

Archbishop John Hughes in the American Civil War

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INTRODUCTION

It has frequently been said that the most monstrous of all wars is civil war, for a country becomes like a stage on which a tragedy is unfolded with brother pitted against brother, friend against friend, and one portion of a nation against another portion. The inevitable result of this strife is that nation, friend, and brother lie prostrate to the greed of a foreign audience.

The Civil War in our country was similar to this; yet, it was more. It was a time of bloody spectacles in which thousands of able-bodied actors were killed. It was a time of destruction in which much of the stage built during the previous ninety-seven years was torn down. It was a time of greed in which Europe anxiously awaited a climatic battle which would exhaust all of the states and leave them open to outside interference. It was a time of public prayers and public fasts in which Northern and Southern onlookers begged God for an end to the horrible conflict. And, it was a time of prominent Catholic churchmen in which future generations could be proud.

The most colorful and outstanding Catholic Bishop during the Civil War was John Hughes of New York--a man of action, a patriot, and a dedicated churchman. He was recognized by the whole country, North and South, as the most important churchman during the war years. Indeed, one of the

Archbishop's bitter adversaries of the time, Orestes A.

Brownson, admitted this at the death of Hughes in 1864:

To the outside public, Archbishop Hughes was looked upon as our only live bishop, and as embodying in himself, so to speak, the whole Catholic hierarchy in the United States.¹

Hughes was the most noticable of the prelates precisely because he ventured into the forefront of the political hurricane. Most of the other bishops steered clear of the political question, even though they leaned toward the attitude of their environment. They confined their activities to the spiritual order and emphasized by speeches and newspapers the value of prayer and the need for peace. But Archbishop Hughes headed fearlessly toward the raging seas, well aware that with his logical mind he could out maneuver and help quell the strife. From his public debated about the war to his European commission, his return and death, Archbishop Hughes labored hard for peace, for reunion of the country and for Catholics to be respected as loyal Americans, and for the Church in the United States to weather the strife unharmed in order to grow into a great bulwark.

In spite of all this work, Archbishop Hughes was not fully appreciated at that time or for years after. Throughout the past decades, Hughes has been underplayed and almost

¹ Henry Brownson, ed., The Complete Works of Orestes A. Brownson, vol. 14, p. 495

neglected in Church and secular history. Little has been published about this outstanding man except a two volume collection of his works and a biography by Hassard immediately after his death, and a biography by Brann in 1892. But none of these works adequately portray the Archbishop and his accomplishments.

Today, a century after the beginning of the Civil War, it is possible to set the man in his historical light and to gain a true perspective of his accomplishments. This is, in fact, the purpose of the essay--to portray accurately the Archbishop's life during the four years of Civil War and to reveal his true character.

CHAPTER I

HUGHES' BELIEF IN THE FEDERAL UNION

Before the outbreak of this war, when the conflict between the rabid abolitionists and the southern slaveholders was causing greater tensions, Archbishop John Hughes was spending long hours of the night in his study, avidly reading in the newspapers accounts of the growing crisis. Hughes was beginning to formulate the opinion that the union should be maintained for the common good of all the states. By the time that the South had exploded its vengeance on Ft. Sumter, the sixty-two year old Archbishop showed his Irish determination that the Union should remain intact by quickly hoisting a Union flag atop the spire of his cathedral.

Hughes' flag waving was bound to clash with anyone of southern sympathies, but especially with an Irish prelate who had sung a Te Deum over the fall of Ft. Sumter. Such a person was Bishop Patrick Lynch of South Carolina. When the actions of these two bishops became known, the anti-Catholic population expected a violent clash between Hughes' flag raising and Lynch's Te Deum that would shatter the unity of the Catholic Church, as had occurred in many Protestant churches. But the Catholic haters were to be disappointed, because

Hughes was not a fanatical Unionist. He had raised the flag for another reason, a reason which was more important to him than his own personal views: "...the press would have sounded the report that the Catholics were disloyal, and no act of ours afterward could sufficiently vindicate us from the imputation."² Hence, the controversy between the two Irish prelates would not be an uncontrolled, angry quarrel.

HUGHES AND LYNCH CONTROVERSY IN PRINT

The controversy was, in fact, filled with moderation and Christian charity. It actually began when the two bishops conversed about the growing crisis in March, 1861. One month after the seizure of Ft. Sumter, Archbishop Hughes decided to write to Bishop Lynch about the war. Hughes realized, however, that battle lines of Blue against Gray had by that time cut off communication between the two sections of the country. But the aged Archbishop could not be prevented from carrying out his purpose. Archbishop Hughes, pained with rheumatism of the hands, wrote a letter to Lynch and published it in his diocesan paper, the Metropolitan Record. The letter was entitled simply: "To a Southern Bishop." The Archbishop's hope was that Bishop Lynch might be given a copy of the paper sometime during the war. A lengthy reply from Lynch which out-

² John Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. John Hughes, D.D., p. 439.

lined the southern view of the crisis reached Hughes late in August. Archbishop Hughes quickly answered Bishop Lynch by publishing in the Metropolitan Record of September 7 a refutation of the reply along with the letter itself. Hughes' second article was explicitly called: "A letter to Bishop Lynch of Charleston, South Carolina." Thus, Hughes' two letters and Lynch's one comprised the whole discussion between the prelates, a discussion which involved three main topics.

THE CAUSE OF THE DREADFUL WAR

The first topic of the controversy between the prelates concerned the responsibility of the war. Bishop Lynch in his reply dated August 4, 1861, charged that the responsibility of the terrible conflict lay with the North, despite the fact that the South had fired the first shot. Paradoxical as this may seem, Lynch went on to explain that the conflict had started long before the bombardment of Ft. Sumter. It had begun, he affirmed, when the abolitionist party molded their anti-slavery policies into a religious dogma and then fanatically carried this dogma into the Federal Government. Bishop Lynch then bitterly denounced the northern abolitionists for their "inconceivable blindness" in having "originated, fostered and propagated" a party spirit which had inevitably led to secession, as the South had threatened it would.³

After Lynch showed that the Black Republicans did cause the crisis, he remarked that they should be the ones to "shoulder their muskets and bear the responsibility" of the fighting. The Irish Prelate emphatically stated that the abolitionists should not be allowed to send Irish-Americans, whom they had previously despised, to do their job.⁴

Archbishop John Hughes agreed with Lynch's argument about the cause of the war being the northern abolitionists. Hughes condemned the abolitionists, because they had overlooked the evils in their own neighborhood, while they had resolved to pluck out the "monster iniquity" in the South--that of slavery. The Archbishop affirmed that the nation could have done without these crusaders and could have allowed the South to manage its own affairs.⁵

SECESSION OF THE SOUTH

The second topic, and also the main argument which separated the two prelates, dealt with the justifiableness of secession. Bishop Lynch maintained that the southern act of secession was lawful, because the abolitionists in the North

3 John Tracy Ellis, Documents of American Catholic History, p. 359.

4 Idem, p. 364.

5 Lawrence Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, D.D., vol. 2, p. 515.

were responsible for the conflict. The South, Lynch asserted, was only defending itself from the "religious dogma" which the abolitionists had inserted into politics. Summing up his whole case against the Black Republicans as a justifiable cause of secession, Lynch declared:

But when they carried it into politics, gaining one State Government after another, and defining their especial policy by unconstitutional laws and every mode of annoying and hostile action, and finally, with increased enthusiasm and increased bitterness, carrying the Presidential election in triumph, and grasping the power of the Federal Government, what could the South do but consult its own safety by withdrawing from the Union. What other protection had they?⁶

Because the abolitionists had gained this one branch of the Federal Government, Lynch believed that southern secession was justified.

Lynch went on to say that besides loosing the executive branch of the government, the South had another reason for secession. This reason was that the southern position was rapidly declining in both the House of Representatives and in the Senate. Lynch affirmed that the Supreme Court was the only branch of the Federal Government which had shown favor to the South, but he stated that new judges would surely be appointed by the Black Republicans.. The entire Federal Government, Lynch maintained, would soon be in the hands of the abolitionists. At such a time the Black Republicans would interfere into the domestic affairs of the states and would

⁶ Ellis, Documents of American Catholic History, p. 360

abolish the slave system which was the backbone of the South. In short, Bishop Lynch said that the unconstitutional act of secession was justified, because it was the only means by which the South could preserve the freedoms guaranteed to it in the Constitution.

Archbishop Hughes, on the other hand, strongly objected to southern secession. He declared that the sovereign states had solemnly agreed to join themselves in a federal union some seventy years before. Hence, "no State has a right to secede." But Hughes went on to say that he was not opposed to secession as such and that, if it was necessary for the survival of the South, the Constitution should be altered by legal means.⁷

Archbishop Hughes was quick to point out that the South had not taken its grievance to the tribunals set up by the Constitution. The South, Hughes affirmed, had taken into itself to be its own judge, its own witness, and its own executor. Such action meant rebellion or revolution. Hence, Hughes declared that the South was guilty.⁸

Hughes argued that the North, for its part, was waging the war to bring the rebel states back into the Union. It was not fighting to abolish slavery in the South. None the less,

⁷ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. J. Hughes, vol 2, p. 515.

⁸ Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. John Hughes, p. 439.

Hughes expressed his opinion that whenever the Union was intact again, the slave states would be expected to initiate a program of gradual emancipation under their own supervision.

NEED FOR PEACE

The final discussion between the two bishops involved the need for peace. Bishop Lynch realized that the North was prepared to wage a full-scale war against the South, but he told Hughes that the North would accomplish nothing except a further loss of lives and devastation of property. Lynch illustrated his argument by painting a picture of a Northern army marching through a wild country of forests and thickets which was "occupied by a population hostile to a man and where even schoolboys can 'bark a squirrel.'" In such a place, Lynch argued, the soldiers would have no protection against Southern guerilla warfare. Such fighting would merely cause more bloodshed. Consequently, Lynch suggested that the North should accept secession as an accomplished fact.⁹

Bishop Lynch went on to say that if the North persisted in waging a war for reunion, the benefits of the reunion would never outweigh the slaughter of thousands of innocent persons who would die in the senseless battles. The war was an evil to be avoided, he declared, because every battle "served but to widen the chasm between the North and South" and make

⁹ Ellis, Documents of American Catholic History, p.361; also Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. J. Hughes, p. 438.

reconstruction impossible.¹⁰

To this plea for peace, Archbishop Hughes also agreed, but he said realistically that the war would have to be resolved before real peace would be established. The Archbishop explained this view by comparing the "sanguinary contest" to a hurricane on the ocean which must exhaust its violence before there could be a return of national calm. But in saying this to Lynch, Hughes little realized at the time how long the hurricane would rage.

Even though the country was divided into two hostile sections, Archbishop Hughes expressed his confidence that peace would reign within the Catholic Church. He confidently told Lynch that the bonds of faith and charity would remain unbroken between the Catholics of the North and of the South.

END OF THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN HUGHES AND LYNCH

After Archbishop Hughes had finished his last letter to Bishop Lynch, he could not conceal his ideas about the need for kindness and charity in dealing with the South. Hughes, therefore, wrote to Secretary of State Seward, a close friend of his, stressing this view:

Be as patient and considerate toward the state authorities of this so-called Confederacy as possible. Conquest is not altogether by the sword. Statesmanship, especially in our own circumstances, may have much to do with it.

10 Ellis, Documents of American Catholic History,
p. 360

But no backing down of the federal union.¹¹

Archbishop Hughes was never to depart from this position-- firmness yet kindness toward the South.

By the time that Bishop Lynch had read the Archbishop's reply, he was occupied with restoring his cathedral, residence, and library which had been destroyed by fire. Thus, with Hughes' second letter the controversy ended.

HUGHES AND BROWNSON DEBATE IN PRINT

Scarcely more than a month had elapsed from the time Archbishop Hughes had published his last letter to Bishop Lynch until the Brownson Quarterly Review of October, 1861, forced the Archbishop once again into public controversy. Orestes A. Brownson, editor of the Review, refuted Archbishop Hughes' statement in the letter to Bishop Lynch that the cause of the war was the Northern Abolitionists. Brownson called for a vigorous prosecution of the war and proposed emancipation of all the American slaves to ensure the defeat of the rebellion.

Archbishop Hughes was extremely irritated at Brownson's proposal, more so than he had been with the many other arguments he had had with Brownson since he had invited him into the diocese six years before.¹² On this occasion, Hughes did

¹¹ Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. J. Hughes, p. 446.

¹² Arthur Schlesinger, Orestes Brownson, A Pilgrim's Progress, p. 218.

not hesitate to refute Brownson's article, "Slavery and the War," by an anonymous letter in the October 12, 1861 issue of the Metropolitan Record.

Brownson was not the kind of man to let such an issue rest. In the January review he defended his "Slavery and the War" and harshly took the Archbishop to task, even though he was by that time traveling abroad in Europe.

The debate between Hughes and Brownson was like a battle between two giants of equally strong character. From this war of words, two main issues stand out clearly-- the question of abolition and the morality of slavery.

THE QUESTION OF ABOLITION TO WIN THE WAR

The first main topic of the debate concerned the abolition of the slaves. Archbishop Hughes answered the October issue of the Review by forcefully declaring that anyone who advocated immediate emancipation by a presidential decree "stood in need of a strait-jacket and the humane protection of a lunatic asylum."¹³

Hughes gave several reasons for declaring that immediate emancipation was wrong. He stated that abolition by a presidential order would be illegal, because the president, as commander-in-chief, did not have the power to free the slaves. Consequently, Hughes affirmed that the North would be just as

¹³ Madeleine Rice, American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy, p. 120.

guilty of subverting the Constitution as the South had been by their act of secession. Another reason was that immediate emancipation would jeopardize the lives of all the southern Whites by leading to a repetition of the Santo Domingo horrors. Archbishop Hughes gravely feared this, because, as a young priest, he had witnessed these horrors.¹⁴ The most immediate reason was that abolition would harm the recruiting of Catholic soldiers for the Union. Hughes affirmed that the Catholics of the North would not fight for the Union, if they believed that the purpose of the war was the destruction of slavery, a position which he accused Brownson of advocating.¹⁵ The reason they would not fight, Hughes said, was because the abolitionist party included such anti-Catholics as the Nativists, a group which had smeared him with the nickname "Dagger John." Archbishop Hughes was so upset with the possibility that the abolitionist's program would keep the Catholics from showing patriotism toward their country that he wrote frankly to the Secretary of War, Simon Cameron:

There is being insinuated in this part of the country an idea to the effect that the purpose of the war is the abolition of slavery in the South. If that idea should prevail among a certain class, it would make the business of

¹⁴ Benjamin Blie, Catholics and the Civil War, p. 33.

¹⁵ Actually Hughes was mistaken in his assertion. Brownson had declared in October, 1861, that the purpose of the war was not to free the slaves, but that it was to crush the rebels. Abolition, according to Brownson, was an absolute necessity to accomplish this. (Cf. Henry Brownson, ed., Complete Works of O.A.B., vol. 17, p. 146).

recruiting slack indeed. The Catholics, so far as I know, whether of native or foreign birth, are willing to fight to the death for the support of the Constitution, the Government, and the laws of the Country. But if it should be understood that, with or without knowing it, they are to fight for the abolition of slavery, then indeed, they will turn away in disgust from the discharge of what would otherwise be a patriotic duty.¹⁶

"Dagger John" was using all of his influence to destroy the abolitionist's platform, "Immediate and Unconditional Emancipation."

To Hughes' public condemnation of abolition, Orestes A. Brownson replied in January that the Archbishop was ignorant of the nation's peril. Brownson maintained that abolition would, most important of all, be a "death-dealing" instrument of war which would strike the enemy in the most vulnerable point and "sunder the sinews of his strength."¹⁷ In addition to winning the war, Brownson argued that abolition would be a just punishment for the rebellion. The final effect of abolition, Brownson said, would be to gain the moral support of the European countries, especially France and England which were openly pro-southern. Thus, Brownson declared, a war with foreign powers would be averted.

After Brownson had enumerated these benefits of abolition, he heedlessly attacked the person of Archbishop Hughes.

¹⁶ Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. J. Hughes, p. 437.

¹⁷ Brownson, ed., The Complete Works of O.A.B., vol. 17, pp. 173-74.

Orestes A. Brownson declared harshly that anyone--obviously referring to the Archbishop--who kept the North divided on the lawfulness of abolition was giving "aid and comfort...to the enemy" and was virtually committing treason.¹⁸ Elsewhere in the same January issue, Brownson declared quite openly that Hughes, more than anyone else in the North, was keeping the Union from following a "straightforward and decided policy" against the southern rebels.¹⁹ Brownson thereby placed Hughes in a class with Benedict Arnold. These two examples illustrated to the public Brownson's characteristic tactlessness which would provoke action from the Archbishop.

THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

The second and final argument between the two men dealt with slavery and was even more forceful than the first. Archbishop Hughes began by agreeing with Brownson's statement in his October article that slavery was an evil. Hughes even admitted that slavery was a "crime" because it reduced men who were created free to a state of bondage.²⁰ But Archbishop Hughes went on to say that slavery was not intrinsically evil. He argued that the living conditions of the slaves were in many cases better than those of the poor in his own diocese.

¹⁸ Brownson, ed., The Complete Works of O.A.B., vol. 17 pp. 193-94.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.323.

²⁰ Theodore Mayard, The Story of American Catholicism, vol. 2, p.15.

Hence, Hughes said that the slaves were much better off under slavery than if they were freed at once.

Hughes then went on to justify the slave trade, even though it had been officially condemned by the Church. He proceeded to illustrate this by describing Aftica as a land of constant tribal warfare. Hence, Hughes said that it was difficult to condemn the men engaged in the slave trade. The slavers were "snatching them from the butcheries" prepared for them in the native land.²¹ Archbishop Hughes admitted that the only bad part of the slave trade was that following generations would inherit the status of slavery. However, he lessened this aspect by likening the inheritance of slavery to Adam's sin being passed on from generation to generation.

When Brownson heard that Hughes had defended the slave trade, he pounced on the opportunity to declare publically the Archbishop's excommunication. Brownson declared that Hughes was plainly advocating what Gregory XVI "absolutely forbids and interdicts."²² After Brownson was satisfied that he had sufficiently repudiated the Archbishop's position, he went on to excuse Hughes by saying that he could not really have meant to defend the slave trade. The Archbishop, he said, had adopted the vulgar style of the newspaper and was not trying to be precise in his language.

²¹ Brownson, ed., The Complete Works of O.A.B., vol. 17, p. 203.

²² Ibid, p. 204.

RESULT OF THE WAR OF WORDS

Between the time that Archbishop Hughes had put forth his position on abolition and slavery and the time that Brownson had taken the Archbishop to task, Hughes had written to the Secretary of State defending his actions. Hughes said to his friend Seward:

If I had not corrected the reviewer's position, he would have done vast mischief, without, I think, intending it, to the struggle in which the country is now engaged. Some of our editors are exceedingly thoughtless in discussing abolitionism of slavery through the instrumentality of the Government and of the army.... It will be time enough to regulate this unhappy question of slavery when the war shall have terminated, on the merits of its own basis, whether in the North or in the South.²³

After Hughes had written his public statement against Brownson's article and after he had written to Seward, the Archbishop believed that he had been successful in repudiating the stand of the abolitionists. Little did he realize that within eleven months President Lincoln would draft his "Emancipation Proclamation."

When Archbishop Hughes saw the January issue of the Review, he became extremely irritated at Brownson's attack on a Catholic Archbishop. In the height of his opposition, however, Hughes showed his integrity of character by assuring

²³ Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. John Hughes, p. 437.

the Holy See of Brownson's personal faith in the Church.²⁴
None the less, Hughes drafted a condemnation of the review,
but withheld it from everyone's knowledge. It was found
among his letters at the time of his death.²⁵

²⁴ Brownson, ed., Complete Works of O.A.B., vol. 14,
p. 496.

²⁵ Thomas Shelly, "Orestes Brownson and Archbishop
Hughes," St. Meinrad Essays 12 (May 1959) 37.

CHAPTER II

EUROPE'S INTEREST IN THE CIVIL WAR

While the North was turning its attention away from the war to watch the beginning of another debate between two of its noted supporters, the Confederacy was putting forth its mightiest efforts to show the European audience that the South stood a good chance of winning. The Southern forces were, in fact, gaining more victories than their northern protagonists. Upon these victories rested the Southern hopes of foreign recognition, and with that recognition, foreign help to sustain the Confederacy.

Most of the European powers were eager to indorse the southern position, because they knew that a permanent division of the states would mean the abandonment of the obnoxious Monroe Doctrine. Furthermore, England, France, and Spain took positive steps in October, 1861, against the Lincoln Government. These world powers agreed to a joint intervention in Mexico and sent in troops on the pretense of safeguarding foreign interest. Besides this violation of the Monroe Doctrine, Spain had quickly re-annexed the Dominican Republic and some of the guano islands off the coast of Peru. France herself was on the verge of building a New World Empire in the Americas, and thus was willing to give open support to the

South. Napoleon III, however, could not afford to do this without an approving nod from Great Britain, who was "mistress of the sea." Although England was sympathetic toward the South, she did not trust Napoleon and would not consent to his venture.

HUGHES ASKED TO GO ABROAD

The North knew the tenor of Europe and was apprehensive lest European recognition would at any time descend like a guillotine to sever all possibilities of a future reconciliation between North and South. The Lincoln administration, therefore, quickly asked several influential persons to journey abroad in order to dissuade the governments of Europe from entering into the domestic quarrel in America. The most important man chosen for this delicate mission was none other than the dynamic John Hughes of New York.

Hughes was chosen, not only because he was the most prominent Catholic bishop at that time, but also because Lincoln and Seward knew personally that he was a very capable man. The familiarity between the two politicians and the Archbishop was illustrated in Lincoln's letter to Hughes on October 21, 1861. After Lincoln had asked Hughes for chaplains in the army, he concluded the letter by thanking the Archbishop for his "kind and judicious letters" which he and

Seward found very profitable.²⁶

The same day that Archbishop Hughes received the letter from Lincoln, he was given a telegram requesting him to visit Washington on public business. Hughes was not long in answering this request. When he arrived in the capitol, he discussed the necessity of a mission abroad with Secretary of State Seward. Hughes recalled the incident a year later when he wrote to Seward:

It was thought that, in the perils of the nation, at that time, I could be useful in promoting the interest of the commonwealth and of humanity if I would go to Europe and exercise whatever little influence I might possess in preventing France and England from intermeddling in our sad quarrel.²⁷

Actually, the purpose of the mission was not only to convince Napoleon III and George V but also the Papacy and other Catholic rulers.²⁸

Hughes was at first hesitant in accepting this commission to go abroad. However, when he was told that it was a personal request and would be considered a personal favor, he "delayed only three minutes" before replying that he would gladly journey abroad. The Archbishop felt that it was his duty to prevent foreign powers from causing a "greater

²⁶ Roy Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 4, p. 559.

²⁷ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 540.

²⁸ J. Randall, Mid-Stream: Lincoln the President, p. 319.

effusion of human blood." Hughes also gave another reason for accepting the commission. He wished to win for the Church a public recognition which would prove conclusively to everyone that Catholics were loyal, decent Americans.

In accepting the commission to go abroad, Hughes chose the position as a volunteer instead of the official position which was offered to him.²⁹ He justified this action by saying that he feared an official post would bind the Church too closely to the North and thereby burst the bond of unity within the Catholic Church. As a volunteer, Hughes planned to represent both North and South for the sole purpose in influencing foreign governments. Hughes summarized this role in a letter to Cardinal Barnabo as follows:

I made known to the President that if I should come to Europe, it would not be as a partisan of the North more than of the South; that I should represent the interest of the South as well as of the North--in short, the interests of all the United States, just the same as if they had never been distracted by the present civil war.³⁰

By relinquishing his personal conviction for the Union cause in order to keep the domestic quarrel from becoming a devastating war involving Europe, Hughes showed a high type of patriotism.

Hughes's position, however, was not full understood by

²⁹ John Gilmary Shea, A History of the Catholic Church, vol. 4, p. 473.

³⁰ Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. J. Hughes, p. 450.

many persons at the time. It was believed that he was going abroad to persuade the European countries to join with the North in the war against the South. Even the editor of Hughes' Complete Works said in his introduction to the first volume that Archbishop Hughes "proceeded to Europe to exert his influence in behalf of the Union cause."

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE

As Hughes was preparing to leave the United States, he received his final instructions in a letter from Seward dated November 2, 1861. The directions were as follows:

While in Paris, you will study how, in conjunction with Mr. Dayton, you can promote healthful opinions concerning the great cause in which our country is now engaged in arms. You will extend your visit to any part of Europe you may think proper, and will consider yourself at liberty to stay until recalled.³¹

Even though Hughes was told to take his time in this important work, he had planned to return to New York within five months. Little did he know that he would be absent twice that amount of time.³²

Hughes left New York on November 6, with Mr. Thurlow Weed, a friend whom he asked to go to England, and Bishop McNeirny whom he took as his assistant. Hughes took special

³¹ V. O'Donnell, "Archbishop John Hughes, American Envoy to France," Catholic Historical Review. 3(1917)338.

³² Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 368.

delight in the ocean voyage, even though it was the fourteenth time he had crossed the sea. The Archbishop particularly enjoyed the relaxation of the "always glorious ocean, with its untiring monotony and ceaseless change."³³ Most of all, he perceived in the fury of the sea and the raging of the wind the presence of his Almighty Creator.

³³ Thomas Meehan, "Going Down to Sea in Ships," America 31 (Sept. 13, 1924) 520.

CHAPTER III

HUGHES' WORK IN PARIS

When Archbishop Hughes arrived at Paris late in November, he found certain misconceptions about the nature of the war and about his own position on slavery. In regard to slavery, Hughes met with celebrated social reformers, such as Cochin, Dupanloup, and Montalembert, to clear his name from the supposed position he had held in the debate with Brownson. He did this, so that his work in Europe would not suffer from the various rumors being circulated about him. In regard to the misconception about the nature of the war, Hughes discerned that the general opinion in France was that the North had harrassed the South to such an extent that the southern states could bear the "yoke of oppression" no longer.³⁴

Shortly after Archbishop Hughes had observed this attitude towards the Civil War, he contacted the Union ambassador in Paris, William Dayton, as Seward had instructed. Hughes asked Mr. Dayton for his help in obtaining an audience with Napoleon III. The Union ambassador, however, took Hughes' mission to France as an insult to his diplomatic experience and was unwilling to aid the Archbishop in this

³⁴ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 369.

undertaking.

None the less, Hughes was determined that nothing would prevent him from gaining an audience with Napoleon. The Archbishop himself wrote a brief note to the Emperor requesting an audience in order that he might explain the war in America. Hughes described to Seward the polite but brief note simply: "Sir, I wish to have the honor of a conversation with you."³⁵ By his unadorned manner of speech, Archbishop Hughes was granted his request.

The meeting which the Archbishop had requested with the Emperor and Empress occurred on December 24, 1861, at the Tuileries. During the seventy minutes of the audience, Hughes discussed several topics which dealt with international aspects of the war. One such topic was the "Trent Affair" in which two Confederate officers were taken off the British ship, Trent, while it was in international waters. Hughes asked the Emperor to act as arbitrator between the United States and England, because the incident was causing threatening reaction. In the North, Congress had voted the thanks of the nation to the American ship. In Great Britain, on the other hand, Parliament felt a blow to its country's pride as "mistress of the sea" and had ordered eight thousand troops to Canada and had placed the Navy on war footing. But Napoleon III declined to act as arbitrator in the quarrel between England and the

³⁵ Thomas Meehan, "Wartime Notes about Archbishop Hughes," America. 19(1918)12.

North.³⁶

Another topic of discussion between the Emperor and the Archbishop was the ruinous effect of the blockade on French manufacturing. Napoleon III told Archbishop Hughes that the Northern blockade had caused a high peak of unemployment in the cotton industries. Hughes did not hesitate to suggest, as a solution to this problem, that France should begin to raise its own cotton in Algeria.³⁷

The final topic of the conference concerned the South's interest for Cuba. Archbishop Hughes hinted to the Empress, who was a Spaniard by birth, that the South wished to use Cuba for the promotion of slavery.³⁸ Hughes was confident that this fact would dissuade the Emperor from openly supporting the South.

After his interview with Napoleon, Hughes related in a letter to the Secretary of State the proceedings of the short meeting and likened his attempt at influencing Napoleon to a homely example of General Jackson's barber:

It is generally thought that certain men are above being influenced. This is a mistake. If there ever was a man of such type it would be General Jackson. And yet whilst General Jackson would disregard, under certain circumstances, the opinion of his whole Cabinet, General Jackson might take up and reflect

³⁶ Thomas O'Gorman, A History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, vol. 9, p. 448.

³⁷ Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. J. Hughes, p. 467.

³⁸ Blieck, Catholics and the Civil War, p. 84.

upon a phrase uttered by the barber who
shaved him.³⁹

Hughes hoped that Napoleon would act as General Jackson had done and would reflect upon what he had discussed at the conference.

In the meanwhile Hughes was acquainting himself with as many important citizens as possible. This included ambassadors, church officials, government officials, and prominent gentlemen. He used every social gathering possible to tell his view of the conflict and thus to put his ideas into circulation. Hughes told Seward that he was "perfectly satisfied" each of his talks reached the ear of one or the other Ministers within twenty four hours after its utterance.⁴⁰

As a result of these social gatherings and the audience with the Emperor, an official declaration on the American Civil War was presented by Napoleon in his speech of January 27th. In this declaration the Emperor acknowledged that the war was harmful to French commerce, but he added —to the satisfaction of Archbishop Hughes —that France would respect the rights of neutrals and would confine itself to "expressing wishes" that the dissensions would soon terminate.⁴¹

³⁹ Ellis, Documents of American Catholic History, p. 381.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 380.

Hughes told Seward that he had done all in his power to bring this commitment about. With this concrete accomplishment, Hughes was convinced that France would not unit with England in an assault upon the Union.⁴² Hence, he bade Paris farewell in early February and, after a brief stopover at Ireland, set out for Rome.⁴³

HUGHES' MISSION TO ROME

When Archbishop Hughes arrived in Rome on February 26, 1862, Roman officialdom and Roman society flocked to the Via dell'Unita' to give tribute to the well-known Archbishop of New York, who had been so distinguished by the United States Government. With his large-shaped Roman nose and his short five feet nine inch stature, Archbishop Hughes blended into these crowds remarkably well. Pius IX was especially pleased to greet this Archbishop who had received such a high honor from his government. Pius IX recalled this happy event a few years later and said:

When we reflect upon the fact that under the constitution of the United States all forms of religious worship are placed upon an equality; when we reflect upon the almost innumerable ministers who represent these different forms of worship; and when we reflect, moreover, that

42 Blie'd, Catholics and the Civil War, pp. 86-87.

43 V. O'Donnell, "Archbishop John Hughes, American Envoy to France," Catholic Historical Review, 3(October, 1917)338n.

the government of the United States, at a most critical moment, has singled out John, Archbishop of New York, to be entrusted with a most important mission, and as one in whom the government has thought proper to place its frank, its full, its unreserved confidence; of this selection we may justly feel proud.⁴⁴

The Holy Father believed that the Catholic Church in the United States was finally overcoming the bitter hatred of which it had been a favorite target.

In spite of all the praise which Hughes received when he arrived in Rome, he found letters of disapproval from his fellow prelates in the United States.⁴⁵ Several of them had expressed fear that Hughes had acted rashly in accepting the government commission. After Archbishop Hughes discussed these letters with the Holy Father and Cardinal Antonelli, he was convinced that his errand had their entire approval. Both Pio Nono and Cardinal Antonelli, the Secretary of State, were grateful that Seward had arranged the mission for the Archbishop, and they held Seward in even greater respect than at the time of their meetings with him before the War.

Archbishop Hughes described his welcome in Rome to Secretary of State Seward as "a most cordial and flattering reception." Hughes thereupon related an incident which illustrated to Seward and Lincoln the deep loyalty and

⁴⁴ Blieid, Catholics and the Civil War, p. 88.

⁴⁵ Robert McNamara, American College in Rome, p. 130; Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. John Hughes, p. 474.

respect which Hughes held for the President of the United States. The Archbishop wrote he had a "little quarrel" with a certain Cardinal who praised the Secretary of State more than the President. Hughes told Seward that he had corrected the Cardinal and said that no President of the United States had been "more capable, more honest, more moderate, more safe and reliable, than the actual incumbent who is now at the head of the country."⁴⁶ This respect would be repaid at the Archbishop's return to the United States.

Shortly after the Archbishop's arrival in Rome, rheumatism began to trouble him, and early in April his condition became much worse. Hughes then retired for a time at the American College in Rome, the seminary which he and Bishop Kenrick had helped to found. Prevented from active work, Archbishop Hughes tried to recuperate as fast as possible by taking hot baths in sulphur water daily.⁴⁷

In March, 1862, Archbishop Hughes wrote to Seward of his successes in Rome and humorously included a short conversation which proved how well he had accomplished his work. A Roman gentleman told him, Hughes said, that some Southern Catholics in the Eternal City held him responsible for having prevented France and England from joining the Confederacy. Hughes quickly answered the man: "I hope the accusation is

⁴⁶ Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. John Hughes, p. 473.

⁴⁷ McNamara, American College in Rome, p. 131.

true!"⁴⁸ Archbishop Hughes was, in fact, doing everything in his power to present his ideas to the many dignitaries in Rome. Indeed, the Archbishop believed that he had accomplished his mission in Rome and was preparing to leave for Spain, Ireland, and then the United States.

When Hughes heard that a canonization of twenty-three Japanese martyrs was to take place on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 1862, he decided to remain in Rome until that solemn day arrived. At the canonization, Hughes was one of the three hundred and twenty-three bishops present and was privileged to assist at the ceremonies. Pius IX addressed the bishops on the following day about the perilous situation of the Church. After discussing the loss of most of the Papal States, he presented a brief survey of the Civil War in America.

Immediately after this allocution by Pius IX, Hughes decided not to include Spain on his agenda. He wrote to Seward that there was no need for him to go to Spain because he had met many Spanish Cardinals and Bishops who convinced him that Spain would not interfere with the Northern attempt for a United States. Instead, Hughes gave his colleague at the canonization, Bishop Domenec of Pittsburg, the opportunity of visiting his native land to keep it impartial toward the Civil War. Hughes praised the Bishop after he had completed

⁴⁸ Henry Dayle, "Catholicism in the Civil War and Reconstruction," Catholic Builders of the Nation vol. 1, p. 180.

his work as the "only one who ever really succeeded" in the missions abroad.⁴⁹ This was obviously an exaggeration, but Hughes did not wish to acknowledge his own accomplishments.

One week after the canonization, Archbishop Hughes left Rome, never to see it again.⁵⁰ His mission to the Eternal City had been a success, judging from the conversation which the Papal Secretary of State had with Mr. Blachford, the United States Charge d' Affaires in Rome. Cardinal Antonelli said to him:

If I had the honor to be an American citizen, I would do everything in my power to preserve the strength of the nation undivided.⁵¹

Evidently, Hughes had convinced the Papal Secretary of State that all of the states would benefit more by a union than by secession.

HUGHES' LABORS IN LONDON

The Archbishop's ship reached the English coast in early July, 1862. Hughes realized that his task in England

⁴⁹ Shea, A History of the Catholic Church, vol. 4, p. 421.

⁵⁰ The date of departure was most probably June 17, 1862. (Cf. McNamara, p. 131.) "Early July" was given as the date in a less reliable source. (Cf. Thomas Meehan, "Wartime Notes about Archbishop Hughes," America. 19(1918)12.

⁵¹ John McGloin, "A Priest in Politics," Historical Bulletin. 16(January, 1938)26.

would be great, for that country was so sympathetic to the South that she allowed the Confederate ship, Alabama, to be built in her docks. Upon landing, Hughes found three main convictions that the English held. First, they charged the North with having forbidden the flow of trade between foreign nations and the South. England favored the Confederacy, because she knew that if the South was outside the Union, trade would be greatly increased. This would mean a more profitable outlet for English manufactured goods and an unlimited supply of cotton to run her operatives which were then, because of the blockade, idle by twenty-five to thirty percent.⁵²

Another reason for England's southern attitude was her belief that the Union would not allow self-determination. England accused the North of not permitting the same privileges which the whole country had enjoyed by the Revolutionary War. If the country was justified in rebelling once, she said, it was justified in rebelling again.

The last and most important reason for England's sympathies toward the South was her fear that the country was becoming too large for one government and was thus becoming a dangerous rival. Hughes commented after his return to New York:

This was at the bottom of their sophistries;
and when it was founded on such a basis, you can

⁵² Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 371.

understand how useless it would be to argue with them.⁵³

But Hughes was not the kind of man to give up his idea of persuading England to remain neutral.

Even though Archbishop Hughes knew that England did favor the South, he believed that she would not enter into the war. The general feeling of most people, Hughes said, was that Americans would themselves divide their government without it costing the Europeans anything. Another group in England thought that intervention would be a dangerous experiment which would have more consequences on them than on the Americans. Still others were amazed at the reports of armies springing up in all of the states. This, Hughes said, made a stronger impression than all the mass of diplomats could accomplish. "The result is," Hughes confidently said, "that there is no disposition to interfere if it is possible to avoid it."⁵⁴ Since Hughes was assured that England would refrain from war, he proceeded to Ireland, his last stop on his homeward journey.

HUGHES' VISIT TO DUBLIN

When Archbishop Hughes arrived in Ireland, he found

⁵³ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 370.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 371

that many of his fellow Irishmen believed the southern position was similar to their own movement for independence. But when England had displayed her friendly attitude toward the South, other Irishmen shifted their sympathies toward the Union. Hughes immediately began to explain to both of these groups the true situation of the Civil War.

His first public appearance occurred July 20, 1862, at the laying of the corner-stone of the new Catholic University in Dublin. On this occasion nearly one hundred thousand of his countrymen were eager to behold the Archbishop with keen gray eyes, a sharp resolute mouth and a brown wig. They all listened as Hughes preached about the benefits of Catholic education for the Irish. Surprisingly enough, Archbishop Hughes did not even mention the war in America.⁵⁵

Two days later Hughes did speak of the war to the Catholic Young Men's Society. Among the topics which he mentioned was his role as an unofficial ambassador of peace. Hughes explained his work in the following words:

When I left, I left with the commission of peace in its name--an office of peace which would be in harmony with my personal character--still more with my ecclesiastical character--and I have endeavored to discharge all the duties that were imposed upon me, or expected of me, since I left that country, and I trust not altogether without effect.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, pp. 358-68.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 763

Hughes was telling his friends that his main effort during the previous ten months was in persuading foreign nations not to enter the Civil War. Hughes then went on to carry out the same work in Ireland. He deplored the "sad spectacle in America," but he emphasized that outsiders should not take advantage of the domestic quarrel to conquer the country. In short, Hughes called for a "hands-off" policy to be followed by all of Europe without exception.

On the same day, Archbishop Hughes addressed the Committee of National Brotherhood. The topic was the same-- the Civil War in America. In this speech Hughes was so engrossed in showing the need for a quick war to end the horrible bloodshed that he asked his audience to fight under the Union Flag.⁵⁷ His remark was not meant to be taken seriously, but it showed his countrymen that the Archbishop was eager for an end to the dreadful conflict.

During his stay in Ireland, Hughes addressed several other assemblies, among which was the "Deputation from Nenagh." Several days after this talk, a supposed copy of it appeared in the Tipperary Advocate. Actually, the article was filled with half-truths and brought into question the character of the Archbishop. Hughes immediately defended himself in the Cork Examiner, but he was deeply hurt that the land in which he had spent the first eighteen years of his life

⁵⁷ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 528.

had questioned his integrity.⁵⁸

Archbishop Hughes tried to forget about the incident while he concluded his formal and informal talks in Ireland. During the first part of August, he told his friends and native land farewell and wearily set off from Queenstown for New York.

⁵⁸ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 529

CHAPTER IV

ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK

When Archbishop Hughes reached his journey's end on August 12, 1862, the whole city of New York, including both branches of the City Council and many other dignitaries, were gathered to greet him. The crowds cheered the Archbishop and afterwards he was offered a congratulatory address by Ex-Senator McMurray. To the many compliments in this speech which received the full approval of the crowds, the Archbishop responded with a brief talk in his Irish brogue. After the cheers and speeches were at an end, Archbishop Hughes retired to his residence for a few days, before setting out to give a report of his voyage in Washington.

HUGHES' REPORT TO WASHINGTON

Hughes arrived at the White House a few days after his return from Europe and was warmly received by his friend, Secretary of State Seward. The Archbishop spent an hour or so in telling Seward in more detail than his letters from abroad the sympathies of Europe toward the Civil War. After the short conference that evening, the Secretary of State informed

Hughes that a banquet would be held in his honor on the following day.

At the dinner which was on Friday, secretaries, generals and other distinguished men paid their respects to Archbishop Hughes. When the meal was served, Hughes was astonished to find that not a piece of meat was in sight. At this gesture of respect for him, the Archbishop was exceptionally pleased, and, indeed, considered it "the most delicate compliment" that he had ever received.⁵⁹ Hughes enjoyed this banquet and the other meals he had in Washington, even though he was forced to eat at regular intervals. This was something he had not done most of his life. In fact, he held to no systematic procedure for anything.

President Lincoln informed Archbishop Hughes that he was deeply grateful for his labors in Europe and told Hughes that he wished to give him something as a sign of his appreciation. But Hughes would not accept any of the public honors that the president could offer. Consequently, Lincoln declared that he would ask the Church to bestow an honor upon the Archbishop: "I intend to recommend in the most appropriate way I can that the pope appoint Archbishop Hughes a Cardinal, and so interfere in the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church"⁶⁰ Lincoln did, in fact, convey to the Holy See such a request.

⁵⁹ Meehan, "Wartime Notes about Archbishop Hughes," America. 19(January 1918)13.

⁶⁰ Blieck, Catholics and the Civil War, p.87.

From that time until the Archbishop's death, it was believed by many, including Hughes' biographer, J. Hassard, that Hughes would receive the position recommended by Lincoln.⁶¹

SERMON ON THE WAR

After the Archbishop's return from his visit in Washington, he preached the sermon in St. Patrick's Cathedral on August 17, 1862, about his mission abroad and the war.⁶²

Hughes modestly summed up for his congregation, indeed for all the public, the work of his commission in the following words:

I had no message to deliver. Another could have carried the message; but none was committed to me, except the message of peace, except the message of explanation, except the message of correcting erroneous ideas as opportunity might afford me the chance of doing, in the same spirit and to the same end. I have lost no opportunity, according to my discretion, and that was the only qualification connected with my going--I have lost no opportunity to accomplish these ends--to explain what was misunderstood--to inspire, so far as language of mine could have that effect, the spirit of peace and good-will into the people of foreign States towards that one nation to which I exclusively owe allegiance and fidelity. The task was not so easy as some might have

61 Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. J. Hughes, p. 486.

62 Most authors agree that August 17 was the date. (Cf. Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 368; Richard Purcell, "Hughes, John Joseph," Dictionary of American Biography. However, Hughes himself referred to the date as August 18, 1862. (Cf. Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 541).)

anticipated; its accomplishment has not been so successful as I could have desired. Nevertheless, I trust that, directly or indirectly, my going abroad, in great part for the purpose of aiding the country, has not been altogether without effect.⁶³

After Hughes spoke of his work abroad, he discussed the war itself. He specifically referred to the conflict as a "slow lingering waste of human life" and insisted that it be brought to a close as quickly as possible. As a means to accomplish this, Hughes proposed the system of conscription. He declared in defense of conscription that it was not cruel--that it was merciful, because it would stop the flow of human blood. Furthermore, he told all those present that they should insist on conscription as the only just way to end the terrible conflict.

In concluding the sermon on the war, Hughes affirmed that the North should respect all just laws of God and Country in warring against the South. Hughes eloquently built toward the climax of the sermon by asking everyone to be patriotic toward their beloved heritage, to be brave in the midst of the booming cannons, and to fire their guns until the sweat took away their mighty strength.

JUSTIFYING THE SERMON

When the "Sermon on the War" became widely known,

⁶³ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 369.

several newspapers severely criticized Archbishop Hughes for proposing conscription and for speaking about politics in Church. These new attacks drew Archbishop Hughes into another public debate like the last one he had had with Orestes Brownson. Hughes defended his actions in the Metropolitan Record, but he quickly broke with the paper because of its anti-Lincoln attitude. He then used the Catholic Mirror to finish the battle of words.⁶⁴

Hughes wrote to Seward on November 1, 1862, about the controversy in which he was engaged. The Archbishop told Seward that the sermon had been bitterly denounced as both a "discourse" and "a war blast in favor of blood spilling" and that he himself had been assailed as a "Politician." Hughes showed by the tone of the letter that he felt hurt, especially because he had been called a "politician." The whole purpose of his work abroad, he said, had been devoid of political reasons. But Archbishop Hughes excused his opponents on the grounds that they did not know the difference between a politician and a patriot. Of the two, he told Seward that he would rather be called a patriot.

Archbishop Hughes explained to Seward that he had advocated conscription because it would better serve the country.

⁶⁴ Purcell, "Hughes, John Joseph," Dictionary of American Biography; also Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 539.

In the first place, Hughes said that conscription would provide enough men to wage a vigorous prosecution of the war in order to bring it to a final end. Even though thousands of men would be lost, Hughes insisted that it would be the most humane battle of the war, because it would be the final battle.⁶⁵

In the second place the Archbishop said that conscription would be more fair than the system of volunteers. Volunteering, he said, left the fighting of the war up to the poor who were forced to enlist, because rich owners were closing their factories. Archbishop Hughes affirmed that conscription would correct this abuse by placing the obligation of fighting on all the citizens.⁶⁶

The Archbishop went on to say in this letter that he was grateful for the opportunity of going abroad to labor for peace. He told Seward that he had used every opportunity while in Europe, but that he was uncertain now whether any of his work would prevent France and England from entering the war. In any case, he insisted that the North should be prepared for war with Europe, because Europe held the United States in utter contempt. Hughes forcefully illustrated his point to Seward in the following words:

⁶⁵ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, pp. 541-42.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 541.

But let America be prepared. There is no love for the United States on the other side of the water. Generally speaking, on the other side of the Atlantic the United States are ignored, if not despised; treated in conversation in the same contemptuous language as we might employ toward the inhabitants of Sandwich Islands, or Washington Territory, or Vancouver's Islands, or the settlement of the Red River, or of the Hudson's Bay Territory.⁶⁷

The Archbishop's apprehension was in contrast to the feeling of the assurance he had expressed to Seward while he was in France⁶⁸ and England.⁶⁹

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Between the time that Archbishop Hughes was justifying his "Sermon on the War" in the newspapers and shortly before he wrote to Secretary of State Seward, the Archbishop received a letter from Pope Pius IX entreating him to labor strenuously for an end to the bloody war.⁷⁰ When Hughes told the public about the letter, he received immediate responses from several men including his old foe, Orestes A. Brownson. Brownson feared that Hughes would call for a peaceful separation of the states in order to end the war. Hence, he declared publicly that Hughes had either "forged" the letter or obtained it by a

⁶⁷ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 540.

⁶⁸ Blied, Catholics and the Civil War, pp. 86-87.

⁶⁹ Kehoe, Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, pp. 371-72.

⁷⁰ Blied, Catholics and the Civil War, p. 89.

"gross misrepresentation" of American affairs.⁷¹ At this new attack, the Archbishop entered another battle with Brownson to defend his actions and those of the Holy Father.

The rest of November and part of December Hughes spent in reflecting upon one of the greatest projects of his life--the construction of the new St. Patrick's Cathedral. Hughes wrote to a priest-friend on December 15, 1862, and told him about this church which he had begun in 1858. He sadly related that the work on it had ceased before the war. when the average elevation was only eleven feet. At that time, two of his contractors had quarreled among themselves and had gone to law. The Archbishop said that the contractors were attempting to drag him into the controversy, but that he was still avoiding it. Hughes ended the letter by expressing hope that the work on the Church would begin in early spring.⁷²

During the same month, Hughes purchased a Methodist University at Troy, New York, in order to provide a seminary for his future priest. The only difficulty was that the thirty-seven acre investment was located in the diocese of another bishop. Hughes justified this situation in a letter to one of his friends, and, in so doing, revealed his character of the

⁷¹ Schlesinger, Orestes Brownson, A Pilgrim's Progress, p. 253.

⁷² Hassard, Life of the Most Rev. John Hughes, p. 493.

past:

The only drawback is, that the property is not in our diocese of New York. But after all, this is a trifling consideration for one who, through life, has ignored civil or ecclesiastical boundaries in the sense of impediments to any good work that could promote the glory of God and the diffusion of his grace and mercy...⁷³

HUGHES AND THE DRAFT RIOTS

From December until July, 1863, Hughes was gradually loosing his health from Bright's disease, the same ailment which afflicting his old opponent, Orestes A. Brownson. During the last five months of this time, public resistance was building against the draft system which had been enacted in March. Many of the Northerners were opposed to it, because it left a loophole to the rich who could either pay three hundred dollars or obtain a substitute. On Monday, July 11, 1863, the inevitable happened. Riots broke out in New York, and quickly the draft headquarters was destroyed, buildings burned, and Negroes tortured and shot⁷⁴ Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune directed the anger of the mob toward Archbishop Hughes whom he accused of being the first person who proposed conscription.⁷⁵ Although Hughes was

⁷³ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 543.

⁷⁴ Blie, Catholics and the Civil War, p. 45.

⁷⁵ Thomas Meehan, "The Draft Riots of the Civil War," America. 64(November 9, 1940)123.

broken in health, he vigorously defended his actions in the New York Herald of July 12.

I did not recommend coercive conscription, but that the people of the North, who stand by the Federal Government, should demand conscription by their own voluntary choice and act. This would be their own system of volunteering. The main object of my remarks on the occasion referred to by Mr. Greeley was to bring the war to a speedy conclusion.⁷⁶

By Thursday the riots were spreading throughout New York and to other cities, and Governor Semour, seeing the danger, requested the Archbishop's help. Hughes then made a public announcement calling the men to his residence at the corner of Madison Avenue and 36 street for the next day. On Friday afternoon, July 17 Hughes, unable to stand and almost exhausted in strength, addressed from his balcony about five thousand men. His plea for peace was accepted by the men, and they returned quietly to their homes. By week-end the riots had subsided.

DEATH OF THE ARCHBISHOP

From that time until his death, Hughes was living in seclusion at his sister's home because of his failing health. After a lingering illness, the Archbishop passed away at the age of sixty-five on January 3, 1864.

When the public was informed of his death, President

⁷⁶ Kehoe, ed., Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes, vol. 2, p. 544.

Lincoln let it be known that the country had lost a great man. Lincoln praised the Archbishop for being "a mountain of strength" to the country during the time when the dangers from Europe were the greatest.⁷⁷ The Secretary of State, William Seward, sent his condolences and praised Hughes for the service he did the nation by his "loyalty, fidelity, and practical wisdom."⁷⁸

The Archbishop's funeral took place on January 7, 1864, in the presence of many bishops, priests, generals, the Mayor of New York, as well as crowds of common people inside the Cathedral and outside in the streets. Both Catholics and Protestants alike mourned the death of the beloved Archbishop.

77 Blieck, Catholics and the Civil War, p. 87.

78 Randall, Lincoln the President, p. 16.

CONCLUSION

ARCHBISHOP HUGHES' ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN REVIEW

Archbishop Hughes' life had ended, but it was not to be forgotten. His friends recalled that during the Civil War he had been a dynamic man and had used all of his time and effort in laboring for the things he believed. One such work was to engage in public debates, especially the one in regard to abolition. Hughes had been just as eager as Brownson to end the dreadful war, but the Archbishop had forcefully attacked Brownson's proposal of abolition. Archbishop Hughes realized the need for constitutional means to win the war and, as the answer, had later advocated conscription.

Another work of Archbishop Hughes during the Civil War was in regard to the slavery question. Hughes had let it be known that he favored an end to slavery. Yet, he had argued that slavery was not intrinsically evil. His solution to the question was that the states themselves should gradually liberate the slaves after the war.

Archbishop Hughes was especially concerned with stressing the need for kindness and charity toward all opponents. He believed that more could be accomplished in this manner than by antagonizing the enemy. This was most apparent in his dealings with the southern Confederacy.

The most important work of the Archbishop during the war was his journey to Europe. As a man of outstanding character, a man who was a fighter, Hughes was in some way responsible for European non-intervention in the American War. But since his mission was unofficial and personal, records of his work are not detailed enough to precisely evaluate his accomplishments.

A final work, and a very important one, was the Archbishop's efforts to show that Catholics were truly American. He did this by engaging in public activities of various kinds. He thus helped to eliminate bigotry toward the Church during the war years. In the Church itself he labored to strengthen it, so that it would grow into a strong fortress.

John Cardinal Farley, a fellow Irishman who studied at Hughes' new seminary, summed up all of Archbishop Hughes' accomplishments when he said:

Church and nation are indebted forever to the prelate and citizen whose strong personality, indomitable courage, and invaluable service constitute him the man needed in his day to meet critical conditions. His failures were few; his achievements many and lasting. He was feared and loved; misunderstood and idolized. Severe of manner, kindly of heart, he was not aggressive until assailed.⁷⁹

Such was the character of Archbishop John Hughes of New York.

⁷⁹ Browne, "Four Patriot Churchmen." Sign. 14(January 1935)359.

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