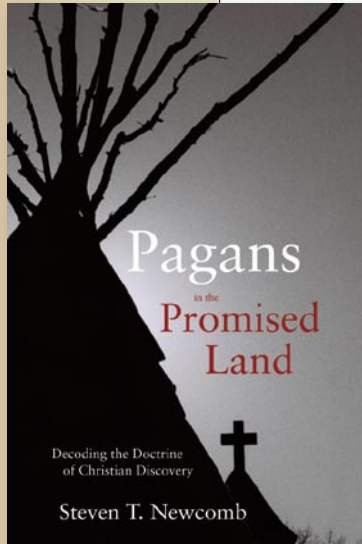


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Pagans in the Promised Land

Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery

By Steven T. Newcomb



Steven T. Newcomb presents a revealing new addition to legal scholarship

A unique analysis of how religious bias has shaped US federal Indian law

Denver, CO (2/1/2008)—*Pagans in the Promised Land* decodes the hidden Old Testament religious basis of the doctrine of discovery as it relates to federal Indian law and policy. Steven T. Newcomb, indigenous law research coordinator for the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation, uses extensive research to argue that the United States cannot achieve a true separation of church and state so long as US federal Indian law and policy are premised on the religious categories “Christian people” and “heathens.” Newcomb illustrates this point by looking back at the Old Testament narrative of the

chosen people and the promised land and then tracing this colonial adventure story to Vatican papal bulls of the fifteenth century and to the 1823 Supreme Court ruling *Johnson v. M’Intosh*. It is on the basis of this conceptual foundation, he contends, that the US government claims an ultimate dominion over the existence and lands of originally independent Indian nations.

“...a provocative and complex account meriting close attention.”

—David E. Wilkins (Lumbee), professor of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota

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Steven T. Newcomb
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FULCRUM PUBLISHING,
founded in 1984, takes pride in encouraging readers to live life to the fullest and learn something new every day. The company is a resounding voice for independent publishing in the western United States, carrying and promoting over 450 active titles.



Steven T. Newcomb (Shawnee/Lenape) is the indigenous law research coordinator at the Education Department of the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation in San Diego County, California. He is cofounder and codirector of the Indigenous Law Institute, a fellow with the American Indian Policy and Media Initiative at Buffalo State College in New York, and a columnist for *Indian Country Today*. He has taught in the Legal Studies Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and as a guest lecturer in the political

science department at the University of Colorado at Denver. In 2004 Newcomb was named Writer of the Year in Journalism by the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers for his *Indian Country Today* column “Bush Lets Freedom Reign.” Newcomb lives with his wife, Paige, in Alpine, California.

For more information on *Pagans in the Promised Land*, please visit www.fulcrumbooks.com.

Editor's Impressions

Working on this book was like aerobics for the brain. The concepts and discussions stretch the mind in ways I didn't think possible, and they kept me thinking long after I was done reading. But the hard work was worth it. Steve's brilliant, humble, kind, and hardworking, with a mellow manner and a sly sense of humor. I respect him very much, and am so grateful to him for making me think about language in a way I've never done before, to bring in etymology and history and really make me think about what each word and expression is truly conveying.

—Haley Berry

What does *Pagans in the Promised Land* explain?

- The hidden religious basis upon which the United States claims an ultimate authority over originally free Indian nations, and ultimate title to their lands, in violation of the presumed separation of church and state in the United States.
- How fifteenth-century Vatican documents of “discovery” and conquest influenced the development of US federal Indian law.
- How the Old Testament colonial adventure story of the chosen people and the promised land was used by the United States as a means of understanding and experiencing American Indian nations.
- The role played by the dominating mentality of Christendom in the early treatment of American Indians and in the eventual development of federal Indian law and policy.
- The tacit religious basis upon which the original independence of Indian nations has been historically defined in US law as *nullus* (null and void).
- How it is that an unnoticed paradigm of domination is built into the English language, which has been used by the United States against originally free and independent Indian nations.
- How some of the most recent findings in cognitive theory (the study of the human mind) provide important tools for analysis and reform through decolonization.

What does *Pagans in the Promised Land* achieve?

The formative influence of Christian doctrines on US law was once clear and unambiguous. Religious dogmas of fifteenth-century Vatican papal bulls were deployed as the foundation of property law, nationhood, and federal Indian law in the early nineteenth century. Court decisions bound US law to the world of Christendom and Christian imperialism. This process was not hidden or mysterious, nor was it a conspiracy among judges and priests. It was a long-range planning for the takeover of a continent and a hemisphere. It was the theory that guided colonial practices. It is the story of *Pagans in the Promised Land*...

Where a given rule is benign, we applaud the ordinary practice for its consistency and efficiency; but where the rule is problematic, ordinary practice is an obstacle to understanding and change. Cognitive theory shows us that a premise for rethinking any area of law is cognitive awareness: we must understand what it is that needs to be rethought. This requires a break with ordinary practice and an exercise of our human capacity for self-awareness and reflection. *Pagans in the Promised Land* provides us with this break and encourages us to think anew about foundational legal issues.

(Excerpt from the foreword for *Pagans in the Promised Land*, written by Peter d'Errico)

