

## Native American Ministries #8

As posted previously this section will be an excerpt from Thom White Wolf Fassett's *Giving Away Our Hearts*. The formal citation has been added a few times and the conventional reference for a repeat citation is *ibid.* and the new page numbers, in this case pp. 29 & 30. I will use this format until I get all the great stuff from this book that applies to our Journey to Repentance.

### Sovereignty and Manifest Destiny

To this very day, the issues of sovereignty have plagued both the Native inhabitants of America and the newcomers. Then as today, the right of Native people to exercise complete power of their geographical homelands was questioned. Indians had always exercised sovereignty over their territories. Violent encounters with other Native nations and entities as well as westward-moving European settlers, for the most part, grew out of an understanding of tribal/nation sovereignty and territorial rights. Incidents of national aggression--that is aggression against Native nations by native groups or by colonial or federal powers--was met with measures of rigorous defense.

The new immigrants embraced concepts of sovereignty not shared by Indian nations. Images of Manifest Destiny gave tone, texture and context to European concepts of sovereignty that allowed them to interfere in the affairs of other nations. Originally understood as the inherent right and ultimate good to expand the principle ideals of the dominant culture--in this case the Anglo Saxon race--the spirit of Manifest Destiny found its fullest expression in America by claiming land and dominance from the east coast to the west coast of what is now the continental United States. Though a phrase not common until the nineteenth century, the meaning and power of its sentiments took root at the beginning of the colonial era. Manifest Destiny was founded upon racial superiority and a compulsion to make manifest the destiny of the immigrant population and a value system alien to the civilizations into whose territories the new settlers migrated.

Probably the finest definition of Manifest Destiny was provided, perhaps unwittingly, by Robert Frost when he recited his poem "The Gift Outright" at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. The poignant line "...The land was ours before we were the land's..." captures the essence of Manifest Destiny in a way no scholar or historian has been able to articulate quite so clearly. The immigrants to the North American continent surely believed that the land was theirs long before they set eyes on it. This philosophy and the ensuing struggle to vanquish the land and its people brought Native Americans to their current state of emergency.