

Deloria's Manifesto Meets the Book of Mormon

In his book *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Vine Deloria (Nakota Nation¹) decries the abusive nature of the US government from 1794 to the present. He looks through history and sees a trail of broken treaties, deceptions, and lies. His first example is the Pickering Treaty with the Seneca Nation.²

Timothy Pickering was sent by President George Washington to develop peaceful relations with the Seneca. The treaty signed between the ancient nation and the new born nation stipulated that the Seneca would get to keep their land - amazing - in perpetuity. Yet in the early 1960s the US government took a huge swath of land for a dam and reservoir. Per Deloria, that was just one of over 400 broken treaties.³

As much as we would like to think of Deloria as an activist - he blames European Christianity⁴ - he is far removed from the first activist. The first was a small team of white missionaries who were active in 1831, long before it was fashionable to be an advocate for Indian rights. And they were not attempting to convert them to European Christianity, from which they were breaking away. Instead they were delivering a new and bold message, i.e., God was restoring His Son's church and was about to restore His ancient covenant people – which included Native Americans – to their rightful place. Not the typical early American message and at great odds with the 19th century theory of "manifest destiny".

Even more fascinating is the fact that these early "activists" stopped to meet with the Seneca on their way westward to the Indian Territory.⁵ They delivered to them copies of a recently published book called the **Book of Mormon**.

¹ Wikipedia, April 3, 2009

² Deloria, Vine, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*; University of Oklahoma Press, 1989; Page 29

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Pratt, Parley P., *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, Desert Book Company, 1973, Page 47