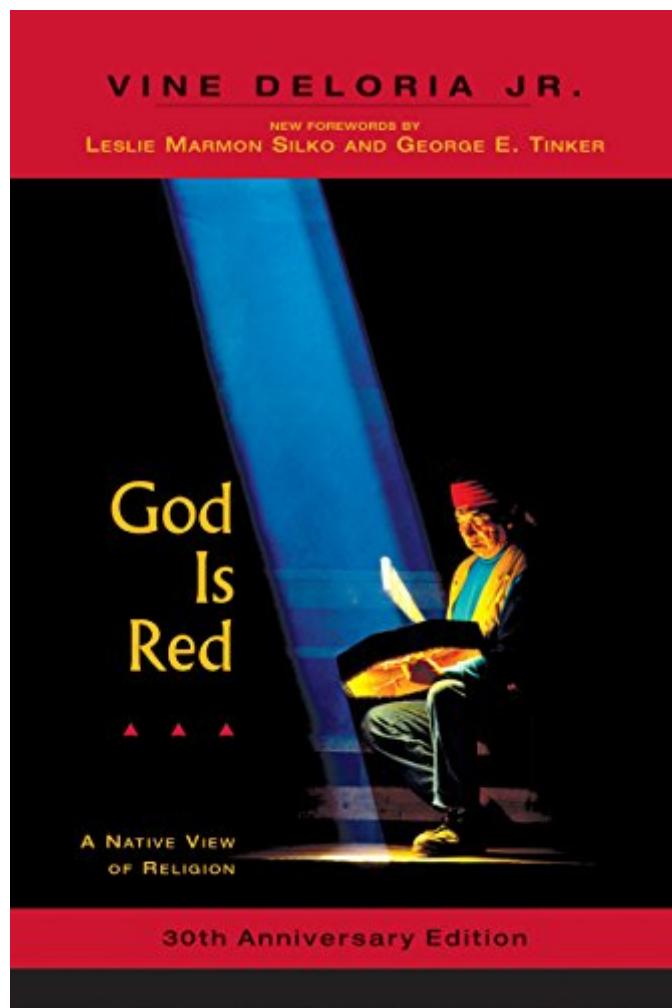


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# God Is Red: A Native View Of Religion



## **Synopsis**

First published in 1972, Vine Deloria Jr.'s *God Is Red* remains the seminal work on Native religious views, asking new questions about our species and our ultimate fate. Celebrating three decades in publication with a special 30th-anniversary edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I first read this back in high school, while I'll never forgive myself of losing the crumpled old version of it I was able to order a brand new copy. After reading through it again it still rings true to me.

Some have already tore into the book as being Anti-Christian. What many of them need to understand is that Christianity has had a huge (and often very negative) impact on the American Indian community in the United States. For too long Native spirituality was merely brushed aside as unimportant or savage, while Native children were having the Bible shoved down their throats

shamelessly by the self-proclaimed followers of Christ. That is pretty much the Christianity that many American Indians have come to know, a relentless and uncompromising force of colonialism. While claiming to be enlighteners they were also responsible for systematic forms of abuse that went on even into the 20th century, in which the consequences still resonate through Indian Country today. One of the major themes of the book is a comparison of Native and Christian values. With this he brings up many examples from various aboriginal nations from North America and various stories and passages ripped from tenets of Christianity. Things such as the value of sacred places, the definition of evil, and humanity's relationship with nature. One bit that I really enjoyed was Deloria's sarcasm regarding new agers. Obviously this book isn't for anyone, as stated it can really offend some Christians. But if you really want to understand the American Indian frustration with organized religion or in this case Christianity, this is definitely a book you should read through.

Wanted to read this for years and finally did. He brings up a specific point so clearly that, if I'd ever read it before, didn't get across 'til this book which is simply this: Land is NOT property. Land has a Sanctity of Place. This changes everything. Land as all Life, even those we, as Whites, were never taught to think of as having Spirit such as stones, were made by the Creator. Ownership of land was unthinkable to the First Nations People; the Land was the Creator's and therefore sacred and respected. Nothing was taken without an offering of some kind made to the Spirit within - a tree, for instance, before felling was given an offering and prayers of gratitude for what the tree would provide to The People. Everything was used. All people who have their sovereignty from the Land and Waters approach with this attitude; no more than needed is taken and nothing is wasted. We have much to learn from this respectfulness because our Mother is dying from what we didn't know, and from wrongful attitudes.

This is written from the point of view of an intellectual well versed in Western philosophy and religion but who is also well versed in American Indian Native religion. The chapters detail the stark differences between what he develops as warring cultures as he step by step describes the impact of Greek philosophy on Christian religion and how that molds the sense of individuality viewed as the modern individual in the West today. In contrast to this he describes the nature of community as seen through the eyes of natives and native religions that are land based instead of abstract conceptual systems. I find it interesting because other books such as Charles Taylor's "The Sources of the Self" make much the point he does in describing the nature of the modern individual and what brings it about. We might also see this in other books that deal with the subject. Of importance are

several insightful points regarding the difficulties native communities face and how they have reacted to these culture wars. For example, regarding suicide he says, "Many people are trapped between tribal values constituting their unconscious behavioral responses and the values they have been taught in schools and churches, which primarily demand conforming to seemingly foreign ideals. Alcoholism and suicide mark this tragic fact of reservation life. People are not allowed to be Indians and cannot become whites. They have been educated, as the old-timers would say, to think with their heads instead of their hearts." (p 242) On the chapter between Natural and Hybrid Peoples he describes the Native religions as based on a sense of place - the importance of the land where "The soil you see is not ordinary soil - it is the dust of the blood, the flesh, and the bones of our ancestors. We fought and bled and died to keep other Indians from taking it, and we fought and bled and died helping the Whites. You will have to dig down through the surface before you can find nature's earth, as the upper portion is Crow." (p 148 quoting Curley, a Crow Indian Chief). (p. 247) "Education and Religion apparently do not mix."

Great book at a really great price! Thank you!

If you truly want to understand Native American beliefs in religion than read this book. If you want to learn American history and not the fiction we are taught in our schools read this book. If you are a non-Christian this may confirm your own beliefs. If you are a Christen it may help you become a better Christen! This is a must read for anyone that wants to better understand the different religious beliefs in our world.

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