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The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as They Were in 1854. By Samuel W. Pond. Introduction by Gary Clayton Anderson. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986. Maps, index, photographs. 192 pp. \$7.95.

Gary Anderson introduces the reminiscence of a nineteenth-century missionary as a source "unrivaled today for its comprehen-

sive discussion of Dakota material culture and social, political, religious, and economic institutions." With the term "unrivaled," evidently Professor Anderson assigns credence to the work of Pond, for he goes on to say that the missionary attempted "an objective assessment of the Dakota before their intercourse with whites dramatically changed their society." Thus a prospective reader is likely to gain the impression that *The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota* is wholly reliable. A professional historian who has written two volumes on the history of Indian-White relations in eastern Sioux Country recommends it. It is reprinted by a historical society press of high reputation.

Moreover, Pond's work is fairly well known for its use by ethnohistorians as a source of information regarding early nineteenth century eastern Sioux material culture, social practices, and community affairs. Scholars use it as a standard against which to measure subsequent change among eastern Sioux through their exposure to the forces of cultural imperialism. It is instructive regarding the point of view of missionaries who worked in Sioux Country during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and so forth. Scholars have long used Pond's reminiscence to considerable advantage. Previously, they have had to seek it out in Volume 12 of the Minnesota Historical Society *Collections*. Now they may take copies home at low cost for easy reference.

So many unwary general readers, many of whom are likely to gather from Anderson's introduction that this is reliable literature. It is not. Prospective readers should observe several caveats. For one thing, Samuel Pond did not know "more about the Dakota than any other white person" of his time, as Anderson suggests. His brother Gideon knew more than he about the subject. This is clear in mission correspondence. Neither of the Pond brothers learned as much as Stephen Return Riggs, and Riggs never fathomed Sioux culture with a depth of understanding compared to that of Thomas Williamson. Neither the elder Riggs nor the elder Williamson knew as much as their sons, Alfred Riggs and John P. William-

son. And Alfred never claimed to know as much as John, who has been characterized by Sioux elders who knew him (in the presence of the reviewer) as "a real Indian" for his understanding of Sioux ways. Far from earning acclaim as the "unrivaled" source, Samuel Pond was least qualified among nineteenth century missionaries to write such a book as this. In less than two decades he abandoned his work among Sioux for service among White settlers. Much later he recorded his ideas. At best, he perceived Sioux life and culture "through a glass darkly."

Some information he recorded remains useful, as mentioned above, but some is clearly erroneous. Pond's perceptions of eastern Sioux religion and philosophy were preposterous. He thought Sioux "notions concerning supernatural things were confused, unsettled, and contradictory." He believed that "The religion of the Dakotas consisted principally . . . in the worship of visible things of this world, animate and inanimate Another object of worship was . . . that which moves. Stones were the symbol of this deity The Indians believed that some stones possessed the power of locomotion." The Sioux were "very superstitious" in their "worship of some one of their vast variety of gods. . . . Stones were much worshipped by them," and so on. Regarding the sweatlodge, he admitted: "What particular ceremonies were connected with this bath, I do not know." About the use of the Sacred Pipe, he could say only that in his opinion Sioux people had become attached to it, and had learned to be "inveterate smokers." It is easy enough to understand how a missionary who observed Indian religious ceremonies from a distance with disdain could develop such mistaken impressions. It is not so easy to understand why his mistakes have been passed along to prospective readers without warning that Pond's judgments were naive, biased, and erroneous.

In the hands of a scholar, such misperceptions by Pond make useful data. A body of literature exists to explain that missionaries like him were prone to characterize Indian

religion as the worship of earthly objects and many gods. In this way, they sought justification for their attacks on tribal practices as pagan beliefs deserving replacement by the teachings of Christ. But careful ethnologists understand that missionaries like Pond twisted Indian religious beliefs and practices beyond recognition.

Unfortunately, unwary lay readers do not understand this. In the hands of people who cannot recognize its faults, Pond's analysis becomes potentially damaging to intercultural understanding and race relations. When, in the absence of appropriate criticism, we reprint sources created by early intruders into Indian Country who had obvious biases, those who hear us are likely to judge Indian people of 1980s accordingly.

The reviewer is perplexed and saddened to see this faulty work go on sale again without caveats. Among general readers, it is likely to reinforce racial bias. To people of Sioux heritage, it has got to be insulting. This old reminiscence should have remained in Volume 12 of the *Minnesota Collections* where only knowledgeable scholars would be likely to find it.

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