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American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865–1900

Francis Paul Prucha

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In this book a distinguished authority in the field presents an account of United States Indian policy in the years 1865 to 1900, one of the most critical periods in Indian-white relations. Francis Paul Prucha discusses in detail the major developments of those years—Grant's Peace Policy, the reservation system, the agitation for transfer of Indian affairs to military control, the General Allotment Act (the Dawes Act), Indian citizenship, Indian education, Civil Service reform of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the dissolution of the Indian nations of the Indian Territory. *American Indian Policy in Crisis* focuses on the Christian humanitarians and philanthropists who were the ultimate driving force in the "reform" of Indian affairs. The programs of these men and women to individualize and Americanize the Indians and turn them into patriotic American citizens indistinguishable from their white neighbors are examined at length.

The story is not a pretty one, for reformers' changes were often disastrous for the Indians, and yet it is a tremendously important work for understanding the Indians’ situation and their place in American society today.

Prucha does not treat Indian policy in isolation but relates it to the dominant cultural and intellectual currents of the age. This book furnishes a view of the evangelical Christian influence on American policy and the reforming spirit it engendered, both of which have a significance extending beyond Indian policy alone. Thorough documentation and an excellent bibliography enhance its value.

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