice) been here, a notion supportable only by the ignorance due to Amerind failure of historiography--unless the ignorance is used poetically, as Melchisedek in the Letter to the Hebrews.
5. God the Creator intends earth as "holy land." Let's not pollute it with mythologies old or new. The Promise is to all, and the Claim should be for all by all.