



**Directors of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions:
3. Monsignor William Henry Ketcham, 1901-1921**

Kevin Abing, 1994

The BCIM, under the guidance of the Bureau's third director, William Ketcham, weathered the storm. In fact, relations between the government and the Bureau had improved dramatically by the end of Ketcham's tenure as director. A changing social and political climate in part contributed to the new-found spirit of cooperation. But Father Ketcham himself also helped calm the troubled waters. He shared Father Stephan's combativeness, but possessed the tact and diplomacy that Stephan lacked. Both qualities served Ketcham well. When he assumed control of the BCIM, much of the government's Indian policy seemed directed at curtailing Catholic influence. Similar to Stephan, Ketcham struggled fiercely to continue, and even expand, the number of Catholic missions. Once the battles were won, however, Ketcham worked closely with government officials to implement Indian policy. As a result, the BCIM became a widely-respected Indian reform organization.

William Henry Ketcham was born on June 1, 1868, in Sumner, Iowa. Unlike other BCIM directors, Ketcham's family was not Catholic; the family could trace its ancestry back to the Separatists of Plymouth Colony. William's father, Alonzo, was born in Illinois and served in the Union army during the Civil War. After the war, Alonzo married Josephine Shanafelt of Cass County, Michigan, on December 23, 1865. Soon thereafter, the couple moved to Iowa where William was born. Sometime during William's childhood, the family again pulled up stakes and moved to Wills Point, Texas. William studied at private schools in Wills Point and nearby Hubbard City. For an, as yet, unexplained reason, William became interested in Catholicism during his grade and high school years. His conversion evidently did not upset his family. Eventually, the rest of his family also joined the Catholic faith. Moreover, his father promised William that he could attend the Catholic college of his choice.¹

William opted to enroll in a Jesuit institution. In September 1884, he entered St. Charles' College in Grand Coteau, Louisiana. There the Reverend Conrad Widman, S.J., baptized William on Holy Saturday, April 4, 1885. On Easter Sunday, William received his first Communion, and the following September, he was confirmed. At St. Charles', Ketcham displayed "an abundance of

¹William's sister, Ella, was the first to be baptized in 1890, his mother in 1898 and his father in 1915. Sister M. Imelda Logsdon, O.S.B., "Monsignor William Henry Ketcham and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions" (Masters Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1949), 4-5; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 410, 425; Sister Mary Urban Kehoe, C.D.P., "The Educational Activities of Distinguished Catholic Missionaries among the Five Civilized Tribes," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 24 (Summer 1946), 174; typed manuscript on Ketcham in "Missions-BCIM" file at Marquette University Archives.

vitality and growing executive ability." He was a class leader and also served as Prefect of the Children of Mary. And during the summers, he gained his first missionary experience, ministering to the "lukewarm Catholics" near his home in Wills Point. Ketcham studied at St. Charles' for three years and acquired a B.A. degree on July 23, 1888.²

On September 2, 1888, Ketcham enrolled at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary of the West in Norwood, Ohio, to pursue his theological training. William, however, became ill and had to leave school. To recuperate, he traveled to his parents' new home in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory. He stayed with his parents for a full year before he was ready to resume his studies. Ketcham, however, decided not to return to Ohio. Instead, he remained closer to home and enrolled at Sacred Heart Monastery, a Benedictine institution located in the Indian Territory.

At Sacred Heart, William became familiar with missionary and educational work among Native Americans, the work that dominated the rest of his life. Two Indian schools--Saint Benedict's Industrial School for Boys and Saint Mary's Academy for Girls--were located nearby and offered many opportunities for Ketcham to interact with the missionaries and Native American children. The work so impressed Ketcham that he sought permission from Bishop Theophile Meerschaert, Vicar Apostolic, to work in the Indian Territory. Priests were a rare commodity in the Oklahoma and Indian Territories, and Bishop Meerschaert gladly accepted the application of this "fervent and zealous Seminarian." Ketcham proceeded to Guthrie, Oklahoma, the episcopal residence and territorial capitol. There he received the tonsure and the four minor orders on December 20, 1891. He was ordained a subdeacon on December 27 and a deacon on January 1, 1892. On March 13, 1892, Ketcham joined the priesthood, the first to be ordained in the Vicariate of the Indian Territory.³

The Bishop immediately dispatched Father Ketcham to Muskogee, Indian Territory. Muskogee was located in the Creek Nation, but Ketcham's territory encompassed the entire northeastern part of present-day Oklahoma. In addition to the Creeks, he ministered to Choctaws, Cherokees, Shawnees, Delawares, Quapaws, Ottawas, Peorias, Modocs, Wyandottes, Senecas and a small number of white settlers. An immense missionary field with dilapidated or non-existent roads undoubtedly proved troublesome for the young priest, but that was only one obstacle he faced. His potential flock suffered from poor economic conditions and failed harvests and were barely able to sustain themselves much less a missionary. But his most formidable hurdle was the fact that a substantial majority of the Indians and whites in the area were not Catholic.

Despite the enormity of his task, Ketcham greatly expanded the Catholic presence throughout this region. His first priority was to finish construction of the church in Muskogee. Then he channeled his energies toward Indian schools. Ketcham, with Mother Katherine Drexel's financial assistance, established Nazareth Institute for boys and Nazareth Academy for girls. Both schools prospered. By 1894, attendance reached over one hundred students.⁴

Protestant members among the Creeks became alarmed at Father Ketcham's success and were determined to stem his growing popularity. In 1893, the Creek council charged that Ketcham had violated a tribal law by building a school without the nation's permission. Surprised by the council, Ketcham disavowed the notion that the Catholics intentionally defied the law and claimed

²Logsdon, "Ketcham," 4-6; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 410; "Missions-BCIM" File.

³Logsdon, "Ketcham," 6-9; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 410; "Missions-BCIM" File; James D. White, ed., *Diary of a Frontier Bishop: The Journals of Theophile Meerschaert* (Tulsa, OK: The Sarto Press, 1994), 60-62, 72-73.

⁴Logsdon, "Ketcham," 9, 14; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 410; Kehoe, "Educational Activities," 174-75.

that he had received Chief Perryman's permission to begin mission work. Despite Ketcham's assurances, the Creek Protestants resorted to intimidation throughout the following summer. They searched the convent belonging to the Sisters of Saint Joseph and threatened to arrest them. They also wrote menacing letters to Ketcham and his assistants. The Protestants' strong-arm tactics failed, however, and by the end of the summer, Father Ketcham informed Katherine Drexel, "God brought these wicked designs to naught and now we enjoy a great calm."⁵

Muskogee was not the only trouble spot during Ketcham's first years in the Indian Territory; the Creeks and white Protestants at Eufaula also resented Ketcham's efforts. Indeed, Bishop Meerschaert called Eufala "perhaps the most bitter on the missions." Ketcham began working in this community thirty miles south of Muskogee shortly after his arrival. He chose a plot of ground upon which he would build a church, but Protestant opponents went so far as to put up barbed wire around the site. Undeterred, Ketcham sought and received permission from Chief Perryman to finish his work. Eventually he erected a small, frame church. As a capstone to Ketcham's efforts, Bishop Meerschaert traveled to Eufaula to bless the church on September 11, 1892.⁶

Over the next few years, Father Ketcham made great strides in extending Catholicism among the Indians. One of his stations was situated at Vinita, sixty-six miles from Muskogee in the Cherokee Nation. A number of German and Irish Catholics had located here, but the vast majority of the settlers, including the Cherokees, were not Catholic. Yet, by 1895, Father Ketcham had constructed a small church at Vinita. He experienced similar success throughout his far-flung mission territory. He oversaw the erection of a church at Wagner, fifteen miles north of Muskogee. In 1893, he helped build St. Mary's Church ninety miles away at Quapaw. The following year, Ketcham, again with the aid of Katherine Drexel, constructed a school. And he raised a church at the tiny Indian village of Tulsa. In addition to the several churches, Father Ketcham also established several stations in which he and his assistants said Mass.⁷

In 1897, Ketcham was transferred to a new mission field to the south. His headquarters was at Antlers, in the center of the Choctaw Nation. His mission work had an inauspicious start. There was no church, and Ketcham had only twenty-five dollars to commence operations. Consequently, the young priest slept and ate at the railroad section house and offered Mass at the courthouse. Once again, Katherine Drexel came to Ketcham's assistance. She made another donation which allowed Ketcham to build a small residence and St. Agnes' School, which also included a chapel.⁸

The most difficult obstacle Ketcham encountered at Antlers was the language problem. Most of the Choctaws in this area were full-blooded and spoke little English. Ketcham seized the opportunity to enhance his stature among the tribe and facilitate his mission work. He began studying the Choctaw language and eventually conducted services in the Native tongue. No doubt impressed by Ketcham's exertions, the number of full-bloods in the congregation gradually expanded, reaching seventy-five by 1900.⁹

⁵Ketcham to Drexel, September 15, 1894, quoted in Logsdon, "Ketcham," 15.

⁶Logsdon, "Ketcham," 16-17; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 410-11; Kehoe, "Educational Activities," 175; White, *Frontier Bishop*, 93-94.

⁷Logsdon, "Ketcham," 17-20; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 410-11; Velma Nieberding, "St. Mary's of the Quapaws," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 31 (Spring 1953), 6-7.

⁸Logsdon, "Ketcham," 21-23; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 411; Kehoe, "Educational Activities," 176; White, *Frontier Bishop*, 231, 243.

⁹Logsdon, "Ketcham," 23-25; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 411; Kehoe, "Educational Activities," 176.

Ketcham's career shifted dramatically in 1900 when Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia called the missionary to Washington, D.C., to assist Father Stephan with his duties as BCIM director. Ketcham had met Stephan several years earlier at the 1893 Chicago Exposition. Impressed by Ketcham's ability and zeal, Stephan asked Bishop Meerschaert to release Ketcham from his mission field and allow him to join the BCIM. The Bishop declined Stephan's request, claiming that Ketcham's services were desperately needed in the Indian Territory. As Stephan's health deteriorated, Archbishop Ryan "suggested" in August 1900 that Ketcham serve the Bureau. The priest relented and made his way to Washington, D.C. Ketcham quickly assumed control of the Bureau while Father Stephan recuperated in Europe. Shortly after his return, however, Stephan passed away. In the wake of Stephan's death, the BCIM's board of incorporators chose Ketcham as the Bureau's third director.¹⁰

Ketcham inherited a number of problems which threatened the Bureau's existence as well as that of Catholic missions as a whole. The most pressing dilemma was the cessation of government funding for all contract schools on June 30, 1900. Several peers counseled Ketcham to give up the mission schools altogether or turn them over to the government. Ketcham adamantly rejected those suggestions. Government schools, he declared, were Protestant in their character and proselyting in their nature. Abandoning the mission schools or turning them over to government control, he added, "appeared to mean in the course of a few years the delivering up of all the Indian children to heresy and infidelity."¹¹

Thus Ketcham scrambled to raise the needed \$140,000 to sustain the Catholic schools. The annual Lenten collection helped a little. Additional aid came from the lecture circuit in which missionaries from the field traveled from parish to parish speaking about the dire necessity of Catholic mission work. And Ketcham developed funding sources of his own. In 1901, he instituted the Society for the Preservation of the Faith among Indian Children. The Bureau charged an annual fee of twenty-five cents to join, and members received a copy of the new BCIM publication, The Indian Sentinel, to keep abreast of Catholic mission affairs.¹² In the journal's first issue, Ketcham tried to impress the urgency of the situation upon Society members. "The life or death of the Catholic Indian schools is the issue at this hour," he wrote, "and view it as we may in all its vast responsibilities, the time and opportunity for action are now upon us, and delay in any event is most hazardous."¹³ In its first two years, the Society raised \$21,357.29 and \$25,937.55, respectively. These revenue sources, however, fell far short of Ketcham's goals. Once again, Katherine Drexel proved to be the difference. She donated over \$100,000 per year and saved numerous Catholic schools from closing.¹⁴

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Katherine Drexel's generosity literally saved the BCIM, especially in light of government policies that seemed to have no other purpose than to threaten Catholic mission efforts. Since 1898, Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones

¹⁰Logsdon, "Ketcham," 25, 31-32; Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 45.

¹¹William H. Ketcham, "Our Catholic Indian Missions: A Paper read before The Catholic Missionary Congress, Chicago, November 16, 1908," BCIM, Series 4/3, Box 5, folder 3.

¹²Logsdon, "Ketcham," 31-32, 44-46, 50-51; Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 48-50.

¹³*TIS* (1902-1903), 24.

¹⁴*Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, For 1900-01 and 1901-02*, BCIM, Series 4/2, Box 1, folder 7, p. 1-2, 4-7; *Report of the Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions For 1903-'04*, BCIM, Series 4/2, Box 2, folder 1, p. 2, 15; Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 52.

had gradually reduced the amount of rations allotted the Indians, claiming they impeded the Indians' "movement toward self-support."

Initially, most reformers blessed Jones' action, because they believed cutting off this form of government subsidy would compel the Indians to adopt more industrious work habits. But that support quickly dried up on August 27, 1901, when Jones discontinued issuing rations to children at sectarian boarding schools. He argued his decision was a logical extension of the policy begun in the 1890s to cease all government support for contract schools. Although Jones' action affected several Protestant institutions, the Catholics, with their larger system of Indian schools, suffered the most. Ketcham derided the measure as a "decided injustice" to Native children. Not only had the Catholics lost appropriations for their contract schools, but the withdrawal of rations would cost Catholic schools an estimated \$25,000 while "hundreds of Indian children [were] deprived of food and clothing guaranteed to them by treaty." Catholic and Protestant leaders alike vigorously lobbied Congress to reinstate the rations. Finally, Congress added a provision to the 1904 Indian Appropriations Act, restoring rations to the children.¹⁵

In addition to the rations issue, Ketcham faced another problem--government enforcement of the Browning Ruling. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Daniel M. Browning instituted this policy in 1896. At that time, the system of government Indian schools was fully in place, and it competed fiercely with mission schools for students. Determined to sustain the government schools, Browning initiated the "ruling," which denied Indian parents the right to decide which school their children should attend. Browning reasoned that the Indian Department and not the Indians themselves should make that determination because Indians were wards of the government. Browning clearly intended to fill government schools at the expense of sectarian institutions, especially Catholic schools. The policy continued under Browning's successor, William A. Jones. When he became director, Ketcham appealed fruitlessly to the Indian Department to revoke the practice. Finally, he approached President McKinley and Secretary of Interior Ethan Allen Hitchcock. Ketcham asserted that the policy violated the Indians' freedom of conscience. Ketcham must have swayed McKinley and Hitchcock for they ordered Commissioner of Indian Affairs Jones to rescind the ruling on October 30, 1901. Jones grudgingly acquiesced, and, after a long delay, the policy finally expired on January 18, 1902.¹⁶

With government rations restored and the Browning Ruling rescinded, Ketcham returned to the pivotal problem of securing adequate funding for Catholic mission endeavors. He was unwilling to place a persistent financial burden upon Katherine Drexel and government appropriations were no longer available. Whether from divine inspiration or sheer desperation, Ketcham turned to tribally-controlled revenues. Native Americans obtained these funds through treaty obligations or a trust fund financed by land or timber sales. When the Bureau applied in 1900 to use these funds for Catholic schools, Protestants once again raised the specter of church-state collaboration. Ketcham argued that these were not public funds but controlled by the Indians themselves. Therefore, they should have the right to determine how to spend that money. The Indian Bureau, however, emphatically rejected Ketcham's request.

¹⁵Logsdon, "Ketcham," 54-55; *Report of the Bureau...1900-01 and 1901-02*, p. 15-16, 19; *Report of the Director...1903-'04*, p. 25-28; Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 65-83; William T. Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt and Six Friends of the Indian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 78-87, 164-72.

¹⁶Logsdon, "Ketcham," 52-53; *Report of the Bureau...1900-01 and 1901-02*, 3-4, 9; Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 57-64; Hagan, *Six Friends of the Indians*, 81-83.

The matter lay dormant for several years as Ketcham battled over the rations issue, but the BCIM renewed the petition once again in 1904. This time, President Theodore Roosevelt decided that the funds could be used for sectarian schools, if the Indians approved of such an application of their funds. The Indian Department issued contracts for eight schools to the BCIM. Protestant opponents did not let the Catholics savor their victory. They appealed to Roosevelt to reverse his decision, but he rebuffed them. Then they launched an all-out assault in Congress. Anti-Catholic legislators proposed bills to prohibit the contracts. During the struggle, Ketcham testified before a Senate Subcommittee on February 3, 1905. He dismissed the church-state arguments and reduced the question to: "Shall an Indian parent have the right to use his own money in the education of his own children in the school of his choice?"¹⁷ Ketcham and his Congressional supporters staved off this initial attack, but opponents were determined to have their way. Each year, Protestant reformers tried to derail the contracts, but to no avail.

Spurned by the executive and legislative branches, the Indian Rights Association turned to the courts. On May 11, 1906, the IRA brought suit against Secretary of the Interior Frederick Leupp to stall the further use of treaty and trust funds for sectarian schools. The case, *Quick Bear v. Leupp*, eventually made its way to the Supreme Court. In February 1908, the justices unanimously agreed that tribal funds were, in fact, private and not public revenues and that the tribes could expend their funds as they wished. This hard-fought success secured over \$100,000 annually for Catholic schools.¹⁸

In addition to these triumphs, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs also conceded the right of Catholic Indian children in government schools to receive Catholic religious instruction, to assist at Mass and to receive the Sacraments. During the 1890s, superintendents at the government schools greatly impeded Catholic efforts to provide these services to Catholic schoolchildren. Ketcham persistently lobbied the Indian Department to allow the children to practice their faith. The change in the government's policy occurred around the turn-of-the-century. The catalyst seems to have been the famous Carlisle Indian School. Father Henry Ganss and Captain Richard Henry Pratt, the virulently anti-Catholic school superintendent, reached an agreement to accommodate Catholic children. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs encouraged all other government schools to pattern themselves upon the Carlisle model. Despite the Commissioner's support, some school superintendents continued to oppose religious "intrusions." Father Ketcham noted this opposition. But, he added, whenever this recalcitrance was reported, the Commissioner, to his credit, "directed the superintendent in question to allow Catholic children suitable facilities for religious instruction and worship."¹⁹

Ketcham's comments indicate that, although anti-Catholicism was yet prevalent, a spirit of cooperation developed between the BCIM and the federal government. In his report of 1903-1904, Ketcham praised the tolerant spirit evinced by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and especially Theodore Roosevelt. "One thing is beyond question," Ketcham mused, "President Roosevelt, in his

¹⁷"Father Ketcham's Statement Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate, in the matter of the Use of Indian Tribal funds for the Maintenance of Sectarian Schools," BCIM, Series 4/3, Box 4, folder 14.

¹⁸Logsdon, "Ketcham," 49-52; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 413; Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 84-160; Hagan, *Six Friends of the Indians*, 172-74, 197-206.

¹⁹*Report of the Bureau...1900-01 and 1901-02*, p. 10-12. Resistance by a number of school superintendents continued for several years, see Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 161-88; Logsdon, "Ketcham," 33-36.

official as well as private acts, has risen above unchristian racial and partisan prejudices, and has manifested a determination to mete out equal justice to all men."²⁰

Roosevelt, indeed, harbored a personal commitment to correct some of the injustices perpetrated upon Catholic missions. But Roosevelt was also a consummate politician, and his actions were no doubt intended to curry favor with Catholic voters in the 1904 presidential election. Whatever the reason, Catholics increasingly became a part of the federal Indian bureaucracy. In 1902, President Roosevelt appointed Charles Bonaparte, a prominent Catholic lawyer, to the Board of Indian Commissioners. Congress established the Board in 1869 to "oversee" Indian policy, but, for the most part, the Board acted in a purely advisory capacity. Until Bonaparte's appointment, the Board's members were, without exception, Protestant Indian reformers. Clearly, Catholics had gained a measure of acceptance for, a few years after Bonaparte's nomination, Cardinal James Gibbons also served on the Board.²¹

This friendlier climate did not signal the end of Protestant antipathy, for Protestant reformers again marshalled their resources for one last major assault on Catholic influence in government schools. This battle revolved around the wearing of religious garb and display of religious symbols in non-sectarian Indian schools. In years past, the government assumed control of several mission schools. Rather than hiring an entirely new staff, the Indian Department kept the existing faculty and counted them as government employees. The government as well as the BCIM found this a mutually beneficial arrangement. It enabled the government to rapidly expand its system of non-sectarian Indian schools while it perpetuated virtually intact the "Catholicity" of several endangered schools. By 1912, ten Catholic schools with forty-six employees were incorporated into government service. The Catholic teachers, wearing their distinguishing attire, stirred Protestant ire.

In 1910 and 1911, Protestant reform organizations mounted a campaign to end the practice, claiming that religious garb in government schools violated the separation of church and state. Unexpectedly, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert Valentine issued a circular in January 1912 which forbade the wearing of religious dress in public school rooms and on school grounds and also directed that all religious insignia be removed from public school rooms. Father Ketcham immediately spoke to President Taft, asking that the circular be rescinded because Valentine had not provided the BCIM the opportunity to refute the Protestants' arguments. Taft ordered Commissioner Valentine to revoke the circular until a hearing was held. In the interim, Ketcham coordinated a Catholic publicity campaign to offset Protestant propaganda. As a further means to undercut the Protestants, Ketcham ordered Catholic teachers to remove all religious pictures, statues and crucifixes from public school rooms. The hearing adjourned on April 8, 1912. Both sides forcefully presented their positions to Secretary of Interior Walter Fisher, who deliberated the issue during the summer. Ultimately, he forged a compromise. He asserted that current and future government employees should not wear denominational garb at government schools, but he would allow religious employees already in the government's employ to continue wearing their distinctive clothing.²²

Though Fisher's decision was not a clear-cut Catholic victory, it marked the end of Ketcham's and the BCIM's trial by fire. Protestant antagonism flared periodically, but the future of the BCIM and of Catholic schools was no longer in doubt. Indeed, Ketcham became inextricably involved in formulating government policy. As a reward for his indefatigable efforts on the Indians'

²⁰*Report of the Director*, p. 31., 34-37. Quote on p. 36.

²¹Logsdon, "Ketcham," 40; Hagan, *Six Friends of the Indian*, 85-86.

²²Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 189-205; Logsdon, "Ketcham," 55-56.

behalf and as a sign of respect, President Taft appointed Father Ketcham to the Board of Indian Commissioners on December 3, 1912.²³ In his dual role as BCIM director and Indian commissioner, Ketcham traveled around the country investigating problems involving Native Americans. He made his most substantial contribution trying to improve health conditions among the Indians. Many Native Americans suffered from tuberculosis and trachoma. Father Ketcham worked tirelessly to remedy the situation, especially within his old missionary field in Oklahoma. In 1917, he helped inaugurate Oklahoma's health drive and secured the cooperation of the Governor, the State Commissioner of Health, and officials from the Oklahoma Tuberculosis Association. Ketcham was also largely responsible for the appropriation for the sanitarium near Fort Sill and helped establish Carter Sanitarium at Talihima. In addition, Ketcham put his study of the Choctaw language to contribute to the Indian Department's health drive. He translated a number of health-related pamphlets into Choctaw, including "Indian Babies," "How to Keep Them Well" and "Tuberculosis Among the Indians."²⁴

Father Ketcham also worried about the growing threat of the war then raging in Europe and the impact it would have on missionary endeavors. In May 1916, Ketcham declared that, if war should come, he saw no reason for a break in Indian mission work because the "priests of this country will not become soldiers." "I believe Indian mission work to be the work of God," he asserted, "and I am not looking forward to any possible interruption as this would savor of a feeling of distrust." He added that, if missionaries had really considered the "threatening clouds" that hung over Catholic mission work for years, "all these works would have been abandoned long ago."²⁵ When the United States did enter World War I, Ketcham doubled his efforts to serve the Indians' needs. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells feared that Indians who enlisted in the armed services would be neglected. Subsequently, he asked Father Ketcham to mobilize the Knights of Columbus to help attend to the Indians. Typically, Ketcham did much more. Not only did he secure the Knights' assistance, he also pressured military officials and journeyed to numerous army camps to ensure that Indian rights were protected.²⁶

As a reward for Father Ketcham's many years of service, Pope Benedict XV made him a domestic prelate on April 5, 1919. At the time, Ketcham was inspecting reservations in New Mexico and Arizona. He first donned his monsignorial vestments at the Sioux Catholic Congress held on the Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota, in July.²⁷

Fittingly, Ketcham died while working among the Choctaw Indians of Mississippi. In October 1921, Ketcham made his way to the Choctaw mission to prepare a report, in the Choctaw and English languages, favoring the establishment of government schools there. Near the end of his stay, he complained of a "great fatigue" to the Choctaw missionary, Reverend E.J. Philippe. On November 9, a "spell" struck the Monsignor as he strolled around the school grounds. Philippe noted that Ketcham began to tremble and his legs gave way. Moreover, he "could not breathe at all; it seemed that he was choked." Philippe succeeded in reviving Ketcham and sent for a doctor, despite Ketcham's protests that he would be all right. The doctor treated Monsignor Ketcham for acute indigestion. He recovered enough that he celebrated Mass on November 13th, and he even

²³Logsdon, "Ketcham," 40.

²⁴Ibid., 40-41, 48; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 440.

²⁵Ketcham to Rev. William Huffer, May 8, 1916, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 100, folder 2.

²⁶Logsdon, "Ketcham," 41-42.

²⁷Logsdon, "Ketcham," 61-62; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 414, 440.

went for a ride that afternoon. But, the following morning, at the breakfast table, Ketcham suffered a heart attack and died very suddenly.²⁸

Ketcham's death at the age of fifty-three shocked everyone connected with Indian mission work. Co-workers and government officials alike praised Monsignor Ketcham's work effusively. Reverend Philippe called Ketcham a saint. He asked a mutual friend of Ketcham's, "You know what a saint is? It is a man who is consistent and logical with himself to the very extreme--that was the case with Monsignor."²⁹ The Board of Indian Commissioners also honored the Monsignor. In a tribute, the Board stated Ketcham's death was an "irreparable" loss. Ketcham "endeared himself to every member of this Board" and he "proved that men, differing widely in matters of creed and church doctrines, can cooperate in perfect harmony with a common purpose and for a common good."³⁰

Ketcham's remains were taken to his home in Oklahoma. In addition to the funeral mass, a Solemn Mass of Requiem was held at St. Paul's Church in Washington, D.C., on November 22. Many high-ranking Church officials, congressmen, members of the Board of Indian Commissioners, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Burke and other prominent citizens gathered to pay their respects.³¹

Ketcham's successor as BCIM director and close friend, Father William Hughes, offered another Requiem Mass that same day at St. Basil's Church in Los Angeles. Hughes' moving tribute neatly summed up Ketcham's career:

The Sioux Indians formally conferred on him the name Wambli Wakiata, the Watching Eagle. For ten years in Indian Territory, he watched at the doors of the Indian homes. He noted as a father their comings in and goings out. For twenty years more, as a faithful guardian, he watched in Congress where laws were made, and in courts lest they might be unmade; and before the altar of God he daily watched and prayed, while in the Catholic Indian Bureau he also humanly provided that the Indians' minds should be enlightened and their souls saved. Father Ketcham was, indeed, Wambli Wakiata, the Watching Eagle, the truest and best and most powerful friend of the Indians of his generation.³²

Thanks in large part to Monsignor Ketcham's diplomacy and dedication, the BCIM became a fixture among Indian reform organizations.

²⁸Rev. E.J. Philippe to Mother Borgia, November 15, 1921, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 126, folder 16; Logsdon, "Ketcham," 63-64; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 403-404.

²⁹Philippe to Mother Borgia, November 15, 1921, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 126, folder 16.

³⁰"Tribute to Monsignor Ketcham," *TIS* (April 1922), 443.

³¹Logsdon, "Ketcham," 64; *TIS* 2 (January 1922), 405, 407-408.

³²BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 128, Folder 4.