

American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict." *The Annals of Iowa* 46 (1983), 638-638.

Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.8943>

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THE ANNALS OF IOWA

American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict, by Henry Warner Bowden. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 255. Notes, index. \$14.95.

Bowden's book is an ambitious attempt to cover, albeit in a general manner, the complex history of the relationship between American Indians and Christian missions and missionaries, from Spanish colonial times to the present. This Indian-white relationship, regardless of what level it occurred on—religious, political, economic, or whatever—is invariably a bewildering, confusing mishmash of factors which are maddeningly difficult to grasp. Despite the complexity and scope of his work, Bowden has done a commendable job of synthesizing a large amount of secondary literature to provide a broad perspective of this subject.

But like every overview book of this sort, Bowden's work does have its share of problems. Its very scope is perhaps *too* broad to be adequately handled in a book of this length. His almost exclusive reliance upon secondary sources, while allowing a variety of points-of-view, does not allow more than cursory attention to be paid to even the most important aspects of Indians and missions. And in fact, when information is culled from a wide variety of secondary sources without any supporting documentation from primary ones, errors result. For example, his statements (pp. 174-175) about the supposed educational achievements of Indian students (mainly Cherokees) at the Brainerd and Eliot schools operated under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, are way off the mark. In fact, these two schools, which operated roughly during the period from 1817 to 1840, were nearly complete failures educationally. Students actually learned very little at all, a point Bowden misses completely.

If read for general content and background, this book does have value. But as with any general work, one should not place too much stock in the validity of specific points made in it.

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Slim Buttes, 1876: An Episode of the Great Sioux War, by Jerome A. Greene. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982. pp. xvi, 192. Photographs, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$12.95.

Military history buffs and professional historians alike will find this a useful book. The battle at Slim Buttes in South Dakota has been over-

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