



**Directors of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions:  
4. Monsignor William McDermott Hughes, 1921-1935**

Kevin Abing, 1994

Father William Hughes built upon Ketcham's legacy. He was one of the most prolific writers and forceful speakers ever to be associated with the Bureau, and he utilized those talents to sustain the Bureau. Although the BCIM's existence was not imperiled, as it was under Monsignor Ketcham's directorship, Hughes faced a different set of challenges.

William McDermott Hughes was born on January 9, 1880, in Sacramento, California. His father, Owen, came to the U.S. from Ireland as a small boy. He and his family lived in New York for many years, and Owen eventually found work as a millwright and mechanical engineer. He journeyed to California when the state was yet in its "pioneer era" and labored in the mining centers along the coast. Eventually, Owen settled in Sacramento and, along with his wife, Catherine Ellen McDermott, raised a large family there, including William. William's interest in Native Americans was developed at an early age. As a young boy, he spent a great deal of time playing, hunting and fishing among the Indian tribes of northern California. He attended Sacramento's public schools and then entered St. Mary's College in Oakland, graduating in 1900 with a Bachelor's degree. Hughes then studied philosophy and science at St. Thomas College, a Paulist school at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. When he completed his coursework there in 1903, Hughes finished his theological studies at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York. With his schooling completed, Hughes made his way to Los Angeles, where Bishop Thomas Conaty ordained him on August 5, 1905, the first Sacramento native to join the priesthood.<sup>1</sup>

The newly-ordained priest's first assignment was as an assistant at St. Agnes parish in Los Angeles. He remained there until he was transferred to Pasadena in early 1907. His service in Pasadena lasted little more than a year, until he asked Bishop Conaty to assign him to Indian mission work in 1908. Although his time at St. Agnes and Pasadena was short, his youthful enthusiasm and forceful speaking ability made a lasting impression on his parishioners. These same qualities served Hughes well for many years to come. To better serve the remnants of the California mission Indians, Hughes asked for, and received, permission to travel to Mexico so that he could master the Spanish language. He spent four months in Mexico traveling to Mazatlan, San Blas and Manzanillo and "visiting almost every nook and corner in the nation." When he returned to

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<sup>1</sup>"In Memoriam," *TIS* 19 (June 1939), 89; Monsignor Francis J. Weber, *Past is Prologue: Some Historical Reflections, 1961-1991* (Mission Hills, CA: The Saint Francis Historical Society, 1992), 364-65; "Solemn Mass of Requiem For the Late Monsignor Hughes in St. Vibiana's Cathedral," Los Angeles *The Tidings*, May 12, 1939; Pittsburgh, PA, *Observer*, January 7, 1922, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 4; Sacramento *Catholic Herald*, June 9, 1923, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 5.

California, he was assigned to St. Mary's parish in San Jacinto, a modest community nestled in the southern reaches of the Sierra Nevada mountains.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Father Hughes began the work that consumed most of his adult life. Using San Jacinto as a base, Hughes ministered to a far-flung territory, including Catholic subjects in Murietta, Perris and Temecula and the Indians residing on the Soboba, Cahuilla and Los Coyotes reservations. Over the next two years, Father Hughes experienced many hardships traveling along the two hundred-mile circuit in his parish. The distances were such that Hughes often went without meals or slept under the stars with a haystack or the ground as a bed. Hughes usually made the trip on horseback, but on one occasion, he borrowed a friend's motorcycle to overcome the distance problem. The resourceful missionary's experiment did not fare well. He successfully maneuvered up a steep grade, but when he reached the top, he nearly collided with a team of wild colts. Hughes lost control of the machine and was spilled onto the ground. He was unhurt, but the motorcycle was disabled. Unable to go forward, Hughes pushed the cycle back down the mountainside. He finally reached San Jacinto after an arduous trip of nearly two days. Once he reached home, Hughes replaced modern technology with a "trusty horse."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the tribulations, the young priest soon gained the trust and admiration of his Native flock. This circumstance stemmed, in part, from Hughes' deep and abiding concern for the Indians' welfare. The history of the Mission Indians, Hughes once wrote, was the "history of a century of dishonor under Mexican and American rule." White encroachment upon Indian land, whiskey and poverty ravaged Native American culture and undermined the Indians' faith in God. "Is it any wonder," he asked, "that they are a sad and demoralized race? Is it any wonder that they suspect the white man, and almost distrust the padre himself, because he is white?"<sup>4</sup>

Other factors enhanced Hughes' standing in the Indian community. His mastery of the Spanish language greatly facilitated his ability to communicate with the tribesmen by eliminating the need for interpreters and the chances for any misunderstandings. Lastly, much of his success was due to Father Hughes' respect and appreciation for Native American rituals and customs. Following the examples of previous Catholic missionaries, Hughes recognized that the Indians had an "instinctive reverence for God" and, thus, capitalized on Native spirituality to further the cause of Christianity. Many times Hughes "baptized" local Native practices, thereby incorporating them into Catholic usage. Native traditions fascinated Hughes. Throughout his missionary travels, he collected stories about Indian folklore and religious practices. He spent many nights sitting around a campfire, trying to pry recollections from Indian elders. On numerous occasions, they were reluctant to part with their knowledge, but Hughes used his awareness of the Indian character to overcome their recalcitrance. He stirred their interest by relating stories similar to the one he hoped to hear. Hughes drew upon classical myths, other tribal legends or his own imagination to break down the barriers, and, more often than not, this encouraged the others to divulge story after story

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<sup>2</sup>Weber, *Past is Prologue*, 365; "In Memoriam," 89; *Pittsburgh Observer*, January 7, 1922; *The Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List For the Year of Our Lord 1906* (The M.H. Wiltzius Co., 1906), 445; *The Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List For the Year of Our Lord 1907*, 464; Hughes to Mr. Ridpath, September 26, 1910, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 67, folder 3.

<sup>3</sup>*The Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List for the Year of Our Lord 1908*, 473; *The Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List for the Year of Our Lord 1910*, 485; *Pittsburgh Observer*, January 7, 1922; "In Memoriam," 89; William Hughes, "Mission Indians of Today," *TIS* (1910), 35-36.

<sup>4</sup>Hughes, "Mission Indians of Today," 37.

about Native traditions. Hughes' success was such that, together, he and the faithful on the Soboba Reservation erected a beautiful mission-style chapel.<sup>5</sup>

These achievements did not go unnoticed by Father William Ketcham. The BCIM director visited the California mission field in 1909 and, in his annual report, praised the young priests who have "fallen heir to the spirit of labor and sacrifice and of zeal for the salvation of the Indians which characterized the missionaries of old."<sup>6</sup> Father Hughes especially impressed Ketcham. In October, Ketcham informed Hughes that he had "dreamed a dream" which Hughes must not confide to anyone else. "During all the years of my work here & all my wanderings," Ketcham wrote, "I have had my eyes open to discover a coadjutor & possible successor in the Bureau." Hughes, Ketcham insisted, was the first and only one whom he had met who would "fill the bill." Ketcham then proceeded to list why he thought Hughes was the answer to his dream:

You are an American, a westerner, an idealist not wanting on the practical side, you could get along with our public men and I think with our churchmen. You have had experience on the missions and know a good deal of Indians and you have a heart for the Indians.

Ketcham did not think the time was right to propose such a plan to the Board of Prelates, but he did have another alternative. He proposed to appoint Hughes as a lecturer for the Bureau. Over the course of time, he could make Hughes assistant director. Hughes then could divide his time between the lecture circuit and BCIM headquarters where he would be "fully initiated into the 'mysteries' of the work." Once he was removed to the "happy hunting ground" or "relegated to some obscure work," Ketcham believed the young priest would be "ready for Elijah's mantle."<sup>7</sup>

Apparently, Hughes had some reservations about the plan which Ketcham had to overcome. First of all, he did not relish the thought of leaving his diocese. In response, Ketcham proposed that the appointment as lecturer would be tentatively limited to six months and served primarily in the West--the Pacific Coast and the Mississippi valley. If Hughes did not like the work, he could return to his diocese. Furthermore, Hughes was concerned about his financial situation. He helped support his father; thus, he wanted assurances that he could continue to do so if he joined the BCIM. Ketcham informed him that salaries for lecturers ranged from \$1,000-\$1,200 with traveling expenses, and as assistant director, Hughes would earn \$1,500. These wages, Ketcham thought, would enable Hughes to "offer your Father the comforts you desire him to have." Lastly, Hughes worried that Bishop Conaty would balk at losing a valuable missionary. Ketcham answered that he thought some sort of amicable settlement could be reached.<sup>8</sup> Believing that he had successfully allayed Hughes' qualms, Ketcham began to put his plan into motion.

But as Hughes feared, Bishop Conaty was loathe to release the young missionary. On April 7, 1910, the Board of Prelates named Hughes as a BCIM lecturer for a one-year term. The following day, Ketcham notified the Bishop of the appointment, and further added: "Of course, if Father Hughes gives satisfaction, he will be employed permanently." Hughes also pressed the issue. He approached Bishop Conaty and pleaded with him to allow the assignment. Hughes emphasized his financial straits, noting that he needed money "to fulfill neglected duty towards home and

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<sup>5</sup>Weber, *Past is Prologue*, 365-66; Los Angeles *The Tidings*, 1910-1911, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 1; *TIS* (1911), 21.

<sup>6</sup>*Report of the Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions For 1909*, BCIM, Series 4/2, Box 6, p. 2, 4.

<sup>7</sup>Ketcham to Hughes, October 15, 1909, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 62, folder 20.

<sup>8</sup>Ketcham to Hughes, November 9, 1909, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 62, folder 20.

especially Papa." He revealed another motivation in a confidential letter to his sisters. Hughes informed his siblings that he wanted the job because he was "frankly ambitious. Some may not be, but I am." Unaware of Hughes' ambition, Bishop Conaty notified Ketcham that he could not let Hughes go because he was "dreadfully handicapped for priests and Father Hughes is doing a work which it would be almost impossible for me to find a man to take up." Ketcham suggested that perhaps Hughes could be released if another missionary was found to take his place. The Bishop responded favorably to the proposal. Eventually, Ketcham found Father J.J. Burri to replace Hughes. Conaty, in turn, freed Hughes from his duties so that he could begin his BCIM work in the fall.<sup>9</sup>

Father Ketcham publicly announced Hughes' appointment in the 1911 issue of The Indian Sentinel. Ketcham stated that he thought Hughes was "admirably equipped" for the work because he was endowed "with youth, robust health and splendid talent, he [was] resourceful, zealous and enthusiastic....Besides being an attractive and forceful speaker, Father Hughes [was] a writer of no mean ability." Ketcham entertained high hopes that, with Hughes' help, the finances of the BCIM would be greatly improved.<sup>10</sup>

Hughes threw himself wholeheartedly into his new duties. Indeed, he took some novel approaches to raising money for the Bureau. For example, in September 1910, he contacted the advertising manager of the South Pacific Railroad Company. Hughes asked the manager if he could supply stereopticon slides of California Indians and/or missions. He also inquired about what the company would offer in the way of transportation. Lastly, Hughes asked what "remuneration [the company would] offer for explicit reference to you[r] railroad lines" in his lectures. Hughes thought the offer would appeal to the manager as a "good advertising investment." The plan, however, was not realized. The company president apprised Hughes that the railroad could furnish slides but not free transportation or advertising money. Undaunted, Hughes happily announced the "firing of the first gun from the pulpit" in November 1910. Until the end of the year, he toured the Los Angeles Diocese, encouraging the Catholic faithful to contribute to the Indian mission cause. Ketcham's faith in Hughes' ability seemed well-founded. In two months, he raised \$683 for the BCIM.<sup>11</sup>

At first, Hughes lectured in the country's mid- and far-western regions. His success there prompted a change in venue to the more lucrative parishes in the East. In 1912, he experienced difficulty in establishing the Preservation Society in a number of dioceses, but he persevered and made great strides. For example, he labored for months to gain access to the Diocese of Buffalo. When he at last obtained the requisite permission, Father Hughes raised over \$3,000 in that diocese alone. That year also saw the fruition of William Ketcham's "dream" when the Board of Directors named Hughes assistant director on April 17, 1912. While he learned the "mysteries" of the BCIM, he continued his speaking tour. In 1913, he experienced "phenomenal" success in the Buffalo and

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<sup>9</sup>Ketcham to Conaty, April 8, 1910; Hughes to "Dear Sisters," April 10, 1910; Conaty to Ketcham, April 5, 1910, Ketcham to Conaty, April 23, 1910; Conaty to Ketcham, April 28, 1910, all located in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 67, folder 3.

<sup>10</sup>*TIS* (1911), 17.

<sup>11</sup>Hughes to Mr. Ridpath, September 26, 1910; Charles Fee to Hughes, September 28, 1910; Hughes to Ketcham, November 1, 1910; Hughes to Ketcham, December 1, 1910, all located in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 67, folder 3; *Report of the Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions For 1910*, BCIM, Series 4/2, Box 6, p. 23.

Springfield dioceses, and also made successful inroads into the Albany and Scranton dioceses. The following year, he canvassed the dioceses of Hartford, Baltimore and Brooklyn.<sup>12</sup>

Despite his success, Hughes ceased his BCIM work in 1915. Perhaps, it was not enough to satisfy his ambition, and certainly, the demands of the job took a toll on him. Moreover, he desired to return to California and to his own parish, voicing his position in his January 24, 1916, letter of resignation. "Among the many discouragements of the Bureau work," he wrote, "the position of being removed from contact with souls, a beggar among strangers, without even an Indian missionary home to return to, are not the least trying to a priest." In any event, he left the Bureau and began ministering to the small congregation at St. Paul's Church in Coalinga, California. Life in a small parish afforded Hughes the time to engage in some long-delayed activities. He worked on a complete course of doctrinal sermons covering the Creed, put in order his collection of stereopticon slides and also worked on his collection of California Indian myths. Although Hughes was back home, he wondered if he made the right move. In June 1916, Hughes wrote Ketcham and noted that he did not know if he had improved his situation, but he was keeping a "stiff upper lip." Above all, he missed Father Ketcham's friendship, stating that he missed "Washington and you very, very much. I wish that I might have seen my way clear to continue there."<sup>13</sup>

America's entry into World War I solved Hughes' dilemma. He volunteered for an army chaplaincy and was commissioned a First Lieutenant on November 27, 1917. His first assignment was with the 335th Field Artillery, 87th Division, stationed at Camp Pike, Arkansas. While there, he made a great impression upon the men. Years later, Herbert Sullivan, a former captain, remembered the chaplain's steadfast efforts to retain the "fine, keen, religious edge the men had built up before entering service." One way Hughes tried to maintain that edge was to have the men kneel for evening prayers, wherever they were. He was extremely popular with the enlisted men and officers, mixing freely with both groups and never hesitating to "tell the latter what a 'scurvy' crew they were." Father Hughes eventually served with the 87th Division in France and also with the 1st Division during the occupation of Germany. He left active service in June 1919 but maintained his rank. Several years later, he was rewarded for his long-time service in the United States Army. In 1931, the Chaplain's Association elected him president, and in 1932, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the Chaplain Corps Reserves.<sup>14</sup>

After the war, Hughes returned to California where he worked for several months as interim pastor for St. Patrick's parish in Watsonville. In November 1919, Bishop John J. Cantwell appointed Hughes pastor of St. Basil's in Los Angeles, a new parish. The new pastor immersed himself in building up the congregation. His first task was to find someplace to conduct services. He bought a residence at 744 S. Catalina Street and said Mass there until a permanent structure could be provided. He devoted the bulk of his remaining time to building that edifice. He found a

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<sup>12</sup>*TIS* (1912), 20-21; *TIS* (1913), 32; *TIS* (1915), 28; Weber, *Past is Prologue*, 367.

<sup>13</sup>Hughes to Cardinal James Gibbons, January 24, 1916; Hughes to Ketcham, January 24, 1916, both located in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 99, folder 11; Hughes to Ketcham, February 15, 1916, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 99, folder 12; *TIS* (1916), 24-25; Hughes to Ketcham, June 22, 1916, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 100, folder 3.

<sup>14</sup>*TIS* 1 (July 1918), 4; Weber, *Past is Prologue*, 367; *Los Angeles Daily Times*, November 22, 1920, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 3; *Pittsburgh Observer*, January 7, 1922, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 4; *The Providence Visitor*, June 20, 1935, BCIM, Series 15, Box 7, folder 3; Herbert Sullivan to John Tennyly, June 12, 1939, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 253, folder 21; *TIS* 11 (Summer 1931), 122.

suitable location for the projected church on the corner of Seventh and Catalina Streets and purchased the lot. All of the project's myriad details were too much, even for someone with Father Hughes' energy, so he delegated some of the work. Indeed, he involved the whole parish by dividing it into guilds responsible for a particular task. Work progressed throughout the summer of 1920, and the wood-frame church was completed in the fall. The parishioners were justifiably proud of their new place of worship. It included all the modern conveniences of the day, and Father Hughes even utilized his military experience by having the builders incorporate an army barracks ventilating system. On October 10, 1920, Hughes said the first Mass in the new church. Bishop Cantwell attended the formal dedication on November 21 and praised the pastor for the speed with which he built up the congregation and erected the new church.<sup>15</sup>

Hughes' success at St. Basil's added to his prestige, and it was only natural that, when Monsignor Ketcham passed away in 1921, he was picked to lead the BCIM. Beginning with Hughes' tenure as director, the BCIM assumed a more focused function. This was possible through the establishment of the National Catholic Welfare Conference in 1919. American bishops formed the NCWC to help coordinate and monitor activities affecting the general welfare of the church. When Hughes assumed control of the Bureau, he worked closely with the NCWC on issues affecting Catholic Native Americans. The NCWC's Legal Department, for example, kept abreast of any federal legislation that impacted upon the Indian community. The Education and Social Action Departments likewise assisted Hughes with an array of Indian-related activities. The development of the NCWC diminished the heretofore wide ranging responsibilities of the BCIM director, enabling Hughes to focus upon the Bureau's original purpose--the maintenance of Catholic Indian schools and missions. To that end, Hughes continued the policies of his predecessor. He perpetuated the use of tribal funds to maintain Catholic Indian schools and solicited funds from the Catholic faithful for mission work. Despite the Bureau's narrower mission, Hughes emulated Ketcham in another way. Hughes continued to cultivate the now-friendly ground with government officials, thereby maintaining the BCIM's presence in the development and implementation of federal Indian policy.<sup>16</sup>

Despite past differences, both government and BCIM officials believed the best course with regard to the "Indian problem" was to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream society. In the 1920s, however, a number of white reformers criticized that goal because it ignored the vitality and value of traditional Indian culture. Foremost among the critics was John Collier, a former New York social worker, who spent some time among the Pueblo Indians. Collier first battled the government in order to protect Pueblo land rights. In response to the reformers' attacks, Secretary of Interior Hubert Work created the Advisory Council on Indian Affairs in 1923. The Council, which was to "determine a settled Indian policy for the Government," consisted of one hundred individuals connected with Indian affairs, including Father Hughes. The Council was unable to affect any substantive policy changes because reformists and conservatives were unable to agree on anything.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Weber, *Past is Prologue*, 368; Los Angeles *Daily Times*, November 22, 1920, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 3; Pittsburgh *Observer*, January 7, 1922, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 4.

<sup>16</sup>Weber, *Past is Prologue*, 368-69; Monsignor Paul A. Lenz, "Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Over a Century of Service" (n.p., n.d.), 10; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed?, s.v. "National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC)," by [need name].

<sup>17</sup>Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 2:797-800, 807-808; Kenneth R. Philp, *John*

The conflict over Pueblo land rights and the Advisory Council's inability to alter Indian policy set the stage for a wider struggle. In their push to "civilize" Native Americans, government officials and missionary groups tried to stamp out Native dances and other customs that impeded the Indians' progress. Collier and his cohorts objected that the policy ignored the religious nature of Indian dances; thus the government and missionaries were religiously persecuting the Indians. Hughes refuted the charges in the July 26, 1924, issue of the *Sacramento Bee*. He insisted that the Catholic missionaries had the complete confidence and affection of the Pueblos and that Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Burke was a true friend of the Indians. The government, he added, did not persecute the Indians for it allowed Native parents to decide the religion of their children, even if it was a "pagan" religion. Then Hughes turned the tables, claiming that the pagan or reactionary Pueblos were instead persecuting the Christian or progressive Indians because they refused to take part in heathenish ceremonies. The "autocratic" pagan rulers, he asserted, cried persecution "to distract attention from their own acts of misrule and persecution and in order to maintain that misrule."<sup>18</sup>

Despite Hughes' defense of government policy, the criticism mounted. Throughout the decade, it became increasingly apparent that Native Americans were not being elevated to enjoy the blessings of civilization. Indian children suffered from inadequate schooling. The unsanitary conditions at home and at school promoted the spread of a deadly array of diseases, and the Indians found it increasingly difficult to support themselves as they lost millions of acres of land through allotment. As a result, reformers indicted all aspects of the Indian Bureau. Secretary Work could not ignore the reproaches and took steps in 1926. He requested an independent organization to examine the Indian Department's structure and operation. Two years later, The Problem of Indian Administration, more commonly called the Meriam Report, pointed out many deficiencies in the Department. It did not, however, recommend a radical overhauling of government policy but rather suggested means to improve the quality and efficiency of the current system. Hughes thought the survey was "in the main valuable, constructive though critical, and was done by real specialists. The investigations were made with some haste but not without value." He believed the report was beneficial because it would "reach people who otherwise never would be reached" and because it would be the "starting point of valuable discussion."<sup>19</sup>

The report sparked several improvements in Indian administration, but they were neither deep enough nor fast enough to suit John Collier. He lobbied tirelessly to be named Commissioner of Indian Affairs after Franklin D. Roosevelt won the 1932 presidential election. His work paid off, and Roosevelt appointed Collier to the post in 1933. The new commissioner immediately set out to overhaul long-standing government policies. He directed all government employees in the field to

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*Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1977), 27-54; Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation: John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 19-137, 190-299; Donald L. Parman, *Indians and the American West in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 76-80; *Los Angeles Tidings*, June 15, 1923, BCIM, Series 15, Box 4, folder 5.

<sup>18</sup>Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:800-805; Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 55-69; Kelly, *Assault on Assimilation*, 300-347; William Hughes, "Director of Catholic Indian Missions Says Pueblos Are Persecuted By Pagan Chiefs," [reproduction of article in *Sacramento Bee*, July 26, 1924], BCIM, Series 4/3, Box 8, folder 7.

<sup>19</sup>Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:808-810; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 83-86; William Hughes to John J. Sullivan, November 9, 1928, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 181, folder 11.

respect all religious practices, even traditional Native rites. He also pushed through legislation to share jurisdiction of Indian programs with the states. But his most cherished goal was to reverse the damaging effects of the allotment policy. In 1934, he developed a legislative package (called the Wheeler-Howard [or Indian Reorganization] Act) which reestablished the right of tribal self-government, appropriated funds to promote the study of Indian culture and arts and crafts, abrogated individual allotment, returned "surplus" lands to the tribe and also set up a special Indian court to adjudicate cases based on Native traditions. Congress watered down many of the provisions, eliminating the tribal court for example, but passed much of what Collier wanted.<sup>20</sup>

Collier's efforts and the Wheeler-Howard Act were watershed events in United States Indian affairs. Because his proposals were radical departures from previous commissioners, they generated a great deal of angry debate. Religious organizations feared that Collier's program bordered on imposed atheism. Other critics denounced the act's anti-assimilationist implications, while others hinted that the act's emphasis on communal ties hinted at communism. But Hughes and the BCIM applauded Collier's campaign. During the debate over the bill, Hughes acknowledged that it was not perfect, but neither was it "communistic, nor hostile to Catholic missions and schools, nor yet based on the false assumption that the Indian Commissioner does not believe in religious influences." Hughes recognized that missionaries were concerned that the bill would "de-Christianize and re-paganize" the Indians, but he was convinced that the bill "has no such suicidal purpose." Furthermore, the bill offered solutions to ill-conceived policies such as allotment and corrections for "vacillating programs which have changed with almost every new commissioner, superintendent and so-called farmer in the Indian Service, so that the Indian's head was kept in a constant whirl and his thumbs playing tweedledum and tweedledee." In the end, he added, "Catholic missionaries wish the Indians Godspeed on their new trail."<sup>21</sup>

Hughes' support of Collier and the preceding Commissioners of Indian Affairs reflected how closely the government and the BCIM worked together. But Hughes, similar to earlier BCIM directors, worried that the close working relationship with the government might revive the specter of anti-Catholic agitation. In a 1935 report, Hughes disclosed that, in 1932, thirty-five Catholic boarding schools received government contracts amounting to \$188,500. Despite the economic disruption of the Great Depression, government support decreased slightly to \$185,755 in 1933. In addition, the BCIM helped procure emergency relief funds for mission schools totalling \$44,750 from 1932-1934. Hughes was acutely aware of the Protestant antagonism that might arise if this information became public; therefore, he urged that the contents remain confidential.<sup>22</sup>

The stress of fourteen years as BCIM director ultimately took its toll on Hughes. By the end of 1934, he was ready for a more tranquil post, and when Bishop Cantwell visited Washington in November, Hughes informed the Bishop that he desired to return to the Los Angeles diocese. The following March, Hughes notified the BCIM's board of directors of his intention. Cardinal Dougherty reluctantly accepted Hughes' resignation, which was to go into effect on June 30, 1935.

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<sup>20</sup>Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:940-963; Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 113-60; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 92-98.

<sup>21</sup>Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 131-33; William Hughes, "What of the New Indian Bill?," *TIS* 14 (Spring 1934), 36; Hughes to George Shuster, April 19, 1934, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 225, folder 7; Hughes, "Indians on a New Trail," BCIM, Series 4/3, Box 8, folder 23.

<sup>22</sup>"Confidential Report on United States Government Support of Catholic Indian Mission Schools and Catholic Education in Government Schools During Biennium Ending April 1, 1935," BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 232, folder 11.

Dougherty thanked Hughes "most heartily" for his years of service and prayed that God would "reward you for the sacrifices you have made and the good you have done." After he returned to California, Hughes spent several months working with Dr. John P. Harrington of the Bureau of Ethnology on his collection of Indian myths and customs. In February 1936, Bishop Cantwell appointed Hughes pastor of St. Catherine's parish on Catalina Island. The following December, he was transferred to St. Catherine's in Laguna Beach, where he spent the last years of his life. Over the winter of 1938-1939, Hughes contracted pneumonia. His constitution suffered, and when complications set in later in the spring, he could not recover. He passed away on May 6, 1939.<sup>23</sup>

Father John B. Tenny, the new BCIM director, offered the Requiem Mass at St. Vibiana's Cathedral on May 9. Over 150 priests attended the service to pay their last respects. The Bureau had lost its most eloquent spokesman and a strong leader. Although the existence of the Bureau itself and that of Catholic missions was not threatened, Hughes exerted a great deal of time and energy maintaining seventy Catholic day and boarding schools scattered across eighty-one reservations. His efforts did not go unnoticed. In 1924, Pope Pius XI made Hughes a domestic prelate, and upon hearing of Hughes' death, former Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Burke commented that there was no one with whom he "officially and frequently co-operated while [he] was Commissioner [that he had] more confidence and respect than for [Monsignor Hughes]."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>William Hughes to Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, April 4, 1935, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 232, folder 2; Hughes to Bishop John J. Cantwell, April 13, 1935, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 231, folder 16; Cardinal Dougherty to Hughes, April 9, 1935, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 232, folder 2; John B. Tenny to Charles Burke, May 20, 1939, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 252, folder 1; Tenny to Senator Carl Hayden, May 22, 1939, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 253, folder 5; Weber, *Past is Prologue*, 370; *The Providence Visitor*, June 20, 1935, BCIM, Series 15, Box 7, folder 3; Los Angeles *The Tidings*, May 12, 1939.

<sup>24</sup>Tenny, "In Memoriam," 89; Los Angeles *The Tidings*, May 12, 1939; Charles Burke to John B. Tenny, May 22, 1939, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 252, folder 1.