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An Account of the Dakota-US War of 1862 as Sacred Text: Why My Dakota Elders Value Spiritual Closure over Scholarly “Balance”

John Peacock

Dakota fluent-speaking elders Dr. Clifford Canku and Rev. Michael Simon have translated from Dakota into English fifty letters written by three dozen Dakota prisoners of war incarcerated at Fort McClellan, Davenport, Iowa, for their participation in the Dakota-US War of 1862. The translators, both Dakota Presbyterian ministers as well as traditional Sun Dancers, are descended from the letter writers, many of whom were likewise Christian Dakota who still followed some of the traditional ways. While still working on the translations, Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon asked me to appear with them on several panels before mainly non-Native audiences to put the project into historical context and to speak about their translation process. This essay presents the various historical perspectives I provided, as well as my analysis of why, for their 2013 book on the Dakota letters, Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon ultimately decided to leave out this historical context and retain only what I had written about the translation process. As I will explain, they intend the book principally for a Dakota audience of young people and fluent-speaking traditionalists of their own generation.¹

The next two sections of this essay present the substance of the historical context I presented in the talks but, at the translators' request, deleted from the book.

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THE WAR AND ITS CAUSES

Of the sources for his still-definitive history of the Dakota-US War of 1862, William Folwell writes, "These accounts are often discordant in minor particulars and not infrequently in regard to matters of first importance."² Not only is there significant variation, but there are many accounts. Between 1924, when Folwell first published his history, and 2012, twenty-five articles about the Dakota-US War of 1862 have appeared in the journal *Minnesota History* alone. In 1976, Kenneth Carley preceded the list of sources for his book *The Sioux Uprising of 1862* with the statement, "The literature of the Sioux Uprising and its aftermath is extensive and frequently contradictory."³

"Since so many narratives of the destruction exist," writes Gary Clayton Anderson in one of the first of his many accounts of the war, "there is little need to do more than briefly outline the fighting."⁴ And yet, how does one briefly outline such widely varying accounts?

The first three histories of the war were Harriet E. Bishop McConkey's *Dakota War Whoop: Or, Indian Massacres and War in Minnesota, of 1862-'3* (1863), Isaac V. D. Heard's *History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863* (1864), and Charles S. Bryant and Abel B. Murch's *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota, Including the Personal Narratives of Many Who Escaped* (1864). All three books defended the perfunctory trials that took place following the Dakota "massacres" of Whites referred to in the books' titles. Heard alone allowed that the Indians had been victimized by traders and defrauded of their land and, therefore, warranted better treatment than they received at the war's end. Return I. Holcomb's "Great Sioux Outbreak of 1862" in *Minnesota in Three Centuries, vol. 3: 1858—Minnesota as a State—1870* (1908) was the first work to challenge the veracity of White eyewitnesses to Dakota atrocities and to benefit from Dakota accounts, such as Chief Big Eagle's, as well as from official [US Military] reports and correspondence collected in *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861–1865, vol. 2* (1893). In sum, historiography of the war is divided between early condemnation of unprovoked Dakota "savages" and more analytic histories, such as Folwell's consideration of testimony from both sides.⁵

According to those eyewitness testimonies, the causes of the war were both numerous and diverse. In his September 3, 1862, letter to the *Saint Paul Press*, missionary Thomas Williamson wrote that the "primary cause" of the war was the government's "utter neglect" five years earlier, in 1857, to punish the murders in Spirit Lake, Iowa, of more than thirty Whites by renegade Dakotas led by outlawed chief Inkpaduta.⁶ Another reason cited for the 1862 uprising, according to its initially reluctant leader, Little Crow, replying to a message from his principal White adversary, Colonel (later General and Governor) Henry Hastings Sibley, was Dakota outrage over trader Andrew Myrick's infamous response to their pleas for annuities of food guaranteed by the treaty. "So far as I'm concerned," Myrick is reported to have said, "if they are hungry, let them eat grass."⁷ Lieutenant Timothy J. Sheehan, whose 100 men had to confront 550 Dakotas storming a warehouse where the food was kept, testified

in the *Sisseton and Wahpeton Claim Case Record*, “I think that probably the immediate cause and the real cause of the grievance of Little Crow and his men and the Soldiers’ Lodge [was the U.S. government] not issuing those rations as agreed to.”⁸

The violated agreements to which Lieutenant Sheehan refers were two treaties signed eleven years prior to the 1862 war: the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, signed on July 23, 1851, whereby Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota, under tremendous pressure, reluctantly ceded to the United States lands in southwestern Minnesota Territory, Iowa, and South Dakota for \$1.665 million in cash and annuities; and the Treaty of Mendota, signed on August 5, 1851, whereby Wahpekute and Mdewakanton Dakota ceded land in southeastern Minnesota for \$1.41 million. A total of 24 million acres was ceded in exchange, not just for annuities of goods and money to be paid in annual installments for fifty years, but also for two small reservations (seventy miles long, twenty miles wide) bordering the upper Minnesota River in southwestern Minnesota, onto which, in the summer of 1851, seven thousand Dakota moved, and which, in 1858, was reduced further when the Dakota ceded nearly a million more acres on the north bank of the Minnesota River.⁹

By ceding more than 24 million acres of hunting territory—prime agricultural land onto which White settlers were pouring—the Dakota people had lost their traditional means of livelihood and become dependent on the United States for the annuities of cash and food guaranteed by the two treaties. Of course, the traditional means of livelihood that the Dakota were losing were not just economic; they were *socioeconomic*. In the chapter entitled “The Dissolution of Kinship Bonds” in his book *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, Anderson argues that discontent over treaties, traders’ payments, and agents’ improprieties does not explain how “the bond that prevented hostilities broke down.”¹⁰ Anderson continues,

Many years after the war, Chief Big Eagle delineated what he thought were its most important causes. High on his list was the desire of traditional Dakota men to continue to earn glory in intertribal war and to “live as they did before the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux . . . hunt game wherever they could find it [and] sell their furs to the traders.” The influx of whites on old hunting grounds had effectively limited this way of life. . . . In essence, to receive federal assistance of any substance Indians had to leave the village and at least show an inclination to adopt farming[;] many native family bonds were severely strained [and] social polarization became a major factor in prompting the [Dakota] soldiers to begin the outbreak. “They [the soldier Indians] were envious of them [the farmer Indians],” Big Eagle later said, “and disliked them because they had gone back on the customs of the tribe and because they were favored.”¹¹

Dakota farmers were favored, that is, in receiving more federal assistance than hunter/soldier Dakotas, who felt equally—if not more—pinched by the delay in August 1862 of annuity cash payments that, rumor had it, might not be made at all because the ongoing Civil War had depleted US gold reserves. Dakotas began to demand payment directly from the United States because they suspected with good reason that when the United States reimbursed traders for goods sold to Indians on credit,

the traders charged more for those goods in order to ask the United States for higher reimbursements. Dakota demands for payment directly from the United States, rather than through traders, were met by traders' refusal to allow Dakotas to buy provisions on credit. Indian agent Thomas Galbraith refused to distribute food rations until the money arrived, as food and money had customarily been distributed at the same time. About the resulting rampant hunger and starvation on the upper reservation, trader spokesman Andrew Myrick is reported to have made his incendiary remark about eating grass.

Anderson establishes the date of this remark between August 5 and August 8, 1862, adding in a footnote that "the best contemporary discussion of the war's immediate causes" is in missionary Stephen Riggs's letter of September 15, 1862, to his colleague Reverend S. B. Treat, secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.¹² "In regard to the origin of this outbreak," Riggs lists three more causes not mentioned above:

- (1) The employing of the annuity Dakotas to hunt up Inkpadoota. That made them feel that the white people were weak and unable to punish transgressors.
- (2) Since the coming in of the present Administration an effort has been made by [the] Commissioner of Indian Affairs to change the money annuity and substitute goods thereof. This has been attempted this year and partly carried out without the knowledge of the Agent.
- (3) The war down south has had its effect upon the Indians in two ways—(a) By stirring up in them the war spirit—and (b) by draining the State of men and leading the Indians to feel that the whole country was in a defenseless state—which was too true. But as Providence would have it our new Regiments were not yet sent out of the State. If that had been done the Indians could have swept down to the Mississippi without opposition.¹³

Even closer to the time of Myrick's inflammatory remark than that of the above letter was Riggs's August 6 letter, sent from the Dakota Mission at Pejutazi, to his son Alfred. Not about causes, but providing a description of events, this letter warrants quoting at length:

The payment does not come off yet—still waiting for the money to come[,] Indians are starving and begging and stealing. Monday morning they had a bread riot—they went down in great numbers and splintered down the door of the ware-house and took out a lot of flour; and that with a hundred soldiers encamped not fifteen rods off. The soldiers then came and attempted to dispossess them of the flour, but failed. The [Indian] Agent and all the white people were of course very much excited, but the Indians were victorious. There was no shooting, although they came very near it, they said.

Up here [at the Mission] all was very quiet. When the news of the riot came up here, I was engaged in writing to the Agent [Thomas Galbraith], urging him to give out the blankets and send the Indians home, as their corn would now be suffering from the birds if they were longer detained. That of course was laid aside.

Yesterday morning Mr. Moore and I rode down to ascertain what the state of things was. When we got to Otherday's we met great quantities of Indians running away from the [Upper Yellow Medicine] Agency—the soldiers were taking prisoners, they said. At the Agency we found some excitement. The soldiers had removed their camp to the side of the jail. I got into a conversation with the Agent—he thought the whole thing was got up by the traders, Garvie and Quinn—the Indians were becoming more and more insolent—he would teach them a lesson, it might as well be one time as another—they had commenced war, and war it should be. I represented to him that the Indians were very hungry. He was sure that could not be, for they had given them the meat of five animals Saturday morning. I had learned from other sources that they had given out a little more than three thousand pounds—so I said they had got $3/4$ pound of meat apiece, as I had gotten at the same time 18 pounds, which was for my family $1\ 1/2$ lbs each, and we had eaten it all up by Monday morn, besides eating ham at one meal and having potatoes and flour and other things as much as we wanted. That was the end of that argument. I calmed the Agent down a little.

At this stage of things a report was brought down that the Indians were all moving their families back [to their camps] and were coming down [to the Upper Agency] in an armed body to rescue the prisoners and to destroy things generally. I at once expressed my entire disbelief in the report. But you could not stop the whirlwind. The soldiers were put in motion—the cannons were placed, picket guards were thrown out, and the men brought into line to support the big guns. In the meantime a wagon drove up and took Mrs. Galbraith (wife of the Agent), Mrs. Links and Mrs. Wakefield and their children to put them into a place of safety at the Lower Agency.¹⁴

What Riggs describes as a “whirlwind” quickly became a conflagration. On August 17, eleven days after Riggs's letter, Dakota councils met to try to get a handle on a situation that had spiraled out of control when four Dakota youth, daring each other to kill a White woman after she discovered them in her henhouse and refused them eggs, killed five settlers near Acton, Minnesota. Anticipating that all Dakota would be punished for the rash acts of a few, many young warriors clamored for war as the only option. Chief Little Crow countered:

[Y]ou know not what you are doing. You are full of the white man's devil water. You are like dogs in the Hot Moon when they run mad and snap at their own shadows. We are only little herds of buffalo left scattered; the great herds that once covered the prairies are no more. See!—the white men are like locusts when they fly so thick that the whole sky is a snowstorm. You may kill one—two—ten; yes, as many as the leaves in the forest yonder, and their brothers will not miss them. Kill one—two—ten, and ten times ten will come to kill you. Count your fingers all day long and white men with guns in their hands will come faster than you can count. . . . You are fools . . . you are little children. . . . You will die like the rabbits when the hungry wolves hunt them in the Hard Moon of January.

To those who called him a coward for this counsel, Little Crow declared, "Taoyateduta is not a coward: he will die with you."¹⁵

On August 18, federal troops tried to quell attacks on the Upper (Yellow Medicine) and Lower (Redwood) Agencies. Later, the Dakota lost one of their own in taking by surprise and killing more than half a party of forty-six soldiers and an interpreter under Capt. John S. Marsh at Redwood Ferry—some thirteen miles upstream and across the river from the agency of the same name. The Dakota took ten more captives. "You ought not to kill women and children," Little Crow told his "soldiers and young men" the next day. "Hereafter, make war after the manner of white men."¹⁶ According to historian Roy Meyer, Dakota overconfidence that they

could kill white men like sheep . . . indirectly contributed to their defeat . . . in later, more important battles [at] Fort Ridgely and the German town of New Ulm, on the south bank of the river a few miles below the reservation. Little Crow and other astute chiefs . . . were overruled by the young braves, who were attracted by the prospects of plunder in the poorly defended town. This lack of control over their warriors cost the Sioux leaders the opportunity to attack either position in full force, though either might have been taken with comparatively slight loss in the first two days of the war. . . . As Big Eagle was to say later, the defenders of New Ulm had "kept the door shut" to . . . a grand sweep down the Minnesota valley all the way to Fort Snelling.¹⁷

Each day, more fuel was added to the fire: August 19, after sixteen settlers were killed near New Ulm, Col. Sibley was appointed by Minnesota governor Alexander Ramsey to take command of volunteer forces. August 20–21, a Dakota attack on Fort Ridgely was successfully repulsed. August 23, a second attack on New Ulm by 650 Dakotas was repulsed, but with 34 dead and 69 wounded Whites and the town destroyed by fire. August 25, two thousand women, children, and wounded men fled from New Ulm thirty miles to Mankato both on foot and in 153 wagons.

As necessary as Little Crow was to any kind of war effort (hence the consensus among Dakota that he lead the war), he lacked sufficient political clout to persuade his own—much less other Dakota leaders'—followers to stop raiding and to focus on quickly taking Fort Ridgely and New Ulm. Even before the war, the Dakota denied Little Crow authority to speak for them because of past indiscretions, including an internecine squabble in which he had been wounded in both wrists, and because of his accommodation—perceived or real, feigned or actual—to Whites: He wore White clothes, played poker, owned a house built by the Indian agent in appreciation of his cooperation, and went to church the day before the commencement of hostilities.¹⁸

September began with American troops sustaining their worst casualties of the war at the Battle of Birch Coulee (near Morton) on the second day of the month. Riggs wrote to Governor Ramsey after the battle, "At present the Indians have all the advantage in this war. Their passing with certainty from place to place on horseback, their mode of shooting and fleeing, their perfect knowledge of the country, its ravines and hiding places, their bushwhacking and ambushing, all give them a decided advantage in fighting with our troops."¹⁹ According to Anderson, "Most whites had generally

believed Dakota warriors would never fight a pitched battle, and traditional Indian warfare almost precluded it.” However, citing a survivor of the Battle of Birch Coulee, Anderson concludes, “Obviously the hostile Indians had adopted many of the military techniques of their white opponents, assaulting positions in force.”²⁰

In response to a September 7th note left by Colonel Sibley attached to a stake at the Birch Coulee battlefield, Little Crow warned Sibley that he had “a great many prisoners women & children,” which Anderson says Little Crow “seemed intent on using . . . as a shield or possibly as a bargaining tool.”²¹ Five days later, in another letter, Little Crow specified that he was holding “one hundred and fifty five prisoners,” who were being treated “just as well as us.” Reiterating that the hostages were Little Crow’s “trump card,” Anderson writes that Little Crow “quickly . . . turned to the issue at hand” in his statement in a September 12th letter to Sibley: “I want to know from you as a friend what way that I can make peace for my people.”²²

Fearing severe reprisals if harm came to the hostages, some less militant Dakotas demanded that Little Crow release them, refusing, if he did not, to join him on the battlefield or even to let him cross their territory to elude US forces. Mixed-blood hostage Samuel J. Brown recalled,²³ “On Friday the 19th [of September 1862], the hostiles and the friendlies quarreled and came near fighting. The quarrel was ostensibly over the division of the plunder, but really over the captives. The latter wanted to take all the captives away and deliver them to the whites at the fort, while the hostiles wanted to massacre the whole outfit. The quarrel got very hot—threats made and guns fired. Tomahawks were shook at us and our situation was critical indeed.”²⁴

Stepping between the two groups, the Sisseton Wahpeton peace-party leader Mazakutemani (Shoots As He Walks) “bearded the lion in his den, as it were,” according to mixed-blood captive Thomas A. Robinson:

He told Little Crow and his people in open council, “You think you are brave because you have in the last few days killed a lot of defenseless women and children. You are cowards. You think to get me and my people to help you in this work? No, never. These prisoners will have to be given back to their people and the sooner you do it the better it will be for you. You are figuring now to leave this country and get under the protection of the English [in Canada], but you must remember the chief of the English is a woman [Queen Victoria] and she can never be friendly to a people who will kill and butcher and otherwise abuse such as she is, as well as killing innocent little children. No, you will never get my help.”²⁵

Elsewhere Mazakutemani is reported to have added,

By your involving our young men without consulting us, you have done us a great injustice. I am now going to tell you something that you don’t like. You have gotten our people into this difficulty through your incitements, and I shall use all the means I can to get them out of it without reference to you. I am opposed to their continuing this war, or of committing further outrages, and I warn them not to do it. I have heard a great many of you say that you were brave men and could whip

the whites. This is a lie. Persons who will cut women's and children's throats are squaws and cowards.²⁶

Little Crow had told his men a month earlier, on August 19, "You ought not to kill women and children," and he harbored hostages in his own house throughout the war. Nevertheless, by war's end, according to mixed-blood captive Samuel J. Brown, Little Crow "was very angry to find that the captives were apprised of his plans to massacre them during the night, and that they were prepared to defend themselves. In the morning he threatened our lives—said that the captives must all be killed. He ordered his warriors to massacre us, but no one dared to execute his order—no not one."²⁷

On September 23, the Dakota were decisively defeated at the battle of Wood Lake. Little Crow's reaction was as follows:

I am ashamed to call myself a Dakota. Seven hundred of our best warriors were whipped yesterday by whites. Now we had better all run away and scatter out over the plains like buffalo and wolves. To be sure, the whites had wagon-guns and better arms than we, and there were many more of them. But that is no reason why we should not have whipped them, for we are brave Dakotas and whites are cowardly women. I can not account for the disgraceful defeat. It must be the work of traitors in our midst.²⁸

During the battle, Dakota who opposed the war rescued and released 269 American captives held near the Chippewa River. The next day, Riggs wrote of scalping on both sides: Whites "scalped most of the Indians" or were themselves "scalped, hands cut off, hearts cut out."²⁹ Two days after that, on September 26, Col. Sibley took custody of twelve hundred camped Dakota men, women, and children, to which eight hundred more would be added in the next weeks.

Sibley, leader of the local White military response, had known, traded, and hunted with Little Crow for years. The hostages' safety was Sibley's main priority; thus, to avoid jeopardizing them by marching up the Minnesota River Valley before his raw recruits were sufficiently armed and drilled, Sibley dragged his feet—waiting for supplies, drilling his men, and camping after only a few miles' progress each day. Sibley's delaying tactics infuriated the White community and the press.³⁰ Excoriated for cowardice and incompetence, Sibley offered to step down so that Governor Ramsey could replace him with a man of more military experience. But even after Major General John Pope was given the opportunity to compensate for his Civil War loss at the Battle of Bull Run by fighting the Dakota—with whom he had no experience—Sibley continued to lead local forces.

The White press ran countless stories of settlers being tortured and killed, girls gang-raped, fetuses torn from pregnant women, infants nailed by their limbs to burning buildings—the accuracy of which has been questioned by Folwell, Carley, and Meyer, the last of whom wrote, "Dr. Jared W. Daniels, who accompanied a burial party and who should have recognized cases of mutilation if anyone would, categorically denied that the corpses he saw had been mutilated. Atrocities there no doubt were, as there have been in every war since the beginning of time, and they were not all committed by

the Indians. But these isolated instances were multiplied in the imagination of refugees and their details exaggerated to such a degree that early accounts can no longer be accepted by sober scholarship.”³¹ Whether fabricated by reporters to justify further abrogating treaties to open up the remaining Dakota land for ever-increasing numbers of settlers, these press accounts had the effect of frightening thousands of settlers into fleeing from their homes and becoming a humanitarian crisis for neighboring communities trying to provide them food and shelter.

The Dakota-US War of 1862 lasted thirty-seven days and cost 500 American and about 60 Dakota lives.³² (More later about Dakota who died after surrendering, including many who had never been involved in the fighting.) Though anyone should have been able to see it coming, the war caught everyone on both sides, and the mixed-bloods in the middle, off guard. It was a paradox of inevitability and surprise, an asymmetrical war with a foregone conclusion: just a matter of time before US forces prevailed with their overwhelming numbers and firepower. Even before hostilities commenced, the Dakota had given ground—millions of acres. Already weakened economically, politically, militarily, and culturally before the war began, the Dakota were in no position to mount any kind of effective military resistance to what had become, in the preceding days, weeks, months, and years, a threat to their very existence as a people.

As to more specifically why the Dakota lost, Roy Meyer is the most succinct: “The Sioux were at no time united, at no time committed as a nation to the purposes of the hostile minority. Furthermore, even those chiefs who did take an active part in the hostilities were able to exercise no really effective discipline over their men. These facts go far to explain why the Sioux Uprising was so brief in comparison with other Indian wars despite certain initial advantages to the Indians, such as that of almost total surprise.”³³

Aftermath of War

After the Battle of Wood Lake, 236 Dakota men were tricked into voluntarily surrendering under a false promise that the withheld annuities of food that had been the immediate precipitating cause of the conflict were finally going to be paid. These men, surrendering with their families, were then separated from the women and children and asked to stand in a line going into a warehouse, where they believed they would receive payment. They were asked to stack their weapons outside the warehouse and told they could retrieve them after collecting their food and supplies. Thus unarmed, they went into the warehouse and were met by soldiers who promptly manacled them.³⁴

Dakota elders have told me that these men were mainly of the “peace party.” Commissioner of Indian Affairs Dennis N. Cooley wrote in his 1866 Annual Report, “The only offence of which many of them appear to have been guilty is that of being Sioux Indians, and of having, when a part of their people committed the terrible outrages in Minnesota, taken part with them so far as to fly when pursued by the troops.”³⁵ Some of the Indians had been forced to fight by the “war party,” whose members had

fled with Little Crow after the Battle of Wood Lake, believing as Little Crow did that if they ever surrendered, they would not be given food but rather be either imprisoned or hanged, which is indeed what happened to those who did surrender.

On September 28, five days after the Battle of Wood Lake and two days after the Dakota had released their White prisoners to Col. Sibley, he appointed a military commission of five officers, with Rev. Stephen Riggs as interpreter, to “try summarily the Mulatto, and Indians, or mixed bloods, now prisoners, or who may be brought before them . . . and pass judgment upon them, if found guilty of murders or other outrages upon the Whites, during the present State of hostilities of the Indians.”³⁶ Sixteen Dakota were tried; ten sentenced to be hanged and six acquitted of murder and other outrages. In the next six weeks, 392 more Dakota were tried, mostly for murder and, in a few cases, for robbery and rape as well; as many as 42 Dakota were tried per day, with some trials taking only a matter of minutes. Although some female White witnesses to the attacks testified against prisoners, most of the incriminating evidence came from mixed bloods who, like some of the defendants, claimed to have been forced to fight. (One of these witnesses was Joseph Godfrey, the son of a slave and a Dakota woman and “the Mulatto” to whom Sibley referred above.) Many of the defendants admitted having been present at battles, not understanding that this confession would condemn them. Of the 392 men tried, 323 were convicted—303 sentenced to be hanged; 30 sentenced to prison terms; and 69 acquitted, of whom 8 were released; the rest remained imprisoned.³⁷

Carol Chomsky, whose *Stanford Law Review* article on the trials is subtitled “A Study in Military Injustice,” notes that “Many wars took place between Americans and members of the Indian nations, but in no others did the United States apply criminal sanctions to punish those defeated in war.”³⁸ As for contemporary reactions, President Lincoln, at his cabinet meeting on October 14, was disturbed by General Pope’s report on the trials and planned executions. Three days later, Lincoln directed Pope to order Sibley to carry out no executions without presidential sanction.³⁹ Four days later, Riggs wrote, “Col. Crooks, who is the president of the military commission, was in here a few moments ago, asking whether in such cases as they thought did not merit death, they might not sentence [Indians] to have their heads shaved and to be whipped. The opinion expressed here is against personal indignities as unsafe for the future. An Indian would remember such treatment and might take revenge.”⁴⁰ Riggs wrote of receiving “a letter from Judge Charles Flandreau to General Sibley which greatly astonished me. He goes in for killing off all men, women, and children—thinks that all have been engaged in these massacres except the young children, and they will only grow up like their fathers.”⁴¹

On November 7, four days after the end of the men’s trials, 1,700 Dakota women, children, and elders began a forced march 150 miles from Lower Sioux to Fort Snelling. En route, they were attacked by Henderson townspeople with clubs and stones—as were the 303 condemned men two days later when they were led shackled through New Ulm on their way to the stockade at Camp Lincoln, near the convergence of the Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers. Many Dakota were injured; one baby was killed on these marches.

After the public stoning of Dakota women, children, and shackled men, Gov. Ramsey telegraphed President Lincoln that he was afraid Minnesotans would take the law into their own hands if all 303 condemned Dakota were not executed, a warning repeated by General Pope three days after the stonings, when he forwarded Lincoln a “full and complete record of the convictions.” On the basis of a “careful statement [of] the more guilty and influential of the culprits,” the president held back the death sentences of all but thirty nine—later reduced to thirty eight—having been urged to do so by Rev. Riggs and by Episcopal Bishop Henry B. Whipple, missionary among the Indians since 1859. In 1860, Whipple had told Lincoln’s predecessor, President Buchanan, about the injustices being perpetrated on the Dakota and, in late November 1862, went to Washington to intercede with Lincoln on behalf of the condemned prisoners.

Ramsey and Pope’s predictions of mob violence were realized on December 4, when 150 to 200 hatchet-, club-, and knife-wielding citizens attacked the stockade holding the condemned men at Camp Lincoln. Soldiers commanded by Colonel Stephen Miller held off the lynch mob, and then moved the prisoners to a new jail hastily constructed with logs in downtown Mankato.⁴²

Two days later—less than a month before he signed the final emancipation proclamation freeing Black slaves—Lincoln signed the Dakota death warrants. War crimes, especially rape and murder of noncombatants, were the charges against the thirty-eight, as opposed to the 303 reprieved and imprisoned at Fort Davenport either for not participating in the hostilities at all or for only fighting White men in the battles. The day before Christmas, the thirty-eight Dakota met their families for the last time. At 10 a.m. on the day after Christmas, they mounted a huge gallows at Mankato, singing in Dakota. What they were singing, according to Dakota elders Clifford Canku and Sidney S. Byrd, was the Christian Dakota hymn “Lac Qui Parle,” written for the *Dakota Odowan* (Dakota Hymnal) by mixed-blood Joseph R. Renville in 1842. However, missionary Samuel W. Pond, who attended the executions and knew Dakota, said that the condemned men were singing a traditional death song.⁴³ At the third beat of a drum, the men were hanged before a cheering crowd, their bodies buried at the edge of town in a mass grave and exhumed the same night by local physicians, who used them for anatomy studies.⁴⁴

In summation, panic had upended Sibley’s cautious strategy for prosecuting the war. Instead, a public outcry for an overwhelming and immediate military response ensued. When such a reaction was not forthcoming, after the cessation of hostilities, troops had to restrain settlers from taking justice into their own hands—not only against Dakota warriors who had turned themselves in, but also against Dakota women and children, no doubt in reprisal for what White women and children were alleged to have suffered while being held hostage by the Dakota. During the trials, White hostage Sarah Wakefield tried to refute such allegations by testifying that a Dakota man had saved her life and sheltered her with his wife and mother during the crisis, but Wakefield was roundly vilified for illicit relations with the man. Though officially pardoned, the Dakota man was one of the thirty-eight executed, supposedly

because his name Chaske (meaning First Born Son) was so common that he was mistaken for another man with the same name.

A month and a half after the executions—on February 16, 1863—the US Congress declared all treaties with the Dakota null and void. Having thus left the Dakota with no land or money, the next step, on March 3, was for Congress to enact legislation removing the Dakota from Minnesota. In May, 1,318 Dakota—176 adult males, 536 women, and 606 children (their numbers having diminished by about 400 deaths over the harsh winter)—were deported from Fort Snelling to Crow Creek, a reservation near Fort Thompson on the Missouri River in Dakota Territory. On May 25, missionary Thomas Williamson's son John, who accompanied them aboard the *Florence*, wrote, "To My Friends The Riggs," "there have been thirteen deaths, one man, three women, and nine children, and there are more very sick."⁴⁵ On September 9, 1865, John Williamson testified before a Joint Special Committee of Congress, stating, "For six weeks after they arrived at Crow Creek they died at the average rate of three or four a day. In that time, one hundred and fifty died, and during the first six months two hundred of them died, and I think that at least one hundred of them died on account of the bad treatment they received after they left Fort Snelling."⁴⁶ Crow Creek proved to be such fruitless land that, three years later, the survivors were moved to the mouth of the Niobrara River in northeastern Nebraska.

As for the prisoners who had been convicted but not executed, on April 22, 1863, they were moved in shackles from the new Mankato jail to Camp McClellan near Davenport, Iowa.⁴⁷ Estimates of the number of prisoners at Davenport vary from 250 men⁴⁸ to 407 men, the sum, according to Carley,⁴⁹ of 40 pardoned in 1864 at the urging of missionary Thomas Williamson, 120 who died at Davenport, and the remaining 247 pardoned by President Andrew Johnson in April, 1866, and "turned over to a special agent, who on June 12 delivered them at the Niobrara agency in Nebraska to rejoin their families."⁵⁰

Reactions of the Elders

Some of what I have written above I learned from Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon. For example, they were the elders who told me that many of the Dakota arrested at the warehouse distribution of food were members of the peace party. Dr. Canku complimented me on how I historically contextualized his presentation of the Dakota letters at the Robert Penn Warren Center at Vanderbilt University, and Rev. Simon did the same after I put the letters in historical context at the Pond Dakota Historical Society in Bloomington, Minnesota. Both of these presentations were to non-Native audiences; Vanderbilt had an academic audience, and Bloomington's audience included descendants of non-Natives caught up in the 1862 war. The academics—graduate students and professors in an advanced seminar—were interested in Dakota perceptions in 1862 that the time was ripe for resisting Whites distracted by the Civil War; in Chief Big Eagle's interpretation that soldier Indians started the war because they were jealous that more annuities were going to farmer Indians; and in disarray among hungry Dakota who raided for food rather than joining ranks under Little Crow to take New Ulm and

Fort Ridgely. Non-Native descendants of settlers at the Bloomington talk were sometimes interested in how the war ended in victory for their ancestors.

By contrast, Dakota descendants of the war to whom we gave presentations elsewhere tended to think in terms of how the war has, in fact, *never* ended. For them, the war's ostensible end was only the beginning of their greater, continuing defeat as a people. To them, Dakota factionalism was an effect of White violations of treaties—the ultimate cause of the war and a continuing existential threat to Dakota sovereignty and peoplehood. Dr. Canku, Rev. Simon, and I addressed Dakota audiences differently than we did non-Native ones. At Cankdeska Cikana Community College, the tribal college of my own Spirit Lake Tribe, I proposed that the same traditional kinship protocols in the Dakota *tiyospaye*, or extended family, that prevented internecine hostilities before the war could re-obligate relatives to feed and protect one another in today's continuing times of need.⁵¹ Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon then began their presentations by praying in the traditional way and by smudging with burning sage every member of the audience who chose to come forward (as most did.)

On August 17, 2012, the 150th Anniversary of the first battle of the war, Dr. Canku began his presentation at Flandreau, South Dakota, by recounting a vision he had had in 1998 of Chief Little Crow, after which, he said,

I received a call from Flandreau Santee Dakota elders who asked me to assist them in [first] translating the letters. . . . In the winter of 2012, when the project seemed overwhelming, I had a dream. A spirit came to me in my dream. I was at the Sun Dance tree holding a bundle in my hands. An old Dakota man appeared . . . from the east gate . . . stopped four times [and] said . . . 'Wacin ibosakapi *šni po. Taku wašte icanunpi do*' (Do not be discouraged for what you are doing is good, it is so).

This orally presented material became part of Dr. Canku's preface to the book, a preface he entitled "Spiritual Foundation."⁵²

Rev. Simon's "Translator's Preface" to the book was also generated from oral presentations he gave to Dakota audiences. He began, "There was great *oiyokišica unkahinŕpayapi* (a great sadness fell upon our people) after the Dakota-US War in 1862," and then went on to describe the continuing effects of the war:

This project was completed in the hope that the continuing mistreatment, the miscarriage of justice, and the oppressive and dominating mentality expressed and perpetrated toward Dakota people that caused the Dakota-US War could change. However, in all too many cases, that mind-set continues to live on in the current dominating mentality that influences U.S domestic and foreign policy today. . . . South Dakota proclaimed in February 1990 a "Year of Reconciliation" but has done little to bring out in the open the illegal taking of land.⁵³

Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon said many times that the book-length translation was mainly for Dakota people. For the book, Dr. Canku told me to "just write what would be good for your Dakota people to hear." What could I add to what they had already said? I know Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon understood, tolerated, but did not

share the perspective of contemporary Dakota activist Waziyatawin Angela Wilson that “the traitors of Dakota people were mixed bloods with family on both sides of the war (such as the LaFramboise, Frenier, and Renville families).”⁵⁴ (Rev. Simon’s wife is a Frenier descendant.) Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon wanted me to include in my introduction the following statement: “These Dakota protected their white relatives in accordance with customary Dakota obligations to relatives by marriage”—that is, in accordance with the kinship protocol I had mentioned in my talk at the Spirit Lake tribal college. Believing this protocol applied to White and mixed-blood relatives did not make Dr. Canku or Rev. Simon apologists for the peace party or so-called accommodationists in 1862, however. Rev. Simon’s above remarks about the illegal appropriation of land suggest that he clearly appreciated the Dakota reasons for going to war, and Dr. Canku told me frankly that, had he lived at the time of the war, he would have fought alongside Little Crow.

But neither man was primarily interested in publicly advocating a particular position on the so-called war or peace parties. I came to recognize that the various historical perspectives I had attempted to balance in my account were not what Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon thought would be good for Dakota people to hear, even though few Dakota people were raised knowing about the war. According to an experience Dr. Canku himself had at a march commemorating the war, as reported by Dakota author (and commemorative marcher) Diane Wilson in her 2011 book *Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life*:

At a gathering of Dakota people that was focused on the 1862 Dakota War and subsequent removal, Clifford asked the sixty people in the room how many had learned about this history growing up. Not a single person raised their hand. I had assumed that the people I met through the [Dakota Commemorative] March had been raised within their culture, unlike the experience of my own family. And while many had lived on the reservation, the silence following Clifford’s question was a stark reminder of how assimilation had affected every Native person in that room.⁵⁵

This quotation became the epigraph to my deleted historical account. If so many Dakota people had never learned the history of the war, I reasoned, then certainly the elders would approve of my informing them. Instead, Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon wanted me to cut the epigraph and most of the historical account; however, they did allow the following two excerpts regarding contemporary Dakota people’s feelings about the war to be retained from the historical discussion and included in my afterword to their book:

2002 Dakota Commemorative marcher Diane Wilson, writing specifically about her great-great-grandmother, wondered “what it would be like for a Dakota woman married to a white man with mixed-blood children, with family inside the fort and family outside—what that would be like in the middle of the war.”⁵⁶ Might not such a woman and her mixed blood children have wanted to be reconciled to their white husband and father even (or especially) if he were fighting against their male Dakota relatives?

Commemorative marcher Amy Lonetree wrote, “We as Native People have sought to emphasize only the stories of resistance . . . and have ignored . . . stories of capitulation and assimilation. At the same time, Whites in Minnesota have always honored the stories of Dakota capitulation and assistance to their cause in their remembrances of the war.”⁵⁷ Commemorative march organizer and spiritual leader Leo Omani, former chief of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, wrote, “We were torn apart. It was beyond our control. . . . And it’s hard to talk about . . . because we know our relatives, which side they were on.”⁵⁸

These two excerpts present some contemporary Dakota commemorative marchers as not as ignorant of the war as the deleted epigraph suggests. On the contrary, they know very particular, salient facts: Diane Wilson knows that Dakota women’s loyalties could be divided between their White husbands and Dakota brothers and fathers; Amy Lonetree knows that Dakotas favor stories of their resistance, whereas Whites favor stories of Dakota capitulation; Leo Omani knows which side different ancestors were on. The problem, then, is not that contemporary Dakota do not have a balanced view of history from White and Dakota perspectives, but that they are culturally *caught* in the balance—“torn apart,” in Chief Omani’s words. The problem, in other words, is not with knowing facts, or even being aware of the different perceptions of those facts. The question, for the Dakota Christian translators Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon, is *how do Dakota people come to some kind of moral or spiritual closure on the Dakota-US War of 1862 so as to be able to move on?*

DAKOTA LETTERS AS SACRED TEXTS

Once I realized that this question got at the prevailing issue their translation of the letters meant to address, I came to more fully appreciate the implications of two subjects I had written about regarding the process of translating the Dakota letters. First, I wrote that the two elders, as syncretistic Dakota traditionalists and Dakota Presbyterian ministers, “think of the Dakota letters as *sacred texts*, not merely historic documents. Both men told me that their training at seminary in translating Biblical languages helped them to translate the Dakota letters. The corpus of the Dakota letters reads to them as revelation of a Dakota apocalypse and as prophesy of the Dakota expulsion and exodus from their Minnesota homelands, the male letter writers to Davenport, their families first to a prison camp at Fort Snelling and then into the desert at Crow Creek.”

I came to understand that the elders felt it would be good for the Dakota people to hear this prophetic history—not the balanced historical perspectives that I had presented to non-Native audiences. Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon told me that the latter account *sounded too much like Euro-American history*. I don’t think they were just complaining about all the dates and details. In writing about the process of their translating the prisoners’ letters from Dakota into Dakota English rather than into Standard English, I had been just as scholarly and far more technical: accounting for the development of Dakota English from the Dakota language and from Pidgin

English; distinguishing Dakota English from Standard English; discussing grammar, syntax, and language pragmatics; analyzing specific letters using the methods of nineteenth-century missionary linguists and twentieth-century students of the Dakota language.⁵⁹ As opposed to how Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon felt about deleting the historical information, they continued to want all of this linguistic information in my introduction to their book and never said it sounded too much like Euro-American linguistics—although that is exactly what it was.

The second issue I wrote about regarding the translation—and which I only came to fully appreciate after I had deleted the historical context—was the following: “There are traditional Dakota speakers who are skeptical that a book in Standard English can ever be a culturally significant Dakota event. These translations in Dakota English are for them.” My remarks about the translation process had largely been an explanation of why Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon had chosen to translate the letters into Dakota (or “rez”) English rather than into the Standard English in which they conversed with academics and descendants of the war’s non-Native participants. I came to understand that as translators, they preferred Dakota English to Standard English, and that as Dakota Christian ministers, they preferred Dakota Christian sacred history to secular history.

Secular history—“bringing forth ‘what really happened’ in value neutral prose”⁶⁰—was fine to present to contemporary scholars at Vanderbilt University or to White Minnesotans, but if the Dakota English translations were significant for Christian Dakota elders like themselves, then the book’s history should be sacred rather than secular.

SACRED VERSUS SECULAR HISTORY

The difference between sacred and secular history is that secular history balances causes and effects in a chronological sequence; sacred history, by contrast, is about the moral, ethical, and spiritual implications of a people’s past experience—including why, in the greater scheme, terrible things happened to them and what they must do to recover from such losses.

If, as Christian-Dakota traditionalists, Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon read the Dakota letters in light of biblical accounts of the apocalypse and exodus, they did *not* do so to understand the balance of power between farmer and soldier Indians as a cause of Dakota disunity at Fort Ridgely and New Ulm. The details of those battles, I discovered at the various talks we gave, were of far less interest to the Dakota descendants of the losers than to the non-Native descendants of the winners. To many Dakota (Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon among them), even if Dakota had won those battles, they would not have won the war. Its outcome, many Dakota have rightly come to believe, was foreordained by the overwhelming existential threat to them as a people.

As Dr. Canku writes in his “Spiritual Foundation,” “Dakota people who face this difficult past squarely and discover their own families’ stories can move beyond anger and anguish . . . to a new age, where Dakota people tell their own history to the world.” In his “Translator’s Preface,” Rev. Simon writes, “The authors have

considered development of this book as a religious search. The Dakota would call it '*taku waŋkuwapi*,' a search for Dakota justice for those who suffered greatly protecting their diminishing homeland, but it is also the beginning of a healing process." In our dedication to the translations Dr. Canku, Rev. Simon, and I jointly wrote, "These letters . . . tell future generations / That the people may end their afflictions / and live."

BALANCE AS BIAS

Once I understood the difference between secular and sacred histories of the war, I came to the conclusion that what was too Euro-American about my historical remarks was their very attempt to achieve *balance*—not just between Dakota and settler perspectives, but between the perspectives of the Dakota war party and the Dakota peace party during the conflict itself. I came to the conclusion that to the translators *balance* represented a particular and (to them) all-too-familiar kind of contemporary Euro-American *bias*. What was essentially biased in their view was the Euro-American academic faith that, given all the facts and available perspectives, people could achieve moral and spiritual closure on the Dakota-US War of 1862. (Indeed, all the facts and available perspectives were what the curators and exhibit designers at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul seemed, to the translators, to mistakenly think was all that was needed for an exhibit commemorating the 150th anniversary of the war.) Facts and multiple perspectives might give closure to the Euro-American winners of war, but, in Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon's experience, facts and multiple perspectives had never provided moral and spiritual closure for the Dakota people to whom the two Presbyterian pastors had ministered for so many years. Hence their emphasis on Dakota Christian sacred history—for which, by the way, they fully expected to, as they put it, "get flack" from both Dakota activists and Native and non-Native scholars who read their translation. They expected disapproval for two reasons: (1) for allegedly "stacking" their book with letters from Dakota Christian prisoners (everyone wants to read the letters from thirty-eight other prisoners who were hanged, but so far nobody has found their letters); and (2) for not "deconstructing" the Christianity of many the letter writers, for example, by claiming that especially those writers who converted in prison did so to win their release. Indeed, at least some of the writers may have been writing to their "father" and "relative" missionary Stephen Riggs to convert to or to reaffirm their Christianity in exchange for help getting released. This implicit kinship exchange is much less evident in Standard English than in Dakota English translations of the letters, because in Dakota English, Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon were more equipped to translate the particular kinship terms in which the letter writers had addressed Rev. Riggs, the recipient of all but one of the letters in the Dakota language. In insisting on Dakota English rather than Standard English as the dialect into which the letters were to be translated, Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon opened the discussion of Riggs's receptivity to such an implicit kinship exchange as part of his attempt to convert the condemned men (who, Riggs said, had proved more ripe for conversion than any of the free Dakota he had encountered in twenty-six years of peacetime missionary work).

However, for Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon, opening the discussion of Riggs's receptivity to a kinship exchange did not imply *closing* the discussion of the Dakota prisoners' receptivity to Christianity by suggesting that the prisoners had only one choice: Either they were true converts, or they only pretended to give up their traditional gods in hopes of extricating themselves from jail. "How do you reconcile being a Dakota traditionalist with being a Christian?" I once asked Dr. Canku while he was teaching me how to build a sweat lodge. "I don't," he replied. That two-word response, unaccompanied by any explanation, was enough to get me thinking about all the other things besides Christianity that the White man had introduced to Indians and that Indians, in turn, had adapted for their own purposes and according to their own practices—horses, rifles, trade goods, and the very name *Indian*. And, now, regarding my own "white man education": Was my only choice either to reject or accept its every principle and practice—information retrieval, multiple perspectives, and knowledge production—as an end in itself?⁶¹

Dr. Canku and Rev. Simon thought that scholars who prioritized information retrieval, multiple perspectives, and knowledge production as ends in themselves were biased against spiritual people like themselves. I suspect the two elders might have initially included me among such scholars, at least the part of me that had been academically trained; the part of me, for example, that had written in my historical remarks a sentence that I did not at first think to include in the section of the deleted material that I included above: "Impossible as it is to believe everything I read from all these inconsistent historical accounts, I find myself attracted to those historians who, after researching everything they could find that has been said or written about the war, still do not claim to have found the truth, but acknowledge the great variation between what those multiple accounts claim to be true." I was attracted to these historians because they exemplified the pursuit of knowledge as the highest aspiration of the academic profession for which I was trained. However, speaking in conclusion now as an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Dakota Nation, I have learned a valuable lesson from my Dakota elders about the limits of that pursuit of knowledge in offering consolation, closure, and healing to Dakota people, many of whom are still traumatized by the Dakota-US War of 1862. The more I learn about the war as a scholar, the less moral closure I find as a Dakota person myself.

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NOTES

1. Clifford Canku and Michael Simon, *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013). Introduction and afterword by John Peacock.
2. William W. Folwell and Russell W. Fridley, *A History of Minnesota*, vol. 2 (1924; reprint St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1961), 109.
3. Kenneth Carley, *The Dakota War of 1862*, 2nd ed. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 93.
4. Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of An other Kind: Dakota-White Relations in Upper Mississippi Valley 1650–1862* (1984; reprint, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 261.
5. Harriet E. Bishop, *Dakota War Whoop, Or, Indian Massacres and War in Minnesota, of 1862–’3* (1863; Rev. ed. St. Paul: Published for the author, 1864); Isaac V. D. Heard, *History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1864); Charles S. Bryant and Abel B. Murch, *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota, Including the Personal Narratives of Many Who Escaped* (Cincinnati, OH: Rickey & Carroll, 1864); Return I. Holcombe, “Great Sioux Outbreak of 1862,” in *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, vol. 3: 1858—*Minnesota as a State—1870* (Mankato: The Publishing Society of Minnesota, 1908); Minnesota Board of Commissioners on Publication of History of Minnesota in Civil and Indian Wars, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861–1865*, vol 2, Official Reports and Correspondence (St Paul, MN: Pioneer Press, 1893); William Lass, “Histories of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862: A Review,” *Minnesota History Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 45–57.
6. Folwell and Fridley, *History of Minnesota*, 225.
7. *Ibid.*, 233.
8. *Ibid.*, quoting Lieutenant Sheehan, 232.
9. Carley, *The Dakota War of 1862*, 2; Roy Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 80. Two useful online maps are (1) the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux Land Cession Area http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Treaty_of_Traverse_des_Sioux_1851.jpg and (2) the Sioux Reservation 1859–1862 http://www.ndstudies.org/resources/IndianStudies/spiritlake/images/reservations_large.jpg, the latter of which includes some battle locations. To these two maps, add a third by Alan Ominsky in Carley, *The Dakota War of 1862*, 77, which shows where the various splinters of the Dakota people settled or were imprisoned after the 1862 uprising, and the reader will have a good overall picture of the places referred to in this essay.
10. Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 255.
11. *Ibid.*, 256–57.
12. Gary Anderson, “Myrick’s Insult: A Fresh Look at Myth and Reality,” *Minnesota History Quarterly* 48, no. 5 (1983): 198.
13. Stephen Return Riggs to S. B. Treat, September 15, 1862, in American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, copies at the Minnesota Historical Society and the Newberry Library, Chicago.
14. Thanks to Lac Qui Parle Mission historic site director June Lynne for sending me typescript copies of this and some of Riggs’s other letters with this note: “Most of the letters were written in pencil in a very small hand. . . . Rev. Riggs’ letters are almost a complete record of the daily happenings of the Sibley expedition of 1862 from the time it reached Fort Ridgely [to put down the Sioux] until it returned to Mankato. . . . Rev. Riggs, his wife Mary . . . and seven children escaped from the [Lac Qui Parle] Mission after the Outbreak.”
15. Taoyateduta (His Scarlet Nation a.k.a. Little Crow), “Taoyateduta is Not a Coward,” *Minnesota History* 38 (1962): 115.

16. Quoted in Heard, *History of the Sioux War*, 144.
17. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 118–120; cf. Gary Clayton Anderson, *Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986), 146.
18. Anderson, *Little Crow*, 4, 38–39; Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 254.
19. Minnesota Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861–1865*, vol. 2, Official Reports and Correspondence, 227.
20. Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 270.
21. Anderson, *Little Crow*, quoting Little Crow, 156.
22. Anderson, *Little Crow*, quoting Little Crow, 156–57.
23. In this essay, I refer to Anglo- and Franco-Dakota participants in the Dakota-US War of 1862 as “mixed bloods,” a term that was used at the time in English written and oral communication on all sides of the conflict. “Mixed blood” was a more polite way of saying “half breed.” The term is still widely used, including by Dakota activist Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, whom I quote using it. In the Dakota language, the offspring of a marriage between a Dakota and a White person was and still is called an *iyéska*, which figuratively means *mixed blood*, but literally means *speaks White* (*Iyé*: he or she speaks. *Ská*: White.) As a term for someone who speaks not just Dakota, but also the White man’s language, *iyéska* is also a Dakota word for *interpreter*—a role my great-grandfather George Faribault performed for the Dakota Agreement of 1873. He was listed on the 1856 Sioux Mixed-Blood role; my grandparents and mother were specified as “half” on the Devil Lake Sioux Tribal rolls; and I am listed as “one quarter” (the minimum blood quantum) on the membership rolls of the renamed Spirit Lake Dakota Nation. My son cannot be enrolled at Spirit Lake because he is only “one eighth,” but he is enrolled in the Mendota Dakota Community, descendants of “friendlies” who remained in Minnesota after the “hostiles” were expelled to North and South Dakota after 1862. The federal government does not recognize the Mendota Dakota as American Indians, even though Mendota is, by some traditional oral accounts, the Dakota place of origin. My son’s Dakota “bloodline” perfectly illustrates the following principle: “Set the blood quantum at one quarter, hold to it as a rigid definition of Indians, let intermarriage proceed as it has for centuries, and eventually Indians will be defined out of existence. When that happens the federal government will finally be freed from its persistent ‘Indian problem’” (Patricia Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* [New York: Norton, 1987], 338). I mention my family history to clarify that, although I use the term *mixed blood* descriptively in this essay, I am not uncritical of it.
24. Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, eds., *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 176; cf. Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 273.
25. Anderson and Woolworth, *Through Dakota Eyes*, 181–82.
26. *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861–1865*, vol. 2, 742.
27. Anderson and Woolworth, *Through Dakota Eyes*, 176.
28. Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), 58; Anderson and Woolworth, *Through Dakota Eyes*, 223.
29. Riggs to wife Mary, September 24, 1862, in author’s possession.
30. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 123.
31. *Ibid.*, 120; cf. Folwell, *History of Minnesota*, 393; Carley, *The Dakota War of 1862*, 22.
32. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 117, 122; Heard, *History of the Sioux War*, 181.
33. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 118.
34. *Ibid.*, 126.
35. *Ibid.*, 156.
36. Order No. 55, issued at Camp Release (Sept. 28, 1862), reprinted in Senate Records 37A-F2, Original Transcripts of the Records of Trials of Certain Sioux Indians Charged with Barbarities in

the State of Minnesota; National Archives, Washington, DC (Order No. 55 is contained in each trial transcript); cf. Carol Chomsky, "The United States-Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 1 (Nov. 1990): 23.

37. Chomsky, "The United States-Dakota War Trials," 25, 27, 28.

38. *Ibid.*, 14.

39. Folwell, *History of Minnesota*, 195.

40. Riggs to wife Mary, 17 Oct. 1862, in author's possession.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Walt Bachman, "Colonel Miller's War," in *Trail of Tears: Minnesota's Dakota Indian Exile Begins*, ed. Mary Hawker Bakeman and Antona M. Richardson (Roseville, MN: Park Genealogical Books, 2008), 108–17; Gwen Westerman, e-mail message to author re. Camp Lincoln and new Mankato jail, March 9, 2012.

43. Samuel W. Pond, *The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as They Were in 1834* (1906; rpt. St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1986), 82.

44. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 129–30.

45. Stephen R. Riggs and Family Papers, 1837–1862, Minnesota Historical Society.

46. John P. Williamson testimony, Sept. 9, 1865, US Congress, Condition of the Indian Tribes: Report of the Joint Special Committee, Appointed Under Joint Resolution of March 3, 1865 (Washington, DC: G.P.D., 1867), 413–15. Online at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/ABB3022.0001.001?view=toc>; quoted in Colette A. Hyman, "Survival at Crow Creek, 1863–1866," *Minnesota History* (Winter 2008–09): 153.

47. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 143.

48. Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 278.

49. Carley, *The Dakota War of 1862*, 78.

50. Fowell, *History of Minnesota*, 262.

51. John Peacock, "Iyéska," keynote address, Dakota Nakota Language Summit, Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Spirit Lake Dakota Nation, Fort Totten, North Dakota, May 15, 2012.

52. Clifford Canku, "Spiritual Foundation," in *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters*, ed. Clifford Canku and Michael Simon (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013), ix–x.

53. Michael Simon, "Translator's Preface," in *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters*, ed. Clifford Canku and Michael Simon (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013), xi, xiii, xv.

54. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2008), 122.

55. Diane Wilson, *Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life* (St. Paul, MN: Borealis Books, 2011), 11.

56. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: The Dakota Commemorative Marches of the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2006), 127.

57. *Ibid.*, 251.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Franz Boas and Ella Deloria, *Dakota Grammar, Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. XXIII (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1941); Beverly Olson Flanigan, "American Indian English and Error Analysis: The Case of Lakota English," *English World-Wide* 6, no. 2 (1985): 217–36; Beverly Olson Flanigan, "Language Variation Among Native Americans: Observations on Lakota English," *Journal of English Linguistics* 20, no. 2 (October 1987): 181–99; Elizabeth S. Grobsmith, "Styles of Speaking: An Analysis of Lakota Communication Alternatives," *Anthropological Linguistics* 21, no. 7 (Oct. 1979): 355–61; William L. Leap, *American Indian English* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993); William L. Leap, "Ethnics, Emics, and the New Ideology: The Identity Potential of Indian English," in *Social and Cultural Identity: Problems of*

Persistence and Change, ed. Thomas K. Fitzgerald (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974): 51–62.

60. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 241. Neither Dr. Canku nor Rev. Simon knows Spivak's criticism of Euro-American historiography.

61. Thanks to Patrick Wolfe for recommending two books that helped me conceptualize this false choice: Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) and Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).