The Development of the Wycliffe Bible Translators and the
Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1934-1982

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I, Fredrick A. Aldridge Jr, declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that the work which it embodies is my work and has not been included in another thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the development of one of the twentieth century's largest North American faith missions, the dual-organizational combination of the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) from its founding in 1934 to 1982. WBT-SIL grew out of the distinctive vision of its founder, William Cameron Townsend (1896-1982), a former Central American Mission missionary. The extraordinarily inventive Townsend conceived of an approach to Christian mission that construed Bible translation as a linguistic and quasi-scientific enterprise, thereby permitting the non-sectarian SIL side of the organization to collaborate with anticlerical governments in Latin America, where it undertook pioneer Bible translation for indigenous peoples speaking as-yet unwritten languages. This unique government relations and scientific approach to missions was at many points in conflict with the prevailing missionary ethos of the organization's North American evangelical constituency. Therefore the WBT side of the mission functioned as the religious arm of the enterprise for the purposes of publicity and recruiting. The dual organization drew sharp critique from nearly every quarter, ranging from North American evangelicals to Latin American Catholics to secular anthropologists. The controversial nature of the organization begs the question: Why did WBT-SIL become the largest faith mission of the twentieth century? This study seeks to answer this question by analysing the development WBT-SIL in both its foreign and domestic settings.

The principal argument mounted in this thesis is that WBT-SIL met with success because its leaders and members followed Townsend's lead in pragmatically adapting the organization to widely varying contexts both at home in North America and abroad as it sought to serve indigenous peoples through Bible translation, literacy

and education. By striking a creative balance between maintaining the essentials of a traditional faith mission and imaginative breaking with convention when conditions necessitated a progressive approach, WBT-SIL became one of the largest and yet most unusual of twentieth-century evangelical missions.

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List of Abbreviations

Archives

BGA – Billy Graham Center Archives

CAA – Central American Mission Archives

GIAL – Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics

MBA - Mexico Branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics Archives

PSC – Pike Special Collection

TA – William Cameron Townsend Archives

UOA – University of Oklahoma Archives

WSA – WBT-SIL Corporate Archives

Individuals

AEB – Albert E. Bishop

BFE – Benjamin F. (Ben) Elson

CH – Calvin (Cal) Hibbard

CJM – Charles J. Mellis Jr

EAN – Eugene A. Nida

FER – Frank E. Robbins

GMC – George M. Cowan

JDHS – Judge J. H. Scott

KLP – Kenneth L. (Ken) Pike

KLW – Kenneth L. (Ken) Watters

LA – Lambert Anderson

LLL – Leonard Livingstone (L. L.) Legters

LR – Lawrence Routh

PG – Phillip (Phil) Grossman

RDS – R. D. Smith

RGS – Robert G. (Bob) Schneider

RSP – Richard S. (Dick) Pittman

WCT – William Cameron Townsend

WGNS – Willam G. Nyman Sr

WW – William Wonderly

Organizations

AAA – American Anthropological Association

ABS – American Bible Society

ABWE – Association of Baptists for World Evangelism

AIM – Africa Inland Mission

CAM – Central American Mission

CAMF – Christian Aviators' Missionary Fellowship

CIM – China Inland Mission

COD – Church of the Open Door

EFMA – Evangelical Foreign Mission Association

IFMA – Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association

ILC – International Linguistic Center

IWGIA – International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

LAIM – Latin American Indian Mission

MAF – Missionary Aviation Fellowship

NACLA – North American Congress on Latin America

PMA – Pioneer Mission Agency

SIL – Summer Institute of Linguistics

SIM – Sudan Interior Mission

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WA – Wycliffe Associates

WBT – Wycliffe Bible Translators

WCC – World Council of Churches

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

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Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities, and shouts, 'It shall be done!'

Wycliffe and SIL Theme Song

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The development of the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) and Summer

Institute of Linguistics (SIL) combination is a paradox that begs for an explanation.

After all this dual organization, essentially sister organizations comprising a single

institution, was at once one of the most controversial and one of the most successful

evangelical missions of the twentieth century. This strikingly unconventional mission

was formed in the mid-1930s and officially incorporated in 1942 under the direction of

a former Central American Mission missionary, William Cameron Townsend. In the

early 1930s it was Townsend's twofold objective to train missionary candidates in the

rudiments of descriptive linguistics and then to send the graduates of his summer course

into anti-clerical Mexico, where they would take up Bible translation among the

nation's indigenous peoples. To gain access to Mexico, Townsend established SIL as a

scientific and humanitarian organization. Since a number of highly placed Mexican

government officials were eager to employ SIL's linguistic expertise in indigenous

language development, they permitted SIL to enter Mexico under government

sponsorship as a scientific organization, while also allowing its missionary-linguists to

pursue Bible translation. SIL was not the type of missionary institution that most North

American evangelicals would easily understand or support. Therefore WBT was created

to relate to evangelicals at home as an expressly religious mission. The WBT-SIL

combination was an elegant solution to the thorny problem of relating to two entirely

different publics. If the dual strategy was ingenious, it was nonetheless provocative. To more than a few observers, ranging from Christian fundamentalists to secular anthropologists, WBT-SIL was nothing more than a charade that concealed a hidden agenda. The organization was obliged over the course of several decades to contend with a nearly unceasing stream of criticism from one quarter or another. Why, then, did WBT-SIL enjoy almost unparalleled success to become one of the twentieth century's largest independent North American faith missions?

As with numerous other independent missions, WBT-SIL was conceived as a faith mission after the pattern of Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission (CIM). Taylor created CIM in 1865 after failing to convince denominational missions to push inland beyond the established coastal mission stations. Taylor's premillennial eschatology was a key factor behind his ambition to take the gospel into China's interior.[1] According to premillennialists, the second coming of the Messiah would only occur after the gospel message was preached in every corner of the world. Almost all faith missioners were premillennialists, and they therefore believed that Christ's return could be hastened through rapid evangelization.[2] The 'faith mission' nomenclature derived from the practice of not soliciting funds. Rather, as Taylor himself once put it, financial support was expected to appear miraculously 'as an answer to prayer in faith'.[3] Keswick holiness teachings were another important aspect of the faith mission enterprise. The Keswick movement emphasized the consecrated Christian life and spiritual power for Christian service. The movement's teachings were well suited to the faith mission

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[1] Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa* (Irvine, CA: Regnum Books International, 1994), pp. 32-34.

[2] Dana L. Robert, '"The Crisis of Missions": Premillennial Mission Theory and the Origins of Independent Evangelical Missions', in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), pp. 29-46.

[3] James Hudson Taylor, *Retrospect* (London, 1894), p. 95, quoted in Fiedler, *Story of Faith Missions*, p. 24.

endeavour, since the leaders of independent missions sought dutiful candidates who

possessed the spiritual mettle required for pioneering missionary service, and who

would humbly submit to direction from a mission board that paid no salaries.[4] Faith

missions also exhibited a particular concern for saving souls, and these institutions

therefore directed a greater part of their energies into evangelization as opposed to

educational or social activities.[5] Lastly, the proliferation of independent Bible institutes

was a boon to faith missions, since these educational institutions were deliberately

designed to instruct potential missionaries in the ways of Keswick spirituality and to

equip them with the minimal Bible knowledge necessary for rapid evangelization.

Indeed in many Bible colleges spiritual vigour was prized above scholarly attainment. [6]

The faith mission movement comprised a pragmatic and energetic effort to evangelize

all parts of the world in the shortest possible span of time.

Initially faith missions were envisaged as supplementing the work of existing

denominational boards, but over the course of the twentieth century they became the

dominant form of North American missionary enterprise. By the early 1980s ten out of

every eleven of the thirty-five thousand North American missionaries serving abroad

belonged to an evangelical mission.[7] This restructuring of North American missions

was of a piece with the emergence of fundamentalism. Into the early part of the

twentieth century, despite the differing missiological perspectives between

denominational boards and independent faith missions, there was general agreement

that Protestant Christianity was the one and only true religion and that making converts

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[4] Joel A. Carpenter, 'Propagating the Faith Once Delivered: The Fundamentalist Missionary Enterprise, 1920-1945', in *Earthen Vessels*, eds. Carpenter and Shenk, pp. 117-122.

[5] Ibid., pp. 125-127.

[6] Virginia Lieson Brereton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 3-8, 87-103, 112-122.

[7] Robert T. Coote, 'The Uneven Growth of Conservative Evangelical Missions', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6 (July 1982): p. 118.

to the Christian faith should be the primary aim of missions. As some liberal

missiologists in the 1920s and 1930s began to take a more charitable view of the major

world religions and to stress the social dimension of Christianity over conversion,

fundamentalists appeared on the scene defending the uniqueness of Christianity and the

centrality of evangelism.[8] The close relationship between fundamentalism and faith

missions was on display at the World Christian Fundamentals Association inaugural

meeting in 1919, where seven of the main speakers were also members of the

conservative Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, which had been

founded in 1917 in response to the perception that liberalism was increasingly prevalent

among denominational missions.[9] By the 1930s the typical North American faith

mission differed from its denominational counterpart in a number of respects. In faith

mission circles spiritual zeal was valued over educational criteria for missionary

candidates; the faith method of no solicitation was favoured over structured budgets and

fund drives; premillennialism was generally the only acceptable eschatology; and a

narrower focus on evangelization was strongly preferred over a broader socio-religious

missiology. Put concisely, by the 1930s many independent faith missions were of a part

with North American fundamentalism.

Although raised as a Presbyterian, Cameron Townsend chose to serve in a faith

mission setting. After completing a year of service in Guatemala as a colporteur with

the fundamentalist Bible House of Los Angeles, he joined the Central American

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[8] James Alan Patterson, 'The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus: Foreign Missions and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Conflict', in *Earthen Vessels*, eds. Carpenter and Shenk, pp. 73-91; William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 125-175.

[9] *God Hath Spoken* (Philadelphia Bible Conference Committee, 1919), pp. 5-6, 17, 23-26, in Carpenter, 'Propagating the Faith Once Delivered', p. 100; Edwin L. Frizen, Jr., *75 Years of the IFMA, 1917-1992: The Nondenominational Missions Movement* (Wheaton, IL: Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, 1992), pp. 85-96.

Mission (CAM). Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, a prominent fundamentalist and editor of the Scofield Reference Bible, had founded CAM as a faith mission in 1890. Thus, Townsend came of age as a missionary in a fundamentalist setting. When he formed his own mission it too had strong ties to the fundamentalist network. For example, in the years before the official incorporation of WBT-SIL in 1942, the Pioneer Mission Agency (PMA), which was essentially an arm of American Keswick, served as the fledgling organization's home office. At the time of WBT-SIL's incorporation it borrowed verbatim the CIM's conservative doctrinal statement. Moreover, Townsend dropped his Presbyterian membership in 1921 and joined the fundamentalist Church of the Open Door located in Los Angeles.[10] To the casual observer in the 1930s and 1940s, WBT-SIL would have appeared as just another faith mission that was part of the fundamentalist network.

Appearances can be deceiving, however. While the PMA, and later WBT, presented to the North American Christian public a conventional faith mission image, abroad SIL was engaged in a remarkably progressive style of missionary activity. In Mexico, SIL was collaborating with the revolutionary government in indigenous education. In Peru, SIL was not only cooperating with the government on education but it was also regularly serving both the Peruvian armed forces and the Roman Catholic missionaries by transporting their personnel in SIL aircraft. In addition, at the organization's linguistic school in Oklahoma, non-evangelicals and Catholics were permitted to study with SIL's evangelical students. In short the dual organization strategy opened up opportunities for WBT and SIL to pursue two very different courses of action. SIL, with its quasi-secular scientific status, engaged in projects of social uplift while, at the same time, WBT maintained all the trappings of a faith mission. WBT-SIL

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[10] These events are discussed in chapter two.

was following Townsend's path-breaking effort to overcome the obstacles of established tradition. 'I yearn', Townsend once wrote, 'for other organizations to begin to break loose from the time honored shackles of churchianity and become all things to all men for the gospel's sake.'[11] The dual-organizational strategy was a brilliant concept but it was also replete with contradictions. The interplay between the two sides of the organization, the innovations the dual strategy spawned and the confusion and exasperation it engendered are all themes that will occupy a central place in this study.

At mid-century when the organization was striking out in a progressive direction abroad under the banner of SIL, North American fundamentalism was itself undergoing something of revitalization. In the course of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s and 1930s, some of the most outspoken fundamentalist leaders tarnished the movement's public image. In a 1928 sermon entitled 'Why I Am a Big F. Fundamentalist', the well-known Baptist pastor and evangelist John R. Rice announced that 'Fundamentalism is not only what you believe but how strong you believe it', and, he added, 'if necessary, offending and grieving people and institutions'.[12] A younger generation of less militant and more progressive fundamentalist set out in the 1940s and 1950s to reform this strident brand of fundamentalism. One of the best accounts of the early phase of the rehabilitation of fundamentalism is Joel Carpenter's 1997 *Revive Us Again*, which is a richly detailed narrative of the popular movement to bring revival to America carried out by 'progressive fundamentalists' in the 1930s and 1940s.[13] In 2008, Garth M. Rosell explored mid-century evangelicalism in *The Surprising Work of God*.

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[11] William Cameron Townsend, quoted in Kenneth L. Pike, 'Report to Director, Board, and Branch Directors on First Ecuador Trip', 14 May 1956, p. 8, Townsend Archive (hereafter 'TA') 40026.

[12] John R. Rice, 'Why I Am a Big F. Fundamentalist', *Fundamentalist* (2 March 1923), p. 3, quoted in Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris & the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p. 44.

[13] Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

At the centre of Rosell's account is Harold John Okenga, who along with Billy Graham and other figures sought to spark revival in America, and to re-engage mainstream culture through a renewed focus on social issues.[14] George Marsden's 1987 account of Fuller Seminary's struggles to restore high calibre evangelical scholarship is of particular interest in regard to the study of WBT-SIL. Not only does Marsden's focus on a single institution provide an analogous account of a progressive fundamentalist institution, but the case of Fuller Seminary also differed in some notable respects from WBT-SIL, and these points of departure will be highlighted in subsequent chapters.[15] Mark Noll's trenchant analysis of the debilitating effects of fundamentalism on evangelical thinking in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994) is also of particular interest, especially when it comes to examining SIL's academic and scholarly endeavours.[16] Although it was never WBT-SIL's intention to reform fundamentalism, the remarkably progressive path taken by the organization naturally situates the present study within the body of established literature on the emergence of the new evangelicalism.

To speak of fundamentalism requires an attempt to describe the movement in its various configurations. Perhaps the most suitable approach to defining fundamentalism is to borrow a convention employed by the distinguished scholar of fundamentalism, George Marsden, who made a practice of referring to 'tendencies' that characterized the movement.[17] In the broadest sense fundamentalists were militant anti-modernists and

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[14] Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Okenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

[15] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987).

[16] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994).

[17] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press,

ecclesiastical separatists. Most fundamentalists also exhibited a marked tendency to emphasize doctrinal orthodoxy, scriptural inerrancy and creationism. Being of a realist cast of mind, they also distrusted idealist modes of thought, especially when such ideas took the form of social expressions of the gospel or subjective intellectual approaches to science. Furthermore a majority of fundamentalists displayed an affinity for premillennial dispensationalism, and thus took a dim view of the potential for human progress. This cluster of traits typified what might be referred to as classical fundamentalism. The progressive fundamentalism that emerged in the 1940s can be distinguished by its emphasis on soul winning and revivalism rather than militancy and separatism. The rise of the evangelical youth movements, such as Youth for Christ in which evangelist Billy Graham began his career, was symbolic of this more constructive fundamentalism. While militancy and separatism faded to some extent from progressive fundamentalism, the essential elements of classical fundamentalism, such as doctrinal orthodoxy and scriptural inerrancy for example, were generally retained. It was with the emergence of the new evangelicals (alternatively neo-evangelicals) in the 1940s that some of the tenets of classical fundamentalism, such as strict inerrancy, premillennial-dispensationalism and strict seven-day creationism, were questioned or even dethroned. The new evangelical movement was significant in that it engaged in the decidedly risky business of theological reform—the archetypal case being the Fuller Seminary experiment—and in part this is what precipitated the rupture between classical fundamentalism and the new evangelicalism in the late 1950s. By about the middle of the 1960s, progressive fundamentalists and new evangelicals had largely been absorbed back into mainstream evangelicalism, while the classical fundamentalists continued to maintain their own subculture within North American

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1980), p. 6 and *passim*.

evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism is most easily defined by simply turning to what has become something of a standard definition. David W. Bebbington, an historian familiar to students of Anglo-American evangelicalism, has provided a four-fold definition of the evangelical movement, which was a form of Protestantism that originated during the trans-Atlantic revivals of the 1730s. Conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism are the four essential characteristics of evangelicalism singled out by Bebbington. Evangelicals have long insisted that the gospel should be widely and passionately preached, since individual conversion was considered the only remedy for sinners. Once having experienced conversion, evangelicals have demonstrated a propensity to become active in seeking to lead others to conversion. Among evangelicals the Bible has always been held in high regard, since they believed it alone contains a truthful account of the gospel message. Finally the cross has held a special place for evangelicals, for upon it rests the doctrine of atonement.[18] While a more detailed definition might be preferred by some, Bebbington's 'quadrilateral' defines evangelicalism with sufficient accuracy while not becoming unwieldy.

This study sets the development of WBT-SIL within the context of North American evangelicalism, while at the same time examining the organization abroad in specific settings. This approach has the advantage not only of illuminating the organization's innovations in the foreign locales, but it will also reveal how WBT-SIL formulated its own extraordinarily progressive style of evangelicalism. The dual organizational nature of WBT-SIL also invites examination from both the foreign and domestic perspectives. Cameron Townsend naturally looms large, for WBT-SIL was in many respects a reflection of his fertile imagination. The study therefore begins with an

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[18] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 2-17.

examination of the formative experiences of Townsend's youth and his early

missionary venture in Guatemala. Likewise Townsend's passing from the scene in 1982

offers a fitting point with which to end the analysis of his organization's development.

Outside North America, the organization's development is examined primarily through

its establishment in Mexico and its expansion into Peru, where Townsend fully

developed his missiological ideas. By following this rather wide-ranging approach the

reader will be offered the opportunity to arrive at a better understanding of WBT-SIL in

its entirety from its founding to the early 1980s.

At present there are a small number of popular histories of WBT-SIL. The first

to appear was *Two Thousand Tongues to Go*, which was co-authored by a Wycliffe

missionary and a professional librarian. This 1959 account of WBT-SIL was written to

inspire a Christian audience, but it is nonetheless a useful introduction to the

organization.[19] James and Marti Hefley, writers of a number of popular Christian books,

published a biographical account of Cameron Townsend in 1974 entitled *Uncle Cam*.[20]

While conducting background research, the Hefley's undertook extensive interviews

with WBT-SIL missionaries. Transcripts of these wide-ranging interviews were

regularly consulted in the course of this study. Lastly the long-serving WBT-SIL

member Hugh Steven has written a chronological series of four biographical books

tracing the career of Cameron Townsend.[21] Designed to show WBT-SIL in the best

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[19] Ethel E. Wallis and Mary A. Bennett, *Two Thousand Tongues to Go: True-Life Adventures of the Wycliffe Bible Translators throughout the World* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959).

[20] James C. Hefley and Marti Hefley, *Uncle Cam: The Story of William Cameron Townsend, Founder of the Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974).

[21] Hugh Steven, ed., *A Thousand Trails: Personal Journal of William Cameron Townsend, 1917-1919* (Langley, B.C.: Credo Publishing, 1984); Hugh Steven, *Wycliffe in the Making: The Memoirs of W. Cameron Townsend, 1920-1933* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1995); *Doorway to the World: The Memoirs of W. Cameron Townsend, 1934-1947* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1999); *Yours to Finish*

possible light, Steven's four works offer the general reader a useful overview of Townsend's life from a WBT-SIL insider's perspective. Mention too should be made of a popular work on Kenneth L. (Ken) Pike, who was WBT-SIL's foremost scholar and chief linguist. Pike's sister, Eunice V. Pike, published a biography of her brother in 1981 entitled *Ken Pike: Scholar and Christian*, and to date it remains the only book-length account of Ken Pike's life. These few books constitute the primary popular works on Cameron Townsend, Ken Pike and WBT-SIL, but there are several hundreds of other hagiographical accounts written by WBT-SIL members on various topics, including many of their own missionary experiences.

At the opposite end of the literary spectrum are three principal works that portray a very unflattering view of WBT-SIL. The first to appear was a 1981 compilation of essays composed by number of American and European anthropologists, published under the title *Is God an American?: An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*.[22] In 1982, David Stoll, an American anthropologist and contributor to *Is God an American?*, followed with his own book-length *exposé* entitled *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America*.[23] The over-arching thrust of these two works was an effort to characterize WBT-SIL as the handmaiden of U.S. imperialism. A third critical work in which WBT-SIL came under scrutiny was *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, written by investigative journalists Gerald Colby and Charlotte Dennett. Published in 1995, *Thy*

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the Task: The Memoirs of W. Cameron Townsend, 1947-1982 (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 2004).

[22] Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, eds., *Is God an American?: An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (London: Survival International/Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1981).

[23] David Stoll, *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, 1982).

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Will was an attempt to link WBT-SIL to the Rockefellers as co-conspirators in the exploitation of Latin American oil resources. These adversarial treatments of WBT-SIL, especially Stoll's *Fishers of Men*, have proved effective in shaping perceptions of the organization over the past three decades. For example, despite the not insignificant shortcomings of Stoll's analysis that will be detailed in this study, the Harvard University historian William R. Hutchison praised *Fisher of Men* as 'meticulous and balanced'.[24] The Jesuit historian Jeffery Klaiber, in his important 1992 social history of Catholicism in Peru, also relied upon Stoll's account. Thus Klaiber was led to conclude that SIL 'refuses all contact with the Catholic church and creates small evangelical enclaves with anti-Catholic bias throughout the Amazon region'.[25] Klaiber's assertions, as will become evident, are without merit. Likewise, in their 1996 work entitled *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*, Steven Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose were mistakenly convinced by Stoll's analysis that WBT-SIL was committed to 'dispensationalist thought', and that the organization was therefore a purveyor of North American fundamentalism abroad.[26] The influence that the critical interpretations of WBT-SIL have had on the historiography invites closer examination. Therefore these accounts, as well as a number of articles critical of WBT-SIL that appeared in the 1970s, are the subject of an extended analysis in chapter six.

Occupying the historiographical middle ground are two recent scholarly studies of Cameron Townsend and WBT-SIL. The historian Todd Hartch in 2006 published a detailed study of SIL in Mexico, under the title of *Missionaries of the State: The*

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[24] Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, p. 194, footnote no. 30.
[25] Jeffrey Klaiber, *The Catholic Church in Peru, 1821-1985: A Social History* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 328.
[26] Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Summer Institute of Linguistics, State Formation, and Indigenous Mexico, 1935-1985.[27]

Another historian, William Lawrence Svelmoe, in 2009 published a highly readable

narrative biography of Cameron Townsend's life to 1945. By a judicious reading of the

evidence, both of these scholarly works provide a balance between the hagiographical

popular literature and the decidedly disparaging accounts of WBT-SIL.

This account of WBT-SIL naturally overlaps at points with those of Hartch and

Svelmoe, but there are a number of significant departures as well. Aside from narrating

the life of Cameron Townsend to 1945, Svelmoe also aimed to produce an exposition of

a faith mission so that his readers could 'get a sense of what it feels like to be an

evangelical Protestant'.[28] He therefore presented WBT-SIL as an exemplary, if

somewhat extraordinary, evangelical faith mission. Svelmoe also maintained that the

historiography of evangelicalism 'has suffered too often from fundamentalism creep to

the point that evangelicalism . . . has tended to be subsumed into fundamentalism'.[29]

Therefore, in an effort to demonstrate that fundamentalism did not eclipse

evangelicalism in the 1920s and 1930s, he employed WBT-SIL as a case in point to

substantiate his argument that many evangelicals were not fundamentalists.

Unfortunately Svelmoe never actually mounts this argument in an explicit fashion. As

one reviewer appositely noted, 'Rather than challenging the reigning historiography of

fundamentalism, he [Svelmoe] assumes it, saying that since Townsend and most of his

colleagues do not fit the profile of narrow and belligerent fundamentalist they were

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[27] Todd Hartch, *Missionaries and the State: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, State Formation, and Indigenous Mexico, 1935-1985* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2006).

[28] William Lawrence Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions, 1896-1945* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), p. ix.

[29] Ibid., p. 18.

evangelicals.'[30] Therefore, while *A New Vision* provides the reader with a delightfully readable and detailed narrative account of Cameron Townsend and his mission to 1945, it is somewhat unsatisfying in that it lacks the necessary analytical framework for properly contextualizing WBT-SIL. Hartch, with his primary focus on the SIL setting in Mexico, naturally offers few insights into WBT-SIL's relationship to North American evangelicalism.[31] The present work diverges from these volumes by explicitly mounting the argument that WBT-SIL should not be considered as a classical fundamentalist mission. Moreover, it is contended as well that since the organization was not a typical faith mission, and therefore WBT-SIL is not the ideal mission for understanding mid-twentieth-century conservative evangelicals in general or faith missions in particular. A second point of departure from Svelmoe's biography is the attempt made here to demonstrate that Townsend's missionary thought and practice were markedly influenced by the intellectual strains of the early twentieth-century Progressive movement. In the third place, while Svelmoe attends to Keswick holiness, this study goes further in exhibiting how Townsend shifted the emphasis and remoulded the language of Keswick in his effort to retail a breathtakingly unusual set of strategies to evangelicals. In the fourth place is the geographical extension of the present enquiry into Peru. It is the contention of this author that only by broadening the coverage beyond Mexico to include SIL in Peru from 1946 is it possible to acquire a sense of the organizational character in its mature form. Finally, while Hartch capably examines the criticism of SIL by anthropologists, primarily in Mexico, this present work broadens the enquiry by evaluating the most prominent literature critical of the entire organization. In

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[30] Mark Rogers, review of *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions, 1896-1945*, by William Lawrence Svelmoe, *Fides et Historia* 42, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2009): pp. 124-126.

[31] Hartch, *Missionaries and the State*, pp. xii-xvii, 90-93.

summary, then, recent scholarly accounts of WBT-SIL paint only a partial picture of the

organization. By examining WBT-SIL both at home and abroad and from its earliest

roots to 1982, this piece of research endeavours to offer the reader a more

encompassing account of the organization than does the existing historiography.

A word is in order on the general methodological approach taken in this study.

George Marsden wrote in the introduction to *Fundamentalism and American Culture*

that he regarded 'fundamentalism not as a temporary social aberration, but as a genuine

religious movement or tendency with deep roots and intelligible beliefs'.[32] In much the

same manner Quentin Skinner, a leading 'Cambridge School' historian of political

thought, contends that 'even in the case of beliefs that nowadays strike us as manifestly

false, there may have been good grounds in earlier historical periods for holding them

to be true'.[33] In this study of WBT-SIL an effort has been made to follow Marsden and

Skinner by treating the subject matter not only critically but also with a measure of

sympathetic objectivity. Additionally, while it is acknowledged that postmodernists

have contributed to the study of history by drawing attention to the relationship between

language and power, the postmodernists' scepticism of the potential for uncovering

authorial intentions is believed to be mostly unwarranted. Rather, with Skinner, it is

assumed that to write or to speak is to 'perform an *act* of a certain kind, to engage in a

piece of deliberate and voluntary behaviour'.[34] Although Skinner's methodology is not

rigorously applied in this study, his overall strategy for recovering authorial intentions

by situating speech acts (texts) within their historical socio-cultural setting is followed

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[32] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 5-6.

[33] Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *Historical Theory* vol. 8, no. 1 (1969): p. 52, quoted in *The History of Ideas: An Introduction to Method*, ed. Preston King (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), p. 31.

[34] Ibid., p. 105.

throughout. 'The aim', Skinner states of his approach, 'is to see such texts as contributions to particular discourses, and thereby to recognise the ways in which they followed or challenged or subverted the conventional terms of those discourses themselves.'[35] More simply stated, and as Skinner himself put it, an attempt has been made when reading the evidence left behind by the subjects of this study 'to use the ordinary techniques of historical enquiry to grasp their concepts, to follow their distinctions, to recover their beliefs, [and] so far as possible, to see things their way'.[36]

By-and-large archived materials form the evidential basis upon which this thesis was constructed. A lion's share of the evidence consulted is lodged in the Townsend Archives located in Waxhaw, North Carolina. This collection of nearly fifty-thousand items not only houses the extant correspondence and writings of Cameron Townsend but it also holds a wide assortment of documents related to the development of WBT-SIL. A number of other archives were consulted in the course of this study, and these are listed in the bibliography. Written sources of evidence were supplemented with interviews of sixty-two WBT-SIL members, all of whom served the organization for at least two decades prior to 1982.[37] Although these interviews were approached in a structured fashion, a large degree of flexibility was exercised during interview sessions. Thus the material gathered during interviews served a more qualitative purpose than a quantitative one.

Although the two organizations were individually incorporated in 1942, the membership of the two entities was identical, as was the board of directors. Furthermore each side of the organization shared an overarching common purpose in Bible translation. Thus, unless the subject matter demands explicit reference to either

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[35] Skinner, Quentin, *Visions of Politics: Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 125.
[36] Ibid., p. vii.
[37] For a list of interviews consult appendix I.

WBT or SIL, the two sides of the dual organization will be treated as a single hyphenated organization. When examining the organization abroad or when exploring its linguistic nature, SIL will naturally come into focus. On the other hand WBT will take centre stage when considering the North American evangelical context. Confusing matters somewhat is the fact that the organization's linguistic school was referred to as Camp Wycliffe in its first decade or so of existence. Eventually, however, the linguistic school was absorbed into the SIL side of the organization. Therefore Camp Wycliffe should rightly be considered a part of SIL. What is important to keep in mind is that WBT-SIL was effectively a single mission with two corporate identities that were each designed to relate to different publics.

Organized into six main chapters, this study is an attempt to account for WBT-SIL's striking success in the face of persistent criticism. At the same time this thesis also endeavours to explain what was a complex, and sometimes confusing, missionary organization. Chapter two traces Cameron Townsend's life from his California roots to his early-to-mid-1930s efforts to establish WBT-SIL in Mexico. The primary aim of this chapter is to illuminate the Townsend mind, for it above all else shaped the contours of WBT-SIL. The next three chapters each investigate various aspects of the organization from roughly the late 1930s down to the 1960s. Chapter three is an account of SIL's development as a linguistic organization and how it became a recognized scholarly institution. Chapter four extends the analysis abroad by examining the SIL in the Peruvian context, which provides an exemplary case study of the ultimate development of Townsend's ideas. Chapter five turns to North America, where WBT publicized the efforts of SIL to evangelical and secular audiences alike. The entirety of WBT-SIL from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s is once again in focus in chapter six, which details both the organization's on-going internal development and its encounters

with anthropologists on the political left.

CHAPTER TWO

PIONEERING AND THE PROGRESSIVE IDEAL

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Limitation

'Yes! The challenge word, That dares against stagnation,
Brings out your stuff, And frightens bluff
With every consternation, And calls for might
And bids you fight, To climb o'er limitation.'

William Cameron Townsend (written while in high school)
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Cameron Townsend was by nature and experience endowed with a frame of

mind that was seemingly incapable of believing that there were limitations to his

pioneering missionary strivings or to his progressive ideals for the social uplift of the

world's indigenous peoples. More an entrepreneur in some ways than a conventional

missionary, Townsend found it nearly impossible to comport himself after the fashion of

a typical faith missionary or fundamentalist. Born to a family that had traversed the

country from Pennsylvania to Kansas to Colorado and finally on to California in search

of a better life, the young Cameron Townsend was himself an expression of this

American peripatetic urge; an impulse that, when combined with more than a touch of

idealism, imagined something bigger and better lay just over the horizon. As a

missionary he was instinctively drawn to pioneer where other missionaries had yet to

tread. As a Progressive he strove tirelessly to conquer social injustice. Discovering that

language was perhaps the greatest barrier to effective evangelization and to realizing his

dream of social justice for Latin America's indigenous peoples, Townsend conceptually

reordered the missionary endeavour by locating Bible translation, literacy and education

in the forefront of his missionary strategy. His unbounded vision often surpassed the

narrow confines of the Central American Mission, in which he served during the 1920s

and early 1930s. Suffused with an expansive idealism he launched his own venture.

With the help of another maverick, Leonard Livingstone Legters, Townsend took his

radical concept of missions into anticlerical Mexico, where the WBT-SIL dual-

missionary organization first took shape. To understand WBT-SIL, then, it is necessary

to appreciate something of the extraordinary mind of Cameron Townsend as it

developed over the course of his youth, during his first decade of missionary service in

Guatemala and during his initial forays into Mexico.

The American Progressive Movement

Cameron Townsend came of age during the high tide of the Progressive

movement, and over the entire course of his life he would display all the marks of

having been influenced by its ideals. From about 1900 to 1920, Progressives sought to

lessen economic inequity in America by attacking political corruption and curbing the

abuses perpetuated by unrestrained capitalism. Hiram Johnson, a California Progressive

and the state's Republican governor from 1911 to 1917, is a fine example of the

Progressives' stress on political reform. In his 1911 inaugural, Johnson intoned that 'the

first duty that is mine to perform is to eliminate every private interest from the

government and to make the public service of the State responsive solely to the people'.[1]

Newly-elected President Woodrow Wilson not only pledged to effect a return to

'equality' and 'justice' in his March 1913 inaugural, but he also promised to protect

American citizens 'from the consequences of great industry and social processes which

they cannot alter, control, or singly cope with'.[2] Progressives insisted that reformed

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[1] Quoted in Walter Nugent, *A Very Short Introduction to Progressivism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 69.

[2] Woodrow Wilson, 'An Inaugural Address', 4 March 1913, quoted in Arthur S. Link et. al., eds., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 27 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1994), p. 151, further quoted in Trygve Throntveit, '"Common Counsel": Woodrow Wilson's Pragmatic Progressivism, 1885-1913', in *Reconsidering*

government had a central role to play in achieving social justice for American citizens at a time when many of them were struggling to adapt to the industrialization and urbanization of America.

The idea of progress was clearly manifested in this early twentieth-century reform movement. President Theodore Roosevelt stated in a 1910 speech at Osawatomie, Kansas, that 'In the struggle [for] equality of opportunity . . . nations rise from barbarism to civilization, and through it people press forward from one stage of enlightenment to the next'.[3] The individual Progressive's reformist 'vision', wrote prominent economist John Bates Clark in 1913, is an 'Eden . . . that he can seriously expect to reach'. Bates then added that this achievement was 'practicable for all humanity.'[4] This sentiment was also unmistakably on display when future U.S. President Woodrow Wilson wrote in 1889 that 'It should be the end of government *to assist in accomplishing the objects of organized society*'. Wilson then went on to write:

> Every means, therefore, by which society may be perfected
> through the instrumentality of government, every means by
> which individual rights can be fitly adjusted and harmonized
> with public duties, by which individual self-development may
> be made at once to serve and supplement social development,
> ought certainly to be diligently sought. . . . Such is the socialism
> to which every true lover of his kind ought to adhere with the
> full grip of every noble affection that is in him.[5]

Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace, ed. John Milton Cooper Jr (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 25.

[3] Theodore Roosevelt, 'The New Nationalism', quoted in Hermann Hagedorn, ed., *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt: National Edition*, vol. 27 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 5, further quoted in Brett Flehinger, *The 1912 Election and the Power of Progressivism: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), p. 65.

[4] John Bates Clark, 'Reform or Revolution', 27 January 1913, quoted in Martin J. Sklar, 'Capitalism and Socialism in the Emergence of Modern America', in *Reconstructing History: The Emergence of a New Historical Society*, eds. Elizabeth Fox-Genevese and Elisabeth Lasch Quinn (New York: Routledge, 1999), in p. 318.

[5] Woodrow Wilson, *The State: Elements of Historical and Practical Politics* (Boston: D. C. Heath, [1889] 1909), pp. 631-632, quoted in 'Common Counsel',

In other words, Progressivism conceived of the idea of progress as ultimately manifesting itself through the instrumentalities of the modern state resulting in a more perfect, if not perfected, social order. As will become evident in both the present and succeeding chapters, elements of Cameron Townsend's approach to missions bore a strong resemblance to the basic ideology of the Progressive movement. Indeed, spurred by his own Wilsonian tendencies, he would go so far as to harness his own mission to the state-making process in Latin America. Beginning in Mexico and then in Peru and beyond, under Townsend's direction the Summer Institute of Linguistics functionally became an extension of the state and took a hand in these nations' ambitions for effecting their own progressive social transformations.

Purveyors of the Social Gospel were affected by the same intellectual currents that influenced the Progressives. Walter Rauschenbusch, perhaps the Social Gospel's leading figure, wrote in 1914 that 'There are two great entities in human life,− the human soul and the human race,− and religion is to save both'.[6] Many conservative evangelicals, especially those in the premillennial-dispensational camp, disagreed. Society was, according to many fundamentalists, ultimately doomed and only individual souls could be saved.[7] The closer the social gospelers came to historicizing Christianity as the outworking of God immanent in society, the more fundamentalists de-emphasized social concerns and stressed evangelism aimed at rescuing individual souls from the present age. Historians have referred to the fundamentalists' shying away from social

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Throntveit, in *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Cooper, p. 28.

[6] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1907), p. 367.

[7] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 62-68; Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 82-104.

reform between about 1900 and 1930 as the 'Great Reversal'.[8] The way in which

Cameron Townsend navigated this particular aspect of the religious milieu would prove

strikingly uncommon, and in doing so he set the stage for how he would eventually

shape his own mission.

Cameron Townsend's Early Life

The Townsend household was deeply religious. Cameron Townsend's father,

William Hammond Townsend, was a life-long and committed Presbyterian who led

daily devotions in their home, and he saw to it that the family was in attendance at

Clearwater Presbyterian Church on Sundays. Cameron Townsend later recalled that the

church was rather 'lifeless'.[9] Thus, according to his brother Paul, it was their father's

teaching that primarily formed their religious character. William Hammond taught his

children to trust in God and he laid a heavy accent on absolute honesty and personal

integrity, but his preachments were not aimed at inculcating any kind of dogmatic

religious fundamentalism or procuring conversionary experiences in his children.[10] It

comes as no surprise then that Cameron Townsend could never recall having been 'born

again'.[11] Perhaps the most telling evidence that he did not hail from a narrow religious

setting was his once dating a Roman Catholic girl in high school.[12] Cameron

Townsend's religious upbringing was broadly evangelical and not severely doctrinaire.

The Townsend family had high hopes for their oldest son's advancement off the

farm. His mother was especially resolute that Cameron, who had four elder sisters and a

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[8] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American* Culture, pp. 85-93.

[9] William Cameron Townsend (hereafter 'WCT'), Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 2, TA 43654.

[10] Paul Townsend, Hefley interview, c. 1970, pp. 6-7, TA 43505; Paul Townsend, interview by Ethel Wallis, January 1987, pp. 41-45, TA 43778; WCT, Hefley interview, June 1970, pp. 4-5, 7, TA 43635.

[11] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 5, TA 43637.

[12] Ibid., p. 6.

younger brother, would attend college. His graduating at the top of his class in high

school suggested that their expectations were well founded.[13] With ambitions of

becoming a minister, another idea earnestly fostered by his mother, Townsend enrolled

at Occidental College located near Los Angles in the fall of 1914.[14] Occidental was a

Presbyterian institution offering a broad liberal arts education, where the sciences were

coupled with traditional subjects such as Greek, Latin, philosophy and Bible study.

Bowing to the winds of progressive educational reforms, the college withdrew from

Presbyterian oversight in 1910, while yet remaining largely evangelical in religious

temperament. It was therefore quite natural for the Progressive ex-President Theodore

Roosevelt to put in an appearance at Occidental for a speech in 1911. This was a highly

celebrated affair for the college.[15] An examination of some of Townsend's essays

written while at Occidental demonstrates that the period's Progressive thinking had

penetrated his mind. In his sophomore year he engaged with philosopher William

James's essay 'The College Bred'. Townsend agreed with James that a college

education should prepare students to recognize, as he put it in his own 1915 essay, 'the

highest ideals, the best in art and literature, and the greatest in science'.[16] In another

essay he challenged the theory of evolution, but without coming out decidedly for

creationism.[17] It is difficult to imagine Townsend reading James or offering anything

less than absolute denial of evolution had he attended, for example, the nearby and

recently established Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA). Bible schools such as

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[13] Paul Townsend, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 2, TA 43505; WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 4, TA 43637.

[14] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 5, TA 43637.

[15] Robert Glass Cleland, *The History of Occidental College: 1887-1937* (Los Angeles: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1937), pp. 11, 40, 46-47.

[16] William Cameron Townsend, 'Recognizing the Best', 26 February 1915, TA 115.

[17] William Cameron Townsend, 'How Old is Life on Earth?', 31 January 1916, TA 121; William Cameron Townsend, 'Problem of Evolution', course notes, 1916, TA 41909.

BIOLA largely forsook a liberal arts 'education' for a narrower focus on Bible-based 'training', which aimed to prepare students for evangelizing lost souls. Virginia Lieson Brereton, in researching the Bible school movement, correctly observed that 'brevity, practicality, [and] efficiency were summed up in the word "training"'.[18] Occidental attempted to broaden students' intellectual horizons rather than to narrow them. Therefore Townsend was expected to make some effort at cultivating the life of the mind rather than simply picking up practical pastoral or missionary skills.

On the other hand the young Cameron Townsend might have been more comfortable at a Bible college, for he soon discovered that he was not particularly suited for the intellectual life or the tedium of seemingly abstract academic study. While he earned top grades in Bible and history, his performance was only adequate in other subjects. It is somewhat ironic that this future Bible translator earned his lowest marks in Greek and Spanish.[19] Later in life Townsend recalled that he 'got quite discouraged in college'.[20] This was especially true if such efforts produced no immediate and tangible results other than a good mark. 'I was tired of working to get good grades', he admitted, '[b]ut not really retaining what I was studying.'[21] In a December 1915 essay on 'Christian Faith', Townsend offered up some obvious indications that his heart led his head. 'It is with the heart that man believes unto salvation. This is not the Devil's brand. His believing is of the head and does not point to life. Intellectual belief is merely one step towards faith.' Perhaps thinking of his own future beyond the confines of the academy, he added that 'faith . . . produces a change in a man's life whereby he feels in

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[18] Virginia Lieson Brereton, 'The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education', in *Making Higher Education Christian*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), p. 115.

[19] William Cameron Townsend's Occidental College transcript, 1914-1917, TA 42061.

[20] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 5, TA 43637.

[21] WCT, interview by Betty Blair, 3 December 1980, p. 4, TA 43737.

his heart toward certain hopes and expectations held forth by Christianity as toward

realities either present or to be fulfilled'.[22] Townsend also found his fellow aspiring

ministers rather dull company. He therefore cast in his lot with the Student Volunteer

Movement (SVM) band, a group of missionary-minded students who, as he described it,

'had life and a lot of enthusiasm'.[23] Townsend was not dim-witted; but he was restless

with studies that seemed abstract and disconnected from immediate concerns.

At his first student volunteer meeting Townsend was asked why he wanted to be

a missionary. Having joined for the camaraderie as much as anything else, he stood up

and offered the comment that 'I don't know', and then quickly sat back down.[24] Despite

signing the SVM pledge in 1915 and a expressing a vague unease over not doing enough

to witness his for his faith, there is little evidence to suggest that Townsend aspired to

missionary work.[25] In fact he was restless enough to have joined the California National

Guard just before the U. S. entered World War I. He was therefore expecting to be

called up for war-time service when he spied an advertisement placed in a local

newspaper by the Bible House of Los Angeles in 1917 seeking college students to

volunteer as colporteurs selling Bibles in Latin America. He impulsively grasped at this

missionary opportunity. While awaiting a call to active duty, the Bible House offered

him a place in Guatemala. Faced with conflicting commitments, he managed to secure a

military deferment, which he sought only after a furloughing missionary matron referred

to him as a 'coward' for avoiding missionary service by going off to war.[26] With the

expectation that he would return after a year's missionary service, Townsend dropped

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[22] William Cameron Townsend, 'Christian Faith: Have it?' 3 December 1915, pp. 1-2, TA 108.
[23] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 5, TA 43637.
[24] Ibid.
[25] William Cameron Townsend's Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions form, 31 May 1915, TA 900113.
[26] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, pp. 14-15, TA 43637.

out of college at the end of his third year.[27] Not for the last time Townsend leapt where others might have engaged in a protracted struggled with self-doubt. Indeed it could almost be said that the twenty-year-old Cameron Townsend who boarded a ship bound for Guatemala in the fall of 1917 was an accidental missionary. This young man who would one day become the founder of the world's largest faith mission seemingly embarked for the mission field as much to escape the drudgery of college as to fulfil any kind of heartfelt missionary calling.

The Education of a Trail Blazer

The Bible House of Los Angeles was a small independent mission that focused on the distribution of Spanish Bibles and tracts in Latin America. It was founded and directed by an inveterate fundamentalist, R. D. Smith, who also sat on the board of the independent Central American Mission (CAM). Smith placed Townsend under the direction of Albert E. Bishop, a veteran CAM missionary serving in Guatemala.[28] Although supervised by Bishop, Townsend was largely self-directed since his backcountry excursions carried him far from CAM territory. Townsend had barely set foot in Guatemala when he became aware of the plight of the country's indigenous peoples. In early October 1917 this young colporteur began making arrangements for his travels. Acting on Bishop's advice he 'decided', as he noted in his journal, 'not to get pack mules but to walk and let [a] native worker carry my pack not to exceed one hundred pounds'. Townsend was obviously uneasy with this bargain, and he recorded that this seemed 'cruel'.[29] A visit to a *finca* (a coffee plantation) in Alotenango brought home the stark realization that the Indians were often held in debt bondage. When he observed their shabby quarters on the edge of town, he remarked that Alotenango was

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[27] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, pp. 1-2, TA 43737.
[28] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 5, TA 43630.
[29] WCT, 'Diary', 3 October 1917, TA 151 and TA 152.

'the most miserable little city I've seen in these parts'.[30] After a weekend of preaching there, the beleaguered indigenous inhabitants of Alotenango had endeared themselves to Townsend, who penned in his diary that 'it was kind of hard to say goodbye to the Indians'.[31] Incidents of this nature deeply affected the young Townsend, instilling him with an enduring empathy for the downtrodden indigenous peoples of Latin America.

Townsend was not simply over-reacting to an unfamiliar situation, for there were in fact profound social inequalities. Indians of Mayan descent comprised a majority of Guatemala's inhabitants, but the minority of mixed-blood *ladinos* controlled the levers of power. In Guatemala, as elsewhere in Latin America, the indigenous peoples were generally held in contempt and occupied the lowermost rung in the social hierarchy. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries social Darwinism seemed to offer the elite classes a suitable ideological explanation for the 'inferior races'.[32] The inherent racism of social Darwinism, especially when coupled with *laissez-faire* capitalism, was a particularly devastating combination for Guatemala's indigenous peoples. Legislative Decree 243 of 1894, still in force when Townsend arrived in Guatemala, is a typical example. This law gave extraordinary power to employers over their peasant labourers, and local authorities were obliged to arrest workers who failed to meet their nearly impossible duties. Debt peonage was part and parcel of this exploitative system, and Indian labourers were therefore indentured essentially in perpetuity.[33] In effect, Indian labour was considered a low-cost commodity to be exploited.

Townsend's choice of an indigenous Cackchiquel Indian as a travelling

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[30] WCT, 'Diary, 27 October 1917, TA 171.

[31] WCT, 'Diary', 28 October 1917, TA 172.

[32] Magnus Mörner, 'Historical Research on Race Relations in Latin America During the National Period', in *Race and Class in Latin America*, ed. Magnus Mörner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 223-224.

[33] Richard Newbold Adams, *Crucifixion by Power: Essays on Guatemalan National Social Structure, 1944-1966* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), pp. 176-177.

companion was therefore a crucial factor that further influenced the contours of his thinking. Although he worked with a number of Guatemalan nationals, the thirty-five-year-old Francisco (Frisco) Díaz was his most frequent companion on the trail. Townsend displayed an uncommon degree of humility towards Díaz, as well as other Guatemalan nationals. 'I am going to learn a lot from them', he recorded in his journal in October 1917.[34] Whenever Díaz's efforts surpassed his own, he never failed to acknowledge his Indian colleague's performance. In his journal there are frequent entries illustrating his impartiality, such as one from November 1918 where he noted that 'Frisco sold more testaments than I did today'.[35] They shared equally in the evangelistic work and the miseries of rugged travel.[36] The year that Townsend spent walking the trails of Central America in the company of Díaz was formative for this young missionary. Often isolated from mission stations and veteran missionaries, he was educated less by missionaries in conventional missionary thought and praxis than by his Indian friend, guide and 'mentor'. In his early missionary experience Townsend came to see the world from the indigenous point of view, and this was a critical factor in his later perspectives on missionary thought and practice.

It did not take long for Townsend to encounter Roman Catholic opposition in Guatemala. Liberal governments in Guatemala since 1871 had imposed severe restrictions on the Catholic clergy and had confiscated the Church's property. However the few remaining clergy were still influential and Catholic ritualism was combined with traces of Mayan religious custom into an ardently held folk Catholicism.[37] Time and

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[34] WCT, 'Diary', 23 October 1917, TA 165.
[35] WCT, 'Diary', 8 November 1918, TA 524.
[36] WCT, 'Diary', 21 December 1917, TA 214; WCT, 'Diary', 23 January 1918, TA 345.
[37] Adams, *Crucifixion by Power*, pp. 278-279; Kay B. Warren, *The Symbolism of Subordination: Indian Identity in a Guatemalan Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), pp. 43-50, 87.

again Townsend recorded that a town was 'fanatical', meaning that its inhabitants held

tenaciously to their religion.[38] He and his various travelling companions were often

refused food or lodging in these towns after it was discovered that they were Protestant

evangelistas. Tracts handed out in the course of their proselytizing efforts were often

torn up, as the people were instructed to do by the priests.[39] By the time that he

completed his year of itinerating he was well versed in Latin America's deeply

entrenched Catholic-Protestant antagonisms. If Townsend felt like lashing out at the

social injustice and religious intolerance, he discovered that doing so would likely cause

more harm than good. Arguing with a local priest nearly landed him in jail on one

occasion.[40] In another instance he observed a fellow missionary upbraid an irate

plantation owner who was beating an indentured Indian. The missionary's interference

only served to effect his permanent disbarment from preaching on the plantation in

question. From such incidents Townsend learned that it was best, as he put it, 'simply

[to] stand and be concerned' but not to 'say anything'. 'I had to be careful [and] . . .

respect their customs and not be independent about it', he later recalled.[41] This posture

toward deep-rooted social and religious realities that Townsend developed in 1917 and

1918 would prove to be a key factor in how he later approached these types of

situations; rather than confronting adversaries directly, he would instead deploy more

nuanced tactics when attempting to overcome social injustice and religious intolerance.

Treading softly on foreign soil by no means suggested that Townsend had

become less headstrong. His sister Ethel once recalled that her brother 'had a determined

mind', emphasizing that '[i]f he thought something should be done, he was going to do

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[38] WCT, 'Diary', 13 May 1918, TA 400; WCT, Diary', 15 May 1918, TA 402; WCT, 'Diary', 5 November 1918, TA 521.

[39] WCT, 'Diary', 22 October 1917, TA 164.

[40] WCT, 'Diary', 5 November 1918, TA 521 and TA 522.

[41] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 15, TA 43737.

it'.[42] Apparently this drive to set events in motion included co-opting others to attain his objectives. 'He would manipulate even in high school', his brother Paul related in a 1970s interview, adding that 'I can remember him manipulating things around and getting things his way.'[43] By April 1918, Townsend had concluded that returning to finish college was out of the question. 'I would never feel right in going to school', he wrote his family, 'when the world is so greatly in need of action as it is today.'[44] Less than a month later in another letter to his folks, he thrust aside any idea of becoming a minister. 'The opportunities down here are simply wonderful. I could never settle down to a pastorate in the States unless the Lord made it tremendously clear that He wanted me there.' 'And', he confidently concluded, 'I don't anticipate that He will.'[45] This last statement beautifully illuminates a key aspect of Townsend's mind: by his lights he was convinced that he could all but read the thoughts of God himself. Once Townsend sunk his teeth into something that he wished to accomplish, there was little anyone could do or say to dissuade him of the course of action he had settled on; this was especially so if he was sure that it was God's design for him to carry it out.

Townsend Joins the Central American Mission

Taking notice of his desire to remain in Guatemala, and impressed with his record as an itinerant missionary, both the Central American Mission (CAM) and the Presbyterian Mission extended invitations. He had sufficiently impressed the Presbyterian missionaries that the Presbyterian board of directors was prepared to overlook his lack of academic qualifications.[46] Also in the Presbyterians' favour was the

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[42] Ethel Townsend, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 4, TA 43502.
[43] Paul Townsend, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 11, TA 43505.
[44] WCT to 'Home Folks', 24 April 1918, TA 601.
[45] WCT to 'Home Folks', 17 May 1918, TA 599.
[46] WCT, Hefley interview, 'Remembering Experiences in Guatemala 1917-1919', c. 1970, TA 43641; WCT to Judge D. H. Scott (hereafter 'JDHS'), Central American Mission (hereafter 'CAM') Treasurer, 15 November 1920, TA 656.

fact that Townsend was smitten by one of their young missionary ladies, Elvira

Malmstrom, and she fulfilled his longings by accepting his marriage proposal. Joining

the Presbyterian Mission would, however, have entailed leaving Cakchiquel territory,

something Townsend was not inclined to do. After a brief exploration of the

Presbyterian territory, he later reminisced that 'I felt as though I were leaving my home

country'.[47] So CAM it would be. Cameron and Elvira were accepted by the CAM board

and married in July 1919 in Guatemala.[48]

The Central American Mission was founded on 4 November 1890 by Cyrus

Ingerson Scofield, a Congregational minister best known for his editorship of the

Scofield Reference Bible.[49] CAM was therefore quite naturally of a premillennial-

dispensationalist persuasion and it was essentially fundamentalist in character.[50] The

mission could also be counted on to keep its distance from anything resembling the

Social Gospel. Moreover, as with almost all faith missions, CAM advertised that it went

to 'God in prayer for all wants', would 'solicit no gifts' and 'take no collections'.[51] In

1918 when funds were in desperately short supply, Scofield was tempted to send out a

circular requesting financial aid. He later expressed his discomfort, allowing that 'I had

a little feeling in the back of my mind all the time that my proposal was after all a sort of

begging, and we never do that, but look wholly to the Lord'.[52] The faith basis of the

CAM placed a rather narrow set of limitations on how it could present its financial needs

to the Christian public. The roots of CAM's attitude towards money, as with all faith

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[47] WCT, Hefley interview, 'Meeting and Courting First Wife', c. 1970, TA 43628.

[48] Report of Acceptance of W. Cameron Townsend and Elvira Malmstrom by CAM, July 1919. TA 44996, *Central American Bulletin* (July 1919), Central American Mission Archive (hereafter 'CAA').

[49] *Central American Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (14 November 1891): p. 1, CAM.

[50] Dorothy Martin, *100 . . . And Counting: The Story of the CAM's First Century* (Dallas: CAM International, 1990), p. 36.

[51] *Central American Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (14 November 1891): p. 2, CAA.

[52] C. I. Scofield to JDHS, 2 February 1918, CAA.

missions, can be traced back to 1824 when Church of Scotland minster Edward Irving preached against the business-like mission structures of his day. If the apostles of the New Testament sallied forth in faith without assured means of support Irving argued, so too should modern-day missionaries. What Irving preached, the well-known missionary and orphanage founder George Müller popularized by not publicizing his financial needs.[53] The CAM council saw to it that the mission hewed closely to the faith mission ideal in the first decades of the mission's existence, but it was policy that Townsend would struggle to follow.

Townsend completed his transition from mainline denominationalism to independent evangelicalism in January 1920 by severing his membership at the Clearwater Presbyterian Church and joining the independent Church of the Open Door (COD) in Los Angeles.[54] The COD was a major fundamentalist base on the West Coast that was also behind the founding of BIOLA. His marriage to Elvira also linked Townsend to the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, since his wife was a member there as well as a personal friend of Moody's well-known pastor, Henry A. 'Harry' Ironside. In less than one year Townsend had established relationships with two prominent fundamentalist churches and become a member of a fundamentalist faith mission. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Townsend had suddenly changed his stripes and become an ardent fundamentalist. For example, although the *Scofield Reference Bible* was his main source of theological insight after college, when asked in later years if he agreed with Scofield's dispensationalism, Townsend replied that 'I don't know. I think he is a little bit extreme maybe on the matter of everything

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[53] David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), pp. 185-188.

[54] Register of the Clearwater Presbyterian Church (copy), Clearwater, California, pp. 114-115, TA 42056; WCT to Church of the Open Door, letter read at the fiftieth anniversary service, 12 September 1965, TA 22361.

being divided up in dispensations.'[55] During a heated debate within CAM over modes of

baptism in the mid-1920s, Townsend came out in favour of pouring. He nevertheless

allowed that 'Not until we get to heaven can we know who was right'. Therefore he was

of the opinion that it was best 'to go forward without dissension'.[56] Throughout his life

he was always at a bit of a loss (or at least he feigned such) when questioned closely

about his theological beliefs. Queried in 1970 on whether or not he held to the doctrine

of election, the best he could do was to say, 'Well, I've not gotten into these fine

points—I really don't know'.[57] Perhaps the best summary of his life-long outlook on

such matters comes from a 1968 chapel talk during which he recollected his move into

conservative evangelicalism. 'I come from a fundamentalist background', he told a

gathering of Wycliffe missionaries, 'But I don't believe that to be saved, you have to go

into a lot of detail.'[58] Although his doctrinal views were generally of a conservative

nature, Cameron Townsend was never a militant or obscurantist fundamentalist.

Joining a faith mission and rubbing shoulders with fundamentalists in no way

guarantees that one will become a fully committed faith missionary or fundamentalist.

As an unreconstructed maverick unschooled in the ways of fundamentalism, Townsend

was destined to chart his own course, and in so doing would create new paths down

which others would later follow. Cameron Townsend's choice of fellow travellers was

nonetheless fortuitous, for by taking up with the independents rather than the

denominationalists, he sided with the eventual winners in America's competitive

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[55] WCT, Hefley interview, 'Devotional and Doctrinal Stand', 25 June 1970, p. 1, TA 43653.

[56] William Cameron Townsend, 'Water Baptism and the Biblical Mode', c. 1924, TA 1008.

[57] WCT, Hefley interview, 'Devotional and Doctrinal Stand', 25 June 1970, p. 1, TA 43653.

[58] William Cameron Townsend, 'Overcome Evil with Good', 1968, p. 4, TA 50001.

religious market place.[59] In fact he would became one of a number of notable innovators who refashioned fundamentalism along progressive lines, thereby revitalizing evangelicalism and ensuring that it would remain a vital and dynamic force throughout the twentieth century.

Cameron Townsend served with CAM from 1919 to 1933. As will become evident, he was too ambitious and too creative to have long remained within the confines of a traditional faith mission. For example, although he was imbued with an evangelistic passion for taking the gospel into virgin territory, this impulse to pioneer was bound up with a not so spiritual desire for freedom of action away from the constraints and tedium of settled work. Thus his missionary impulse was hardly an unalloyed pious desire to save souls. The mind of Cameron Townsend is clearly a study in contrasts. Although he was a college dropout with anti-intellectual tendencies, he would nonetheless become a Bible translator, educator and eventually the founder of a linguistic school for missionaries. Although possessed of an utterly pragmatic disposition, he yet retained the sentiments of a starry-eyed visionary. As a young missionary Townsend elected to associate with fundamentalists, but his choice of company did little to dampen qualities more in keeping with those of a more liberal persuasion. In the years before World War II, when many fundamentalists distanced themselves from the Social Gospel and from socio-political Progressivism, Townsend's outlook was a compound of these very elements. An examination of the varied aspects of Townsend's particular approach to missions during his tenure with CAM serves to reveal that many of the distinctive features that would one day mark WBT-SIL were developed in the context of this young missionary's sometimes uneasy relationship with a classical faith mission. Therefore, rather than taking a chronological approach to

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[59] These events are discussed in chapter five.

Townsend's career with CAM, the next several sections will analyse various factors and themes that were most significant in ultimately giving shape to Townsend's own mission.

Townsend's Progressive Vision for the Indians

Before joining CAM, Townsend had already concluded that he would devote the largest share of his efforts to the Cakchiquels. What he had in mind was nothing less than the subversion of the reigning social hierarchy that maintained the Indian in a subservient relationship to the *ladino*.[60] Indeed he had concluded that the *ladinos*, 'degenerated by generations of immorality', lacked the Indian's innate 'moral fibre'.[61] To his way of thinking the Indian was naturally endowed with qualities that only needed revitalization. 'Although real ambition generally lies latent and undetectable beneath the miserable mien of the average descendant of the formerly great Mayan race', the real tragedy, Townsend charged, was that 'so little is done to quicken it and so very, very much to drown it in hopelessness.'[62] Therefore, to gain for the Indians social justice and freedom from repression, he reckoned that it was necessary to break the stranglehold of social control held by *ladinos* and Catholic priests. He aimed to obtain this goal by initiating an indigenous language ministry, by undertaking educational efforts and by developing independent indigenous congregations. In a sense, Townsend was echoing Theodore Roosevelt's line that 'The worth of a civilization is the worth of the man at its centre', and he intended to see the Indians rise to take their place at the centre of the Guatemalan church and society.[63] Reaching peoples with the gospel isolated by language and geography while at the same time reversing centuries of social injustice

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[60] A member of the hispanicized upwardly mobile class in Central America, especially in Guatemala.

[61] WCT to 'Home Folks', 19 July 1918, TA 583.

[62] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Language Project', n.d., TA 946120.

[63] Quoted in Cooper, *Pivotal Decades*, p. 39.

was an ambitious plan, and it was one that Townsend grandly hoped, if successful, could 'bless all of Central America'.[64]

In CAM, as with faith missions in general, education was considered less important than evangelization. This inclination to downplay education was exacerbated during the early part of the twentieth century when the 'Great Reversal' was making itself felt in conservative evangelicalism. In keeping with its faith mission ethos and outlook on education, CAM directed most of its limited funds primarily into evangelistic efforts. When the discussion turned to the idea of establishing a Bible school at an August 1921 CAM council meeting, it was quickly dismissed.[65] If Townsend expected to see the full flowering of his ideas, it would depend on his own personal capacity to marshal the needed funds. This proved to be something at which he excelled. For instance he was a prolific contributor to CAM's publicity organ, the *Central American Bulletin*. As early as the summer of 1920 he published a special insert for the bulletin detailing his efforts among the Cakchiquel, which now included a children's boarding school and an adult evening school.[66] Not satisfied with the limited scope of CAM's donor list, he requested that the special bulletin be sent to numerous additional individuals and churches.[67] These publicity efforts redounded to good effect. Elvira was sufficiently embarrassed by the floodtide of donations received for their special projects to remark in a February 1921 letter to CAM treasurer Judge Scott that 'we feel a little bad about having so much funds on hand'.[68] While his fellow missioners struggled financially, Townsend, by constantly priming the pump with his promotional efforts,

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[64] WCT to 'Home Folks', 19 July 1918, TA 583.

[65] JDHS to Albert E. Bishop (hereafter 'AEB'), 27 August 1921, CAA.

[66] WCT to JDHS, 27 July 1920; TA 674, JDHS to WCT, 7 August 1920, TA 675.

[67] Elvira Townsend to JDHS, 1 September 1920, p. 2, TA 669; WCT to JDHS, 18 October 1920, p. 4, TA 661.

[68] Elvira Townsend to JDHS, 14 February 1921, TA 798.

generated ample cash flows from numerous sources, such as his former Sunday school

teacher Louise Heim, who donated the sizable sum of $5,100 dollars in the early 1920s

for a clinic and a boarding house.[69] Townsend's flair for fundraising would later prove

to be one of the most significant factors in the success of his own mission.

'What a splendid Christian the Indian makes!', Townsend exclaimed in a 1920

Central American Bulletin article.[70] Such jubilation was quickly tempered when it was

realized that placing Indian converts under the direction of *ladino* congregations led

almost inexorably to their falling away. The Townsends queried some Indian converts

on the matter, and Elvira reported to CAM home secretary, Judge Scott, what they had

discovered. 'They all gave as the reason for not continuing that they would not attend

services with the ladinos, for they were only laughed at by the ladinos [and] furthermore

they felt they did not have [a] place there.'[71] Townsend empathized with the Indians,

and they began to look to him as their leader. Rather than use his stature to encourage

them to remain under *ladino* leadership, he instead pointed them towards independence.

Arguing that 'he who pays, commands', he wished for them to have complete control

over their church affairs.[72] The impoverished Indian congregations resisted his proposal,

preferring instead to continue relying on CAM. Not until 1931, owing mainly to a

growing nationalistic and anti-American sentiment in late-1920s Guatemala, did the

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[69] William Cameron Townsend, 'A Training Center for Young Indian Leaders', n.d., TA 946095; William Cameron Townsend, 'The Louise Heim Clinic', n.d., TA 946096; WCT to Lewis Sperry Chafer, president, Central American Mission, 22 October 1923, TA 952; Paul Townsend, interview by Ethel Wallis, 1987, p. 48, TA 43778.

[70] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Guatemalan Indian and the San Antonio Mission, *Central American Bulletin* [no volume number indicated], no.112 (15 September 1920): p. 4, CAA.

[71] Elvira Townsend to JDHS, 1 October 1920, p. 6, TA 666.

[72] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Development of the Indigenous Church', n.d., TA 946112.

Indian church leaders finally opt for full self-support.[73] Townsend, a fervent champion

of indigenous ecclesiastical independence, set a pace for change that even the Indians

found overly ambitious.

Striving to realize his hopes for an indigenous pastorate, Townsend launched a

first-of-its-kind school in Guatemala to prepare indigenous preachers. He began by

training Cakchiquel evangelists on an informal basis in 1921. The following year, in

March 1922, he formally established the Indian Workers' Training School of Central

America in Panajachel, Guatemala. The name was later changed to the Robinson Bible

Institute (RBI) in honour of Townsend's recently deceased friend and fellow missionary,

Robert Robinson. Panajachel, chosen for its central location, allowed other missions to

send students and in its early years the school counted students from among the

Cakchiquels, Mams, Quichés and Zutugils.[74] The establishment of the RBI was an

enduring effort, eventually becoming the Guatemala Bible Institute in the late 1960s.[75]

Along with his Bible translation efforts, the RBI was the second of Townsend's two

major accomplishments during his tenure with CAM. By 1927 he could report that in

just the Cakchiquel department 'eighty preaching points are being cared for by a staff of

about 20 native workers'. Other indigenous evangelists were fanning all along the

Central American isthmus and new congregations were forming apace.[76] The success of

the RBI spoke for itself, and the effectiveness of its graduates provided incontrovertible

proof that the Indians could manage their own religious affairs without *ladino*

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[73] William Cameron Townsend, 'Congregations Now Self-Supporting', n.d., TA 946114.

[74] William Cameron Townsend, 'III. The Robinson Bible Institute' , n.d., pp. 2-3, TA 650; William Cameron Townsend, *Central American Bulletin* 119 (November 1921): p. 19, TA 944955; William Cameron Townsend, 'The Robinson Bible Institute', n.d., TA 946098; William Cameron Townsend, 'Preparation of Indian Workers', n.d., TA 946091.

[75] Martin, *100 . . . And Counting*, p. 150.

[76] WCT to Leonard Livingstone Legters (hereafter 'LLL'), 26 February 1927, TA 1348.

leadership.

Unburdened by deep attachment to the cardinal points of the faith mission system, Cameron Townsend gave free rein to his inner impulses and outsized imagination. Moreover, having never been catechized into the fundamentalist movement, he was able to pursue social and educational goals fearlessly. Headstrong and all but blind to limitation he crafted his own progressive programme for the social uplift and religious conversion of Guatemala's indigenous peoples.

Bible Translation

In 1920 the Townsends were the only Protestant missionaries in Guatemala devoted primarily to Indian work, but not the only ones interested or presently engaged in reaching Guatemala's indigenous peoples.[77] Before Townsend took up work with CAM, there were a few small Indian congregations tucked away here and there in Guatemala, and CAM's Lucas Lemus occasionally engaged in indigenous evangelization.[78] In addition, CAM's own Benjamin and Louise Treichler, who joined in 1917, dreamed of evangelizing the Indians, but personal problems and difficulties learning Spanish eventually thwarted their aspirations.[79] Serving with the Presbyterian board in the Quiché territory were a frustrated Paul and Dora Burgess, who harboured ambitions for engaging in Indian work, but were largely stymied by the typical missionary's crushing workload and the Presbyterian Mission Board's emphasis on Spanish ministry. 'We envy you and your opportunity to do some real language study', Paul Burgess confided to Townsend in a 1920 letter.[80] Burgess was a far more likely

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[77] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Guatemalan Indian and the San Antonio Mission Station', 1919, p. 4, TA 46144.

[78] AEB to Mr and Mrs Mcbath, Washington D. C., 8 June 1921, CAA.

[79] Anna Marie Dahlquist, *Trailblazers for Translators: The Chichicastenango Twelve* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), pp. 16, 73; WCT, 'Mr. and Mrs. Treichler', typed note. n.d., TA 946086.

[80] Dahlquist, *Trailblazers for Translators*, p. 15.

material for a Bible translator than was the minimally-educated Townsend. The erudite Burgess had studied in Europe, was a seminary graduate and possessed an earned doctorate. Eventually he would master seven languages, and was therefore as comfortable discussing philosophy in German as he was preaching in Spanish.[81] While the Burgesses would eventually complete a Quiché translation of the New Testament, in 1920 it was the college dropout Cameron Townsend and his wife Elvira who were able to report making progress in deciphering the complicated grammatical structure of Cakchiquel.

When Townsend set himself to the task of translating the Cakchiquel New Testament in early 1921, his fellow missionaries in CAM were opposed to what they saw as a time-consuming and inessential task.[82] In 1908 CAM's Albert Bishop observed that 'The Indians of Guatemala cannot read their own language; they have no literature in their own tongue, [and] schools in their own language are prohibited by the government'. CAM missionaries and the CAM home council generally shared Bishop's sentiment that, since there 'are Indians who read and speak Spanish' it was through that language that the tribes must be evangelized, if evangelized effectively'.[83] At the time Townsend joined the CAM in 1919, then, there were no efforts by its missionaries to learn the indigenous languages or to reach these indigenous peoples in their mother tongue. CAM's unofficial but yet unmistakable policy accepted the prevailing inequalities of race, cultural and class; and this status quo was something which the young Townsend intended to change. That Townsend sometimes treated his antagonists roughly made it that much more difficult to convince his critics. Spanish-only ministry,

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[81] Anna Marie Dahlquist, *Burgess of Guatemala* (Langley, B.C.: Cedar Books, 1985).

[82] WCT to JDHS, 15 May 1921, TA 771; Paul Townsend, 'Paul Townsend's Memories of His Early Life', n.d., p. 10, TA 43776.

[83] Albert E. Bishop, *Central American Bulletin* 14, no. 4 (1908): pp. 5-6, CAA.

he indelicately suggested to an opponent in 1927, might be 'good for old missionaries or lazy ones who don't want to go to the effort of learning a new language'.[84] In due course he concluded that it must be 'Satan [who] had blinded most missionaries in a greater or lesser degree of the need' for indigenous language work.[85] More troublesome than his grumbling colleagues was fitting translation in among a multitude of other chores. In 1923, Townsend was placed in charge of all missionary work in the towns of San Antonio and Panajachal.[86] Sickness, charge of national pastors and a long list of other responsibilities threatened daily to impede progress on Bible translation.[87] These experiences convinced Townsend that translation would remain, even under the best of circumstances, a side-line for CAM missionaries unless they could be convinced of its merits and then offered ample time for the long and tedious process the work entailed.

There was another valuable lesson to be learned from his translation labours. When he and Elvira initiated their study of Cakchiquel, with its complex grammatical structure, they did so without much in the way of written material to guide their effort. At some point during their struggle to decipher the language, Townsend came across a Cakchiquel grammar written in 1884 by American archaeologist Daniel G. Brinton.[88] He later recounted that he was relieved to have not discovered Brinton's work sooner, for he might otherwise have followed Brinton's example of forcing the complex Cakchiquel verbal morphology into a Latin paradigm. By following his own lights Townsend largely avoided Brinton's error.[89] In fact it would seem that he intuitively analysed the language in something vaguely analogous to what American structural linguists were

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[84] WCT to Mr Dunlop, 22 December 1927, TA 1245.

[85] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Language Project', n.d., TA 946120.

[86] Lewis Sperry Chafer to WCT, 2 May 1923, TA 997.

[87] Elvira Townsend to JDHS, 11 January 1921, TA 802; WCT to Howard B. Dinwiddie, 7 May 1921, TA 775; WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, TA 43652.

[88] Kenneth L. Pike, 'Forward by Kenneth L. Pike', *Mayan Studies* 5 (1960): pp. 3-7, TA 942957.

[89] WCT, 'The Cakchiquel New Testament', n.d., TA 946100.

attempting at the time.[90] Two of Townsend's popular biographers maintain that that in 1919 an archaeologist by the name of 'Dr Gates' introduced Townsend to the work of University of Chicago linguist Edward Sapir, a leading figure in the then emerging school of American structural linguistics.[91] Unfortunately evidence is lacking to corroborate their assertions. Likewise the identity of 'Gates' remains a mystery. Moreover, when SIL's top linguist Kenneth L. (Ken) Pike reviewed Townsend's Cakchiquel grammar in 1960, he found little indication of Sapir's influence in the work. On the other hand Pike noted that Townsend had approached Cakchiquel grammar from something of a structural linguistic perspective, at least in a very rudimentary form.[92] There may be some element of truth in Hefley and Steven's contention after all, for Townsend did send his completed grammar for Sapir's inspection, and in 1930 he travelled to the University of Chicago to consult with Sapir.[93] What is important to note is that by 1930 Townsend was not only an accomplished amateur linguist but had also taken the first step in linking missionary Bible translation to the emerging discipline of structural linguistics.[94]

One of the most striking aspects of Townsend's approach to translation was his insistence that any indigenous translation of the scriptures should be printed in parallel-columned Spanish and mother-tongue diglot form, for the express purpose of aiding the

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[90] William Cameron Townsend, 'Cakchiquel Grammar', 1926, TA 42961; WCT, 'The Substantive Verb and Pronomial Ideas in Cakchiquel and Nahuatl', c. mid-1920s, TA 942962; Pike, 'Forward': pp. 3-7, TA 942957.

[91] James and Marti Hefley, *Uncle Cam* (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1974), p. 47; Hugh Steven, *Wycliffe in the Making: The Memoirs of W. Cameron Townsend, 1920-1933* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1995), pp. 14, 206.

[92] Pike, 'Forward': pp. 4-5, TA 942957.

[93] James Hefley 'Note on Edward Sapir', c. 1970, TA 43535; WCT to Eric M. North, American Bible Society, 19 February 1930, TA 901540; Eric M. North to WCT, 21 February 1930, TA 1603; Edward Sapir to WCT, 17 March 1930, TA 1597.

[94] The ultimate implications of Townsend's connecting SIL with the discipline of structural linguistics are more fully examined in chapter three.

Indians in making the transition from indigenous-language literacy to Spanish literacy.[95]

Townsend was innovatively linking Bible translation to bilingual education. On this

point he was two decades ahead of his time. Not until the mid-1940s would bilingual

education begin to achieve some measure of acceptance in Guatemala, and not until

1953 did the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO) conclude that bilingual education was preferable to monolingual

education.[96] His concept apparently proved viable. In 1932 he reported that Cakchiquels

taught to read in their mother tongue were subsequently able to utilize 'the [New]

Testament as a text book in their efforts to learn Spanish'.[97] From these experiences

Townsend discovered that bilingual education was potentially superior to the oft failed

attempts at Spanish monolingual education.

Translating the Cakchiquel New Testament was a momentous experience for

Townsend and for the future development of his own mission. By whatever means he

had come to appreciate the value of linguistics for the missionary translator. Here was

the kernel of an idea that resulted in the formation of Camp Wycliffe in 1933 to train

missionary linguist-translators.[98] By later standards his translation and his grammar

would prove to be of inferior quality. For instance his translation was considered overly

literal by later standards.[99] Moreover, when Ken Pike examined Townsend's grammar

from a professional linguist's point of view, he remarked that 'it didn't look so hot'. 'It

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[95] 'Minutes of the Chichicastenango Conference', Appendix A, in *Trailblazers for Translators*, Dahlquist, p. 139.

[96] Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), pp. 80-82; UNESCO, 'The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education', *Monographs on Fundamental Education*, 8 (Paris: UNESCO, 1953).

[97] WCT to Karl D. Hummel, 9 March 1932, p. 2, TA 1696.

[98] The development of Camp Wycliffe is detailed in chapter three.

[99] Martha (King) Diebler, interview by author, Waxhaw North Carolina, 16 June 2006 (NB: Diebler was one of the revisers of Townsend's Cakchiquel translation).

was', Pike added, 'an amateurish job of somebody new to linguistics.'[100] Yet these

defects would in the long run prove rather insignificant, for it was ideas that lay behind

these projects that would one day give birth to a strikingly novel variety of evangelical

mission.

The Keswick Connection

The Keswick movement, also referred to as the Victorious Life Testimony, was a

descendant of Wesleyan Holiness and John Wesley's concept of 'Christian Perfection'.

The American glass manufacturer Robert Pearsall Smith and his wife Hannah were two

of the foremost purveyors of this renewed emphasis on the Holy Spirit and a life of

surrender in the late nineteenth century.[101] Influenced by strains of Romanticism, the

movement accented on religious experience rather than on reasoned theological

discourse or doctrinal deliberations.[102] One commentator is reported to have said of

Smith that 'I never gave Smith credit for much intelligence. It was his heart, not his

head, which attracted me.'[103] One way to illustrate the mood of this multidimensional

movement is to turn to novelist Shirley Nelson, who sought to express Keswick's

essence in *The Last Year of the War*, which is set in the context of a fictitious Bible

school during WWII. At one point Nelson has the fundamentalist professor 'Dr.

Peckham' holding forth in chapel on the 'victorious life'. Peckham challenged students

'to be courageous, serene in the face of adversity, powerful in soul-winning, steady and

unmovable in faith, free from the tyranny of self, flesh crucified'. All this striving was

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[100] Kenneth L. Pike (hereafter 'KLP'), Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 7, TA 43472.

[101] J. C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story: The Authorized History of the Keswick Convention* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), pp. 11-15.

[102] Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, pp. 184, 207-210; David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 167-171.

[103] Quoted in Pollock, *Keswick Story*, p. 14.

to be miraculously accomplished 'with sunshiny faces'.[104] The potent spirituality of this movement was an important factor in creating a socio-religious mood that encouraged performances of religious athleticism, where young people relentlessly subjected themselves to an almost endless round of witnessing, tract distribution, Bible study, attending and leading church services and prayer meetings, all the while maintaining a submissive attitude and personal spiritual purity.

The emphases of Keswick were also valued by faith mission leaders. Charles Hurlburt, the general director of the Africa Inland Mission, insisted in 1917 that publicizing the task of worldwide evangelization at Bible conferences and in Bible schools should be coupled 'together with such teachings of the victorious life and complete surrender as might be needful to secure desirable candidates for the mission field'.[105] In other words the Victorious Life movement was expected to supply energetic but also compliant missionary recruits to the burgeoning faith mission movement.

The Keswick movement enjoyed broad popularity in evangelical circles. Only after about 1901, when the Pentecostal preacher Charles F. Parham began preaching on the gift of glossolalia and the doctrine of a 'second blessing', the latter of which he believed eradicated the sinful nature, did some fundamentalists become wary. A young student at the Bible Institute of Chicago (Moody) spoke for many fundamentalists when he expressed himself forcefully upon hearing a commentator espouse what he took to be an eradicationist view. 'The doctrine of the eradication of the carnal nature by the Holy Spirit,' the student declared, 'is one of the most damnable heresies that ever cursed the

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[104] Shirley Nelson, *The Last Year of the War*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Northcote Books, [1979] 1989), p. 197.

[105] Quoted in Edwin L. Frizen, Jr, *75 Years of IFMA, 1917-1992: The Nondenominational Missions Movement* (Wheaton, IL: Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, 1992), p. 105.

Christian Church.'[106] It was imperative for expositors of the Victorious Life to avoid

intimating anything that even hinted at eradication of the sinful nature. Hard-edged

Calvinism might have suffered under the onslaught of experientialism in American

evangelicalism, but original sin remained an important doctrine within fundamentalism.

For the most part, Keswick teaching remained popular in fundamentalism for it largely

avoided the perfectionist theology taught by some Pentecostals.

In the fall of 1920, Howard B. Dinwiddie, secretary of American Keswick, made

his way to Guatemala City to hold a Victorious Life Conference for the missionaries

stationed there. Townsend and Burgess shared with Dinwiddie their passion for reaching

the Indians of Central America, and won for themselves an avid spokesman.[107] In

December, Dinwiddie cabled another Keswick enthusiast, Leonard Livingstone Legters,

inviting him to join them for a hastily-planned Indian conference in Guatemala. Legters

was a Presbyterian minister and former Dutch Reformed missionary to the Comanche

and Apache Indians in Oklahoma. Legters also held the distinction of having preached at

the funeral of the legendary Apache chief Geronimo.[108] Already passionate about Indian

missions, Legters needed no coaxing to join the conference.[109] The Townsends,

Burgesses and Treichlers, together with Legters, Dinwiddie and a few other interested

missionaries, gathered at Chichicastenango, Guatemala, in January 1921 to discuss what

they saw as the pressing need for specifically indigenous ministry. First they agreed that

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[106] A. M. Hills, *Pentecost Rejected and the Effect on the Churches* (Titusville, PA, 1973 [1902]), pp. 63-63, quoted in *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, Marsden, p. 95.

[107] William Cameron Townsend, *Central American Bulletin* [no vol. no. or issue no.] (15 March 1921), p. 12, CAM; Elvira Townsend to JDHS, 7 December 1920, TA 653; Herbert Toms to JDHS, 29 January 1921, CAA.

[108] WCT, 'Hefley interview', c. 1970, TA 43539; Angie Debo, *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), p. 442.

[109] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Early Years of Wycliffe', 1949, rev. 1980, pp. 1-2, TA 42636; William Cameron Townsend, 'Dinwiddie and Legters', n.d., TA 946088; Lawrence Dame, *Maya Mission* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), pp. 8-16.

the Indians must themselves be adequately trained to evangelize their own people.

Second it was decided that mother-tongue Bible translation was not an option but a

necessity. Toward this end the gathered ensemble unanimously passed a motion

directing Townsend and Burgess to form a translation committee.[110] The

Chichicastenango group struck a pose that was at odds with prevailing missionary

attitudes and practice among Protestant missions in Guatemala in advocating indigenous

language evangelization and mother-tongue Bible translation.

Fearing that their goals would never come to fruition through the efforts of

existing missionary organizations, the group established a new mission, the Latin

American Indian Mission (LAIM).[111] While it was expected that the LAIM would fulfil

its aims 'by contribution to and in cooperation with other agencies', the

Chichicastenango group nonetheless opened the door to bypassing existing missions

when they resolved that LAIM could engage in 'direct activity to give the Gospel to the

Indians of Latin America'.[112] Forming an entirely new mission was tantamount to a

palace coup, and it aroused the suspicion of several CAM council members.[113] When

Townsend became aware of the growing hostility he rather impertinently, especially for

a newly-minted missionary, wrote Judge Scott admonishing that 'I trust the Council may

be guided very definitely by the Lord in their attitude toward this matter. If taken up

wisely, I think that great good can come of it, but if not, it is apt to result in

misunderstandings.'[114] Townsend's presumptuous attitude was hardly in keeping with

Victorious Life submissiveness that faith mission leaders expected of their missionaries.

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[110] 'Minutes of the Chichicastenango Conference', Appendix A, Part I, in *Trailblazers for Translators*, Dahlquist , pp. 139-149; Herbert Toms to JDHS, 29 January 1921, CAA.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Dahlquist, *Trailblazers for Translators*, p. 141.

[113] R. D. Smith (hereafter 'RDS') to WCT, 19 February 1921, CAA.

[114] WCT to JDHS, 9 May 1921, CAA.

There was a palpable air of distress throughout the summer of 1921 among members of the CAM council over Dinwiddie and Legter's Keswick connections. Typical of the prevailing apprehension was R. D. Smith's March 1921 report, in which he related that a fellow council member 'was disturbed because' he had learned that Dinwiddie was 'connected with . . . the men that lead the Victorious Life Conferences'.[115] Another council member hoped that Dinwiddie and Legters 'might be delivered from the extremes' of the Victorious Life teaching.[116] Exacerbating CAM's angst was the council's observation that Dinwiddie and Legters did not, as Judge Scott put it, know 'anything about a faith mission'. Scott went on to point out that 'Mr. Dinwiddie is a good beggar, but since we are only to beg from God, I do not see how we can use him.'[117] Back in the U.S., Dinwiddie and Legters were engaged in an all-out deputation and recruiting operation that paid little heed to faith mission protocol. Legters, possessed of a hyperkinetic personality, was especially given to exaggeration. Once chastised for public statements which implied that CAM had never engaged in any Indian work at all before the formation of LAIM, Legters nonetheless persisted in his claims. Bishop grumbled in July 1921 that Legter's 'blunder [has] become . . . permanent propaganda'.[118] The old-school restrained publicity methods of CAM were being turned upside down by these two impulsive and passionate men. 'It is a case of enthusiasm ungoverned, untempered, by careful and thoughtful investigation', Bishop lashed out that same July.[119] Legters was deaf to reproach and Dinwiddie simply hoped that God would give the council 'the mind and harmony of the Holy Spirit and lead [it] to the conclusions that shall bring forth the unfolding and the fulness [sic] of His plan

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[115] RDS to JDHS, 10 March 1921, CAA.
[116] Luther Rees to AEB, 5 August 1921, CAA.
[117] JDHS to AEB, 3 September 1921, CAA.
[118] AEB to Howard B. Dinwiddie, 9 July 1921, CAA.
[119] AEB to Mr and Mrs McBath, Washington, D.C., 8 June 1921, CAA.

for His ministry'.[120] Filled with a sense of divine purpose, derived in no small part from a Keswick perfectionist-induced self-confidence in being Spirit-led, Dinwiddie and Legters had little patience with the niceties of the faith mission approach to public relations, and they were not about to let such restrictions impede their plans.

At nearly the same time Dinwiddie was convening a conference in Philadelphia to establish a home council for the LAIM in October 1921, he and Legters were founding yet another organization, the Pioneer Mission Agency (PMA). Established on 26 October 1921, the PMA was largely an American Keswick affair. In addition to Victorious Life chairman J. Harvey Borton, Charles G. Trumbull and Howard Banks, both of the immensely popular *Sunday School Times* and exponents of Keswick theology, were appointed to the PMA board of directors.[121] The PMA eschewed directing missionaries on the field and focused exclusively on fund raising and recruitment for work among all unreached indigenous peoples.[122] Why the founders chose to launch another mission is unclear, but it is not so difficult to comprehend under the circumstances. Certainly the cold water thrown on their LAIM venture and CAM's wariness played a part in their decision. By forming their own organization, Dinwiddie and Legters conveniently dispensed with the inter-agency polemics that threatened to undermine their ambitions; and it also permitted them to exercise their style of animated public relations that other faith mission leaders found objectionable.

The PMA remained something of an irritant in the eyes of CAM conservatives. In 1929, CAM general secretary Karl D. Hummel complained to Townsend that Legters 'overstates things' and that he 'exaggerates'.[123] As for Townsend, he had concluded that Legters's enthusiasm, while perhaps sometimes excessive, was more a help than a

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[120] Howard B. Dinwiddie to JDHS, 14 July 1921, CAA.
[121] Howard B. Dinwiddie to Luther Rees, 15 October 1921, CAA.
[122] Dahlquist, *Trailblazers for Translators*, pp. 66-71.
[123] Karl D. Hummel to WCT, 26 September 1929, TA 1453.

hindrance, especially when making the case for Indian work to folks at home. 'His vision', Townsend later recalled, 'was marvelous and we needed his help so I cultivated his friendship.'[124] Although Dinwiddie died in December 1925, the Townsend-Legters friendship continued until Legters's death in 1941. Therefore, when Townsend eventually decided to part ways with CAM, he had a ready-made base of support in the PMA and a likeminded co-conspirator in L. L. Legters. Townsend, Dinwiddie and Legters were of a type, each willing to bend rules and to challenge authority.

Historians have stressed the connections between the Keswick movement and faith missions. For example, Joel Carpenter wrote in 1990 that 'Keswick holiness teaching was thoroughly integrated into the fundamentalist network of Bible schools, summer conferences, and faith missions'.[125] George Marsden has also tended to convey the idea that Keswick teaching and fundamentalism were of a piece, save for the reproaches of the Warfieldians at Princeton.[126] The case of the Dinwiddie-Legters-Townsend triumvirate and the more staid CAM suggests that this assumption should be challenged. From the evidence offered here it would appear that not all fundamentalists or faith missioners looked with favour on Keswick teaching, especially when it took the form of a self-confident dynamism that threaten the conventional patterns of discrete fundraising and surrender to leadership expected by most faith missions. Dinwiddie, Legters and Townsend parted with faith missions' traditional diffidence towards publicity and making appeals for missionary funds, and the three innovatively turned the expected compliance of Keswick spirituality in a non-conformist confidence that engendered bold and independent action.

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[124] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, TA 43539.
[125] Carpenter, *Once Delivered*, p. 119.
[126] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, pp. 93-101.

Politics and Diplomacy

The political atmosphere in late-1920s Guatemala grew increasingly nationalistic and anti-American. In February 1931, Jorge Ubico came to power as Guatemala's president. Ubico, essentially a dictator, pursued nationalistic policies and the centralization of government power. Beginning in 1932, he promulgated laws restricting Protestant missions by limiting their numbers and prescribing government certification for all missionaries entering the country. A 1932 Communist-inspired revolution in neighbouring El Salvador, which had included indigenous elements among the insurgents, increased Ubico's wariness of Guatemala's Indian population and the missionaries who resided among them.[127] Paul Burgess, once a member of the Socialist Party in his younger days and now in intimate contact with the Quichés, came under particular suspicion. Burgess published a popular Quiché almanac of farming hints, witticisms and Bible quotations. While the almanac's contents were typically innocuous, Burgess incurred the wrath of the Ubico regime when he provocatively penned a somewhat critical editorial, in which he openly declared that the 'government can err' and that the government had a responsibility to 'maintain justice'. Burgess was briefly jailed and thereafter forced to submit further editorials for censorship or cease publication altogether.[128] By the early 1930s missionaries in Guatemala no longer occupied their former privileged position, and if they publicly complained it could lead to arrest or curtailment of their activities.

In light of these events the fact that the 21 May 1931 issue of the Guatemalan newspaper, *El Libero Progresista*, ran a front-page article and photograph of Cameron Townsend presenting a copy of the Cakchiquel New Testament to President Ubico

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[127] Adams, *Crucifixion by Power*, pp. 174-177; Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism in Guatemala*, pp. 71-73.

[128] Dahlquist, *Burgess of Guatemala*, pp. 37, 122, 125-130.

requires explanation.[129] Working through the president's chief of staff and the minister

of education, Townsend secured a meeting with Ubico for himself, Trinidad Bac (one of

his Cakchiquel co-translators) and R. R. Gregory of the American Bible Society. With

keen foresight he arranged for a photographer to be present. He had also incurred the

extra expense of preparing a specially bound copy of the New Testament in anticipation

of this auspicious occasion.[130] It can only be surmised why Ubico consented to

Townsend's request or why he reportedly uttered during the half-hour meeting that 'this

book marks a great forward movement in our civilization'.[131] Perhaps the most plausible

explanation is that Ubico saw this as an opportunity to garner favourable publicity with

the country's Mayan peoples as part of his overall nationalistic programme for

solidifying his grip on the country's fragmented population. It probably helped too that

Townsend dwelt on the diglot's potential for drawing the indigenous population into the

Spanish-speaking culture. What for the president likely amounted to mere rhetorical

flourishes aimed at drumming up indigenous support was, for Townsend, simply the

first of many instances where he catapulted himself into the public eye and in the

process ingeniously garnered visible support from ruling elites, who may or may not

have shared his religious and evangelistic goals.

By the time that Townsend completed the Cakchiquel New Testament translation

in 1929 his perspectives on religious and missiological matters were already well

formed. The main points of his outlook can easily be summarized. First, unlike many

fundamentalists of the period, he was not overly concerned with doctrinal punctilios. In

fact, by upbringing and by nature, Townsend was more broadly evangelical in religious

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[129] 'El Nuevo Testamento fue Traducido al Cacchiquel' *El Libero Progresisto*, 2828, 21 May 1931, p. 1, TA 45065.

[130] WCT to 'Home Folks', 21 May 1931, TA 1661; WCT, 'President of Guatemala Receives First Copy', n.d., TA 946105.

[131] R. R. Gregory, 'Guatemala Receives the Cakchiquel New Testament', *Bible Society Record* 76, no. 8 (August 1931): p. 1, TA 45063.

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character than narrowly fundamentalist. Second were his pioneering efforts to reach the indigenous peoples isolated by language and his high regard for indigenous education and its benefits. Third was his pragmatic willingness to part with faith mission proprieties when it suited his purposes. Fourth was his insistence that Bible translation was central, not peripheral, to any missionary effort. Fifth was his prescient understanding that the emerging school of descriptive linguistics offered key insights to Bible translators in their efforts to analyse unwritten languages. And in the sixth place was his diplomatic approach to government officials, seeking to win their favour rather than repulsing them. Townsend carried this rather progressive missiology into Mexico, where he would have ample opportunity to practice his unique approach to missions.

WBT and SIL in the Making

By the late 1920s, Cameron Townsend's fertile mind was breeding schemes for missionary expansion of such magnitude as to make his departure from CAM a foregone conclusion. 'I am convinced', he wrote Legters in April 1930, 'that God is leading me to a spectacular undertaking' in South America. What he had in mind was to use aeroplanes to reach isolated jungle areas of the Amazon Basin with the gospel. How would an 'Air Crusade to the Wild Tribes sound?', he asked Legters.[132] The impetus for this extraordinary idea was twofold. Firstly Legters had returned from Brazil in 1926 with photographs of some Xingu Indians sparking in Townsend a yearning 'to pioneer again in a tribe down there'.[133] Secondly, that same year, Townsend chanced to meet U.S. Army Major Herbert A. Dargue during the aviator's 1926 U.S. Pan-American Goodwill flight that circumnavigated South America.[134] Townsend's fertile mind easily

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[132] WCT to LLL, 24 April 1930, TA 1529.
[133] William Cameron Townsend, 'Highlights from Wycliffe 20th Anniversary in Mexico Celebration', 10 and 11 November 1953, p. 5, TA 42642.
[134] William Cameron Townsend, 'An Airplane Crusade to the Unevangelized Jungle-Lands of Latin America', August 1930, TA 41806; Herbert A. Dargue to WCT,

joined these two ideas, and he just as effortlessly overlooked the complexities involved.

For example, where would he obtain the money for this enormously expensive

undertaking? Unshackling himself from any pretence of faith mission restraint, he

proposed that 'If this project is put before the public extensively and also in a striking

way 500,000 Christians can be secured to send a dollar apiece'.[135] That aircraft travel

was still in the experimental stage of development, not to mention that America was

feeling the first tremors of the Great Depression, bothered Townsend not in the least.

'Maybe it is only a visionary idea', he admitted to CAM's Karl Hummel, 'but I just

can't help having them'.[136] An 'Air Crusade to the Wild Tribes' was, naturally, far

beyond anything the cautious CAM Council could even begin to imagine, and the

council members struggled unsuccessfully to channel Townsend's enormous energy into

less improbable and more commonplace undertakings.

The beginnings of Townsend's foray into Mexico developed while he was still

involved in a Cakchiquel literacy campaign in 1931 when he chanced to meet Moisés

Sáenz, a Mexican educator, diplomat and politician who was visiting Guatemala to

study the 'Indian problem'. Saenz was impressed with Townsend's literacy efforts and

suggested he should establish a similar programme among the Aztec Indians near

Mexico City. Sáenz later repeated the invitation in writing and offered that such an

endeavour would have the backing of Mexico's revolutionary leaders.[137]

The Sáenz invitation notwithstanding, Mexico was an unlikely destination for

launching a new missionary endeavour in the early 1930s. The Mexican Revolution of

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11 April 1929, TA 1415; Herbert A. Dargue to WCT, 4 January 1930, TA 1615.
    [135] WCT to LLL, 24 April 1930, TA 1529.
    [136] WCT to Karl D. Hummel, 24 July 1928, TA 1389.
    [137] WCT to LLL, 11 November 1931, TA 1630; WCT, Hefley interview, note,
RE: Meeting with Moisés Sáenz in Guatemala, c. 1970, TA 43657; WCT, 'Mexico's
Gift Airplane "Amauta Moisés Sáenz" Continues to Serve Peru's Amazonian People',
1969, TA 42690.

1910 had long set political liberals against religion and the country was effectively

closed to new missions. The Revolutionary 1917 Constitution forbade religious

processions, prohibited clergy from wearing priestly garb in public, barred the Catholic

Church from owning property and proscribed its involvement in education. President

Plutarco Elías Calles, an avowed atheist who had assumed power in 1924, fulminated

against the Church, inciting the Cristero rebellion of the late 1920s that pitted the

government against Catholic guerrillas. The bloody confrontation saw priests hanged

and churches burned.[138] Mexico's revolutionary leaders and intellectuals saw religion as

an impediment to progress. Thus the drive to reconstruct education along secular lines

was part of a larger attempt to supplant religious 'superstition' with 'rationality' in

pursuit of modernization. With these ends in mind, President Calles reminded Mexicans

in July 1934 that the 'Revolution is not over. . . . We have to enter a new phase, [sic]

that I would call the period of psychological revolution: we must enter and conquer the

minds of the young.'[139] Revolutionary Mexico of the early 1930s, by supressing religion

in an all-out effort to catapult the nation into modernity, seemed to offer little or no

opportunity for the planting of a new missionary venture or programme for Christian-

based education.

With visions of aeroplanes and wild tribes dancing in his head, Townsend was

not immediately drawn to the idea of entering Mexico. Legters, seeing providence at

work in the Saenz encounter, managed to change his companion's mind.[140] Townsend

was finally convinced to settle on Mexico after Legters agreed to help him with another

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[138] Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 542-545, 587-590; Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), pp. 71-72.

[139] Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1977), p. 433.

[140] LLL to WCT, 21 January 1932, TA 1706.

of his innovative ideas. What Townsend had in mind was a first-of-its-kind linguistic school to train potential missionary Bible translators in the rudiments of descriptive linguistics. The South American plan was shelved while Townsend and Legters focused on gaining a foothold for Bible translators in Mexico and launching 'Camp Wyciffe', the name given to the linguistic summer camp in honour of the English translator John Wycliffe.[141]

Knowing full well that the prevailing intellectual climate in Mexico prohibited any kind of standard missionary strategy, Townsend conceived a novel approach which he laid out in a letter of introduction to the Mexican authorities. Cleverly avoiding the term 'missionary', he introduced Legters as a 'lecturer, explorer and humanitarian' and himself as an 'ethnologist and educator'. He did not hide his religious intentions when proposing what he referred to as the 'Mexican Society of Indigenous Translations'. This new organization he promised would carry out a dual programme which aimed to 'conserve for science a grammar and dictionary of each indigenous language', while also undertaking to 'translate the New Testament in each language and publish it in bilingual edition'.[142] He took pains to show that his efforts were in keeping with those of Mexico's liberal educators. For example, Townsend was aware that rural teachers were expected to model exemplary behaviour among their charges.[143] He therefore added that 'no one will be used who would function as a bad moral example when living and working among the indigenous people'. In addition, and quite startlingly, he clearly

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[141] WCT to Dr Henry Beets, president, *Reformed Press Digest*, 5 November 1943, TA 903465.

[142] WCT to Al C. Lic. José M. Soto, official mayor, Secretaría Gobernación, 6 October 1933, TA 2077 (translation by William Lawrence Svelmoe in *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions, 1896-1945* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), p. 241-242.

[143] Nathaniel and Sylvia Weyl, *The Reconquest of Mexico: The Years of Lázaro Cárdenas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 320.

suggested that he was ready to place his organization at the disposal of the state when he offered that 'your employees will try to inculcate notions against alcoholism and other bad habits that brutalize the Indians'. He also explained that his organization would cooperate in the state's efforts to integrate the indigenous peoples into the nation. 'We believe', Townsend wrote, 'that the indigenous races will contribute in a great way to the enlargement of each nation where they live once they learn the native [national] language and are set on the right track in the national culture.'[144] What Townsend held out was a two-pronged religious and scientific agenda calibrated to coincide with Mexico's revolutionary aims.

Townsend and Legters crossed into Mexico on 11 November 1933.[145] Four days before their departure Townsend finally resigned from CAM so that he could legitimately claim that he was not a missionary.[146] 'Having to be so careful makes me feel rather like a spy', he later confided, 'but I'd be even that to get the Message to those poor Indian tribes.'[147] Never deeply wedded to his missionary identity, Townsend simply dropped it in favour of referring to himself as an 'educator'.

Legters returned to the U.S after a few weeks, leaving Townsend to his own devices. His venturesome colleague was hardly at a loss in Mexico, and soon fell into the company of left-leaning American writer Frank Tannenbaum.[148] Tannenbaum was an American Progressive activist who wrote on education, prison reform and labour issues. Imprisoned in his early twenties for leading anarchic demonstrations in New York City, he later came under suspicion by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for

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[144] WCT to Lic. José M. Soto, 6 October 1933, TA 2077.
[145] WCT to 'Supporters', 11 November 1933, TA 1729.
[146] WCT to executive council, CAM, 7 November 1933, TA 1733.
[147] WCT to William and Etta Nyman, 8 April 1934, TA 50920.
[148] WCT to Elvira Townsend, 10 December 1933, TA 1718.

associating with a 'red cohort' of leftist intellectuals in Mexico.[149] The two men struck

up a friendship and Tannenbaum provided his new acquaintance with a note of

introduction to Mexico's director of rural education, Rafael Ramírez, thus paving the

way for Townsend to tour the country inspecting its educational system.[150]

During a two-month period Townsend travelled over 5,000 miles, visiting

schools and meeting with Mexican educators, businessmen, clergy and military

officials.[151] Upon his return to the U.S. in February 1934, he published a number of

articles lavishing praise on Mexico's educational system and its attempts to educate the

Indians and rural inhabitants.[152] He admitted in a 1935 piece that, while he was at first

'prejudiced against the educational authorities' for their anti-religious stance and purely

rationalist aims, he had now come to understand that 'religion has played the traitor' in

Mexico by its collaboration with 'exploitation, political injustices, foreign imperialism,

ignorance, superstition and even immorality'. What was needed, Townsend argued, was

not organized religion but rather 'personal pious faith' and the Bible as 'an antidote to

fanaticism' and a 'textbook of right living'. In effect he reasoned that the Bible would

bring about the very results which Mexico's revolutionary leaders and educators were

labouring towards. He lauded the salutary benefits that accrued from literacy and

reading of the Bible. 'Peasants formerly lacking in a desire for knowledge', after

learning to read the Bible, 'delve into its truths' and subsequently give up drinking, pay

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[149] Charles A. Hale, 'Frank Tannenbaum and the Mexican Revolution', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (May 1995): pp. 215-246.

[150] WCT to Elvira Townsend, 20 December 1933, TA 1716.

[151] William Cameron Townsend, 'Record Part of Mexican Trip', 21 December 1933 to 12 February 1934, TA 1892; WCT to Josephus Daniels, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, 18 December 1936, TA 1911.

[152] William Cameron Townsend, 'Mexico's Program of Rural Education', *School and Society* 39, no. 1018 (June 1934): pp. 848-851, TA 901866; William Cameron Townsend, 'The Guardians of the Mexican Revolution', c. mid-1934, TA 42602; William Cameron Townsend, 'Mexico's Astounding Program of Rural Education', 1934, TA 42604; William Cameron Townsend, 'Blazing a New Trail in Education South of the Border', 1934, TA 42603.

off their debts and find their 'standard of living' inexorably rising. 'If educators find this transformation going on in its early stages before it has been cristalized [sic] in ecclesiastical molds [sic]', he concluded, 'they can guide it so as to greatly aid them in their program of social uplift.'[153] Townsend at once sought to secure his credentials as an exponent of the educational ideals of the Mexican Revolution while holding out the Bible as a moralizing force as over against organized religion, which was cast as an impediment to progress.

Hindering Mexican educators' objectives was the sheer variety of indigenous languages and a dearth of linguistic expertise required to untangle the problem. Nathaniel Weyl, an American economist and a first-hand observer of 1930s Mexico, noted in 1939 that 'One of Mexico's greatest problems is the scarcity of capable technicians loyal to the revolutionary program of the Government'.[154] Over the summers of 1934 and 1935 Cameron Townsend busied himself training a handful of young missionary-linguists in Arkansas who could, if permanent access to Mexico could be obtained, help to alleviate this dearth of 'technicians'.[155] In August 1935 Townsend and one of his top linguistic students from Camp Wycliffe, Ken Pike, put in an appearance at the Seventh Inter-American Scientific Conference in Mexico City. When Ramírez encountered Townsend he enthusiastically welcomed him back to Mexico. Most importantly he introduced the pair to Mariano Silva y Aceves, the director of the Mexican Institute of Linguistic Research, which had been established in 1933. Townsend recounted to Aceves his experiments with bilingual education in Guatemala and his vision for linguistic analysis, literacy and Bible translation. Aceves was

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[153] William Cameron Townsend, 'Is Religion Doomed in the Land of Cuautemoc?', 1935, TA 42599.

[154] Weyl, *The Reconquest of Mexico*, p. 328.

[155] The establishment of 'Camp Wycliffe' by Cameron Townsend in 1934 to train young missionary recruits in the rudiments of descriptive linguistics is detailed at length in chapter three.

apparently impressed because he invited Townsend and his students to cooperate with the Institute. While the conference was still in session Pike was placed at Aceves' disposal as a linguistic 'consultant', and the two worked together briefly collecting data in Mexico City from bilingual informants. The following year Aceves arranged for some of Townsend's budding linguists to become official researchers attached to the National University.[156] Also in 1936, at Townsend's urging, a linguistic conference was arranged in Mexico, where papers, mainly by his cadre of recently trained missionary-linguists, were presented. Townsend expected that this event would help to establish the 'thoroughly scientific' credentials of his embryonic organization in the eyes of Mexican scholars.[157] The door to Mexico was suddenly prised open and the welcome mat rolled out for him to begin implementing what he referred to in a report to the PMA as a 'three point program of Bible translation, cooperation with the University in scientific linguistic research, and cooperation with the government in its welfare program'.[158] Townsend had convinced Mexican officials and educators that his nascent organization had a real scientific and cultural part to play in Mexico's on-going revolution.

So what had happened between 1933 and August 1935 that led to this state of affairs? In the first place, Townsend's laudatory articles published in the *Dallas News* and *School and Society* had convinced Ramírez and Secretary of Education Narcisco Bassols that he would in fact attempt to shape his venture to fit the Mexico context.[159] In the second place, recently elected President Lárzaro Cárdenas had, in June 1935,

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[156] WCT to Pioneer Mission Agency (hereafter 'PMA'), 8 September 1937, p. 3, TA 2102; Cameron Townsend et. al., *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1991), pp. 55-56; KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, pp. 17-18, TA 43472.

[157] Quoted in WCT to Karl D. Hummel, 12 February 1937, TA 2158; WCT to PMA, 8 September 1938, TA 2102; William Cameron Townsend, 'Memorandum para el C. Secretario de Educacion Publica', 24 December 1941, TA 2697.

[158] WCT to PMA, 8 September 1937, TA 2102.

[159] Rafael Ramírez to WCT, 15 March 1934, TA 1886.

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dismissed his cabinet. This shuffling of the president's cabinet altered its makeup from a Calles-era extreme anticlerical stance to a much more moderate position on the role of religion in Mexican society.[160] At the very same moment that Townsend's publicity efforts were dispelling scepticism over his intentions, the Mexican political winds were shifting in a more favourable direction on religion.

In late 1933 and early 1934, when Townsend was reconnoitring Mexico's education system, the country's next president was also perambulating throughout the country. Had Lázaro Cárdenas chanced to meet Townsend, they would have discovered that they held much in common. Cárdenas, elected president on 1 July 1934, was a mestizo of Tarascan Indian heritage. He brought with him to the presidency a genuine heartfelt concern for Mexico's peasants and Indians, something he had already demonstrated during his governorship of Michoacán.[161] By tirelessly campaigning in far-flung rural areas and patiently lending an ear to peasants' endless complaints, he created for himself tremendous popular support, which allowed for his 1935 break with his political patron Calles. Perhaps the simplest way to characterize the president's outlook is to quote a rural working-class Mexican, who upon meeting Cárdenas is reported to have said that 'We are progressive men, Mr. General. We do not drink alcohol, because we repudiate vice and want to feed our families better, and because it gives us pleasure to see our wives with new clothes and shoes.'[162] Cárdenas, like Townsend, was an exhibit in Progressivism; therefore encounters such as this one would certainly have brought a smile to the president's face, for this was precisely the aftereffect he expected from his version of Mexico's Revolution.

Cárdenas, with his impeccable revolutionary credentials already well established,

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[160] Weyl, *The Reconquest of Mexico*, pp. 162-164.
[161] Meyer and Sherman, *Course of Mexican History*, pp. 596-598; Riding, *Distant Neighbors*, p. 75.
[162] Weyl, *Reconquest of Mexico*, p. 160.

had little need to demonstrate bellicosity towards the Church, as had his predecessor

Calles. His government, Cárdenas promised, would 'not repeat the mistakes committed

by previous administrations in considering the religious question the preeminent

problem'. 'It is not the government's job', he emphasized, 'to promote antireligious

campaigns.'[163] Staking out a moderate position on Roman Catholicism, however, did not

indicate that Cárdenas turned his back on the revolutionary drive towards modernity,

socialism and rationalism. Within months of his taking office, Article 3 of the

Constitution was amended to the effect that 'education imparted by the State shall be

socialist and in addition to excluding all religious doctrines, shall combat fanaticism and

prejudice'.[164] On this point it would seem that the two men would have intractable

differences. Yet it must be recalled that Townsend was already advancing notions that

the Bible could serve revolutionary ends as 'an antidote to fanaticism' and a 'textbook

of right living', and that literacy and Bible reading led almost inexorably to a thirst for

rational knowledge. What Townsend was proposing was nothing less than a non-

sectarian faith shorn of ecclesiasticism, where the Bible, freed as it were from either

Catholic or Protestant interpreters, would serve as a moralizing and liberalizing force

rather than as a tool of oppression and class interests. Townsend even went so far as to

link the Bible's teachings to the socialist aims of the Revolution. In a 1935 article he

pointed out that Jesus himself had 'commanded the rich young ruler to sell all that he

had and give it to the needy'.[165] Townsend was making the argument that this pared-

down, non-sectarian form of Christianity could serve the socialist aims of Mexico's

revolutionaries over against the Roman Catholic Church's insistence 'that property

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[163] Krauze, *Mexico*, pp. 459-460.
[164] Ibid., p. 433.
[165] William Cameron Townsend, 'Is Religion Doomed in the Land of
Cuautemoc?', 1935, TA 42599.

rights, rooted in nature, are inviolable'.[166] By Townsend's lights, religion was not the problem since, depending on how it was deployed, it had the capacity to repress or to liberate and enlighten.

Townsend understood that the best way to prove the validity of his intentions was to put them into action. He settled in the impoverished rural village of Tetelcingo, Morelos, where he initiated a multifaceted social, scientific and religious programme that set the pattern for WBT-SIL projects to come. Whether intentional or not, with ironic symbolism he parked his camper-trailer between the town's school and the local Catholic church. On the one side his stratagem was designed to supplant Roman Catholicism with a non-sectarian form of evangelicalism, while on the other side making an effort to fulfil revolutionary educational objectives. Townsend detailed the outlines of his programme in a letter to U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Josephus Daniels, with whom he developed a long and lasting friendship.[167] He listed no fewer than nineteen separate projects, including whitewashing the insides of houses, planting five hundred trees secured from the Department of Reforestation, introducing dairy cows and building an irrigation system. On the linguistic front he developed an Aztec (Nahuatl) reading primer, began learning the local language and made plans to launch a Bible translation project. On the whole Townsend's religious goals were rather modest by most missionary standards. He certainly kept up a steady stream of personal but discreet personal evangelism behind the flurry of other activities that furthered the essential goals of the Mexican Revolution, but in his own words he was 'determined not to engage in the propagation of sects but rather to give the simple Bible to people'.[168] To

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[166] 'Carta pastoral colectiva de los prelodos de la provincial del Michoacán', 1920, quoted in *Setting the Virgin on Fire*, Becker, p. 17.

[167] Josephus Daniels, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat: Ambassador to Mexico, 1933-1942* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947), pp. 167-168.

[168] WCT to Ambassador Josephus Daniels, 18 December 1935, TA 1911.

the casual observer happening upon Tetelcingo in 1935 or 1936 there would have been little to indicate that a missionary was in town; rather one would have observed what looked very much like any other rural community service project carried out under the direction of Cárdenas's government.

The most important eyewitness to Townsend's ambitious programme of social uplift was President Cárdenas himself. The president's interest was aroused by reading reports from Ambassador Daniels about this intrepid American's activities. Cárdenas paid an unexpected visit to the Townsends on 20 January 1936.[169] An enduring life-long relationship between the two men ensued. 'If before having the pleasure of knowing you, I loved and admired the revolutionary work of Mexico,' Townsend wrote to Cárdenas after the president's visit, 'now, upon knowing its highest representative personally I feel more intimately identified with her and more resolved and determined in service.'[170] Cárdenas was equally affable in his response. 'I wish to congratulate you upon the noble service which you are accomplishing among the Indian towns in connection with your research studies', he wrote in March. Townsend had promised to bring a contingent of young American volunteers to develop the same kind of projects throughout Mexico. Thus the president added that 'I earnestly desire that you may be able to carry out your project of bringing a brigade of university trained young people to engage themselves in the same service as that which you are accomplishing, and to that end, my Administration would give you every aid which might be necessary'.[171] Having won the president's admiration, Townsend's burgeoning field organization, which he was beginning to refer to as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), had gained not

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[169] Elvira Townsend, *The Moody Church News*, June 1936, TA 1983.
[170] WCT to Lázaro Cárdenas, 20 January 1936, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico, Fondo Lázaro Cárdenas, 710.1/1598, quoted in *A New Vision*, Svelmoe, p. 270.
[171] Lázaro Cárdenas to WCT, 28 March 1936, TA 2046 (translation by Calvin (Cal) Hibbard).

only unfettered access to Mexico but it now had the full weight of the government

behind its activities.

Perhaps the best way to summarize Cárdenas's assessment of SIL's contribution

to Mexico is simply to quote at length from a 1937 letter he sent to Townsend.

> Being convinced of the value of the work which you and your
> group of North American teachers have been carrying on among
> the Indian peoples of this country, I extend to you the
> appreciation of the Government over which I preside, hoping
> you may continue cooperating with us with the same enthusiasm
> for the we[l]fare of the Indian races, in which you will have the
> realisation of having contributed your unselfish endeavor in
> behalf of these underprivileged classes, being rewarded for the
> discomforts and hardships which you must encounter frequently
> in your noble mission, by satisfaction of seeing the people
> bettered as a result of the great service which you are all
> rendering.[172]

Cameron Townsend and Lázaro Cárdenas were united in a progressive vision for

Mexico's Indians. This shared goal formed the basis for each to realize their separate

political and religious aims.

Townsend's relationship with Cárdenas opened the way for him to channel his

young Camp Wycliffe graduates into Mexico, where they engaged in language and

community development projects coupled with Bible translation. However, Townsend's

missionary-linguists did not preach, baptize converts, or found churches under SIL's

control.[173] Thus, rather than entering Mexico as a classical faith mission, Townsend

instead conformed his mission to Mexico's socio-political context. In this pragmatic

adaptation to circumstance lie the roots of the WBT-SIL dual organization. Operating

abroad under the banner of the Summer Institute of Linguistics conferred upon

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[172] Lázaro Cárdenas to WCT, 15 June 1937, TA 2182 (translation by Cal Hibbard).

[173] William Cameron Townsend, 'Notes on Spiritual Work, 26 April 1948, TA 42641; Kenneth L. Pike, 'Our Own Tongue Wherein We are Born', *Bible Translator* 10, no. 2 (1959): p. 15; William Cameron Townsend, 'The Early Years of Wycliffe', 1949 (rev. 1980), pp. 34-36.

Townsend's mission the requisite scientific aura necessitated by partnering with

governments along secular lines. By its very quasi-secular status, SIL was not very well

suited to the task of relating to the organization's evangelical constituency in North

America. It was therefore necessary to develop a second but parallel organization for the

purposes of generating publicity, recruiting personnel and for the provision of essential

administrative functions. From 1934 down to 1941, the Pioneer Mission Agency

supplied these services. In 1941 the number of linguist-translators in Mexico rose to

nearly one hundred, thus exceeding the administrative capacity of PMA's Philadelphia

office.[174] Wycliffe Bible Translators was thus formed in 1942 to take up the tasks of

publicity, recruiting, constituent relations and forwarding of funds to SIL. In 1942 both

WBT and SIL were officially incorporated as separate organizations, but with an

overlapping membership, identical leadership and parallel boards of directors, of which

a majority were WBT-SIL insiders.[175] In effect, the two organizations were simply one

mission with a twofold character.

The problem of gaining access to Mexico was solved, but this radical new

approach to missions created at least three formidable challenges. The first lay in the

fact that Townsend was presenting SIL to Mexico as a truly scientific organization and

its missionaries as scientists and professional linguists. At a time when Mexico

possessed little in the way of linguistic expertise, this arrangement went unquestioned.

However, as the discipline of descriptive linguistics developed apace over the next

decade, to refer to SIL as 'scientific' would demand far greater commitment to

scholarship and research than Townsend had at first envisaged. Also a time was soon

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[174] PMA letter to North American constituents on the formation of WBT, 10 July 1942, TA 41526.

[175] SIL Articles of Incorporation, 12 August 1942, Wycliffe Bible Translators and Summer Institute of Linguistics Corporate Archives, Dallas, Texas (hereafter 'WSA'); WBT Articles of Incorporation, 13 August 1942, TA 41523; SIL Articles of Incorporation, WSA.

coming when deploying summer-school-trained amateur linguists, some even lacking university degrees, was not going to impress Mexican academics. In the second place, by having shaped the contours of SIL to the Mexican context, the question of its viability in places where anti-clericalism was less pronounced and the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed greater respect was in question. Was this then a one-off project or could it be repeated? Thirdly, the mission strategy that Townsend developed was almost certain to perplex and annoy conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists in North America on whom SIL depended for recruits and funds. Asking fundamentalist recruits to drop their missionary identity to work for a revolutionary if not socialist government did not appear to be a plan designed for success. This was especially true at a time when the fundamentalist-modernist controversies were still reverberating. Moreover, pressing for donations for this undertaking, the task given to SIL's sister organization in the U.S., the Wycliffe Bible Translators, was fraught with many difficulties, since it would confront a public sensitized to the faith mission approach. Each of these three factors as they relate to the ultimate success of the WBT-SIL combination is explored in turn in the succeeding chapters.

Cameron Townsend pragmatically adapted his missionary programme to prevailing socio-political contexts, while yet never giving up his overarching social and religious goals. Struck by the social injustice and inequality he observed during his first months in Guatemala, he remained committed to the uplift of Latin America's indigenous peoples. Along the way he framed readership of the Bible in the mother tongue as the key to evangelizing the hearts and reforming the minds of these peoples. His natural capacity for creative destruction, the breaking down of existing patterns of missionary practice in order to achieve superordinate aims, set him apart from many of his CAM colleagues. When Townsend fell into the company of Howard Dinwiddie and

L. L. Legters in 1921 his fate was all but sealed. These dynamic men, inspired with the outsized confidence that Keswick or Victorious Life Testimony could engender, refashioned traditional patterns of evangelical missionary activity to fit their own vision. Paying little heed to the antithesis between the social gospellers and the fundamentalists, Townsend and his colleagues charted a middle course. Townsend then carried this opportunistic approach into Mexico, winning for himself and SIL not only a respected place in a revolutionary and anticlerical Mexico but also the accolades of one of its most revered presidents, Lázaro Cárdenas. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Cameron Townsend dared to challenge reified social, religious and missionary patterns that had come to be accepted as conventional wisdom, and in doing so he began carving out an entirely new approach to Christian missions that formed the basis for the development of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LINGUISTIC APPROACH

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'As long as we tell anybody that we are scientists, in my opinion it is absolutely essential that we do not be liars. We claim that we are scientists, we must be scientists.'

Kenneth L. Pike (1947)

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Faith missions were founded to win souls, not to cultivate missionary scholarship. Camp Wycliffe, established in 1934 as the original training arm of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, was therefore established in an intellectual milieu that did not give prominence to the life of the mind. With its nail-keg chairs and pioneering spirit, the Camp Wycliffe project to teach missionary candidates the rudiments of linguistics was structured along pragmatic lines in keeping with the spirit of fundamentalist Bible school endeavours. The fact that it was launched as a rustic summer 'camp', rather than a full-fledged academic institution, emphasizes this point. Such humble beginnings did not dampen Cameron Townsend's enthusiasm, for he tended to view his fledgling projects through spectacles that magnified their import to an almost preposterous degree. Thus, in typical fashion, he grandiosely billed graduates of his school as 'linguists' upon completion of their short course of study. The camp's founder was certainly given to hyperbole but, as was often the case, his extraordinary claims had an uncanny way of finding fulfilment. One of the most important steps taken by Townsend that would ultimately shape the contours of SIL was the linking of his enterprise with the emerging school of American structural linguistics. When he subsequently attracted two exceptionally talented students, and then sent them off for post-graduate studies in linguistics at the University of Michigan, Townsend set his organization upon a path that was destined to carry it well beyond what even he could

have imagined. In the main, SIL's coming of age as a first-rank institute of applied linguistics—one that could claim to have produced more primary research on indigenous languages than any other institution in the world—is the tale of how a group of faith missionaries overcame their inherited anti-intellectualism to create a bastion of scholarly accomplishment.[1]

The Intellectual Climate of Fundamentalism

The way in which fundamentalists mounted their defence of the faith had the unfortunate effect of blunting the life of the mind, and this in turn had deleterious effects on fundamentalist institutions of higher learning. In their polemics with modernists, fundamentalists generally took tactical refuge in their received traditions rather than strategically developing the intellectual resources necessary to meet their foes on an equal footing. Thus, as the historian Joel Carpenter fittingly put it, fundamentalists waged battle with 'discredited intellectual equipment'.[2] Having lost their bid for control of the centres of power within mainline Protestantism, from the 1930s fundamentalists developed their own institutions, many of which neglected academic rigour in favour of simple piety and evangelistic activism. Commenting on the magnitude of this shift, the historian Nathan O. Hatch has aptly suggested 'that for evangelicals the heritage of fundamentalism in Christian learning was akin to the impact of Chairman Mao's "Cultural Revolution" on Chinese academia'.[3] Along this line it became fashionable

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[1] Geoffrey Sampson, *Schools of Linguistics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 79-80; Kenneth L. Pike, 'Our Own Tongue Wherein We Were Born', *The Bible Translator* 10, no. 2 (April 1959): p. 14.

[2] Joel A. Carpenter, 'From Fundamentalism to the New Evangelical Coalition', in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, IL: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), p. 4.

[3] Nathan O. Hatch, 'Evangelical Colleges and the Challenge of Christian Thinking', in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Grand Rapids, IL: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), p. 159.

within fundamentalist circles to style oneself in opposition to ivory-towered intellectuals by striking a reactionary and populist pose. A case in point is Lewis Sperry Chafer. Although he had supported education efforts by missionaries during his tenure as general secretary of Central American Mission in the 1920s and was the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, he still argued that a lack of formal theological education was an asset. In 1947, Chafer boasted that 'The very fact that I did not study a prescribed course of study in theology made it possible for me to approach the subject with an unprejudiced mind and to be concerned only with what the Bible actually teaches.'[4] This type of reaction to theological liberalism produced nothing less than an intellectual rout from which later evangelicals struggled to recover. Thus, by the 1930s, fundamentalists were mainly served by a host of Bible institutes and Bible schools, of which even the best were not of the academic calibre found in Catholic universities and mainline Protestant seminaries, let alone America's better secular universities.

In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994), Mark A. Noll, a leading historian of American Christianity, remarked that the trend away from the life of the mind among fundamentalists was nothing less than an 'intellectual disaster'.[5] Looking back across the evangelical landscape of the twentieth century, Noll lamented the failure of evangelicals to keep up the life of the mind. He observed that in the wake of the modernist-fundamentalist controversies evangelicals had fled from specifically Christian reflection on 'economics and political science, literary criticism and imaginative writing, historical inquiry and philosophical studies, linguistics and the history of science, social theory and the arts'. Thus, by default, meaningful and sustained thought on these aspects

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[4] Quoted in C. F. Lincoln, 'Biographical Sketch of the Author', in *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols., Lewis Sperry Chafer (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), vol. 8, pp. 5-6, further quoted in Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), p. 128.

[5] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, IL: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), p. 109.

of human experience and nature was left to non-evangelical intellectuals. This departure from the field of intellectual refection and Christian scholarship, Noll charged, was 'the scandal of the evangelical mind'.[6]

The cognitive horizons of many fundamentalists were orientated towards practical service in the form of evangelism and defending the faith. Reflection and intellectual endeavours, especially if they were of the subjective variety, were considered of little help, and perhaps even a hindrance to the practical aims of many fundamentalists. Arguably fundamentalism of the 1930s and 1940s would seem to be poor soil for a project like Camp Wycliffe to become more than a summer training camp in the tradition of the Bible school movement. Townsend, however, would break more than a few rules in the fundamentalist playbook, thereby setting off a chain reaction that would transform Camp Wycliffe into a world-class institute of descriptive linguistics.

Kenneth L. Pike and Eugene A. Nida

When Cameron Townsend consulted University of Chicago linguist Edward Sapir in 1927, he took an important first step towards yoking SIL to the American school of descriptive linguistics (alternatively American structuralism).[7] This relationship would eventually prove to be one of the most far-reaching and significant factors determining the character of SIL, for it drew the organization into a decidedly scholarly orbit and profoundly shaped its disciplinary interests.

Of the three major figures identified with the American school of descriptive linguistics, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield, it is Bloomfield who is generally considered the most outstanding figure of the group, and he was the scholar most responsible for the founding of the Linguistic Society of America. From the late

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[6] Ibid., p. 7.
[7] Cameron Townsend's initial contact with Edward Sapir and descriptive linguistics is covered in chapter two.

1930s, linguists working in the Bloomfieldian tradition primarily directed their efforts towards describing the structure of individual languages much more than theorizing about the nature of language in general. Their attention was also overwhelmingly focused on the smaller units of language, such as phonology (the patterning of sounds) and morphology (the grammatical aspects of suffixes, affixes and intonation), rather than on semantics. The descriptivist approach was therefore highly restricted in that it did not much concern itself with how meaning impinged on grammar or the way in which larger elements of discourse were structured.[8] Descriptive linguistics was, in its practicality and objective goals, a natural fit in many ways with the kind of naïve empiricism prevalent among fundamentalists. This can clearly be seen in a quotation from an historiographical essay, where the central thrust of Bloomfieldian linguistics is remarked upon: 'Rigor of method as against speculative interpretation; the facts of science as against popular misconception and entrenched intellectual prejudice — these are at the start' of the Bloomfieldian method.[9] Hence Bloomfieldian descriptivism was amenable to the conservative evangelical mind, since it seemed to be uncontaminated by the kind of theory-laden or speculative science which distressed so many fundamentalists. The Bloomfieldian school of descriptive linguistics was also an ideal fit for SIL, for it was a pragmatic and narrowly circumscribed discipline that offered SIL translators useful techniques for cracking the mysteries of complex indigenous languages.

Kenneth L. (Ken) Pike and Eugene A. Nida, two of Townsend's most outstanding students and the two figures most responsible for establishing SIL's academic foundation, drank deeply from the well of American structural linguistics.

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[8] Sampson, *Schools of Linguistics*, pp. 57-80; R. H. Robbins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1979), pp. 206-208.
[9] Dell Hymes and John Fought, eds., *American Structuralism* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), p. 103.

They first appeared at Camp Wycliffe in 1935 and 1936 respectively. For prospective

faith missionaries of that period, they presented themselves at Camp Wycliffe with

above-average academic qualifications, and both quickly demonstrated an outstanding

aptitude for linguistic analysis. Had Townsend not stumbled upon these two precocious

talents and, most importantly, had he not encouraged them to pursue advanced studies at

the University of Michigan's Linguistic Institute in the early years of their missionary

careers, it is doubtful whether SIL would ever have become a respected academic

institution. This was to be especially true in the case of Ken Pike, for his contributions to

SIL's development would overshadow his colleague's, since Nida was destined to resign

in 1953.[10] With these two budding scholars joining his venture, Townsend was on the

cusp of opening up entirely new vistas for young fundamentalists with an urge to use

their minds in missionary service.

Ken Pike came of age in an evangelical home, and attended a Congregational

church in Woodstock, Connecticut, with his family.[11] Pike was in a number of ways an

unlikely missionary candidate; and his career as a missionary nearly ended before it

began. In 1928, at the age of eighteen, Pike promised God that if his gravely-ill father

survived he would go into the ministry. Keeping his vow he applied to the China Inland

Mission (CIM) in December 1932, one semester before his 1933 graduation from the

fundamentalist Gordon College of Theology and Missions in Boston. His future with

the CIM ended summarily when he was rejected during the mission's orientation

process because, as Pike put it, they were 'afraid that my nervous hulk would crack'.[12]

The CIM thought that this skinny and 'jittery' youngster would never survive on the

mission field. Pike had also experienced a great deal of difficulty with the pronunciation

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[10] The reason for Nida's resignation is covered in chapter four.

[11] Eunice V. Pike, *Ken Pike: Scholar and Christian* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), p. 7.

[12] KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 1, TA 43472.

of Mandarin Chinese during his language examinations. Dejected but still eager for Christian service, Pike returned to Gordon College for a postgraduate course in Greek, and it was during his second sojourn there that he learned of Camp Wycliffe.[13] The next summer the inhibited young man hitchhiked his way to Arkansas for the 1935 session, thinking that the 1500-mile trip would provide opportunity for 'social training'.[14] Wycliffe legend holds that when the gruff-mannered L. L. Legters saw the rail-thin Pike perched in a tree, he grumbled to himself something to the effect of 'Lord, couldn't you have sent us someone better than this?'[15] Townsend could not have agreed less, since for him Pike was perfectly adequate material. Not for the last time would WBT-SIL's founder show contempt for judging missionary candidates by prevailing traditional standards that emphasized physical hardiness, psychological steadiness and spiritual ardour.

Eugene Nida was raised in an Oklahoma City Methodist church, where he later professed to have had 'the most meaningful experience of my life'. On back-to-back Sundays, two different visiting evangelists preached on the thirteenth chapter of Revelation from mutually opposed perspectives. The perplexed youth plied his father for an answer to these contradictory interpretations of the Bible. Nida recounted his father saying that 'In life it is even more important to be able to doubt than to believe, because too many people love the unbelievable.'[16] Nida seems to have taken this lesson to heart, for it was his willingness to challenge conventional patterns of thought that would later

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[13] E. Pike, *Ken Pike: Scholar and Christian*, pp. 7-13; KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 13, TA 43472; KLP to WCT, 2 May 1935, TA 1946; KLP to Sam Fisk, 28 May 1935, TA 1942.

[14] KLP to Calvin (Cal) Hibbard (hereafter 'CH'), 'Re: Your Question Regarding Sam Fisk', 19 December 1986, TA 39527.

[15] Hugh Steven, *Doorway to the World: The Memoirs of W. Cameron Townsend, 1934-1947* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1999), p. 17.

[16] Eugene A. Nida, *Fascinated by Languages* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2003), p. 1.

prove invaluable to his theoretical insights on Bible translation.

Nida's arrival at the Camp Wycliffe in 1936 marked an important moment in his dream of becoming a missionary, an aspiration that he had harboured from the tender age of four. Striking out towards this goal, Nida attended the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), where he majored in Greek and minored in foreign languages and the sciences. Nida graduated *summa cum laude* in 1936.[17] At Camp Wycliffe it was immediately apparent that Eugene Nida was head and shoulders above his fellow classmates. Indeed, Townsend had him teaching as a student before the 1936 session had concluded.[18] Nida's talent for linguistic analysis was again on display when he followed Townsend into Mexico. Shortly after his arrival he began to recognize subtle dialectal differences in the language area and he produced a rather sophisticated morphological analysis. These linguistic insights were outstanding accomplishments after so little time spent in contact with the language situation.[19] The young Eugene Nida exhibited the qualities of a natural born scholar.

Nida's physical constitution did not match his mental powers, and as a result he failed spectacularly in his first venture as a pioneer missionary. Once in Mexico, his rapid progress in analysing the Tarahumara language was matched by an almost equally swift decline in the state of his health.[20] On 6 December 1936 the weary youngster wrote to Townsend, requesting leave to have a broken tooth treated in Chihuahua City, and

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[17] Eugene A. Nida, 'My Pilgrimage in Missions', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12 (April 1988): pp. 62-65.

[18] Philip C. Stine, *Let the Word Be Written: The Lasting Influence of Eugene A. Nida* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), pp. 27-28; EAN to WCT, 25 May 1936, TA 2038.

[19] Eugene A. Nida (hereafter 'EAN') to WCT, 25 November 1936, TA 2004.

[20] WCT to WGNS, 2 December 1936, TA 1974; EAN to WCT, 22 October 1936, TA 2017; EAN to WCT, 5 November 1936, TA 2012; EAN to WCT, 13 November 1936, TA 2010.

remarking that 'this is surely one hard place to work'.[21] His next letter to Townsend,
written on 19 December, arrived not from Mexico but from Garden City, California,
where Nida reported that he was 'getting repaired'. Much to Townsend's chagrin Nida
had perfunctorily packed up, left Mexico and returned to his parents' home. A medical
examination revealed that he was suffering from the symptoms of altitude sickness
along with a number of other undisclosed ailments.[22] Nida would never again attempt
pioneer missionary work; his days as a field translator were finished.

Yet it was evident that Nida's bodily weakness was more than compensated for
by his outstanding cerebral abilities. Therefore, when it became obvious that he would
not be returning to Mexico, Townsend, although disappointed, determined that this
young man's formidable intellect would not be lost to the cause of Bible translation. He
thus arranged for Nida's talents to be shared with the American Bible Society (ABS) on
a part-time basis, and for him to pursue doctoral studies while continuing to teach at
Camp Wycliffe. The actual implementation of this partnership was not consummated
until Nida completed his doctoral studies in linguistics and anthropology at the
University of Michigan in 1943. Between 1937 and 1953, Nida continued to serve
WBT-SIL in public relations work, teaching at Camp Wycliffe and consulting on Bible
translation projects. In addition he also served on the organization's board of directors
from 1942 to 1953.[23] Rather than writing Nida off as simply another regrettable
missionary casualty, Townsend instead rehabilitated the young man's missionary career,
and in doing so salvaged for Bible translation one of its foremost scholars, for Nida was
one day destined to revolutionize Bible translation theory.

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[21] EAN to WCT, 6 December 1936, TA 1999.
[22] EAN to WCT, 19 December 1936, TA 1997.
[23] EAN to WCT, 25 November 1936, TA 2004; WCT to KLP, 7 April 1937, TA
2153; EAN to PMA, 19 August 1937, TA 2230; WCT to Eric North, secretary,
American Bible Society, 15 September 1937, TA 2094; Eric North to EAN, 6 December
1943, TA 3794; Nida, 'My Pilgrimage': pp. 62-65.

In a number of ways Ken Pike is perhaps the most outstanding example of the type of fundamentalist candidate that Camp Wycliffe and SIL attracted and then helped to grow academically and intellectually. 'I was a fire-eater', he recalled in a 1970s interview, 'and unless the Holy Spirit tames me I am still a Son of Thunder that bungles, boggles and blows everything and stamps on everybody without mercy.' In this same interview, he related that '[J. Gresham] Machen was right down my line', adding that had he not entered missionary work, he might have become like the ardent fundamentalist 'Carl McIntire[,] slamming home to try to do something for God'.[24] In the mid-to-late 1930s, Pike's mind housed a mixed bag of scholarly potential, fundamentalist anti-intellectualism and missionary idealism. In a long letter to Townsend, he pilloried Nida for what he saw as his colleague's useless digressions into pure scientific research, which 'made not a hoop nor holler of difference . . . in translation'. As far as Pike was concerned, Nida was simply trying to put a 'Scientific feather' in his cap. He also took umbrage at Nida's lack of pioneering missionary fortitude, speculating that there was a very real possibility that he was simply a hypochondriac and that he was manifesting unspiritual fears of death. The 'territory of the devil staked a claim', Pike wrote, 'and has left a boy in bondage'. Like himself, he thought that Nida should be 'ready to meet the Lord to-morrow . . . with [his] boots on'. By way of conclusion he specified that Nida should 'forget his health, and come to live or die, sink or swim' and that he must 'forget his science and get to translation'.[25] As will become clear, Pike was not atypical of the kind of candidates that Townsend attracted, since many of them bore the marks of fundamentalism, with its undertow of anti-intellectualism and missionary idealism.

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[24] KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 6, TA 43472.
[25] KLP to WCT, 29 March 1937, pp. 5-10, Pike Special Collection (hereafter 'PSC').

At the very same time that Pike was taking Nida to task, he was beginning to experience a scholarly awakening. Pike later recalled that he found the study of phonetics 'extremely exciting'.[26] His earlier failure to master the subtle differences of Mandarin pronunciation set the stage for an exciting moment of illumination when he discovered during classes on phonetics that it was not so mysterious after all. There was a method for accurately reproducing the seemingly impossible jumble of sounds. At the end of the 1935 summer session of Camp Wycliffe he travelled to Mexico, where he began an analysis of the Mixtec language in the village of San Miguel el Grande, located in the state of Oaxaca. While in Mexico he expended his meagre financial resources acquiring, 'sight unseen [,] every book on phonetics' available through a Mexico City bookstore.[27] Pike could also be found reading a recently published book by the eminent linguist Leonard Bloomfield entitled *Language* (1933). This work was quickly becoming recognized as the period's definitive work on linguistics. Pike remarked to his sister Eunice in April of 1937 that his reading of that 'plaguey Bloomfield' was slowing his analysis of Mixtec. Although he had read parts of *Language* four times without being able to comprehend it fully, he still thought of it as a 'lovely companion'.[28] Attending Camp Wycliffe and this first foray into field linguistics proved to be intellectually transformative experiences for the young Ken Pike.

Intending to make the most of Pike's talent, Townsend began pressing the young man to write a book on phonetics in the fall of 1936.[29] Pike later recalled that he was 'aghast' at the proposition, since he considered himself to possess a 'near-zero

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[26] KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 13, TA 43472.

[27] Kenneth L. Pike, 'An Autobiographical Note on Phonetics', in *Towards a History of Phonetics*, eds. David Abercrombie, R. E. Asher and Eugénie J. A. Henderson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p. 182; KLP to WCT, 29 March 1937, p. 5, PSC. NB: Unfortunately Pike's letter fails to mention the titles of the books he requested.

[28] KLP to Eunice Pike, 12 April 1937, PSC.

[29] Pike, 'An Autobiographical Note', p. 182.

background' in linguistics.[30] Only after he was immobilized in Mexico with a broken leg did he decide to make the best of a bad situation by working on the manuscript. Townsend sent a draft copy of Pike's work to Edward Sapir, who offered a glowing appraisal of Pike's efforts and suggested that Townsend should send this promising young student to study at the University of Michigan's Linguistic Institute. Townsend readily agreed to the proposal and Pike made his way to Michigan in the spring of 1937. This was Pike's first major foray into the world of postgraduate scholarship and, as he later put it, 'I never recovered'.[31] At the University of Michigan he pursued doctoral studies each summer under the supervision of Charles Fries, who was both the director of the Linguistic Institute and a professor at the university. Pike successfully defended his dissertation on phonetics in the fall of 1941.[32] Pike's academic achievement and intellectual conversion should not be underestimated. He had accomplished what few conservative evangelicals at the time could have imagined possible within the confines of a faith mission, and he charted the way for many others who were to follow in his footsteps in the coming decades in SIL.

Completing his doctorate and establishing a foothold in academia were only the beginnings of Pike's university career. In 1942 he was appointed as a part-time research associate in the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, and for the academic year of 1945-1946 he was awarded a Lloyd Postdoctoral Fellowship. Then, in 1948, he received an associate professorship, serving one semester each year at the university with the rest of his time dedicated to SIL work. That same year he turned down an invitation to teach at Yengching University in China, which, in light of having

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[30] KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 1, TA 43473.

[31] Pike, 'An Autobiographical Note', p. 182.

[32] Kenneth L. Pike, *Phonetics: A Critical Analysis of Phonetic Theory and a Technic for the Practical Description of Sounds* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1943).

been rejected by the CIM, he found 'grimly funny'.[33] In 1955 he was promoted to a full professorship at Michigan on the same rotational basis. Pike's long tenure with the University of Michigan stood him and SIL in good stead, for it ensured Pike's on-going intellectual development while also helping to secure SIL's academic credibility.

In 1954, Pike issued the first volume of what would become his three-volume magnum opus, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*.[34] In these volumes Pike articulated his 'tagmemic' approach to structural linguistics. Pike insisted that the linguistic particles from which language is constructed (sounds, syllables, words, clauses etc.) should be considered as 'units in context'. That is to say, at every step in the analysis of any linguistic structure the researcher must attend to the way in which various units of language impinge upon the others. Moreover, contrary to the prevailing Bloomfieldian proscription against mixing of levels in analysis, Pike also stipulated that it was crucial to investigate how the various levels of the linguistic hierarchy interacted. Pike's theory was well suited to linguistic analysis of unwritten languages in that it took a rather more comprehensive view of language than was typical at the time in the Bloomfieldian school.[35]

Central to Pike's tagmemic theory was a distinction between an insider's (emic) and an outsider's (etic) understanding of events or actions in context. Pike argued, in structuralist terms, that cultural insiders have accumulated knowledge that shapes how they understand an event or action that outsiders lack. Just as the speakers of a language have subconscious control of the rules that govern the structure of their language, they

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[33] KLP to WCT, 26 April 1948, TA 5540.

[34] Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, 2nd rev. ed. (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967).

[35] Bruce L. Edwards, 'Pike's Tagmemics and Its Impact on Rhetoric and Composition Theory', in *Language and Life: Essays in Memory of Kenneth L. Pike*, eds. Mary Ruth Wise, Thomas N. Headland and Ruth M. Brend (Arlington: The University of Texas at Arlington and SIL International, 2003), p. 573-574.

also have the same kind of internalised mastery of the structure of their culture. Thus until one had mastered the 'grammar' or come to an 'emic' understanding of a culture, one was at risk of misinterpreting a wide range of cultural data. Pike's theory naturally ruled out the idea that all observers would thus see the external world in the same fashion, for every individual was culturally conditioned to arrange various aspects of experience within specified pre-existing patterns at a subconscious level. 'All phenomena', Pike wrote, 'all "facts", all "things", somehow reach him [the individual observer] only through perceptual and psychological filters, which affect his perception of the structuring of and relevance of the physical data he observes.'[36] In the decades since Pike first postulated the theoretical distinction between the 'etic' and the 'emic' scholars have employed the terms and the associated theory not only in ethnography but also more recently in the study of the phenomenology of religion.[37] Pike's etic-emic conceptual framework is perhaps his most significant and durable contribution to the wider academic world.

The publication of Pike's *Language* signalled that he was not bound by the epistemological strictures of fundamentalism. By the early 1950s, Pike had clearly parted ways with the traditional fundamentalist common sense variety of knowing in favour of a rather more Kantian epistemology that recognized the active part the mind played in one's perception of the external world. His excursion into the non-fundamentalist intellectual world of secular academia encouraged Pike to accept some degree of philosophical relativism, which in turn allowed him to explore dimensions of language and social behaviour that would have been impossible had he remained

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[36] Pike, *Language*, p. 658.
[37] Kenneth L. Pike, 'Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behavior', in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, ed. Russell T. McCutcheon (New York, Cassel, 1999), pp. 28-36; Ward H. Goodenoug, 'Anthropology in the 20th Century and Beyond', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 104, no. 2 (June 2002): pp. 434-435.

securely within the confines of a strictly fundamentalist intellectual milieu.

Pike's academic journey thus led him to quarrel with the anti-intellectualist posture of fundamentalism, from which he himself had been extricated. 'For the past generation or two', Pike wrote in his 1962 *With Heart and Mind: A Personal Synthesis of Scholarship and Devotion*, 'the evangelical wing of the Christian church has viewed scholarship with suspicion. Reeling under attacks internally from higher criticism and externally from science, it has sometimes withdrawn into a defensive cyst formation in order to weather the storm.' This was certainly not the Pike of the mid-1930s. In his estimation science for the sake of science had become not only an approved endeavour but also an obligation for evangelicals. Thus he urged evangelicals to undertake active designs for 'making positive contributions to the world's knowledge'. Lamenting the calibre of evangelical scholarship in many Christian colleges, he suggested that these schools should not only pray for 'research workers to be appointed to their faculties' but that they should also '*pay*' for them as well. Pike concluded by surmising that if the 'old Puritan academic devotional witness' could be established 'on a broad front', there was the prospect that the 'intellectual climate' of the entire complex of graduate schools might shift. 'Secularism', he added, 'would cease being the only academic option'.[38] As a scholar, Pike tirelessly pitted himself against the heart-versus-mind manichaeism that was the legacy of fundamentalism.

Pike's career in secular academia was marked by some rare achievements for an evangelical. He was elected to serve as the president of the Linguistic Society of America in 1961, taking his place alongside such luminaries as Bloomfield and Sapir. In 1974 he was awarded a named professorship, the Charles C. Fries Professorship in

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[38]Kenneth L. Pike, *With Heart and Mind: A Personal Synthesis of Scholarship and Devotion* 2nd ed. (Duncanville, TX: Adult Learning Systems, Inc., [1962] 1996), pp. viii, 23, 26-27.

Linguistics at the University of Michigan, which he held until his retirement in 1979, and he served as Director of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan from 1975 to 1977. Pike also collected honorary doctorates along the way. In 1973 the University of Chicago bestowed this mark of distinction upon Pike, and he was awarded the Docteur Honoris Causa, L'Université René Descartes, at the Sorbonne, Paris, in 1978.[39] This synopsis could be lengthened considerably, but even this abbreviated account is ample evidence that Pike lived up to his own ideals and proved that evangelicals could pursue productive academic relationships outside the confines of their religious subculture.

Ken Pike's journey from a failed CIM candidate to an accomplished linguistic scholar is a testament of the kind of intellectual transformation that Townsend's scientific approach to Bible translation unwittingly set in motion. That Townsend had the foresight to salvage Pike and Nida's careers, and then encourage them to develop their minds in the service of Bible translation, is remarkable within the context of faith missions. At a time when the prospects for academic excellence and intellectual striving were dwindling for conservative evangelicals, SIL was providing ample opportunity for scholarly endeavours. The radical nature of venture did not, however, always develop smoothly. As was the case with Ken Pike, most WBT-SIL recruits came to WBT-SIL bearing the marks of fundamentalism and missionary idealism. Thus they would sometimes experience a great deal of inner tension as Camp Wycliffe and SIL became more academically orientated and even somewhat secularized. Likewise Townsend would occasional display an uneasiness with where Pike and Nida wished to take his nascent organization. Yet, by advancing these men's scholarly careers, Townsend had

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[39] Thomas N. Headland, 'A Tribute to the Life of Kenneth L. Pike: A Perspective from One of His Students', in *Language and Life*, eds. Wise, Headland and Brend, pp. 11-12; KLP, *Scholar and Christian*, pp. 181-182.

already let the proverbial genie out of the bottle, for they pursued a course of action that was to challenge the prevailing fundamentalist proclivity to shun scholarship in favour of heart-felt evangelistic action.

Heart and Mind? — The Struggle for Balance

Ken Pike and Eugene Nida pressed their notions of academic rigour at the 1937 session of Camp Wycliffe. This first attempt to boost the academic standing of the camp swiftly met with a backlash of fundamentalist anti-intellectualism. Cameron Townsend reported to the Pioneer Mission Agency (PMA) on 8 September that the fourth session of Camp Wycliffe, presently underway in Siloam Springs, Arkansas, was enjoying 'wonderful harmony'.[40] Townsend was blithely unaware that the exceedingly eager Pike and Nida were even then unleashing the full force of their academic zeal on the student body. Rumblings of the coming upheaval were soon felt. On the 14th, Townsend reported to his wife Elvira that Nida had given a 'rather hard exam' resulting in 'plenty of indignation at the table this noon'.[41] A few days later he again wrote that two students had 'decided to quit and several had decided not to recommend the camp to their friends'.[42] On 20 September he complained to Legters that 'over half the students were so discouraged they did not know what to do'. This impending disaster was partly the result of Nida's instituting a grading system based on college standards, rather than on the less rigorous Bible school standards, by which most of the students were accustomed to having their performance measured. When Pike and Nida criticized students who did not 'have the proper background to enable them to keep up' it only served to fan the flames of hostility.[43] Attempting to quell the agitation Townsend delivered two

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[40] WCT to PMA, 8 September 1937, p. 8, TA 2102.
[41] WCT to Elvira Townsend, 14 September 1937, TA 2095.
[42] WCT to Elvira Townsend, 18 September 1937, TA 2092.
[43] WCT to LLL, 20 September 1937, TA 2089.

devotionals and arranged for two convocations so that students could air their grievances. Townsend managed to convince these two up-and-coming scholars to cool their academic ardour, thus staving off disaster, but this reverse did not dampen the two men's ambitions to raise the academic qualifications of applicants.[44]

If academic standards were set too high then Townsend's vision of deploying hundreds of missionary-translators would grind to a halt. He therefore argued against moves to upgrade the educational requirements of Camp Wycliffe applicants. During the 1937 crisis, Townsend admitted to Legters that 'I feel that it is very important in the future for all of us to take the stand that the men and women whom God sends here should be helped, whether we feel that they are properly gifted or not'.[45] Two years later, the debate over student qualifications remained unsettled, and Townsend again weighed in. 'Personally, I would rather accept five failures', he allowed to SIL translator Max Lathrop in January 1939, 'than accept the responsibility of denying God's Word to a single tribe on account of standards which God has laughed at and utterly disregarded time and again.'[46] Townsend believed the evidence was on his side, and he pointed to a number of minimally educated SIL missionaries who were apparently enjoying success in their Bible translation projects.[47] The issue of education prerequisites was finally resolved by permitting applicants possessing a minimum of a high school diploma and some Bible school credits to attend courses, while insisting upon adequate academic performance during the courses to gain acceptance by SIL as a missionary-translator.[48]

With something of a *modus vivendi* between Townsend and his two up-and-coming linguists providing a middle path between laxity and rigour, Camp Wycliffe

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[44] WCT to Elvira Townsend, 18 September 1937, TA 2092.
[45] WCT to LLL, 20 September 1937, TA 2089.
[46] WCT to Max Lathrop, 27 January 1939, TA 2478.
[47] Ibid.
[48] William G. Nyman Sr (hereafter WGNS) to Georgia May Loper, 17 October 1945, TA 4113.

proved itself a roaring success. By 1940 concerns over low attendance had turned to

worries over how to house an enlarged student body.[49] To accommodate the growing

number of students, the 1940 session was moved to facilities on the campus of John

Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. Camp Wycliffe had enrolled 174

students since its inception in 1934. With thirty-two of these students having returned

for one or more sessions, a total of 142 individuals, comprising seventy-eight women

and sixty-four men, had received linguistic training at Camp Wycliffe by 1941.[50] The

large number of women testifies to faith missions' willingness to mobilize and deploy

single women under the banner of urgency, and to the fact that women were drawn to

missions with the knowledge that it afforded them greater opportunities for equal service

with men than was often the case at home in conservative churches in North America.[51]

Townsend's vision of non-sectarian service was patently evident in the diverse

denominational makeup of the student body. Twenty different denominations were

represented among students attending the first eight years of Camp Wycliffe.

Presbyterians topped the list with forty students, followed by Baptists with thirty-two

students. The Christian and Missionary Alliance was a distant third, with nine students

represented. Completing the list of denominations were Methodists, Bible Presbyterians,

Assemblies of God, Disciples of Christ, Mennonites, United Presbyterians, Brethren,

Church of the Brethren, Plymouth Brethren, Congregationalists, Swedish Covenant,

United Brethren, Southern Presbyterians, Four-Square Gospel, Mission Covenant, and

Friends. Nida was sufficiently impressed with the Presbyterian students, who came from

a denominational tradition of academic achievement, to single them out by remarking

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[49] LLL to WCT, 4 April 1940, TA 2657.

[50] 'Detailed Analysis of Information Regarding Students of Camp Wycliffe', 1941, TA 43046.

[51] Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), pp. 200-205, 253-254.

that they were 'well trained and well qualified'; however, only a minority of the Presbyterian students joined SIL, since most of them were already commissioned to serve with the Presbyterian Board, USA. The geographic spread was of equal breadth, with fifty-nine from the East Coast, forty-three from the Midwest, forty from the West Coast and twenty-three from the South.[52] The rapid growth and wide attraction of Camp Wycliffe suggest that a wide variety of mission boards were eager to upgrade their candidates' language skills. Townsend's move to sell science in the service of faith was timely, for he was at once helping to create a trend while at the same time riding it to success.

Pike and Nida had eased off on their demands at Camp Wycliffe, but they still managed to keep the pressure on translators serving in Mexico.[53] Thus students who took up service with SIL were expected to continue making regular contributions to the discipline of linguistics. Pike and Nida were not alone in stressing academic output. Richard S. Pittman, a Methodist of scholarly demeanour who took over Townsend's work in Tetelcingo during the late 1940s, and then later became the Mexico director of SIL, was another.[54] Pittman, like Pike, recognized from his tenure in Mexico that for SIL to maintain its integrity in the eyes of Mexican officials and educators it would have to produce more than translated Bibles. 'Prepare to Publish', Pittman challenged his colleagues in 1942. 'By that,' he qualified, 'I am not thinking primarily of our Scripture publications, but scientific publications.' Pittman did not think it 'too high a standard' to expect that each translator would produce during the course of a Bible translation project

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[52] EAN to WCT, 10 July 1943, TA 3564; EAN to WCT, 11 February 1944, TA 3843; 'Detailed Analysis of Information Regarding Students of Camp Wycliffe', 1941, TA 43046.

[53] The establishment of SIL in Mexico is detailed in chapter two.

[54] Robert Pittman (son of Richard S. (Dick) Pittman), email to author, Subject: Early Life of Richard Pittman, 3 July 2011.

a 'creditable, if not exhaustive, grammar, dictionary, [and a] book of texts'.[55] Later that same year at the WBT-SIL founding conference, in keeping with SIL's claim to be fielding qualified linguists, delegates voted to make it obligatory for translators to submit a 'linguistic or ethnological article in form for publication' at least once every six months.[56] This was a very ambitious goal, and in hindsight it would prove somewhat difficult to achieve, since scholarly pursuits had to compete with the strong activist urge of many SIL translators. Yet, by setting the bar high, SIL demonstrated that it intended to live up to its billing as a scientific outfit.

There were two other transformational events in 1942 that helped to propel Camp Wycliffe and SIL in a more scholarly direction. In the first place Cameron Townsend turned the presidency of SIL over to Ken Pike, thus giving Pike full charge of SIL's academic activities. Secondly Camp Wycliffe broke decidedly with its backwater roots by partnering with the University of Oklahoma at Norman. This latter move was a very significant milestone in the development of the organization's academic credibility, but it was not without its own set of headaches. Pike and Nida's encounter with fundamentalist anti-intellectualism in 1937 was not the last. Camp Wycliffe's partnership with the university stoked fears of an apparent loss of spiritual vitality, and this in turn brought the need for scholarly attainment into question. So long as Camp Wycliffe continued in its rustic Arkansas setting, it remained insulated from the wider arena of university learning save for the influence of the likes of Pike, Nida and Pittman. Once Camp Wycliffe formally engaged with the university, fundamentalist notions among faculty and students of separatism from modernists and liberals and attitudes reflecting anti-intellectualism were put to the test.

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[55] Richard S. (Dick) Pittman (hereafter 'RSP') to Mexico Branch of SIL, 18 February 1942, TA 903353.

[56] 'Summary of the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1942', 5-18 September 1942, TA 40250.

In the early 1940s, Della Brunstetter, a French language instructor at the University of Oklahoma, attended Camp Wycliffe. It was her hope that the missionary-linguists there could help her to untangle the complexities of Cherokee phonetics and to unlock the secrets of the language's intricate tonal system. Brunstetter was sufficiently impressed with Camp Wycliffe that she initiated a campaign to have the summer programme transferred to the University of Oklahoma. Eugene Nida commenced what proved to be successful negotiations, and the Camp was moved to Norman, Oklahoma, for the 1942 session.[57] The faculty of the University's Department of Modern Languages, with its abiding interest in American Indian languages, unanimously approved of the partnership.[58] The university professor R. T. House captured the prevailing sentiment when he stated that the 'Institute [SIL] is in the charge of men who rank with the best equipped anywhere, and are developing instructional methods of remarkable effectiveness'.[59] The camp's curriculum proved to be of sufficient rigour and breadth of content to gain accreditation by the university.[60] An examination of the camp's 1941 prospectus illustrates why the university faculty was keen to join hands with SIL. The curriculum was much improved over that of the mid-1930s, and it now sported an expanded number of courses exhibiting greater sophistication, including second-year seminars for advanced students and a course in anthropology. These improvements were a direct result of Pike's and Nida's graduate studies and university

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[57] 'Memo of Discussion between Pike and Nida', 21 to 28 February 1942, TA 43039; WCT, Hefley interview, 'RE: Invitation to the Campus of U. of Oklahoma', c. 1970, TA 42966.

[58] Gustavo Mueller to Della Brunstetter, 5 October 1941, University of Oklahoma Archives (hereafter 'UOA'), Record Group 3, Presidential Papers, Joseph A. Brandt, Box 7, Folder 'Linguistic Institute'.

[59] R. T. House, 'memo', 9 October 1941, UOA, Record Group 3, Presidential Papers, Joseph A. Brandt, Box 7, Folder 'Linguistic Institute'.

[60] Della Brunstetter to President Joseph A. Brandt, 'faculty report', 16 December 1941, UOA, Record Group 3, Presidential Papers, Joseph A. Brandt, Box 7, Folder 'Linguistic Institute'.

relationships, for the courses were specifically designed along the same lines as those

offered at the University of Michigan's Linguistic Institute. In fact what was on offer at

Camp Wycliffe was perhaps even more extensive than what was presented at Michigan.

Not only was Camp Wycliffe's course of study longer by fifty per-cent (twelve rather

than eight weeks) but it also combined theory with practice. The more theoretical

'General Linguistics' course was rounded out with 'Field Problems' and 'Translation

Problems' practicums. This ensured that students could actually apply what they learned

in a real-life setting.[61] As in Mexico, where the state was making common cause with

SIL to their mutual benefit, now at the University of Oklahoma another secular

institution was affiliating with SIL for the quality of service it could provide.[62]

Judged by faith mission standards, where educational background had not

typically figured as a factor in a candidate's qualification, the academic credentials of

many students arriving at Camp Wycliffe were above average.[63] Analysis of the

academic credentials among the one hundred and forty-two students who had attended

Camp Wycliffe between 1934 and 1941 reveals that eighty-five had completed a

bachelor's degree, twenty-five had a seminary degree, and nine had arrived with

graduate degrees. Not surprisingly ninety-one possessed some Bible school training,

with fifty-five having graduated from a Bible college course of two to four years.[64]

These statistics are quite remarkable when compared to the whole of the American

population where, in 1940, only about one in four Americans had graduated from high

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[61] Course Brochure and Syllabus: '*The Summer Institute of Linguistics* Camp Wycliffe, June 12 to September 4, 1941', Sulphur Springs, Arkansas, course prospectus (1941), TA 42582; WCT to J. K. M. Kimber, Registrar, Columbia Bible College, Columbia, South Carolina, 3 September 1941, TA 2733.

[62] SIL's service in Mexico is detailed in chapter two.

[63] Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa* (Irvine, CA: Regnum Books International, 1994), pp. 396-397.

[64] 'Detailed Analysis of Information Regarding Students of Camp Wycliffe', 1941, TA 43046.

school and a mere one in twenty had completed college.[65] Camp Wycliffe was drawing

students who might have otherwise entered middle-class, white-collar careers in

business and education had they not chosen Christian missions as a vocation. The

quality of students coming to Camp Wycliffe allowed for Pike and Nida to advance by

degrees their designs for upgrading the quality of instruction. Thus, by the mid-1940s,

the Camp had garnered something of reputation for its demanding coursework. SIL

missionary-translator Betty Adams recalled that she was considering Camp Wycliffe in

1946, but was concerned because some recent camp alumni at BIOLA 'had brought

such gory tales back to school about Camp Wycliffe and its stiff curriculum that I never

really wanted to go, though I felt that I should'. Only at the urging of Dawson Trotman,

a Wycliffe board member and the founder of the Navigators, did Adams finally apply.[66]

Camp Wycliffe was in the vanguard of a movement to deploy better educated

evangelical missionaries, one that would one day see the rise of such institutions as

Fuller's School of World Mission and Ralph Winter's U.S. Center for World Mission.

The partnership with the university offered SIL academic credibility, but it did

not come without costs. Recent religious history worked against WBT-SIL's cooperative

arrangement with the University of Oklahoma, since Camp Wycliffe drew many of its

students from fundamentalist and conservative evangelical backgrounds. By the late

1940s, Camp Wycliffe was serving over thirty mission boards, many of them rather

conservative, such as the Africa Inland Mission, the China Inland Mission, the Sudan

Interior Mission, the Christian Missionary and Alliance, the South American Indian

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[65] Richard Polenberg, *One Nation Indivisible: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States Since 1938* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p. 20.

[66] Quoted in Ethel Wallis, *Lengthened Cords: How Dawson Trotman – Founder of the Navigators – Also Helped Extend the World-Wide Outreach of the Wycliffe Bible Translators* (Glendale, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1958), p. 98.

Mission, and the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society.[67] Marking off

boundaries against religious liberalism and modernism came naturally to many of these

faith missions. Separatism therefore functioned as an impediment to SIL's taking a more

moderate stance. Convincing students from other faith missions to lay aside their

ingrained penchant for separation from perceived apostasy meant that SIL was asking

them to break with the fundamentalist conviction that they should not bend to the winds

of liberalism.

World War II interrupted the tie-up with the University of Oklahoma, and events

that transpired during this interlude serve as a context for understanding the conflict that

lay just over the horizon. In late 1942 the U.S. military essentially took over the

university campus as part of the overall war effort to train Army and Navy personnel.[68]

Forced to relocate temporarily, SIL accepted an offer from the Northern Baptist Home

Mission Board for the use of its Bacone College campus for the 1943 and 1944

sessions.[69] The move to Bacone was accompanied by an outpouring of missionary

idealism and evangelistic fervour. Bacone College, located near Muskogee, Oklahoma,

'provided the students with the convenience of a town', Nida informed the Pioneer

Mission Agency, 'but has been sufficiently off to itself that we have had a fine spiritual

atmosphere'. Indeed students quickly set about organizing 'spontaneous prayer groups

for Africa, the heart of Asia, South America and Mexico'. Dormitory prayer meetings

sprang up on a daily basis. Visits by mission leaders from several mission boards added

to the ferment. Nida also related that on weekends the students preached in local

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[67] Benjamin F. (Ben) Elson (hereafter 'BFE') and Adel Elson to 'Friends', October 1947, TA 4946; RSP to WCT, 8 August 1946, TA 4450; RSP to WCT, 12 August 1946, TA 4448; KLP to WCT, 20 August 1947, TA 4837; KLP to Rev Raymond Buker, Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 5 May 1948, TA 5659; Howard Van Dyck, staff secretary, Christian and Missionary Alliance to WGNS, 29 December 1948, TA 5087.

[68] EAN to WCT, 11 February 1943, TA 3604.

[69] EAN to WCT, 26 March 1943, TA 3593.

churches and that 'many have been saved' through their efforts.[70] In fact, with Camp Wycliffe's move to Bacone, it was taking on a Bible college atmosphere of the variety that Joel Carpenter has referred to as a 'hothouse' environment, where 'Keswick piety' and 'missionary idealism' flourished.[71] When the Camp's classes were relocated back to Norman in 1945, the staff and students would come to lament the loss of spiritual zeal.

As the 1947 session commenced there was no denying the deleterious effects that the co-operative relationship with the university was having on the Camp's spiritual vitality. For students coming from faith mission boards, the ending of prayer before the start of each class was a most worrying indictor of the direction that the Camp was pursuing. This action was taken by the Camps' co-directors, Pike and Nida, to align with the secular stance of the university.[72] They argued that the Summer Institute of Linguistics was 'officially non-religious', therefore dropping prayer before class was in keeping with WBT-SIL's 'basic policies and continuous attempts to distinguish between the academic character of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the missionary program of the Wycliffe Bible Translators'. By Pike and Nida's reasoning, SIL had departed from established principle in allowing prayer in class in the first place. Removing prayer from the classroom was therefore not a novelty but rather a return to Townsend's basic operating principles. They therefore determined that 'it seems wise to suspend the practise of prayer before classes in order that we can conform to the academic practises of the University'. After the matter was discussed, the Camp Wycliffe faculty voted thirty-one to three to maintain Pike and Nida's policy on classroom prayer.[73] This majority decision suggests that the faculty was well on its way to accommodating the demands of associating closely with a secular university.

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[70] EAN to the PMA, 23 August 1943, TA 43032.

[71] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, p. 83.

[72] KLP to WGNS, 20 June 1947, PSC.

[73] SIL, minutes, 14 June 1947, pp. 1-2, WSA.

Some students took the ending of classroom prayer as an ominous sign and began making noises about reporting this egregious lapse to their mission boards. Discontent over having to rub shoulders with liberals and Catholics was another hot-button issue among the more conservative students over the summer of 1947. Several liberal Protestants and Roman Catholics had arrived for study, having gained access to Camp Wycliffe through the university's admission process. Attempts were made to shore up the Camp's spiritual foundations with the implementation of daily dormitory devotions and noon chapel, but this failed to stem the rising tide of discontent.[74] These events culminated in a series of official WBT-SIL conference sessions held at the end of July, where the future direction of Camp Wycliffe, and thus SIL, would be determined.

When WBT and SIL were incorporated in 1942, ultimate authority over the organization was democratically vested in the organization's membership through the biennial conference. Therefore, since the WBT-SIL conference of delegates elected by the membership was the highest body of authority in the organization, decisions stemming from conference deliberations were binding on the board and general director.[75] Hence the way in which the conference handled these issues would have much to say about the future of the organization. Fortunately a verbatim record was kept of the late-July conference proceedings, thus permitting a detailed look inside these portentous meetings. Unfortunately there is a dearth of biographical data on many of the participants. This is due, in part, to the fact that personnel records were long ago discarded by the organization. However the single-spaced, sixty-eight-page conference transcript provides an extraordinarily comprehensive window through which to view this seminal event in the organization's history, and Ken Pike's incomparable role in its

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[74] SIL, minutes, 12 June 1947, pp. 1-3, WSA.

[75] Articles of Incorporation for WBT and SIL, 1942, TA 41523; George M. Cowan, *The Word that Kindles: People and Principles that Fueled a Worldwide Translation Movement* (Chappaqua, NY: Christian Herald Books, 1979), p. 235.

outcome.

What might have remained nothing more than a case of student restiveness turned into a camp-wide debate when an Ethel Wallis, an SIL faculty member, took the opportunity of student discontent to wage her own campaign to steer the organization in a more conservative direction. Wallis was something of a fundamentalist firebrand with strong anti-Catholic views. In 1942, for example, she had published a vehemently anti-Catholic article in the popular *Sunday School Times* entitled 'Deadly Poison'.[76] Wallis launched her campaign to reform Camp Wycliffe when Nida's chapel homilies, which were intended to encourage toleration, instead set off alarms when some of the students became convinced that they could detect strains of 'Barthianism' in his irenic messages. Determined to move SIL in a more explicitly religious direction, Wallis intimated she might resign, while at the same time she stoked fears among some the teaching faculty that SIL was in danger of lapsing into liberalism.[77]

Few post-war conservative evangelicals were entirely free of fundamentalist tendencies, and therefore militancy and separatism could easily surface if they felt threatened. The Camp Wycliffe faculty were not immune to this kind of reactionary impulse. As the 1947 session of Camp Wycliffe advanced, it became obvious that the teaching staff were increasingly uneasy with the Camp Wycliffe and University of Oklahoma relationship. The shift in sentiment was profound. Whereas thirty-one of the faculty at the beginning of the 1947 session had cast their votes in favour of ending classroom prayer and had made little fuss over the admittance of non-evangelicals, now, less than a month later, no fewer than twenty-three dissenting faculty sought to end the

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[76] EAN to WCT, 2 October 1942, TA 3203; Ethel Wallis, 'Deadly Poison: A Tragic Lesson from a Mission Field in Mexico' (photocopy), *Sunday School Times* (12 September 1942): n.p, TA 45190.

[77] WGNS to WCT, 28 July 1947, TA 4617; SIL minutes (hereafter 'Minutes of 26 July'), 26 July 1947, pp. 8-12, WSA.

admittance of liberals and Roman Catholics to Camp Wycliffe, and perhaps even to see

SIL terminate its connection with the university.[78] This sudden reactionary turn

threatened to undo Pike and Nida's efforts to garner academic legitimacy for SIL.

The measure of just how deep-seated the fears and antagonisms were among

some of the SIL staff can be seen in faculty members' expression of apprehension over

having to mix with and teach non-evangelicals. With an unknown number of liberals

and five Roman Catholic priests attending Camp Wycliffe that year, it was suggested by

some of the faculty that SIL was casting its linguistic pearls before the proverbial swine.

Ambrose McMahon, a translator working in Mexico, worried that after receiving SIL's

linguistic training, liberal missionaries or Catholic priests might return to field and 'beat

SIL to the job'. When Pike asked if barring Catholics from Camp Wycliffe would

necessarily stop them from reading SIL's textbooks, McMahon retorted that 'there is a

lot of difference between getting it out of text books and getting it practically sugar-

coated'. For McMahon it was a travesty that 'sticking with the University leaves us open

to give the course to people who are our enemies and who fight us'.[79] Donald Sinclair,

another SIL translator, pushed this principle even further. He argued that SIL should not

even disseminate its scholarly works publicly.[80] The earlier advance in a progressive

direction was rapidly becoming unravelled by reflexive reactions to the perceived

dangers emanating from cooperation with liberal Protestants and Catholics.

The issue of separation was bound up with the question of whether or not SIL's

academic stature necessitated the university relationship. SIL had leaned heavily on its

academic credentials in Mexico and utilized its university connections to open the door

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[78] Ibid., p. 31.
[79] Ambrose McMahon, quoted in Minutes of 26 July, p. 33, WSA.
[80] Donald Sinclair, quoted in Minutes of 26 July, p. 52, WSA.

to Peru.[81] Indeed, Pike had recently gained a foothold for SIL in Peru by leveraging the

prestige of his University of Michigan connections and his scholarly publications.[82]

Obvious echoes of fundamentalist anti-intellectualism surfaced during the debates over

just what constituted adequate academic standing or whether it was even necessary. SIL

had sent some of its finest missionary-translators to serve as faculty at Camp Wycliffe,

but this was not necessarily an indication that they were all as enamoured with linguistic

research as were Pike and Nida. SIL translator Joyce Jenkins gave expression to this

kind of sentiment when she remarked that 'We are technicians'. Therefore, she wanted

to know if there was 'any reason to feel that we might not stand on our own two feet as a

technical institution?'.[83] Wallis, calling into question the use of scholarship as a strategy,

pointed to three missionaries who recently gained entry to Mexico without any academic

credentials, thus presumably establishing the fact that 'academic prestige is not

necessary'.[84] The average SIL missionary-translator, although likely to be more cerebral

than his or her typical faith mission counterpart, was usually more interested in

linguistics as a practical tool than as an intellectual pursuit. For them linguistics was

merely the handmaiden of Bible translation, whereas for much smaller minority, such as

Pike and Nida, linguistic research and scholarship were the *sine qua non* of SIL's

strategy. The conundrum faced by directors of Camp Wycliffe was how to mediate

between the seemingly incongruent realities of faith missionary pragmatism and the

necessity of maintaining SIL's academic standing.

Ken Pike was not about to back down without a fight since he remained solidly

committed to scholarship. He struck hard; it was almost as if he wanted to embarrass his

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[81] The linguistic aspect of SIL's contribution in Mexico is discussed in chapter two, and SIL's work in Peru in chapter four.

[82] Ken Pike, 'General Report on South American Trip', 21 February 1944, TA 3875.

[83] Joyce Jenkins, quoted in Minutes of 26 July, p. 40, WSA.

[84] Ethel Wallis, quoted in Minutes of 26 July, p. 37, WSA.

colleagues for their lack of scholarly enthusiasm. In Pike's mind the only SIL linguist who had the capacity for independent research at that moment was William Wonderly, a rising academic star in SIL who was pursuing his doctorate at the University of Michigan.[85] As for the rest of SIL translators, he pointed out that while it was commendable that some members had managed to produce 'about 8 or 10' articles on phonemics, this did not obviate the deplorable fact that 'we do not have one single grammar published'. 'As long as we tell anybody that we are scientists', Pike lectured his faculty, 'in my opinion it is absolutely essential that we do not be liars. We claim that we are scientists, we must be scientists.'[86] Pike was not about to equivocate on the point that if SIL professed to be scientific, it was therefore obligated to fulfil the requirements of that declaration according to the standards set by the wider world of secular academia.

To obtain his objective, Pike perceptively linked the academic question to heartfelt action by connecting SIL's strategic purpose to the winning of souls. This proved a particularly powerful method of stirring the affections of the faculty. The poignant moment in question occurred near the end of a long session on the 26th. Judging from the detailed notes it must have been near midnight when J. Dedrick, a faculty member not affiliated with the dissenting group, wondered out loud whether it was proper for SIL to distance itself from the scholars who, although perhaps not Christians, had nonetheless extended a helping hand to the organization and some of its members over the years. 'What kind of debt do we owe the unregenerates?', asked Dedrick. 'We have taken so much from [Leonard] Bloomfield and the rest of them [professional linguists]. Does that have any bearing on the unregenerate here [at Camp

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[85] KLP, quoted in Minutes of 26 July, p. 41; Stine, *Let the Words Be Written*, p. 77, WSA.

[86] KLP, quoted in Minutes of 26 July, pp. 39, 43, WSA.

Wycliffe]?'[87] 'Yes', Pike replied, 'we owe them a debt'. 'One of the saddest things about Wycliffe', Pike began before pausing abruptly in mid-sentence. After a moment's hesitation, he continued, 'I hate to think of Sapir sizzling in hell.' He then began to weep. Still sobbing, he lamented that 'The only thing we can do to repay them is get them to heaven, and I don't know how to do it.'[88] This sentimental moment broke the tension. 'Praise God, you've got a better opportunity to do it than anybody else because of your linguistic field', offered Howard McKaughan, one of the dissenters.[89] Ken Pike's wife Evelyn was the last to speak before a midnight vote was taken. Her words seemed to capture the moment in a kind of summing up that reinforced the necessity of staying the course at the university and keeping up the academic side of the work. She presciently pointed to a rising tide of nationalism around the world, and thus warned the group that 'These foreign people aren't going to accept our religion.' 'The only basis on which we can bring them the Lord Jesus Christ', she added, 'is to avail ourselves of the linguistic approach.'[90] The lengthy discussions had brought the group full circle; whatever enthusiasm they had for separation had largely dissipated by this point of the evening.

The ebb and flow of the Saturday 26 July conference held the potential for volatile and fissiparous outcome. Evangelicals of the fundamentalist persuasion were certainly imbued with qualities that could make for ugly endings. However, much like a good revival service, this meeting also depended on the dynamics of the moment. The evening had, in characteristic fashion, opened with prayer, but the solemn and reflective tone was short-lived. Mutually opposed positions were quickly staked out and defended. This was met with the strident tones of Pike's jeremiad. Then came that portentous

[87] J. Dedrick, quoted in Minutes of 26 July, p. 47, WSA.
[88] KLP, quoted in ibid., pp. 47-48.
[89] Howard McKaughan, quoted in ibid., p. 48, WSA.
[90] Evelyn Pike, quoted in ibid., p. 53.

moment that saw the melting of the hearts and, after the manner of congregants duly penitent after a well-delivered sermon, the faculty was humbled for the equivalent of an 'altar call'. Just after midnight on Sunday 27 July a weary faculty voted twenty-five to seven in favouring admitting Catholics and liberals to Camp Wycliffe so long as no fewer than five board members approved.[91] The resolution to separate from the University of Oklahoma was defeated twenty-five to six. In the end a majority of the dissenters decided to stay the course at the university, while relying upon the board of directors to act as a check on the unorthodox (enrolment through the university was unaffected by this decision). By choosing to remain within the university system, the SIL staff demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of its members were willing, if somewhat unenthusiastically perhaps, to swear off any full-fledged separatism.

In the wake of the 1947 turmoil SIL continued to make academic progress, and this was reflected in the growing number of SIL missionary-linguists who earned their doctorates in linguistics. By 1959, SIL could boast of the following eight members, in addition to Pike, in that category: Richard Pittman (1953), Robert Longacre (1955) and Sarah Gudschinsky (1958) from the University of Pennsylvania; Benjamin Elson (1956) and Howard McKaughan (1956) from Cornell University; Viola Waterhouse (1958) and Thelma Pickett (1959) from the University of Michigan; and John T. Bendor-Samuel (1958) from the University of London.[92] In mid-1955, Ken Pike recalled being 'academically lonely' in SIL; by 1959 he had plenty of company.[93]

Progress was also made in the arena of academic publishing. In fact, even within the dissenting group of 1947, no fewer than eight individuals can be identified as going

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[91] Ibid., p. 67.

[92] Frank E. Robbins, 'Training in Linguistics', in *Works and Contributions*, eds. Brend and Pike, pp. 59-60.

[93] Kenneth L. Pike (with Hugh Steven), *Pike's Perspectives: An Anthology of Thought, Insight, and Moral Purpose* (Langley, BC: Credo Publishing Corporation, 1989), p. 168.

on to make significant scholarly contributions to the discipline of linguistics, including

Ethel Wallis, who also became a prolific writer of popular books on Wycliffe.[94] In 1949,

Ken Pike reported that articles now being produced by SIL missionary-linguists 'do not

call for shame'. 'They are good', he added.[95] The University of Oklahoma had also

taken note of this trend. In 1949 the university president, George L. Cross, informed

Pike that SIL was 'making such fine contributions to knowledge' that the faculty had

requested SIL's scholarly publications 'by-line' the university affiliation.[96] Moreover, in

1948 and 1949, approximately a fifth of the twenty to twenty-five papers presented at

the Linguistic Society of America conferences were read by SIL members.[97] This level

of academic production was a phenomenal feat among North American evangelicals. By

way of comparison, professor and theologian Edward J. Carnell complained to Fuller

Seminary president Harold J. Ockenga in 1953 that the school's faculty had not

'published as much as one article in a scholarly journal' since its founding in 1947.[98]

SIL's scholarly output increased apace over the ensuing decades. As hundreds of new

translation projects were embarked upon, each SIL team was required to produce an

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[94] Ben Elson, Harold Key, Mary R. Key, Howard W. Law, Cornelia Mak, Howard McKaughan, Velma B. Pickett, and Ethel Wallis: *Bibliography of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (Dallas: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992); Ethel Emily Wallis and Mary A. Bennett, *Two Thousand Tongues to Go: True-Life Adventures of the Wycliffe Bible Translators throughout the World* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959); Ethel Emily Wallis, ed., *Tariri: My Story: From Jungle Killer to Christian Missionary* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965); *Aucas Downriver* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973); *The Dayuma Story: Life Under Auca Spears* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960) and Ethel Wallis, *Lengthened Cords: How Dawson Trotman – Founder of the Navigators – Also Helped Extend the World-Wide Outreach of The Wycliffe Bible Translators* (Glendale, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1958).

[95] Ken Pike, 'Report of General Director's Appointee on Linguistic Matters', SIL board of directors, minutes, appendix I, 12-18 September 1949, p. 1, WSA.

[96] George L. Cross to KLP, 1 October 1949, UOA, Record Group 3, Presidential Papers, George L. Cross, Box 66, Folder, Linguistic Institute.

[97] Ken Pike, 'Report of the General Director's Appointee on Linguistic Matters', SIL board of directors, minutes, appendix I, 12-18 September, 1949, pp. 1-2, WSA.

[98] Edward J. Carnell to Harold J. Ockenga, 15 September 1954, quoted in Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 142.

analysis of the language in which it was working. This took the form of a detailed

description of the language's phonological system and grammatical structure.

Accompanying the translated New Testament, teams often produced a bilingual

dictionary for the language under study. Added to these foundational linguistic

descriptions were hundreds, and then thousands, of indigenous language primers and

other mother-tongue reading materials, along with articles on literacy, linguistics and

translation published in-house and in various professional academic journals.[99] By 1984,

SIL sported an impressive 9,876 articles and books in its bibliography. The faculty at

Camp Wycliffe in 1947, by choosing to set aside their fundamentalist habits of mind,

kept SIL from the fate of becoming merely a technical or vocational type school.

Another indicator of SIL's success as an academic organization was the fact

that, by 1981, it counted no fewer than 118 Ph.D.s.[100] While this number of earned

doctorates represented only about 2.6 percent of SIL's 4,500 members, it nonetheless

surpassed the combined total of 36 doctorate professors on the faculties of Asbury

Theological Seminary, Fuller Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the 1980-1981 academic year.[101] One final

measure of SIL's academic reach is that by 1990, SIL maintained no fewer than twenty-

eight university affiliations around the world, where SIL scholars taught and carried out

research on a part- or full-time basis.[102] When Ken Pike retired from his post as

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[99] Ruth M. Brend and Kenneth L. Pike, eds., *The Summer Institute of Linguistics: Its Works and Contributions* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1977).

[100] Hyatt Moore, 'Editorial: PhD's and Fools', *In Other Words* 8, no. 5 (September 1982): p. 3, on file at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics, Dallas, Texas (hereafter GIAL); 'The Five Principles', Progress Report, a special edition of *In Other Words* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): p.18, GIAL; NB: Ken Pike counted 125 members with earned doctorates at this point, Pike, *Pike's Perspectives*, p. 122.

[101] Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986), pp. 127-130.

[102] 'SIL – University Affiliations', complied by Richard Pittman and Calvin Hibbard, 1990, TA 43212 (see Appendix II for list).

president of SIL in 1979, he could rest easily in knowing that he no longer need worry over SIL's academic credentials, since the record spoke for itself.

The Inerrancy Debate, Translation Theory and the Dominance of Linguistics

The close connection that SIL developed with the American school of descriptive linguistics was an important factor in shaping the organization's academic and scholarly perspectives. The descriptivist conceptual framework was quite congenial to the literalist mind-set, which insisted upon a strong correlation between the structure of biblical texts and truth. Put another way, for a lion's share of mid-twentieth century fundamentalists, literal interpretations of scripture, literal translations of the Bible and notions of truth were all closely interrelated. This outlook led the fundamentalist editor of the *Sword of the Lord*, John R. Rice, in 1953 to praise the literal American Standard Bible's 'holy reverence for the actual wording of the original manuscripts'.[103] Likewise not a few SIL translators' gaze was skewed towards the structure of any particular text and away from concerns over how that structure facilitated or inhibited the transfer of meaning in translation. Whether a translator's source text was the literalistic King James Bible, a Greek text or some other version of the Bible, he or she was inclined to reproduce the source text's structure in the target language. In other words translators quite often left themselves open to the very real danger that the 'message' (meaning) would, in a manner of speaking, get lost in the translation. Many SIL translators therefore tended in translation to follow as closely as possible the structure or form in which the biblical text was cast in the original Greek or literal English translations. The net result of this state of affairs was the production of awkward, difficult-to-read

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[103] John R. Rice, 'God's Own Translation of Isaiah 7:14 Says Virgin', *Sword of the Lord*, (25 September 1953): p. 11, quoted in Peter J. Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 112.

translations, which were later referred to as 'wooden translations'.[104]

Coming from a background where the perspicuity of scripture was a widely held belief, SIL translators tended towards overconfidence in supposing that they understood the meaning of biblical texts. In fact, if one possessed a Bible-school level understanding of the scriptures, little or no further theological or biblical education was generally considered necessary in SIL. Otis Leal, a translator and the chairman of Wycliffe's candidate committee, noted this glaring absence of theological sophistication during a 1956 conference discussion on the topic of scriptural inerrancy. In the wake of the conference, Leal lamented to Ken Pike that 'we were treated to the sad spectical [sic] of a debate' on inerrancy, where not one of the SIL members present 'possessed enough knowledge on the subject to discuss it even in a way which we would have considered absolutely minimal, if the subject had been linguistics'. The inevitable result for translators, observed Leal, 'was that after a long session of consulting commentaries and a Bible encyclopaedia, it is sometimes harder to know what we want to say than to find a way of saying it'.[105] The thrust of Leal's letter was an argument for pressing candidates to pursue additional biblical studies or perhaps even attend seminary, just as he himself had done. Pike would have none of it, and took Leal to task stating that 'you hold seminaries in much higher esteem than the facts warrant'. Pike pointed out a recent candidate who had come to SIL with sixteen hours of Bible and eight hours of Greek, and contended that this was altogether sufficient.[106] Rare was the SIL translator who questioned the perspicacity of scripture or displayed a sophisticated grasp of theology.

An indicator of SIL's inordinate emphasis on linguistic scholarship to the

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[104] Ellis Diebler, interview by author, 14 June 2006, Waxhaw, North Carolina; Richard Blight, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 2 July 2009; Robert E. Longacre, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2010.

[105] Otis Leal to KLP, 25 July 1956, PSC.

[106] KLP to Otis Leal, 7 August 1956, PSC.

exclusion of other disciplines is reflected in the fact that all ten doctorates earned by SIL members before 1960 were in linguistics.[107] By 1960, then, SIL could boast of a growing roster of professional linguists, but it was sorely lacking in the same level of expertise in other important disciplines related to Bible translation, such as theology and biblical studies. Thus not only did SIL translators in the 1940s and 1950s bring little theological or hermeneutical expertise to the task, but the typical translator also approached translation with less scholarly rigour than he or she did in linguistic analysis.

This is only part of the story however, for there was a moment in the 1950s when the potential for widening of the organization's scholarly horizons to encompass translation theory was a distinct possibility. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Eugene Nida and another SIL linguist and close associate of Nida's, William Wonderly, took up an interest in translation theory, or what was sometimes referred to as communication theory. More specifically the two men began investigating why the meaning of biblical texts was all too often obscured by the process of translation. What they began to discover was that overly literal or 'wooden' translations were a large part of the problem. An examination of their particular perspectives on translation serves to shed light on some other key factors that helped to sustain SIL's intense focus on linguistics, and the resulting effects this had on SIL's organizational character.

'Nida has made the one greatest contribution to Bible translation of recent times', Ken Pike reported to the WBT-SIL board in 1948, adding that his colleague had 'taken over literal wor[d] for word translation and . . . smashed it.'[108] Nida was quick to identify the problem of overly literal translations from his earliest days in SIL, and his

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[107] Robbins, 'Training in Linguistics', in *Works and Contributions*, eds. Brend and Pike, pp. 59-60.

[108] Ken Pike, 'Report of the General Director's Appointee on Linguistic Matters', SIL board of directors, minutes, appendix I, 12-18 September, 1949, p. 8, WSA.

efforts to counter this trend resulted in his most significant theoretical contribution to the modern Bible translation movement. Drawing on his experience in helping SIL translators with the many thorny issues that translation invoked, Nida developed what he referred to as 'dynamic equivalence'. Hints of where Nida was heading theoretically were visible in his 1947 work entitled *Bible Translating*. Therein he urged translators away from literalism and slavishness to the form of the source text, while yet cautioning against excessive paraphrasing. This he did by directing translators to aim for the 'closest "natural" equivalent to the statement of the [source] text'. What Nida sought was a middle path between 'awkward literalness on the one hand and unjustified interpretations on the other'. The key theoretical concept that he introduced was the 'translation of ideas'.[109] This notion was not fully developed in *Bible Translating*. Nonetheless here was the germ of a concept that Nida would continue to develop into his theory of dynamic equivalence.

Nida's innovative approach to Bible translation practice and theory was driven by a strong desire to see that the meaning of the translated scriptures was conveyed to the reader, and by a willingness to challenge conventional wisdom. Nida's sensitivity to issues of communication proved to be an especially important factor behind his dissatisfaction with the Bloomfieldian linguists' tendency to neglect meaning in their pursuit of a strictly rule-based structural linguistic descriptions. Nida framed his argument around two basic concepts. First he argued for the 'nonexistence of real synonyms'. Words, Nida pointed out, such as 'peace' and 'tranquility' might be listed as synonyms, but 'they are', he added, 'far from being identical in meaning'. Hence, simply because the rules governing language structure would permit synonyms in the

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[109] Eugene A. Nida, *Bible Translating: An Analysis of Principles and Procedures, with Special Reference to Aboriginal Languages* (New York: American Bible Society, 1947), pp. 12-13.

same slot within a syntactic structure, this did not imply that the same meaning was generated. Secondly, Nida contended that the meaning of a word was further defined by its context or environment. He gave as an example that the word 'damn', which had very different meanings when 'uttered in church or on the golf course'.[110] To structural linguists, especially those of a behaviourist perspective, these kinds of concerns did not, they argued, fall within the domain of descriptive linguistics. Therefore, within the historiography of linguistics, Nida is considered an innovator among a small group of what have been referred to as 'moderate Bloomfieldians', who were more willing to defer to meaning in linguistic analysis than were many of their colleagues.[111] (Admittedly, Pike too considered 'meaning' in his *Language*, but it was not treated specifically or systematically in relation to translation).[112] It is worth pointing out also that Nida's approach was at odds with literalistic biblicism. He had written in 1947 that 'Words are merely vehicles for ideas. They are symbols, and as such they usually have no special significance over and above the actual objects which they symbolize'.[113] Few fundamentalists would have followed Nida in allowing for such semantic ambiguity, contextual conditioning and semiotic functionalism; rather they would insist on a stronger if not immutable relationship between a specific word and its referent. Nida's attempts in the late 1940s and 1950s to treat meaning in his linguistic analysis was a departure from the practices of the behaviourist Bloomfieldians, and his moves also served notice that he was parting ways with the naïve empiricism and literalist biblicism common in conservative evangelical circles.

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[110] Jan de Waard and Eugene A. Nida, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), p. 15.

[111] E. F. Koerner, *Towards a Historiography of Linguistics: Selected Essays* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins B. V., 1978), p. 161.

[112] Pike, *Language*, pp. 598-640; Pike, *Linguistic Concepts*, p. xvi.

[113] Nida, *Bible Translating*, p. 12

It was in 1959 that Nida introduced the radical notion that the readers' response to a biblical text should dictate the adequacy of a translation; that is, readers of the translated text should respond to it in essentially the same fashion as the readers of the original source text had responded.[114] Thus the quality of a translation hinged not so much on translating key words exactly the same way in every instance, or the literalistic mapping of equivalent structures, but rather on whether or not the reader was able to decode and understand the message conveyed in the translation.[115] This approach to translation drew its inspiration from Nida's engagement with neo-orthodoxy.[116] (Perhaps students at Camp Wycliffe were not tilting at windmills after all). Nida explicitly noted his debt to a Barthian position in his 1964 book *Toward a Science of Translating*. 'One must recognize', he wrote, 'that neo-orthodox theology . . . conceives of inspiration primarily in terms of the response of the receptor.' The neo-orthodox 'concept of inspiration', Nida went on to explain, 'means . . . that attention is inevitably shifted away from the details of wording in the original to the means by which the same message can be effectively communicated to present-day readers'. In fact he argued that translators 'who espouse the traditional, orthodox view of inspiration . . . often tend to favor quite close, literal renderings as the best way of preserving' inspiration.[117] By driving a wedge between the text and its message Nida was carrying out a direct assault on the idea that literalness functioned to preserve truth.

Dynamic equivalence was a revolutionary approach to Bible translation that

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[114] Eugene A. Nida, 'Principles of Translation as Exemplified by Bible Translating', in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).

[115] Nida, *Fascinated by Languages*, p. 76.

[116] Frank E. Robbins, interview by author, 2 September 2008, Dallas, Texas; Ben Elson to author, email, Subject: Inerrancy Statement, 27 June 2009; Robert E. Longacre, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2010.

[117] Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), pp. 27, 166.

guided translators away from slavish adherence to the form of the source texts and instead moved them towards recasting source texts into the natural occurring linguistic forms of the receptor languages. Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence was destined to become the accepted translation theory among a majority of missionary translators by the 1970s. His work also had significant ramifications for North American evangelicalism, since dynamic equivalence also formed the theoretical basis for most modern vernacular English translations.[118] Most important among these was the *New International Version*, for its immense popularity was instrumental in bringing down the long reign of the King James Version among conservative evangelicals.[119] When Townsend linked SIL to the school of American descriptive linguistics and then salvaged Eugene Nida's translation career, he could not have foreseen the impact that these moves would have on the future of global evangelicalism.

SIL translator William Wonderly, a close colleague of Nida's, made his own explorations into what he referred to as 'communication theory'. This line of inquiry also led him to question the doctrine of inerrancy. In the July 1952 and January 1953 issues of the American Bible Society's journal, *The Bible Translator*, Wonderly published a two-part article on 'information-correspondence', wherein he discussed the difficulties of translating a biblical text when the structure of the source language differed significantly from that of the receptor language. Wonderly pointed out that these differences in structure posed a number of problems for the translator because 'certain items of information . . . [that] are obligatory' in the source language 'are either

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[118] D. A. Carson, 'The Limits of Dynamic Equivalence in Bible Translation', *Notes on Translation* 121 (1987): pp. 1-14; William A. Smalley, 'Language and Culture in the Development of Bible Society Translation Theory and Practice', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19 (April 1995): pp. 64-67.

[119] Peter J. Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 150-152.

absent or can be translated only by rather awkward circumlocution' in the receptor language. This addition or subtraction of information, even when held to a minimum, could lead to 'ambiguities not present in the [original] Greek' text of the New Testament. As such 'divine revelation' only reaches the reader of translated scripture 'in a form that has been modified'. Wonderly therefore argued that a translator could not 'claim nor expect divine inspiration for his version in the sense we claim it for the original texts'.[120] Responding to a May 1955 letter from the Mexico branch executive committee all but accusing him of heresy, Wonderly retorted that 'if freedom from all manner of error is an absolutely essential feature of inspiration, it would seem that when inerrancy disappears as a result of translating we are left with a message that is no longer essentially inspired'. As Wonderly understood it, a translation was merely 'the best substitute that we can produce for a divinely inspired message'.[121] These were dangerous words to utter in conservative evangelical circles.

At the time when Wonderly began airing his views, WBT-SIL's stance on inspiration was broadly evangelical in character. Applicants in the 1930s and early 1940s had simply required assent to 'the full inspiration of the Scriptures'.[122] With the official incorporation of WBT-SIL in 1942, this point was elaborated only slightly by requiring members to give assent to the 'divine inspiration and consequent authority of the whole canonical Scriptures'.[123] Until the ferment surrounding Wonderly's views began raising concerns, the issue of biblical inspiration was not a matter of much

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[120] William Wonderly, 'Information-Correspondence and the Translation of Ephesians into Zoque', part I, *The Bible Translator* 3 (July 1952): pp. 138-142 and 'Information-Correspondence and the Translation of Ephesians into Zoque' part II, *The Bible Translator* 4 (January 1953): 14-21.

[121] William Wonderly (hereafter 'WW') to George M. Cowan (hereafter 'GMC') and Otis Leal, 4 June 1955, TA 11796.

[122] Application Blank for Entrance to Camp Wycliffe, 1940, TA 43057.

[123] Corporate By-Laws of Wycliffe Bible Translators, 15 September 1942, TA 41523.

concern. However, as will be seen, the controversy surrounding his theories would lead some conservative members to press for a narrower definition of the doctrine of inspiration. Indeed, some would demand that WBT-SIL members ascribe to inerrancy, which was a doctrine that insisted that there were no errors of any kind in the original autographs of the scriptures.

With a cloud of suspicion hanging over him in May 1955, Wonderly's future in SIL looked dim. Pike nonetheless stood by his colleague, expecting him to carry on teaching at Camp Wycliffe and to offer his theoretical insights to students. 'By all means', Pike wrote, 'you should continue to use communication theory in your classes.' Pike had copied in Townsend when writing to Wonderly, and SIL's founder fumed as he read it. In the margin of his carbon copy Townsend scribbled a large 'NO!', accompanied by an arrow pointing directly to the word 'theory'.[124] He quickly followed up with a censorious letter to Pike. 'Surely', he implored, 'theory isn't essential to good translating. Then, why wreck us over it?' 'Theorizing', he vented, 'is extremely dangerous.' 'What our students need', Townsend lectured, 'are practical aid[s] to Bible translating.'[125] Townsend never grasped fully the implications of pursuing a truly scholarly approach; nor did he ever understand completely what constituted the scientific enterprise. In his mind science was mainly a matter of acquiring technical competence and then applying it to a specific task.

Townsend always worried too that SIL might become irrelevant if the organization was taken too far down the scholarly path. 'I am happy over my 50 years diploma-less missionary effort', he wrote in a 1967 essay. Taking his own experience as an example, he argued that it was better to delay college education in order to obtain some practical missionary experience. By pursuing a degree before beginning one's

[124] KLP to WW, 30 May 1955, TA 11340.
[125] WCT to KLP and Evelyn Pike, 15 June 1955, TA 11335.

missionary career, Townsend warned, 'you run the risk of losing your missionary vision and never going'.[126] In keeping with this perspective he even refused honorary doctorates from Wheaton College and BIOLA.[127] Townsend and those of like mind in SIL were not entirely opposed to advanced education, as an ever-lengthening roster of Ph.D.s attested, so long as garnering credentials did not slow the output of translated New Testaments or cause candidates to lose their missionary ardour.

William Wonderly finally resigned over the inerrancy issue on 5 August 1955, after learning that at least two unnamed but 'influential and valuable' WBT-SIL members were threatening to resign if he were allowed to remain in SIL.[128] Wonderly was fretting over a very real problem related to translation, but his theorising was making some SIL members nervous. In fact, Wonderly's position on inspiration had been a source of apprehension for several years before his departure. In an attempt to block Wonderly's ideas from spreading, a few of WBT-SIL's more conservative members initiated a movement in 1951 to narrow the organization's doctrinal position on inspiration.[129] Exceptionally concerned was one of SIL's foremost up-and-coming scholars, Robert E. Longacre, who later recalled that he was terribly upset over Wonderly's playing 'fast and loose with inerrancy'.[130] Attempting to check Wonderly's influence, Longacre and fellow SIL member Otis Leal led a campaign to have the 1951 WBT-SIL conference replace the moderate 'inspiration' statement currently in place with a stricter one that insisted on 'inerrancy'. Both men were educationally equipped to

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[126] William Cameron Townsend, 'How Much Education Do You Need?', 1967, TA 42696.

[127] WCT to V. Raymond Edman, president, Wheaton College, 2 June 1952, TA 50888; Sam H. Sutherland, BIOLA dean, to WCT, 16 June 1952, TA 7588; WCT to Sam H. Sutherland, 30 June 1952, TA 43591.

[128] WW to WBT board of directors, 5 August 1955, TA 11773; WW to WBT board of directors, 15 September 1955, TA 11768.

[129] KLP to WW, 30 May 1955, TA 11340; WCT to WBT-SIL board of directors, 1 June 1955, TA 11343; Otis Leal to WW, 23 June 1955, TA 11784.

[130] Robert E. Longacre, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2010.

launch a fight on inerrancy. Longacre and Leal had graduated in the mid-1940s from

Faith Theological Seminary and Westminster Seminary respectively. In the 1940s and

1950s these two seminaries, along with Dallas Theological Seminary, comprised a trio

of redoubtable fundamentalist institutions of higher learning where academic rigour

remained above what was found in most other independent Bible schools.[131] Longacre

and Leal were successful in convincing the 1951 conference to append a 'declaratory

statement' to the organization's 1942 doctrinal statement. The revised statement read:

'We affirm that the doctrine of Divine inspiration of the Scriptures includes their being

free from all manner of error in the original manuscripts.' Every candidate joining after

1951 was required to agree with this amended version of the doctrinal statement, and

they had to do so '[w]ithout mental reservations and in full faith'.[132] At the next biennial

conference in 1953 conformity to this qualifying statement was extended to the entire

membership.[133] WBT-SIL's position on the doctrine of scripture had narrowed

considerably by 1953, reflecting a much more fundamentalist position.

Despite the kneejerk reaction to the Wonderly affair, the fact remained that not

everyone who joined WBT-SIL in this period was a committed exponent of hard-edged

inerrancy. Therefore the revised statement on inerrancy did not sit well with more

moderate-minded members, such as the young Frank Robbins, who would one day rise

to the presidency of SIL. Robbins, recalling the events surrounding Wonderly's

departure over inerrancy in an interview, stated that both he and his wife 'were very

much for Bill'. Indeed, Robbins related that although they were Baptists at the time of

Wonderly's resignation, 'we believed [then] . . . more-or-less what our [current]

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[131] Carpenter, *Revive* p. 22; George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), p. 24.
[132] WBT conference, minutes, 13 September 1951, WSA; Robert E. Longacre, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2010.
[133] 'Letter to Members', Pucallpa, Peru, 1 February 1954, TA 41409.

Presbyterian Church says, "the Bible is trustworthy" . . . , God got his message across, but that doesn't mean that every little scientific detail is correct.'[134] Richard Pittman, who was by this time spearheading SIL's expansion into Asia, was also sympathetic to a less dogmatic outlook, preferring to 'suspend judgement' on the matter of inerrancy.[135] Townsend complained to Pike in 1955 that he wished the 'theory of inspiration' had never arisen in the first place.[136] As the agitation mounted between the two camps, Pike thought that the organization 'was in for a rough time unless the Lord lets us find a quiet solution for agreement'.[137] Apparently the parties to the debate found the Lord's favour. Soon after William Wonderly resigned, the 1955 Wycliffe conference once again amended the doctrinal statement. Conference delegates did affirm that the concept of 'the divine inspiration and consequent authority' of scripture 'implies Scriptural inerrancy'. However, while this statement would seem to lock WBT-SIL into an unadulterated inerrancy position, the conference went on to specify three different, and conspicuously inconsistent, qualifying interpretations. Candidates and members could thus choose any of the three that best fitted their view. By taking this tripartite approach the conference was effectively hedging on a very delicate issue. The first and third qualifying statements were essentially inerrantist. However, the second choice was broader, allowing one to 'affirm that the doctrine of divine inspiration of the Scriptures includes their complete truthfulness'.[138] This convoluted and ambiguous compromise reflected an effort to find some middle ground that would satisfy a majority of WBT-SIL's members. If it was imperfect, it was nonetheless durable. It also served a dual purpose in that only the main statement, and not the qualifying points, was publicised.

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[134] Frank E. Robbins, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 2 September 2008.
[135] RSP to WW, 29 July 1955, TA 11336.
[136] WCT to KLP and Evelyn Pike, 15 June 1955, TA 11335.
[137] KLP to WCT, 20 June 1955, TA 11337.
[138] WBT, corporation meeting, minutes, 15 September 1955, p. 14, WSA.

Thus the 1955 statement on inerrancy allowed some breadth of internal opinion while maintaining an unswervingly conservative statement for public consumption.

The upshot of the 1955 compromise was that the WBT-SIL membership continued to exhibit a remarkable variety of opinions on the subject of inspiration. Responses in interviews ranged from that of Glen Stairs, a 1948 Bob Jones University graduate, who averred that 'inerrancy is absolute' to John Alsop, a 1956 Fuller Seminary graduate, who offered that he 'avoided discussions about inerrancy' and simply believed in the 'full reliability' of scriptures.[139] Within WBT-SIL, where widely varying views prevailed, peace was kept in the camp by generally eschewing debate on such matters. Alsop's comment, that he avoided discussion on inerrancy, was typical after the mid-1950s, and it became something of an unspoken rule in the organization that one did not discuss doctrinal matters, especially inerrancy, openly. As Robert Longacre trenchantly put it in an interview, inerrancy was treated in the manner of the U.S. military's 'don't ask, don't tell' policy.[140] The fractious nature of inerrancy was dodged in WBT-SIL by sweeping the matter under the rug.

The closest WBT-SIL ever came to elaborating a position on inspiration in a detailed fashion after the controversy of the 1950s came in 1966. Otis Leal, desirous of some measure by which to judge candidates' views on inspiration, requested Ken Pike's opinion on the subject. In the main, Pike was of a mind that 'the Bible is not to be treated as a textbook of science, but as teaching faith and practice in the Christian life'. In fact, Pike feared that a 'rigid legalistic view could lead to great distress of mind'. Therefore it was his judgment that 'we should be as concerned about over-rigidity in a legalistic but non-realistic view of the nature of Biblical language, as we are in a

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[139] Glen Stairs, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2009; John Alsop, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 4 September 2008.

[140] Robert E. Longacre, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2010.

liberalistic view'. Pike's views were remarkably similar to Wonderly's. This was especially evident when he qualified that 'Jesus Spoke Human Language, and within human language spoke truth'.[141] This was certainly no argument for strict inerrancy, but rather for toleration on the matter when evaluating new recruits on their views.

Another measure of the breadth of opinion on scripture was the extraordinarily progressive attitude among SIL translators towards the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV). The release of the complete RSV in September 1952 met with considerable consternation in conservative evangelical circles. The Reverend Martin Luther Lux, a Southern Baptist minister in Wake Forest, North Carolina, gained nationwide notoriety when he burned a page torn from a RSV Bible in November 1952.[142] More than anything else it was the RSV translators' choice to render the Hebrew word *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 as 'young woman' rather than 'virgin' that distressed conservative evangelicals.[143] The RSV was anathematized by fundamentalists, especially those of the more militant variety, such as Carl McIntire.[144] While Lux was making headlines and McIntire was railing against the new translation, the RSV was showing up on SIL translators' desks. Turner Blount, translator of the Navaho New Testament, was 'convinced that it was the best version' and he planned to use the RSV text in his diglot translation.[145] Ken Pike wrote WBT-SIL secretary Bill Nyman in January 1953 expressing his approbation of the RSV. He was 'impressed with its integrity' and its 'scholarship'. 'I am personally convinced', Pike commented, 'that no combination of conservative scholars with whom I am personally acquainted was in a

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[141] KLP to Otis Leal, 'Topic: Inspiration', 15 August 1966, TA 24502.
[142] Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures*, pp. 93-95.
[143] Ibid., p. 124.
[144] Ibid., pp. 101-102, 106-108, 112-113.
[145] Turner Blount to WCT, 12 October 1952, TA 8178.

position to do as fine a job as that which has been done by these liberals'.[146] The reception of the Revised Standard Version in SIL circles suggests that whatever undercurrent of fundamentalist conservatism existed within the organization regarding the scriptures, it was far removed from the style of militant reaction that was cropping up elsewhere.

When Eugene Nida and William Wonderly resigned in 1953 and 1955 respectively, they took with them much of the theoretical emphases on translation that existed in SIL at the time. Therefore scholarly attainment in SIL continued to remain narrowly focused on descriptive linguistics. One reason for this lack of prominence given to translation theory was due in part to the legacy of Nida and Wonderly's criticisms of inerrancy, which ensured that their views on translation theory now carried a faint odour of heresy in the conservative wing of SIL. The second and much more significant reason was that Pike and his students continued to hew closely to Bloomfieldian descriptive linguistics at a time when Nida was challenging that school's outlook. Robert Longacre, one of Pike's most advanced protégés, aptly characterized his mentor's approach to linguistics in decidedly structuralist terms, when he wrote that it 'is frankly and unapologetically interested in functional relations in the internal structure of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences as well as in such relations and contrasts among constructions'.[147] Pike's scholarly interests were weighted more towards descriptive linguistics than translation problems. Nida was more concerned with translating the 'message' contained in scripture. Pike and many of his students remained rather more narrowly orientated towards structural or descriptive linguistics and, as a consequence, translation quality continued to suffer. The inclination for SIL translators

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[146] KLP to WGNS, 7 January 1953, TA 8663.

[147] Robert E. Longacre, 'Some Fundamentals Insights of Tagmemics', *Language* 41, no. 1 (February 1965): p. 65.

to produce overly literal or 'wooden' translations persisted into the early 1960s due to SIL's heavy emphases on linguistics unbalanced by equal attention to translation theory.[148]

Interest in translation theory did not forever lie dormant in SIL, and it was finally revived under the direction of SIL translator John Beekman in the 1960s. Although having only earned an MA, Beekman was nonetheless a gifted linguist. Most importantly he possessed the ability to relate his ideas in a less intellectually intimidating framework than the erudite Nida, and therefore was the ideal person to reintroduce the concept of dynamic equivalence into SIL. 'The clear implication from the differences in languages', Beekman wrote in 1965, clearly echoing Nida, 'is that any message to be communicated from one language to another should be conveyed in the linguistic form of the receptor language.' 'Only thus,' he added, 'can meaning be preserved.'[149] Beekman convincingly argued that overly literal translations, when they failed to communicate, actually impaired inspiration. Therefore the Bible was injured by carrying too much of the original form over into the receptor language more often than the reverse. Toward this end he was thus able to convince reticent translators that recasting the biblical message in the form of the receptor language would do no injustice to the scriptures but actually enhance their veracity.[150] Beekman's arguments unleashed a renewed interest in SIL during the 1960s in translation theory and the results were rapidly integrated into the translation process. By 1966 he was able to report that 'Our translators have moved away from any traces of extreme or recurring literalism as of

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[148] John Beekman, 'Idiomatic Versus Literal Translations', *Notes on Translation* 18 (November 1965): pp. 8-10; James Lauriault, 'Some Problems in Translating Paragraphs Idiomatically', *The Bible Translator* 8 (October, 1957): 166-169.

[149] Beekman, 'Idiomatic Versus Literal Translations': p. 9.

[150] Ibid.: pp. 8-12.

several years ago'.[151] SIL missionary-translators were, in Beekman's words, no longer turning out 'blunt swords'.[152]

Beekman's impact on translation notwithstanding, garnering credentials in linguistics remained the ticket for making one's career in SIL, and biblical studies and seminary were generally considered unnecessary. A vast majority of the organization's scholars continued to undertake post-graduate studies in linguistics at secular universities, and they subsequently maintained relationships with non-theological professional organizations, such the Linguistic Society of America and the American Anthropological Association.[153] Likewise their professional scholarly output was overwhelmingly published in linguistic and anthropological journals. For example, SIL linguists featured regularly in the *International Journal of American Linguistics*. Between 1944 and 1954 SIL members published no fewer than sixty-six articles in the journal, and the total SIL output for this same period in all scholarly journals totalled seventy-three articles.[154] Innovative Bible translation methods notwithstanding, linguistic research remained SIL's hallmark.

There yet remains one last and crucial difference between Ken Pike and Eugene Nida that is worthy of discussion. An examination of Pike's scholarly corpus to the early 1980s reveals that he approached linguistics from a naturalistic point of view.[155] Only in Pike's popular works does one discover his Christian commitment.[156] Nida, on the other

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[151] John Beekman, 'Translation Report to the 1966 Mexico branch conference', 1966, TA 40292.

[152] John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God, with Scripture and Topical Indexes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 349.

[153] SIL's relationship to anthropology is covered in chapter six.

[154] *Bibliography of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (Dallas: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992).

[155] Ibid., pp. 174-179; Joan Spanne and Mary Ruth Wise, 'The Writings of Kenneth L. Pike: A Bibliography', in *Language and Life: Essays in Memory of Kenneth L. Pike*, eds. Wise, Headland and Brend, pp. 57-75.

[156] Kenneth L. Pike, *Stir, Change, Create: Poems and Essays in Contemporary*

hand, displayed a regular habit of approaching language and translation from a decidedly Christian perspective.[157] After a fashion this distinction is relevant to Mark Noll's critique of the evangelical mind. It is not enough, Noll argued, for evangelicals to 'learn how to succeed in modern academia'. 'The much more important matter', Noll insisted, was 'to think like a Christian' about the physical and social worlds.[158] Nida reflected on translation from a specifically Christian point of view. Conversely it was Ken Pike's inclination to respect the Enlightenment distinction between scientific facts and religious values. Therefore his approach to the discipline of linguistics largely mirrored that of secular linguists.[159] Nida was a Christian scholar. Pike was a Christian *and* a scholar. In fact this was how Pike thought of himself, as both a 'Christian' and a 'scholar', as if he were shuttling back and forth between two distinct worlds.[160] The very character of SIL was marked by this distinction. SIL's best missionary-linguists would prove themselves more than capable of holding their own in secular academia, but one finds little in the way of sustained scholarly reflection on linguistics, translation or language from a specifically Christian intellectual or philosophical perspective in the years covered by this study. SIL transcended the fundamentalists' populist distrust of academia to produce highly competent linguistic scholarship, but it appears that the organization did not altogether escape the legacy of fundamentalism when it came to

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Mood for Concerned Students (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1967); Pike, *With Heart and Mind*.

[157] Nida, *Bible Translating*: Eugene A. Nida, *God's Word in Man's Language* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952); Eugene A. Nida, *Religion Across Cultures: A Study in the Communication of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968).

[158] Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p.7.

[159] It could be argued that Ken Pike did in fact reflect on the methods of scientific inquiry in his 1962 *With Heart and Mind*; however, this small volume was not intended to take its place in the scholarly literature but was written to encourage Pike's students. Likewise Pike's tagmemic theory may have had theistic underpinnings, but he did not make the connection explicit.

[160] Gary F. Simmons, 'The Call to Academic Community', in in *Language and Life*, eds. Wise, Headland and Brend, pp. 83-84.

scholarly Christian reflection on the nature of human language and scripture.

SIL's coming of age is a chronicle of how Cameron Townsend's ambition to field better-trained missionary-translators not only accomplished that aim but also fortuitously stimulated a movement to revitalize missionary scholarship. To Ken Pike and Eugene Nida goes much of the credit for these accomplishments, especially considering that SIL's founder was sometimes a fly in the ointment of scholarly progress. Townsend, his occasional foot dragging on academic matters notwithstanding, still deserves recognition for seeing the potential of these two missionary 'failures'. There too was the critical factor of Townsend's linking SIL to the school of American descriptive linguistics. This not only shaped the academic character of SIL but also helped to ensure that the organization's research and scholarly production quite often met the prevailing academic standards at research universities. The tie-up with the University of Oklahoma was another key factor in ensuring SIL's academic character. Thus, under Pike and Nida's leadership, SIL evolved along academic lines, becoming a respected institution of applied linguistics. On the other hand, SIL linguists tended to respect the division between scientific facts and religious values, and therefore Christian thought and linguistic scholarship generally remained separate spheres of activity. Despite any failings in the arena of Christian intellectualism, for an organization with roots in fundamentalism to rise to the level of scholarly attainment that SIL achieved is, perhaps, an accomplishment unmatched in North American evangelicalism. Clearly, then, the case of SIL is an outstanding demonstration of mid-twentieth century evangelicals transcending their anti-intellectualist background to enjoy fruitful engagement with academia. The development of Camp Wycliffe and the Summer Institute of Linguistics represents nothing less than a revival of scholarship among evangelicals from the unlikely confines of a faith mission

CHAPTER FOUR

CAMERON TOWNSEND AND THE STRATEGY OF 'SERVICE TO ALL'

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'We sing to One America, United Hemisphere,
Blest harmony of the nations! The world our song must hear.'

William Cameron Townsend (1942)
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Having successfully parted with the limitations imposed by the traditional faith mission ethos in Mexico to pursue a multidimensional religious, scientific and humanitarian mission, Cameron Townsend opportunistically pushed his organization even further along a radical course in Peru beginning in 1946. Although SIL was founded in Mexico, the SIL experiment in Peru became Townsend's flagship operation. He was deeply involved in its development and it embodied the most innovative and unconventional of his strategies abroad. As in Mexico, he insisted that SIL should cooperate with the Peruvian government and follow the linguistic approach, but these strategies were extended in ways that indelibly shaped the organization for decades to come. WBT-SIL's first executive director, Benjamin 'Ben' Elson, wrote in 1976 that 'Uncle Cam's first operating principle is service to all'.[1] Many of the varied aspects of the SIL approach to missions examined in this chapter were, in one way or another, a function of Townsend's insistence that SIL should serve everyone regardless of their political persuasion, religious perspective or social class. 'If they would let me teach the Bible in Russia,' Townsend wrote in 1939, 'I would gladly abstain from censorship of their policies I did not like. After all', he added, 'who called us to pass judgement on our

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[1] Ben Elson, 'Service to All', in *The Wycliffe Sapphire*, Cameron Townsend, et al (n.p.: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1991), p. 59, from an article that originally appeared in the September 1976 issue of SIL's *Intercom* magazine.

rulers?'[2] This was no idle boast, for he would one day prove himself true to his word in the USSR.[3] Townsend insisted that what had worked so magnificently in Mexico would work as well in Peru. 'Many, many self-sacrificing young workers will be needed,' Townsend wrote in 1945 on the eve of the Peruvian venture, 'but only those should apply who are willing to become all things to all men that by all means they might save some.'[4] This was a strategy that some newly minted WBT-SIL missionaries would struggle to follow, as will be shown, but the policy of serving all comers was one that Townsend was utterly committed to pursuing.

The Townsend Factor

As Townsend set about establishing WBT-SIL in Peru, the dual-organization approach was on full display. WBT-SIL's 1948 'Principles and Practices' explicitly stated that the 'Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc. exists for one purpose: to obey Christ's command to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"'.[5] By almost any commonly accepted definition, one would assume that the organization's personnel were thus missionaries. Townsend argued on the contrary that, since the organization's members went out as translators and linguists under the scientific and cultural SIL side of the organization, they were not missionaries. 'We are not now and never have been a missionary organization' Townsend declared in 1943.[6] Yet, when speaking to the Christian public in North America, he was given to calling WBT-SIL

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[2] William Cameron Townsend, 'Answer to Critics of Our Policy of Cooperating with Governments and Scientific Organizations', 29 November 1939, TA 2436.

[3] Townsend's excursions in the USSR are discussed in chapter six.

[4] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Director's Column', *Translation* (Spring 1945): p. 10, TA 942655.

[5] 'Principles and Practices – Wycliffe Bible Translators in Cooperation with the Summer Institute of Linguistics', 1948, p. 2, TA 41458.

[6] WCT to staff members of Camp Wycliffe, 14 July 1943, TA 3479.

personnel 'missionaries'.[7] With the founder practising obfuscation, it comes as no

surprise that the dual organization was the most misunderstood of WBT-SIL's

strategies. In an interview for this study, translator Dorothy Minor, who joined the

organization in 1949, wryly reflected that WBT-SIL members are 'two-headed

monsters'.[8] During the early 1950s charter board member Eugene Nida became

increasingly disenchanted with what he saw as the semantic elasticity of the dual-

organizational rhetoric, and it was the reason he offered for his departure from WBT-

SIL.[9] When Nida tendered his resignation in September 1953, he explained that it was

because he could no longer tolerate the 'degree of misrepresentation' that accompanied

'the explanation of the SIL-WBT program'. 'In the same way that splitting of

personality is disastrous to effective living,' Nida reasoned, 'so artificial differences

between SIL and WBT contain the seeds of ultimate disruption and lack of

integration.'[10] When Ken Pike was pressed to explain the dual setup he simply replied

that 'SIL and WBT are for <u>accountability</u> to two different audiences'.[11] This was

probably as close to the truth of the matter as any other explanation, for WBT and SIL

had differing constituencies, Christians at home and governments abroad respectively.

Internally however the two organizations were often conflated as anyone reading in the

corporate archives soon recognizes by noting the pervasive tendency of the leaders to

carry out business as if the two organizations were in fact a single entity. Indeed the

introduction of the 1948 'Principles and Practices' explained that only Wycliffe would

be referred to therein 'to make for a more simple presentation of the overall principles

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[7] William Cameron Townsend, 'Overcoming Barriers to Reach Bibleless Tribes', *Sunday School Times* (24 January 1948): pp. 67-68, TA 44391.

[8] Dorothy Minor, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 10 September 2008.

[9] EAN to WCT, 11 May 1943; TA 3577, EAN to WCT, 21 May 1943, p. 2, TA 3579.

[10] EAN to WBT board of directors, 9 September 1953, p. 2, TA 9256.

[11] KLP, explanation of the dual organization to an unidentified inquiry, n.d., TA 42517.

and procedures of the two organizations'.[12] As confusing as it was, the dual nature of WBT-SIL permitted organizational leaders and members to emphasize either the religious or the scientific nature of WBT-SIL as called for by the public with which they were engaging at the time.

That Townsend presented SIL to governments first and foremost as a linguistic institution, rather than a mission, led him to insist that SIL members should refrain as much as possible from overtly emphasizing SIL's missionary character. Open evangelism was especially discouraged, and he therefore cautioned his young recruits that while a missionary's 'soul may burn within him with the desire to preach the Way of Salvation, . . . he will get much further if he lets his life talk more than his words'.[13] SIL presented itself as a scientific and cultural organization, and as one which had the host state's best interests in in mind. Therefore, its founder argued, the organization should seek to maintain an image congruent with the state's expectations. Fearing that SIL would appear as just another typical missionary outfit, on one occasion he went so far as to order that a regular meeting to sing Christian hymns taking place in an SIL missionary's home should cease.[14] The lesson was taken to heart. In 1954 the Peru branch director put some non-SIL evangelical missionaries who were lodging at an SIL guesthouse onto the street. This rather uncivil action was taken to ensure that there would be no detectable evangelical atmosphere during a Peruvian government official's visit.[15] Townsend strove constantly to lessen the possibility that SIL would be mistaken for conventional missionary enterprise. In fact he was adamant that outside North America SIL would publicly reflect its scientific and humanitarian character more than

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[12] 'Principles and Practices', p. 2, TA 41458.

[13] William Cameron Townsend, 'Notes on Spiritual Work', 26 April 1948, pp. 2-3, TA 42641.

[14] Hefley interview notes, 'Unique Policies of WCT', c. 1970, TA 43516.

[15] WCT to Otis Leal, 15 July 1954, TA 10112.

its religious nature.

WBT-SIL's the board of directors often looked upon Townsend's innovative ideas with consternation, at least initially; but the board's activities generally failed to impede the implementation of the founder's ideas. Ken Pike once recalled that whenever the board of directors sided against the founder, he would use 'his kind of end-run tactics to get his own way'. 'If there is a motion passed which goes his way', Pike added, 'he immediately acts on it fully. If the motion goes against him, he just walks around it any way he can.'[16] Townsend was therefore able to stamp the Peru branch with his own unique brand of mission in large part because of the weakness of the WBT-SIL board of directors. There was too the fact that he led by persuasion and not infrequently by coercion. As former Wycliffe president Bernie May put it in an interview, Townsend was a 'power player'.[17] Former SIL president Frank Robbins trenchantly recalled that 'he twisted peoples' arms right out of their sockets'.[18] Ken Pike once remarked that 'There is no one known to me in our organization who has worked closely with Uncle Cam without getting terribly clobbered. In some senses he's one of the most ruthless men I've ever known.'[19] It was quite natural, then, that Cameron Townsend evoked a full range of emotions from his contemporaries, ranging from exasperation to reverence, but, by dint of sheer stubbornness, he most generally had his way despite whatever resistance he encountered.

Another key to Townsend's success was the fact that he possessed a temperament that put him at ease with political leaders of the sort that most other faith mission leaders would have gone out of their way to avoid. A summary left by

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[16] Kenneth L. Pike, quoted in Tom Moore, 'Report to the Administration on Opposition' (unpublished report), October 1989, chap. 5, p. 5, in author's possession.

[17] Bernard (Bernie) May, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 18 September 2009.

[18] Frank E. Robbins, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 2 September 2008.

[19] Pike quoted in 'Opposition', Moore. chap. 5, p. 5.

Townsend of a late-April 1945 meeting with the president of Venezuela, Rómulo

Betancourt, who had just come to power in a military coup, demonstrates just how at

ease he was in the company of Latin American heads of state. 'The way of a reformer is

hard', he recorded, so it was to be expected that the Presidente de la Junta

Revolucionaria was 'taking a well-earned vacation' after 'overthrowing the government'

of General Medina. Townsend noted that when Betancourt was in exile, he had learned

'about the art of overthrowing dictators', and that some of his fellow revolutionaries had

'attempted to blow the props out from under Gen. Gomez', a former president of

Venezuela. The assassination attempt failed and the bombers were jailed. After

recounting these events, Townsend boasted that he 'ate dinner with one of the would-be

bombers'. He also took no little pride in the fact that he was left unguarded on the

veranda with the president during his visit.[20] As he had already demonstrated in his

personal relationship with Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico, Townsend enjoyed the company

of revolutionary figures who proclaimed democracy and social uplift, even if their route

to power subverted the democratic process, as in the case of Betancourt.

There was yet another side of the Townsend character to which many would

succumb. Ken Pike once remarked of Townsend's disarming manner that he 'was very

mild looking[,] like a lost farmer in the middle of the city . . . . He looks helpless and

makes you want to help him.'[21] A 1964 photograph taken of Townsend strolling the

halls of a newly dedicated SIL facility in the company of Mexico's president, Adolfo

López Mateos, and a bevy of other government officials exemplifies Pike's point. SIL's

Ben Elson and the government officials are all stylishly decked out in well-fitted

business suits and all sport nicely trimmed, executive-style haircuts. Townsend, walking

alongside the president, cuts a less than imposing figure with his tie askew, wearing a

[20] WCT, 'Notas Escritas en Abril de 1945', April 1945, TA 4005.
[21] KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 5, TA 43472.

wrinkled suit and an obviously worn shirt. Adding to the effect, his hair is cropped well

above his protruding ears, somewhat in the style of a farm boy whose father had set a

bowl on his head before taking the shears to him. His looks were beguiling, for this

naïve exterior disguised a master of public relations and a skilful negotiator. Not a few

ministers or government bureaucrats, thinking that they could easily dispense with such

an ungainly American, would subsequently find themselves doling out favours to this

intrepid missionary diplomat.

Townsend was not shy about taking advantage of social occasions and forays

into the halls of power to engage in personal evangelization. For instance, Ambassador

Cooper and his wife were present at the Townsend residence when it came time to read

the devotional *Daily Light*, something of a *de rigueur* exercise for conservative

evangelicals at the time. Townsend's wife later remarked that 'we hope the Coopers

went away thinking of spiritual things'.[22] He was able to engage routinely in

evangelization without offence because he was more patient and subtle than most

evangelicals. Indeed in a 1958 letter he put it thus:

> As a boy I hunted squirrels. If a greenhorn went hunting with
> me, I always warn[ed] him to keep still and above all not to
> shoot until we got close enough to the game. I reserve that right
> today when I engage in hunting for men. If you ever go hunting
> with me among the ruling classes of Lima, I'm quite likely to
> say, . . . 'please don't open your mouth until I let you know that
> we're ready'. Sooner or later we always get to testify for our
> Lord, but we must be willing to take time to stalk the game.[23]

Townsend had developed his own personal brand of evangelism, and it was a strategy

that did not put cultural elites on the defensive as would have more direct techniques.

These encounters were also made possible by the fact that he was not knocking on doors

as a missionary, but as the leader of a linguistic institute. 'We may not boast about being

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[22] Elaine (Mielke) Townsend to Robert Cole, 8 September 1946, TA 4285.
[23] WCT to WGNS, 27 March 1958, TA 16292.

missionaries', Townsend declared in 1953, 'but the opportunities we get through our double approach are priceless.'[24] Townsend's evangelistic efforts ensured that nearly everyone who ever rubbed shoulders with him knew that he was a sincere Christian.

Cameron Townsend was the guest of honour at a 1961 banquet hosted by Mexican elites to celebrate SIL's work among the indigenous peoples of Latin America. Attending were ambassadors from Bolivia, Brazil and the Philippines along with representatives from the United States, Canada, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru and Columbia. Speaking on behalf of the Mexican committee the poet, politician, judge and former mayor of the state of Sonora, F. Arellano Belloc, aptly framed the twofold nature of Townsend's mind that gave rise to the policy of service to all and the dual-organizational strategy. Beloc began by professing that 'Mr. Townsend is one of these mystics in whom two tendencies meet'. The first of these, Belloc asserted, was 'the salvation of souls', then concluded that the second tendency was one that 'applies positive good in our civilization, so that not only souls but also bodies may be freed from the horrors of sorrow, sickness, po[v]erty, exploitation and premature death'.[25] Cameron Townsend was more than a missionary with a passion for Bible translation, he was also a committed humanitarian, whose missionary organization was fittingly described in a 1964 letter of recommendation for a public service award as a 'Peace Corps with wings and a soul'.[26]

The Post World War II Peruvian Context

Peru's civilian political institutions were particularly weak throughout much of the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. In effect the country was ruled by an

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[24] WCT to WBT-SIL members, c. September 1953, TA 8824.

[25] 'Missionary Statesman Honored', WBT-SIL press release, January 1961, TA 20699.

[26] Nomination of WBT-SIL for the Lane Bryant Award, 1964, TA 42248.

oligarchic elite that consolidated its power around an export economy based on foreign capital (originating mainly from the United States) and the extraction of commodities. By and large traditional laissez-faire capitalism prevailed and the state was relegated to combating inflation, controlling labour and encouraging foreign investment. Challenges were levied from the political left and by labour against the dominant class. The most significant expression of discontent with the ruling class and U.S. domination of the economy was the appearance of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) in 1931. The *Aparistas*, as members of the APRA were known, were unable to consolidate power before World War II due to the entrenched power of the conservative right and because Peru's illiterate peasants and Indians were prevented from voting by laws stipulating a literacy test. Its efforts thwarted, the APRA radicalized in the difficult depression years of the early 1930s leading to violence. The Peruvian congress called on the armed forces to assume power in 1933 to quell the unrest. The country returned to civilian control after democratic elections in 1939. A 1948 coup once again returned Peru to military control under an army general, Manuel A. Odría. Civilian rule resumed from 1956 to 1968, save for a short interregnum in 1962-1963 when the armed forces intervened to prevent the APRA candidate, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, from assuming power.[27] During SIL's first twenty-five years in Peru, the military was a dominant force in the nation's political affairs.

Of particular importance for the future of SIL in Peru was the distinctive intellectual outlook of the armed forces on Peruvian development. The influence of French military thought on colonial affairs was an influential force shaping the mind of Peru's military officers from as early as 1896 when, under the leadership of a French colonel, Paul Clément, the Peruvian army was reorganized and modernized. French

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[27] Daniel Masterson, *The History of Peru* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009), pp. 95-102, 112-118, 141-146, 159-161.

colonial ideology was mediated through the education of the general staff at, for

example, the newly established Escuela Superior de Guerra (1904), where concepts such

as the penetration and control of the country's remote interior, the army's role in

carrying out a civilizing mission and the function of education in national development

were all inculcated from the turn of the century until about 1940. The upshot of four

decades of French training and the accompanying professionalization of the officer

corps was that the army became the most capable instrument of state modernization in

Peru.[28] An influential essay written by Peruvian Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Morla

Concha in 1933 is a testament to the French influence. Morla saw the army as nation-

building tool which could form the 'vegetating masses' into an industrious citizenry, and

he argued that the army was ideally suited to effect the incorporation of Peru's

indigenous peoples into the state and to undertake their education, while still allowing

them to preserve their 'positive attributes'. Morla also called for the settlement of the

frontier by building roads, constructing railroads and the establishment of airlines. Morla

envisaged trained 'legions' leading a charge to 'forge nationhood' under the tutelage of

the army.[29] Morla was proposing nothing less than a modernizing project along the lines

of French colonial projects in Africa and Asia. Writing in 1964, the army general and

leading military intellectual Edgardo Mercado Jarrín clearly indicated that the military

was the ideal agent for carrying out an effort to modernize the state, since French

training and guidance had 'facilitated the formation of a nucleus of officers with modern

attitudes, new expertise, revolutionary spirit, social consciousness, and inclined to

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[28] Frederick M. Nunn, 'Professional Militarism in Twentieth-Century Peru: Historical and Theoretical Background to the Golpe de Estado of 1968', *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 59, no. 3 (August 1979): pp. 391-417.

[29] Manuel Morla Concha, 'Función social del ejécito en la organización de la nacionalidad', *Revista Militar del Perú* (October 1933): pp. 843-872, quoted in Nunn, 'Professional Militarism in Twentieth-Century Peru', p. 400.

maintain peace and order'.[30] Institutionalized over the past several decades, this French-inspired colonial ideology was a primary impulse behind the military coup in 1968, in that it was sparked by frustration over the civilian government's inability to resolve internal conflicts and modernize the state effectively.[31] At the time of SIL's arrival in Peru, the Peruvian military leadership was utterly confident that the armed forces were ideally suited to effect the nation's transition to modernity.

The timing of Townsend's foray into Peru was extraordinarily advantageous. Within a few short months of Minister of Education Enrique Laroza's signing the Peru-SIL agreement in June 1945, he was succeeded by the historian, journalist, politician and ethnologist Luis Valcárcel Vizcarra. Valcárcel was especially influential in mediating both the ideology of the Mexican Revolution and the intellectual currents of the indigenist movement into Peru.[32] It was his contention that Peru was fashioned from two irreconcilable populations. On the one side were the indigenous peoples of Inca descent and on the other were those of Spanish descent. Valcárcel argued in 1927 that the answer to this perceived problem was not to be found in the triumph of the dominant Spanish culture over the indigenous Incas, but rather in a 'a return to our Inca roots'. Inca 'culture will come down again from the Andes', he insisted, and it 'will reappear in a dazzling form, haloed by its eternal values'.[33] Valcárcel used his stature and influence in government circles to inaugurate an institute for the study of Peru's indigenous

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[30] Edgardo Mercado Jarrín, ''El ejército de hoy y su proyección en nuestra sociedad en período de transición, 1940-1965', *Revista Militar de Perú* (November-December 1964): p. 9, quoted in Nunn, 'Professional Militarism in Twentieth-Century Peru', p. 394.

[31] Jane S. Jaquette, 'The Peruvian Experiment in Retrospect', *World Politics* 39, no. 2 (January 1987): pp. 281-282.

[32] Jorge P. Osterling and Héctor Martínez, 'Notes for a History of Peruvian Social Anthropology, 1940-1980', *Current Anthropology* 24, no. 3 (June 1983): pp. 343-344.

[33] Luis E. Valcárcel, *Tempestad en los Andes* (Lima: Universo, [1927] 1972), pp. 23-25, quoted in ibid., p. 346.

peoples, the Instituto Indigenista Peruano, of which he became director in 1946.

Valcárcel was not alone in the immediate post-World War II period in his research aims

and ambitions for rehabilitating Inca cultural values. Among a number of other projects

was a cooperative research programme between Peru and Cornell University. The twin

goals of this project were 'to conduct a form of experimental research on modernization

processes' and 'to help this community [Peru's indigenous peoples] to change from a

position of relative dependence and submission . . . to a position of relative

independence and freedom in the framework of Peruvian national life'.[34] Townsend and

SIL happened upon the Peruvian scene at the very moment when social anthropology

and indigenous concerns were becoming institutionalized under the direction of

intellectuals such as Valcárcel.

The Catholic Church in Peru generally resisted the liberal strains of modernity.

For example, in the 1930s a number of clergy in the upper echelons of the Peruvian

Catholicism became infatuated with fascism, since it complemented Roman Catholic

ideas of authoritarianism, hierarchical society and corporatism. In no small part this

obsession with fascism was part and parcel of the church's efforts to reassert its place in

society.[35] Catholic Action, a movement initiated in 1917 to form a militant Catholic

laity, was another symbol of resistance to progressive social change.[36] In the years

leading up to World War II and in the decade that followed, the Catholic hierarchy in

Peru attempted to erect a conservative bulwark against encroaching modernity.

By the mid-1950s a growing progressive wing within Peruvian Catholicism, one

that was more in touch with the changing social realities, came to the fore. The 1955

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[34] Quoted in Osterling and Martínez, 'Notes', p. 349.

[35] Fredrick B. Pike, 'Church and State in Peru and Chile since 1840: A Study in Contrasts', *The American Historical Review* 73, no. 1 (October 1967): pp. 42-47.

[36] Jeffrey Klaiber, *The Catholic Church in Peru, 1821-1985: A Social History* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), pp. 24-26, 209-213.

succession of the conservative Cardinal Juan Gualberto by the more progressive Juan

Landázuri Rickets as archbishop of Lima, marks the inflection point where the militant

and conservative wing of the Church was surpassed by a more progressive and modern

wing of Peruvian Catholicism. Over the next thirty-five years Landázuri patiently but

firmly pressed the Church to take up the question of social justice. Change in the

church's outlook was visible in a 1958 pastoral letter from Peru's bishops in which they

spoke of the need for Christians to change the social order, whereas in the past the

church had limited its criticism to specific social injustices.[37] The central thrust of

Landázuri's progressive programme foreshadowed the reforms of the Second Vatican

Council of the early 1960s, which undertook an ideological reorientation that moderated

the Church's authoritarian, paternal and anti-progressive perspectives.[38] After the

Second Vatican Council progressive Latin American Catholic bishops increasingly

assumed a lead role in contributing to social justice within the framework of the modern

nation-state.

The context in which SIL found itself in Peru was one where the most powerful

political institution, the army, shared a number of overlapping goals with SIL. Likewise

there were shared values between SIL and the nation's indigenistas and educational

elites. It was natural then that SIL would form alliances with these institutions. It was

also quite logical for the more conservative wing of the Roman Catholic hierarchy,

which in the late 1940s and early 1950s was still dominated by conservatives, to feel

threatened by SIL's advance into the frontier zones. As the battle lines were drawn

between SIL and the Catholic hierarchy in the early 1950s, it became imperative for SIL

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[37] Ibid., pp. 245-246, 252-253, 256.
[38] Williams, 'The Emergence of the Secular Nation-State': pp. 264-274; Catalina Romero, 'The Peruvian Church: Change and Continuity', in *The Progressive Church in Latin America*, eds. Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 253-275.

to convince military leaders and educational elites that its services were of sufficient value to warrant the organization remaining in Peru despite demands from Catholic antagonists for its departure. At issue was whether or not SIL could hold on until the transformation taking place within Peruvian Catholicism shifted in its favour.

The Founder in Transition

In November 1953 Cameron Townsend was in Mexico celebrating the twentieth anniversary of his 1933 crossing into the country. To the gathered ensemble of SIL Mexico branch members, he recollected the time when L. L. Legters returned from an exploratory trip to Brazil with some pictures of the Xingu Indians. 'I couldn't forget those Indians', he reminisced, 'and so I told the Lord at least by 1927 that I would be glad to pioneer again in a tribe down there.' Despite having shelved plans for South America to enter Mexico, Townsend often thought about those 'fine stalwart fellows,' who had 'not a strip of clothing, but fine expressions on their faces, just anxious to have someone come and tell them about God and His love'.[39] This calling 'through Pictures', as he retrospectively referred to this experience, provoked an unquenchable thirst for moving into South America that could only be satiated by action.[40]

The end of World War II marked the beginning of a new chapter in life for Cameron Townsend. On Christmas Eve 1944 his wife Elvira suddenly died of a stroke in his arms.[41] A subdued but undaunted Townsend remained purposeful in his vision. 'If I have been devoted to my Lord's service in the past', he averred at Elvira's funeral, 'by

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[39] William Cameron Townsend, 'Highlights from Wycliffe 20th Anniversary in Mexico Celebration', 10 and 11 November 1953, p. 5, TA 42642.

[40] William Cameron Townsend, 'Wycliffe Lives Again', 1948, p. 6, TA 42642.

[41] WCT to RSP, 24 December 1944, TA 3733; WCT to Mrs Harvey J. Borton, secretary of the Pioneer Mission Agency, telegram, 26 December 1944, TA 3732; 'Elvira Malmstrom Townsend Called Home' funeral announcement by WBT, 26 December 1944, p. 2, TA 3731.

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his grace my devotion shall be a passion from now on.'[42] Townsend was a man of his

word as the next four decades would prove. Indeed the very next day Townsend wrote to

SIL Mexico director Dick Pittman briefly remarking on the previous day's funeral. He

then rather abruptly informed Pittman that this 'note will have to be about business'.

Should he plan to come to Mexico? What about the co-operative programme to

publicize Wycliffe that he was planning with the famous radio evangelist Charles

Fuller?[43] Above all else Peru was beckoning, and Townsend, still in his prime at forty-

eight, was straining at the leash to pioneer once again.

A close reading of Townsend's correspondence from early 1946 intimates that he

had taken more than a passing interest in Miss Elaine Mielke, a WBT-SIL missionary

twenty-five years his junior. Several times she is singled out for special notice in

Townsend's correspondence. He had particular praise for her successful literacy

campaign in Mexico, where she was then serving with SIL.[44] In a letter to his niece

Evelyn Pike (Ken Pike's wife), Townsend confided that he had fallen for Elaine but was

determined that 'my head shall steer my heart'.[45] Apparently his head said yes, and they

were married on 4 April 1946, at the home of Lázaro Cárdenas, with the former

president standing as Townsend's best man and Mrs Amalia Cárdenas acting as Elaine's

matron of honour.[46] After a brief honeymoon Cameron and Elaine embarked for Peru.[47]

Where Elvira had struggled with her husband's impulsive nature and unsettled ways,

Elaine seemed to revel in these characteristics providing Cameron the ideal mate as he

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[42] William Cameron Townsend, 'Statement of Purpose Made at Elvira's Funeral', 28 December 1944, p. 1, TA 3731.
[43] WCT to RSP, 29 December 1944, TA 3730.
[44] WCT to A. M. Johnson, 11 April 1945, TA 4020; WCT to Max Lathrop, 11 April 1945, TA 4019; WCT to 'supporters', 20 April 1945, TA 4015.
[45] WCT to Evelyn Pike, 14 June 1945, TA 3994.
[46] 'Wedding of Elaine Mielke and Cameron Townsend at the Summer Home of General and Mrs. Lázaro Cárdenas', reported by Mrs Reimer, 1946, TA 42032; WCT to 'friends and relatives', 11 April 1946, TA 4346.
[47] WCT to WGNS, 12 April 1946, TA 4203.

tenaciously pursued his visionary plan for making the Bible available to thousands of language groups around the world.

The Establishment of SIL in Peru

SIL's invitation to Peru came as direct result of its linguistic research and educational work in Mexico. In 1943 the American Bible Society requested Ken Pike's assistance in developing a common script for the various Quechua dialects spoken in the Peruvian Andes. While in Lima, in January 1944, Pike gave a series of lectures on phonetics to high school teachers of English at the request of Peru's minister of public education, Enrique Laroza. During his sojourn in Lima, Pike described SIL's work in Mexico to Laroza. The minister recognized the value of the services SIL potentially offered in his nation's struggle to incorporate Peru's indigenous peoples into the state, and he therefore invited SIL to take up work similar to what had been done in Mexico.[48] 'No doubt', Laroza wrote Townsend in June 1944, 'the research work that the institute intends to perform in my country will constitute a most important contribution to remedying the multiple problems which we are engaged in solving.'[49] Upon receipt of this letter Townsend embarked on his exploratory survey of Peru, during which he secured an official agreement for SIL's services. At a time when additional Protestant missionaries were denied entry, Peru extended an invitation to SIL based upon the merits of its scientific and educational credentials.

An examination of the 25 June 1945 agreement with the Peruvian Ministry of Public Education is revealing, for it is a classic example of Townsend's unorthodox approach to missions and SIL's participation in state modernization. The first cluster of objectives mainly concerned academic matters. Along this line the agreement called for

[48] Ken Pike, 'General Report on South American Trip', 21 February 1944, TA 3875.

[49] Enrique Laroza to WCT, 22 June 1944, translation by author, TA 3822.

a 'thorough study of each language' and a 'comparative study of the native languages, both among themselves and in relation to other languages of the world'. In addition SIL agreed to produce in-depth anthropological studies, the chief end of which was to record and preserve for posterity the 'Indian tribal' way of life. The second emphasis of the agreement was on practical service. SIL personnel were required to act as interpreters, offer 'linguistic courses for groups of rural school-teachers', prepare reading primers, and to engage in the 'fostering of sports, civic duties, and cooperative services', along with 'the uprooting of vice by all means possible'. In keeping with SIL's linguistic emphasis, the agreement called for 'the translation into the native tongues of laws, sanitary advice, handbooks dealing with agriculture, . . . as well as books of great moral and patriotic value'. SIL was to undertake this two-pronged programme largely at its own expense, save for the training of rural teachers, for which SIL would receive remuneration. This did not imply that the Peruvian government had the better end of the arrangement since the agreement went on to stipulate that several government ministries and departments were to render various services to SIL. The Department of Immigration was to eliminate the head-tax on SIL personnel, the Ministry of the Interior was to secure for SIL the use of government land, the Ministry of Aeronautics was to issue permits for SIL to import and acquire in-country aircraft and to operate them, and the Ministry of Government and Ministry of Police were likewise to permit the use of radio and communications equipment. In addition SIL received duty-free import status and fully equipped offices in the Ministry of Public Education building in Lima.[50] Other missions could only dream of such co-operation and governmental aid. As in Mexico, SIL was once again making common cause with a Latin American state in its efforts of

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[50] 'Agreement between the Ministry of Public Education of Peru and Mr William Townsend, General Director of the Summer Institute of Linguistics', 25 June 1945, TA 40628.

social uplift and goals for the incorporation of the nation's indigenous peoples into the political and economic structures of the state.

In securing this agreement Townsend seemed to have left out one important topic: not once did it explicitly mention Bible translation. Buried in the detailed four-page agreement was the point that SIL would translate 'books of great moral . . . value'. This bit of semantic ingenuity was code for Bible translation. This evasive choice of words would eventually result in accusations that WBT-SIL was acting deceitfully.[51] Clearly the relationship between the secular requirements of the agreement and the allowance for spiritual work was oddly out of proportion when taking into consideration WBT-SIL's primary goal of Bible translation. If the agreement were strictly adhered to in its general outline, it would be very difficult for SIL to accomplish its Bible translation goals. In fact the main thrust of agreement was on linguistic and anthropological research and the integration of the indigenous inhabitants of Peru into the national life of the country. Conversely there was only barest hint of spiritual or missionary work, and no mention of Wycliffe Bible Translators. In Mexico, Townsend had cast Bible translation in terms of liberating the Indians from avarice and superstition and as a means for weakening the influence of Roman Catholicism. Examination of this agreement with the Peruvian government makes it look as if Townsend concealed SIL's Bible translation intentions in the minutiae of bureaucratic language. Statements in the press at the time of the signing of the agreement tend to suggest this was the case. For example two prominent Peruvian newspapers made no mention of Bible translation or religious activities when publicizing the arrival of SIL's first contingent of missionary-linguists in June 1946.[52] Townsend had succeeded in crafting an agreement that

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[51] Aspects of this issue are also discussed in chapter six.

[52] 'Llegada de une Mission Científica y Cultural Norteamericana', (Lima), *El Comercio*, 27 April 1946, TA 45568; 'Ha Llegado una Mision Cultural y Cientfica de

effectively subsumed Bible translation under a comprehensive programme of cultural, social and scientific service.

While it is true that Townsend downplayed the Bible translation angle, and that he reinterpreted it in less than strictly religious terms as a book of morals that carried patriotic overtones, he did not practice outright deception when negotiating the agreement. He later reported that he had verbally informed Peruvian officials of SIL's spiritual aims, but purposely avoided mention of Bible translation in the contract so as not to give the Roman Catholic hierarchy reason to mount an attack.[53] SIL's religious intentions did not long remain a secret. A 13 September 1946 *Peruvian Times* article on SIL's nascent operations in the Amazonian jungle briefly noted that SIL was translating 'selections from the Bible'. Nevertheless, as with the agreement itself, the *Peruvian Times* article implied that such endeavours were rather limited in comparison with the larger scientific and cultural work of SIL.[54] Townsend had not deceived Peruvian government officials, but he had couched his Bible translation ambitions in minimalist terms.

Townsend employed his interpersonal skills in Peru to establish an extraordinarily wide ranging circle of relationships. An examination of his correspondence during the summer of 1946 is revealing. His letters refer to almost daily meetings with dignitaries of one variety or the other. This never ending stream of diplomats, ministers, educators and members of the intelligentsia that Townsend encountered ranged from Peruvian radical political theorist and politician Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre to American Admiral William 'Bull' Halsey, Jr, both of whom he met at the home of Prentice Cooper, the American ambassador to Peru, who was a frequent

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Estados Unidos, *La Croncia*, 27 April 1946, TA 45569.

[53] WCT to 'Dr. Friesen', 13 May 1948, TA 5312.

[54] 'The Summer Institute of Linguistics: Indian Languages of the Jungle', (Lima), *Peruvian Times*, 13 September 1946, TA 45565.

guest of the Townsends.[55] By mid-October 1946 the Townsends had personally

entertained over fifty public figures at their Peruvian residence, four of whom were

cabinet-level ministers.[56] Once he established rapport with those who could help him in

furthering his programme, Townsend set about weaving those friendships into a tapestry

of mutually reinforcing connections. In November of 1946 he mailed to University of

Oklahoma president George Cross some newspaper clippings, in which the Peruvian

minister of education, Luis E. Valcárcel, had mentioned the University of Oklahoma

when extolling the merits of SIL's programme. Along with the clippings Townsend

included a request suggesting that Cross should reciprocate by sending a letter of

gratitude to Valcárcel, and he cleverly requested additional copies.[57] Cross complied,

and Townsend thus obtained a handful of letters useful for impressing lower-level

ministerial bureaucrats.[58] By the late 1940s, Townsend was probably as well connected

in Peru as many diplomats and certainly more so than any North American evangelical

missionary.

SIL's Peruvian literacy programme carried out in co-operation with the Peruvian

government is a singular example of the organization's efforts to fulfil the scientific and

educational requirements of its contract with the Department of Education. At the time

the bilingual education project was initiated in 1952, Peru was again under military rule,

following the seizure of power by General Manuel Odría in 1948.[59] This experimental

programme in bilingual education was calibrated to facilitate the integration of Peru's

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[55] WCT to WGNS, 11 June 1946, TA 4192; Robert G. (Bob) Schneider (hereafter RGS) to WGNS, 5 August 1946, TA 4570.

[56] WCT to A. M. Johnson, 6 October 1946, TA 4268; WCT to Amos Baker, 12 October 1946, TA 4265.

[57] WCT to George L. Cross, University of Oklahoma, 7 November 1946, TA 904259.

[58] George L. Cross to WCT, 18 November 1946, TA 4394; George L. Cross to Dr Luis E. Valcárcel, Minister of Education, Republic of Peru, 18 November 1946, TA 4509.

[59] Masterson, *The History of Peru*, p. 145.

indigenous peoples into the social, economic and political structures of the nation-state.

Towards this end Supreme Resolution no. 909 authorizing the programme decreed that 'students will be trained for productive work and taught the basic cultural norms of Western civilization necessary for participating in national life [and] the concept of citizenship'.[60] In a 1981 review of the project, SIL's Mildred L. Larson found that by the display of flags, a recitation of the national anthem and the keeping of national holidays the programme's schools exuded an 'atmosphere of patriotism' and encouraged 'loyalty to Peru'.[61] Another project reviewer, SIL's Mary Ruth Wise, observed that 'Through the bilingual school system thousands have become literate in both their native language and in Spanish, and have learned of the extent of their native land and of the existence and functioning of its government.'[62] In all, by the time that Peru assumed full operational control of the programme in 1975, 210 communities were affected, 320 teachers were prepared and 12,000 pupils were trained.[63] WBT-SIL wanted literate readers for its translated scriptures and wished to maintain its access to Peru; to gain these objectives it pragmatically aligned itself with the nation-making and state-modernization goals of Peruvian educators and Peru's military leadership, and thereby fulfilled the requirements of its government contract.

Struggling to Adapt to the Dual-Organization and Government Approach

As the founder took SIL into Peru it was manifest that his progressive idealism

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[60] 'Resolution Authorizing Bilingual Education in the Peruvian Jungle: Supreme Resolution No. 909, Lima, Peru (28 November 1952), reprinted in *Bilingual Education: An Experience in Peruvian Amazonia*, eds., Mildred L. Larson and Patricia M. Davis (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1981), p. 393.

[61] Mildred L. Larson, 'The Role of Vernacular Versus Prestige Languages in Primary Education', in *Bilingual Education*, eds. Larson and Davis, p. 29.

[62] Mildred L. Larson, Olive A. Shell and Mary Ruth Wise, 'Overview of the Program of Bilingual Education in the Peruvian Jungle', in *Bilingual Education*, eds. Larson and Davis, p. 37.

[63] Larson, Wise and Shell, 'Overview', in *Bilingual Education*, eds. Larson and Davis, p. 38.

was alive and well. This was particularly evident in the degree to which SIL engaged in the Peruvian government's project of state modernization. It was also apparent in Townsend's insistence that his mission would serve everyone regardless of political persuasion, religious creed or social status. It was clear too that he had little patience with any narrow focus on salvation at the expense of social concern. The 'Bible', he insisted in 1945, 'tells us of a better age to come, [but] it also tells us how to better this age'.[64] Townsend placed SIL at the service of all comers regardless of their political or religious affiliation to achieve these twin goals, the salvation of souls for eternity and the embodiment of the progressive ideal in the present world, and in doing so he advanced his project of creating an entirely new type of evangelical missionary organization. This transformation was not carried out without growing pains. As was the case the year before at Camp Wycliffe in Norman, Oklahoma, in 1948 the young and inexperienced members of the newly established Peru branch of SIL reacted to the unsettling effects of serving the government and of keeping their religiosity under wraps.[65]

A 1948 letter written by SIL missionary-translator Sylvester Dirks, a Canadian Mennonite, reveals the kind of psychological strain that adapting to Townsend's dual-organizational and government co-operation could have on his fledgling missionaries. Looking around at his fellow Peru branch colleagues, Dirks thought that he detected a dark 'under-current' resulting from 'a natural outgrowth from the chameleonic veneer characteristic of our organization'. Called to share the 'burning message' of the gospel, Dirks lamented that WBT-SIL missionaries found themselves instead constrained to 'speak at length about the purely scientific aspect' of SIL's work in an attempt to 'convince people that we are not missionaries'. We are 'dogs that do not bark', he

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[64] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Director's Column', *Translation* (Spring 1945): p. 10, TA 942655.

[65] Camp Wycliffe is discussed in detail in chapter three.

groused. He worried himself over what supporters at home would think if they were to discover this state of affairs. 'I venture to say', he wrote, 'that 95% of our support would be cut off to-morrow.' Dirks also accused the organization of failing to give candidates the full picture before departing for service abroad. 'We were never told', he charged, 'that in conversation with [Peruvian] nationals' discussing Wycliffe is 'taboo.' He also decried the informal rule instructing SIL members 'not to attend evangelical services too frequently'. As Dirks wound down his litany of grievances he struck a rueful tone, confessing that he had given testimony in church, held Bible studies and 'played Gospel Records' despite such prohibitions. In closing he avowed that he was not alone, for other SIL missionaries were experiencing 'similar difficulties'. Dirks wondered out loud if SIL could perhaps change its contract with the government. 'Many of us', he related, 'more or less feel a need of that.'[66] While the overwrought Dirks undoubtedly exaggerated at points in this letter, his assessment of the group's sentiment was not far from the mark, as would soon become evident. Once again the cognitive dissonance between these young missionaries' ingrained understanding of missions and Townsend's unique approach was creating more than a little anxiety.

The stress of adapting to SIL's strategy came to a head during the March 1948 Peru branch conference. Townsend, who was at the time immersed in his ambitious attempt to set up an aviation programme (discussed below) and producing WBT-SIL's first publicity film, sent his protégé and Mexico branch director Dick Pittman in to quell the impending revolt.[67] Unfortunately for the historian stenographic reports of the conference sessions were never typed and the originals were apparently lost. Furthermore the only surviving attender was unable to recall details of the event.[68] What

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[66] Sylvester Dirks to WCT, 25 January 1948, TA 5564.
[67] WCT to RSP, 23 February 1948, TA 5168.
[68] 'Report of the Peru Branch of Summer Institute of Linguistics', 22-31 March

can be gleaned from the extant record is that SIL members in Peru were afflicted by qualms similar to those troubling Dirks. They therefore pressed for greater openness with the government that Bible translation was SIL's primary goal and registered the opinion that SIL members should not attend diplomatic functions where movies were shown or where liquor was served (as was presently the case). They also requested that restrictions on attendance at evangelistic services should be eased. The only point where the group remained divided was over whether or not the dual system should be done away with by reconstituting the organization under one name.[69] The thrust of the Peruvian branch members' protest was an attempt to move SIL into the more familiar orbit of a faith mission.

These matters were discussed at considerable length and then put to a vote, and it appears that the very act of voting on these issues had a cathartic effect on the Peru branch members. Pittman reported that in the wake of the intensity surrounding the discussion and voting 'an immediate and overwhelming sense of relief' came over the group. He also sensed that the voting had acted as a 'safety valve', letting off 'the pent up steam of many months'. Having given expression to their frustrations and fears, the members now felt a 'humble willingness to admit possible immaturity and error in voting'.[70] Much like members of the previous summer's Camp Wycliffe group, the SIL missionaries in Peru seemed to be gripped by a sudden sense of guilt after having rebelled. This transient paroxysm left in its wake contriteness and a willingness to suppress their apprehensions. Therefore they were willing to swallow their grievances out of respect for 'Uncle Cam', who, they acknowledged by a vote of 19-0, with a single

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1948, p. 4, TA 40599; Gloria (Grey) Wroughton, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 20 June 2008.

[69] 'SIL Peru Branch Conference Minutes', 1 April 1948, TA 40595.

[70] Dick Pittman, 'Report of Conference of Peru Branch of Summer Institute of Linguistics at Ahuaytia, Loretto, Peru', 22-31 March 1948, TA 40599.

abstention, as 'the man whom the Lord has chosen to direct the work of SIL in Peru and

that it is our desire that he continue as our director for the next three years at least'.[71]

Veteran WBT-SIL missionaries time and again recounted in interviews that they often

exceeded their own expectations of themselves because Townsend's leadership inspired

them to do so. The sentiments expressed are perhaps best summed up by Lois Hesse,

who joined WBT-SIL in 1955. She said of Townsend that 'we had faith in him as well

as in the Lord'.[72] Once again, out of respect for Townsend's leadership and under the

deft guidance of another one of his lieutenants, WBT-SIL missionaries struggled

successfully to overcome their inbred understanding of the contours of Christian mission

based on the traditional missionary ideology.

The cadre of young missionaries who joined WBT-SIL in the mid-to-late 1940s

struggled when confronted with the full ramifications of Townsend's approach. For

many of them his innovations transgressed the boundaries of their inherited

fundamentalist values. Therefore they remained apprehensive until coming to the

realization that they could flout ingrained ideological boundaries without necessarily

undermining their faith. Once they made this discovery, many quickly acclimatized to

this new approach. Indeed they were often eager for a freer environment. A typical

example is Nancy Lanier, who joined WBT-SIL in 1952 after attending the austere

fundamentalist Bible Institute of Los Angles (BIOLA). Lanier admitted in an interview

that she never 'fit in very well with the BIOLA context'. 'I was asked to leave the

school because I got too many demerits', she forthrightly recalled, adding that BIOLA

'was a little strict I guess for me, I think I fit in better at Wycliffe'.[73] The organizational

culture that was developing in the 1940s and 1950s in WBT-SIL paralleled that of the

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[71] 'SIL Peru Branch Conference Minutes', 1 April 1948, TA 40595.
[72] Lois Hesse, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 August 2008.
[73] Nancy Lanier, interview by author, Catalina, Arizona, 31 July 2009.

wider evangelical subculture in North America, where progressive evangelicals were distancing themselves from their fundamentalist past.[74] What set WBT-SIL apart from this broader evangelical movement was the organization's willingness under Townsend's influence to break nearly every rule in the fundamentalist playbook, and this becomes exceeding evident when examining the development of SIL's aviation programme.

Jungle Aviation and International Goodwill

Cameron Townsend never gave up on his vision of an 'Air Crusade to the Wild Tribes'.[75] As he set about establishing SIL in Peru, he seized the opportunity to realize this ambition, in part because reaching the indigenous people groups inhabiting the remote jungles of Peru's nearly impenetrable Amazonian basin was perfectly suited to the use of aircraft. What would otherwise entail journeys of weeks or even months by pack animal or canoe could be reduced to mere hours by aeroplane travel. Moreover, as World War II came to an end, surplus aircraft were arriving on the market and these aeroplanes were significantly improved over those available in the early 1930s when Townsend first fantasized over using them in missionary work. That the time was ripe for such a venture was recognized by several former military aviators. U.S. Navy pilots James Truxton and James Buyers had formed the Christian Aviators' Missionary Fellowship (CAMF) in 1944 for the express purpose of offering evangelical missions aviation services.[76] The CAMF's first customer was the Mexico branch of SIL, with the renowned—at least in evangelical missionary circles—Elizabeth 'Betty' Greene doing the flying. Greene had earned her wings serving with the Women's Airforce Service

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[74] Discussed briefly in chapter two and more fully in chapter five.

[75] Townsend's early ideas for missionary aviation are discussed in chapter two.

[76] The CAMF was renamed as the Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) in 1946.

Pilots during World War II.[77] Therefore SIL's aviation needs were well cared for by experienced pilots working within a specialized organization along the very lines that Townsend had envisaged twenty years earlier.[78]

Townsend, however, chafed at having to rely on the MAF for SIL's aviation needs. Thus whereas close cooperation between SIL and MAF was called for to establish an effective jungle aviation programme, he instead waged a protracted campaign to wrest from MAF control over the aviation operations that it was conducting in Peru on SIL's behalf. The primary impulse behind this desire for personal control was his ambition for a more expensive and far-reaching operation than MAF could ever begin to imagine. 'We simply must not skimp on this tremendous undertaking', Townsend growled when the MAF persisted in its plan for a minimal, one-aircraft operation in Peru.[79] That his technical knowledge was inferior to that possessed by MAF personnel mattered not in the least to Townsend either; he simply wanted to call the shots on all matters related to SIL's advance in Peru. The MAF was responsible for the safety of aircraft under its operational control. It was therefore naturally determined to draw upon the collective expertise of its professional cadre of pilots and mechanics. Thus MAF's secretary-treasurer Charles Mellis informed Townsend in 1947 that 'we have found by experience that no major decisions in missionary aviation should ever be made by any <u>one</u> person'.[80] Also standing in Townsend's way was the fact that the WBT-SIL board was perfectly satisfied to have MAF fulfil SIL's aviation needs. What

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[77] Dietrich G. Buss and Arthur F. Glasser, *Giving Wings to the Gospel: The Remarkable Story of Mission Aviation Fellowship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), pp. 13-28; Betty Greene, *Flying High: The Amazing Story of Betty Greene and the Early Years of Mission Aviation Fellowship* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 2002), pp. 1-6.

[78] The name was again changed in 1971 to Mission Aviation Fellowship in order to dispense with the term 'missionary', as a concession to growing nationalistic and anti-western sentiment (Buss and Glasser, *Giving Wings to the Gospel*, p. 27).

[79] WCT to Charles J. Mellis Jr (hereafter CJM), 30 November 1946, TA 4237.

[80] CJM to WCT, 25 January 1947, p. 2, TA 4919.

ensued from 1946 on was a contest of wills over who was going to determine the scope,

function and nature of the aviation programme supporting SIL's expansion into Peru and

beyond.

Becoming impatient with MAF's delay in repairing and transporting a Waco

aeroplane from Mexico for service in Peru, Townsend impulsively leapt at the

opportunity in June 1946 to obtain a Grumman J-2 amphibian aeroplane, or 'Duck' as it

was commonly described, that the U.S. Naval mission in Peru was selling as war

surplus.[81] Townsend excitedly relayed the news to WBT-SIL secretary William Nyman

that the aircraft could likely be had for between $2,500 and $5,000. He also noted that

the Navy had assured him that the Duck was recently 'reconditioned' and had seen little

use since. Bursting with excitement, Townsend exaggerated to Wycliffe's financial

supporters in North American that the Duck was worth the exorbitant figure of

$80,000.[82] The WBT-SIL board was far less enthusiastic, pleading with him to spend no

more than $2,500.[83] Apparently unable to restrain himself, Townsend threw caution to

the wind and made an offer of $4,000.[84] Aware that he was overreaching, he confessed

to Betty Greene 'that it seems like presumption for us to talk about $4,000, when we

don't have enough money to buy a good drink of gasoline for it . . . ,[but] it seems so

providential that I believe that the Lord intends to give us the plane'.[85] Once Townsend

came to consider something preordained it was all but impossible to dissuade him from

the course of action he had chosen.

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[81] WCT to James Truxton, 22 June 1946, Billy Graham Center Archives
(hereafter 'BGA'), Wheaton, Illinois, MAF Collection 136, Box 60, Folder 34; WCT to
Robert (Bob) Cole, 14 June 1946, TA 4328; WCT to Mabel Smart, 15 June 1946, TA
4324.
[82] WCT to 'supporters', 9 July 1946, TA 4316.
[83] Minutes, WBT board of directors, Glendale, California, 22 June 1946, TA
41499.
[84] WCT to 'Supporters', 9 July 1946, TA 4316.
[85] WCT to Elizabeth (Betty) Greene, 19 June 1946, TA 4323.

Townsend negotiated furiously with the Navy, pleaded with donors and prayed for the needed $4,000. His connections at home paid off. A businessman and associate of Charles Fuller sent $3,000, Clarence Erickson of the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle donated $700, and MAF magnanimously supplied the remaining $300.[86] The Navy was less obliging, setting the final price at $4,500, thus leaving Townsend $500 short.[87] This proved to be less of a problem than an opportunity for SIL's enterprising general director, who embarked on a public relations campaign that redounded to good effect in short order. He reported to a supporter in June 1946 that 'As fellow missionaries hear what the Peruvian Government is doing for us, they simply marvel and so do the officials at the American Embassy.'[88] For once he was not embellishing the truth. In the first place Peru's ministries of education and health agreed to take half ownership in the Duck, thus cutting the purchase price and subsequent maintenance costs in half for SIL. In the second place Ambassador Cooper agreed to Townsend's suggestion that he 'intervene' on SIL's behalf to obtain a reduction of the Navy's stated price. This action resulted in the Navy lowering the price to $3,500.[89] With the Peruvian government paying half, Townsend ended up securing the plane for a mere $1,750. After all was said and done the reduced price proved fortunate, since when Betty Greene inspected it she discovered that it was actually in rather poor condition.[90] Under Greene's direction the Duck was grounded for a complete inspection and overhaul. On the bright side there was the possibility that the U.S. government might supply a new engine, since the Navy had apparently been somewhat less than forthright about its condition when selling it. With a buyer like Townsend in hot pursuit, it is little wonder that the Navy did not dwell on any

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[86] WGNS to RSP, 22 June 1946, TA 4592; Herbert P. Rankin to WCT, 13 July 1946, TA 4458; WCT to Herbert P. Rankin, 15 July 1946, TA 4312.
[87] WCT to KLP, 28 June 1946, TA 4321.
[88] WCT to Mabel Smart, 15 June 1946, TA 4324.
[89] WCT to WGNS, 9 July 1946, TA 4187.
[90] WCT to WGNS, 21 August 1946, TA 4183.

deficiencies. As was typical among the theologically conservative MAF pilots, Greene was hesitant of 'looking to men rather than the Lord' for help in obtaining the new engine.[91] Townsend was less circumspect, once again leaning on Ambassador Cooper for his aid in obtaining a new engine, and the American Embassy obliged by paying for the transport of the replacement engine.[92] Townsend's skirting of the proprieties of faith mission funding and his willingness to ignore church-state boundaries in serving governments was paying some handsome dividends, but it was also leading SIL ever further along a path that would prove to have some rather pronounced effects on the organization.

The MAF was the ideal organization to serve SIL's aviation needs. After all it was founded and administered by experienced pilots and mechanics, whereas SIL's expertise was in linguistics. Indeed, that Townsend had naively purchased an aircraft that, unbeknownst to him required a complete overhaul, suggests that his aeronautical knowledge left much to be desired. All this mattered little to Townsend, who had plans for nothing less than an expansive jungle airline, complete with large aircraft and a state-of-the-art short-wave radio communications system. The MAF's modest operational goal by contrast was to provide safe and reliable missionary transport at the lowest possible cost. Theirs was a fairly straightforward approach to missionary aviation, where aircraft were simply tools for efficient transportation.[93] This moderate outlook showed itself also in MAF's tendency to economize by limiting the number of aircraft deployed as well as minimizing the number of personnel engaged in any single field of operation. In November 1946, Townsend took MAF's secretary-treasurer Charles Mellis to task over this very point, insisting that a single-pilot operation was inadequate for 'the

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[91] Betty Greene to WGNS, 27 August 1946, TA 4562.
[92] Betty Greene to WGNS, 11 October 1946, TA 4540.
[93] Buss and Glasser, *Giving Wings to the Gospel*, pp. 26, 59-66.

Herculean task that confronts this epochmaking [sic] project from the aeronautical

standpoint'. He concluded his letter to Mellis by suggesting that only a 'lack of vision'

on MAF's part would stymie his proposal for a multi-aircraft and multi-pilot aviation

operation.[94] In a five-page rebuttal Mellis let it be known that the MAF could agree with

'practically none' of Townsend's 'aeronautical reasons' for having additional pilots in

Peru, and, in so many words, he suggested that Townsend should stick to Bible

translation and let the MAF handle the technical details of flying and maintaining

aircraft.[95] Put concisely, Townsend and the MAF leadership held fundamentally

different opinions over what constituted an adequate missionary aviation programme.

In June of 1947, Townsend expressed his misgivings about 'turning over our

"lifeline" . . . to an extraneous organization'.[96] This backhanded slap at MAF was likely

provoked by an event that Townsend hoped would lend weight to his argument for a

break with MAF. On 25 February 1947, Cameron, Elaine and their first-born daughter

Grace had barely managed to wedge themselves into the backseat of a commercial Piper

Super Cruiser in Mexico before the pilot hurriedly began his take-off. The heavily

loaded plane struggled for altitude. Attempting to avoid some trees the pilot banked

sharply and caught the landing gear in some treetops, resulting in an accidental landing.

The infant escaped unharmed but Cameron's leg was broken and Elaine suffered a

dislocated ankle. The pilot sustained life-threatening injuries.[97] Townsend later claimed

that the first thought that leapt into his mind while lying beside the wrecked craft was

that 'God is going to use this accident to arouse greater interest in providing adequate

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[94] WCT to CJM, 30 November 1946, TA 4237.
[95] CJM to WCT, 18 December 1946, TA 4375.
[96] WCT to WGNS, 20 June 1947, TA 4654.
[97] WCT to RGS and RSP, 25 February 1947, TA 4758; WCT to 'Home Folks', 3 March 1947, TA 4752.

aviation for our young pioneers'.[98] This was no exaggeration, for he insisted upon being photographed beside the wrecked craft before being moved. Furthermore, within mere hours after the incident, Townsend penned a letter relating that 'we are really thankful for the accident for it shows conclusively that for such an important project as the one in which we are engaged it is necessary to have the best aircraft and pilots possible'.[99] The ever imaginative Townsend was endeavouring to turn this close brush with death into a publicity event that would provide him with the justification and the funds needed for the ambitious aviation programme that he was itching to launch.

If anything the accident seemed to have convinced the WBT-SIL board that MAF was the key to a safe and reliable aviation programme. In the year following the accident, the entire of board of directors, which at this time included inside directors Ken Pike, Eugene Nida, Dick Pittman, William Nyman and volunteer Wycliffe deputation secretary Earl Wyman and outside directors Dawson Trotman and California businessman E. S. Goodner, remained steadfast in their resolve to avoid any breach with the MAF.[100] In April 1948, Ken Pike more-or-less summed up the group's sentiment when he stated that he 'strongly support[ed]' MAF's recommendations and 'absolutely oppose[d] rupture with the M.A.F.'.[101] The MAF argued against SIL forming another aviation organization, since it would compete for funds and add to the public's confusion over an already growing profusion of mission organizations.[102] The most the WBT-SIL board was willing to do to assuage Townsend was to form a Jungle Aviation

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[98] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Airplane Crash', 25 February 1947 (emphasis in the original), TA 4757.

[99] Dale Kietzman, Hefley interview, c. 1970, TA 43675; *Steam from the Kettle*, extra edition, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Mexico City, Mexico, 4 March 1947, TA 4999.

[100] E. S. Goodner to WCT, 13 April 1948, TA 5545.

[101] KLP to WBT-SIL board of directors, 12 April 1948, TA 5079.

[102] CJM to WBT board of directors, 24 January 1948, BGA, MAF Collection 136, Box 60, File 30.

and Radio Service (JAARS) 'committee' that was mainly constituted as a fundraising instrument in North America.[103] Neither the MAF nor the WBT-SIL board of directors was inclined to allow Townsend to take control of the Peruvian aviation operation.

Townsend was making a futile effort to relax while vacationing in April 1948 at the home of former President Cárdenas in Pátzcuaro, Mexico. Still fuming over what he saw as the board's intransigence, he decided to pull out all the stops and make a stand on the MAF issue. On the 27th he threw down the gauntlet in a letter to board member Ken Pike, informing him that 'I cannot return to Peru unless I have full charge of the aviation program'.[104] The same day he repeated his ultimatum in a long letter to MAF president Jim Truxton. He could no longer accept the 'double leadership' situation, nor could he continue to tolerate MAF's 'shoe string' economizing – if 'extravagance' was called for, so be it he insisted.[105] Truxton and Townsend met for what proved an unsuccessful meeting on 8 May.[106] Relating details of this encounter to WBT-SIL board member E. S. Goodner, Townsend complained of what he saw as MAF's belligerent unwillingness to follow his prescriptions for a large-scale air operation. Casting himself in the role of aviation expert, Townsend also maintained that Jim Truxton and Charles Mellis's 'aeronautical grasp [was] far from perfect'. He closed his letter to Goodner with an ultimatum: if the board sided against him, he was 'perfectly willing to withdraw from leadership in Peru and serve Wycliffe' elsewhere.[107] Left with the choice of wrecking the organization or supporting the founder, the board capitulated. On 1 June 1948 the limited JAARS committee became a full-fledged aviation and radio subsidiary

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[103] WCT to RGS, 3 March 1948, TA 5348; WCT to Don Kennedy, 23 March 1948, TA 5341; WCT to Grady Parrot, 25 March 1948, TA 5340.
[104] WCT to KLP, 27 April 1948, TA 5325.
[105] WCT to James Truxton, 27 April 1948, TA 5321.
[106] WCT to WGNS, 8 May 1948, TA 5146.
[107] WCT to E. S. Goodner, 11 May 1948, TA 5316.

organization of SIL under the general director's control.[108] Townsend had what he wanted, the opportunity to assemble, as he put it, an 'airline of the magnitude that we need'.[109]

The assistant director of the SIL Peru branch Harold Goodall explained to readers of a 1954 booklet describing the institute's work that 'Because of the extreme isolation of these Indian tribes and the utter absence of any efficient transportation and communication, the Institute has been forced to establish its own airline and communications'.[110] The founder had obviously managed to effect an historical reconstruction of the events of 1948 to reflect his perspective. He had done more than create a bit of organization myth over the past six years, for JAARS was now serving translation and literacy projects among twenty indigenous peoples located throughout central and eastern Peru.[111] By the mid-1950s, SIL's JAARS operation had at its disposal two small single-engine Aeroncas, a powerful 650 horsepower Nordyne 'Norseman' floatplane and a twin-engine Consolidated PBY Catalina capable of international flights.[112] Flying and servicing these craft was a twenty-six man cadre of pilots and mechanics by the end of 1956.[113] The organization's aeroplanes were not idle. Townsend reported in October 1954 that over the previous six months JAARS aircraft had flown an astonishing 483,583 passenger miles. In addition radio communication equipment connected each of SIL's jungle locations with its headquarters at Yarina Cocha, located on the banks of the Ucayali River near Pucallpa. Perhaps most intriguing

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[108] RSP to WCT, 2 June 1948, TA 5514. Minutes, WBT board of directors, 19 June 1948, TA 941472.

[109] WCT to Larry Montgomery, 27 May 1948, TA 5306.

[110] 'The Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Peru', June 1954, p. 10, TA 940661.

[111] CH to KLP, 19 July 1953, TA 8884.

[112] 'The Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Peru', June 1954, p. 10, TA 940661.

[113] Lester Bancroft to WCT, 27 December 1956, TA 12157.

of all, Townsend reported a 'clear profit (after operation, maintenance, reserve and insurance cost have been paid)', for the previous six months of $1,230.[114]

An examination of the factors that permitted the JAARS missionary aviation operation to generate a profit is to take yet another journey into the extraordinarily imaginative mind of WBT-SIL's founder. In the first place, the JAARS programme deepened the relationship between SIL and the Peruvian military government. With the ministries of education and health taking a half interest in the Grumman Duck, it was quite natural for the Peruvian Air Force, the Fuerza Aérea del Perú (FAP), to undertake its overhaul.[115] This initial cooperation between SIL and the FAP expanded as the JAARS operation grew, and in 1953 SIL obtained an official agreement with the FAP to operate as an official airline carrying passengers, cargo and mail along routes determined by the military.[116] It had not taken Peru's military leaders long to seize upon the utility of SIL's aircraft. Vast areas of the Amazonian basin remained largely inaccessible until such time as the government could deploy an adequate fleet of aircraft, an aim which required the training of pilots and mechanics. Desirous of extending political control over the nation's geography and to develop the country's inaccessible natural resources, the Peruvian military was keen to see SIL expand its services. The FAP therefore offered all the assistance it could to SIL, including supplying it with free fuel and oil for its aircraft.[117] SIL proved itself a valuable ally of the armed forces by, for example, carrying military personnel to Peru's far-flung army outposts and, without any apparent apprehension, regularly transporting prisoners to the penal colony at Sepa.[118]

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[114] WCT to 'members of WBT-SIL', 16 October 1954, TA 9956.

[115] WCT to CJM, 4 October 1947, TA 4772.

[116] 'Convenio de Cooperacion' between SIL and Fuerza Aérea del Perú, 30 April 1953, TA 43268.

[117] WCT to Henry C. Crowell, 16 October 1954, TA 909977; WCT to 'members of WBT-SIL', 16 October 1954, TA 9946.

[118] Manuel Basulto, Director of the Sepa Penal Colony to WCT, 12 January

JAARS pilots also flew in support of the U.S. Four Point Program, which was a technical assistance programmme inaugurated in January 1949 by the Truman administration as a Communist deterrent in developing nations.[119] In 1956, SIL's aviation operation was placed under the authority of the Peruvian army's Transportes Aereos Militares.[120] Regularly renewed, SIL's contract with the army remained in effect until 1983.[121] By pursuing the mantra of 'service to all' with respect to aviation, SIL's JAARS effectively became an arm of the Peruvian army in the mid-1950s.

Townsend remarked to the WBT-SIL board in 1953 that he had long wished to make SIL 'seem indispensable . . . to the Government'. He had certainly accomplished that aim. In fact he reported to the board that 'it is just a little embarrassing to Peruvians for us to have an air service that goes where the Peruvian Air Force doesn't go, and has won a better reputation for safety, etc.'.[122] Townsend was convinced that good public relations was the key to mollifying any incipient resentment, and he therefore strove to limit the possibility that SIL would project, as he once put it, that 'old attitude of gringo imperialists'.[123] One way of accomplishing this was to involve Latin American elites in his projects. Sometime in mid-1950 Townsend was offered, for the sum of $15,000, a

1957, TA 13121; Cecil Hawkins, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 10 July 2009.

[119] WCT to members of WBT-SIL, 16 October 1954, TA 9946; Thomas G. Patterson, J. Garry Clifford and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895: Volume II*, 4th ed. (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1995), p. 295.

[120] Larry Montgomery to Lynn Bollinger, Helio Aircraft Corporation, 25 August 1956, TA 12526; WCT to Admiral Roque A. Saldias, Presidente del Consejo de Ministros y Ministro de Hacienda, 6 June 1956, TA 12033; RGS to WCT, 18 January 1957, TA 13602; WCT to Joe Qualm, 27 January 1959, TA 16880.

[121] Jerry Elder and CH, 'Background on the SIL Cooperative Program with Peruvian Military, September 1983, TA 41068; Lester Bancroft, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 17 September 2009; Eugene Loos, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 25 June 2009.

[122] WCT to WBT-SIL board of directors, 20 March 1953, TA 9027.

[123] William Cameron Townsend, 'The Vital Role of Courtesy in Missionary Endeavor', SIL Oklahoma Lecture #173, c. 1945, TA 50076.

Catalina PBY 'flying boat' by southern California aircraft dealer Charles Babb.[124] With a 104-foot wingspan and a 2,500 mile range, it was both enormous and complex by missionary aviation standards. Larry Montgomery, JAARS's lead pilot, noted this and commented that the Catalina was 'a little large for our work'.[125] This suited Townsend's purposes perfectly. While in Mexico in November 1950, he convinced his long-time acquaintance and Mexico's minister of finance, Ramón Beteta, to form a committee of Mexican dignitaries to obtain the Catalina, christen it the *Moisés Sáenz* after the educator who invited Townsend to Mexico, and then donate it to Peru for use in SIL's programme as a gesture of international goodwill.[126] Mexico's President Miguel Alemán Valdés authorized $10,000 for the Catalina purchase. A committee comprised of, among others, Manuel Gamio, the director of the Inter-American Indian Institute, Gual Vidal, the minister of education and a wealthy industrialist, and Moisés Sáenz's brother, Aarón Sáenz, collectively contributed the remaining $5,000 dollars.[127] The presidents of both nations, along with a host of notable personages, attended the christening ceremonies respectively in Mexico and Peru, winning for SIL a public relations coup in both countries.[128] Townsend understood intuitively that aircraft (especially large ones) were not simply a means of transportation, but that they were also symbols of prestige and could therefore be deployed as instruments of statecraft and public relations.

The *Moisés Sáenz* was not Townsend's first effort to generate international goodwill. He had long fused his faith with political interests. Not infrequently this came in the form of a rebuke of the United States for not living up to its own professed ideals

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[124] WGNS to WCT, 30 November 1950, TA 6277.
[125] Larry Montgomery to WCT, 30 July 1950, TA 6556.
[126] WCT to WGNS, 27 November 1950, TA 6312.
[127] WCT to WGN, 1 December 1950, TA 6311; WCT, 'memorandum', April 1951, TA 907238.
[128] CH to RGS, 6 April 1951, TA 6950; RGS to WCT, 7 April 1951, TA 7119; WCT to 'supporters', 12 April 1951, TA 6947.

in international affairs. When Mexico's President Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized

American oil companies' assets in 1938, Townsend toured several southern U.S. states

attempting to influence public opinion in Mexico's favour.[129] He followed up with a

book entitled *The Truth about Mexico's Oil*, wherein he charged that 'the history of the

oil industry in the United States is full of pages stained black'.[130] Franklin D. Roosevelt

received a complimentary letter from Townsend in 1940, praising the president's Good

Neighbour policy but, as with several presidents to follow, he was treated to another in

1943 lamenting America's failure to embody that policy fully.[131] Townsend also

concerned himself with relations among Latin American states. In 1956 he begged Billy

Graham to 'sponsor a Peace Boat on the Napo River to foster better relationships

between Ecuador and Peru'.[132] Examples of Townsend's attempts to encourage better

relations between nations could easily be multiplied, since peaceful international

relations and gestures of international goodwill were fundamental components of his

approach to missions.

Beginning in 1956, Townsend combined his passion for diplomacy, international

goodwill and aviation to create what has to be one of the most striking programmes

initiated by an evangelical mission at the time. In late 1955, Townsend cast his eyes

upon a revolutionary short-take-off-and-landing aircraft, the Helio Courier, which had

recently arrived on the market.[133] Mesmerized by the remarkable short-field

performance and superior low-stall speed of the Helio-Courier, all other aeroplanes

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[129] William L. Svelmoe, 'W. Cameron Townsend as Lázaro Cárdenas's "Man in America", in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home*, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), pp. 171-190.

[130] W. Cameron Townsend, *The Truth about Mexico's Oil* (Los Angeles: Inter-American Fellowship, 1940), p. 1.

[131] WCT to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 16 September 1940, TA 2591; WCT to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 14 April 1943, TA 3495.

[132] William Cameron Townsend, 'Possible Ways in Which Dr. Graham Can Help Wycliffe', 21 June 1956, TA 12022.

[133] Merrill Piper, Hefley interview, 'Aviation Program', c. 1970, TA 43702.

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suddenly lost their lustre. The fact that the Helio was three times more expensive than the more pedestrian Pipers, Aeroncas, or Cessnas did not dampen his enthusiasm, and Townsend forthwith placed a verbal order with the company's president, Lynn Bolinger, for six Helios, at a cost of $22,000 each.[134] That he had no board authorization and no money to pay for the acquisitions was of little consequence to Townsend. He entreated with his wife Elaine to pray for funds, but all this proved too much for his usually accommodating wife, and she refused to trouble God for more than one plane at a time.[135] Townsend was convinced, however, that he was to have all six. Writing to JAARS pilot Merrill Piper in October 1955 he declared, 'I have tried to dodge the issue for a long time, but at last the Lord cornered me and I've promised Him to trust Him from now on for what His work really needs rather than [settle] for the second rate stuff we can afford'.[136] It would seem that Townsend, who liked to exercise his enormous faith by 'putting God on the spot', was now audaciously claiming that God had put him on the spot.[137]

Arguing for the acquisition of the Helios in a 21 November letter, Townsend confessed that the 'expense is great, but our God is greater', and to settle for second best would only be due to a 'lack of faith'. Although 'the flesh flinched at the thought', Townsend warned the board he intended to seek 'non-evangelical assistance' in developing the necessary financial resources for the Helios. By and large it was considered taboo in faith mission circles to seek funding for God's work outside of the evangelical camp. Townsend therefore imaginatively crafted a loophole to manoeuvre around this impediment. He planned to rally local businesses and community groups in

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[134] WCT to Lawrence Routh, 19 November 1955, TA 11293; Bernard (Bernie) May, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 18 September 2009.

[135] WCT, Hefley interview, c. 1970, TA 43513.

[136] WCT to Merrill Piper, 14 October 1955, TA 11308.

[137] KLP, Hefley interview, c. 1970, TA 43474.

cities across America to raise funds for the Helios as part of an international goodwill effort. These aircraft would then be then donated to various countries under the sponsorship of SIL as a gesture of inter-American cooperation. To 'strengthen the Good Neighbor feeling even more', Townsend suggested, the planes should be referred to as the 'Inter American Friendship Fleet'. He also insisted that upon the cowling of each aircraft should be painted the donor city's or state's name. He explained that this approach essentially solved the problem of secular funding, since the aircraft in question would be donated by American cities to the respective countries for which they were bound. Hence secular funds would not be directly linked to spiritual work. This assessment conveniently overlooked the fact that SIL's subsidiary, JAARS, would fly and maintain the donated aircraft.[138] The faith mission wall of separation between unsullied Christian monies and tainted secular mammon crumbled under Townsend's unrelenting drive to enlarge WBT-SIL's donor base as a means to expand the organization's operations.

The WBT-SIL board rightly read Townsend's 21 November letter for exactly what it was: nothing less than another ultimatum. Thus the board once again voted to allow him to have his way, with the single caveat, and one not likely to be obeyed, that he was not to engage directly in 'solicitation' on SIL's behalf.[139] The lone unwavering dissenter was the fiscally and religiously conservative BIOLA professor, John Hubbard, who wrote Townsend after the board's decision to complain that the entire project smacked of 'fanfare', something he felt should have no part 'in connection with the Lord's work'.[140] Townsend was handed permission for an aggressive expansion of the SIL-JAARS aviation programme that now included creative financing and international

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[138] WCT to WBT-SIL board of directors, 21 November 1955, TA 11291.
[139] SIL board of directors, minutes, 26 November 1955, WSA.
[140] WCT to WBT-SIL board of directors, 21 November 1955, TA 11291; John A. Hubbard to WCT, 1 December 1955, TA 12183.

goodwill components.

Over the next twenty-six years, twelve Helio Couriers and ten other aircraft of various types were donated to eight different countries under the auspicious of the Inter American Friendship project.[141] For the christening of each aeroplane SIL sought out local and national dignitaries to make speeches and to sign letters to the recipient country's leaders. To create advance interest, SIL sent press releases and pictures of its Amazonian operations to local newspapers, which were then followed by invitations to prominent community leaders to attend each ceremony. SIL was able to attract some rather significant political and religious personalities to these events, such as Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, Vice President Richard M. Nixon, Billy Graham and former President Harry S. Truman.[142] In June 1958, SIL's Dick Pittman, now the architect of the organization's advance into Asia, sat down to assess the results of the Seattle, Washington, project, in which a Helio Courier was donated to the Philippine government. Pittman's report is worthy of mention because it characteristically describes some of the more significant results of the Good Will projects. Besides supplying an aeroplane for SIL's use, the events surrounding the ceremony in Seattle prompted the University of Washington to invite SIL to offer linguistic courses at its campus along the same lines as those at the University of Oklahoma. The programme also brought SIL two significant donors, the Pew Foundation of Sun Oil Company and the lumber magnate C. Davis Weyerhaeuser, both of whom were major donors to

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[141] Hugh Steven, *Yours to Finish the Task: The Memoirs of W. Cameron Townsend, 1947-1982* (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 2004), pp. 271-272.

[142] 'Chicago Sending Plane to Ecuador', *Chicago Daily News*, 17 December 1955, TA 44099; WCT to Donald H. Burns, 13 November 1955, TA 11296; Lynn Bollinger to WCT, 16 November 1955, TA 11295; WCT to RGS, 30 July 1956, TA 12008; WCT to Henry C. Crowell, 11 June 1956, TA 12038; WCT to KLW, 11 June 1956, TA, 12037; 'Gift of Plane to Peru', (Lima), *Peruvian Times*, 28 September 1956, p. 10, TA 45694; WCT to President Harry S. Truman, 22 January 1958, TA 14840.

evangelical causes. Several Seattle churches also initiated support of WBT-SIL. Pittman

related that the project resulted in the strengthening of relationships with U.S. officials

and agencies, such as Vice President Nixon, the undersecretary for Far Eastern Affairs,

several unnamed congressmen and senators and the United States Information Agency.

In the Philippines, SIL extended its range of associations to an even greater extent,

including the president, the secretary of defence, a presidential aide, an ambassador and

several high-level military men.[143] Each time SIL successfully completed a Good Will

project it secured for SIL an increasingly longer list of friends in high places and well-

heeled donors.

As the Helio programme expanded, Townsend cunningly situated himself

between the Peruvian Army and the Helio Corporation, which saw Peru as a lucrative

market. The Helio Aircraft Corporation had secured the services of a middleman, but he

was no match for Townsend, whose connections with the Army and Air Force were

unmatched and whose sales techniques probably qualified as outright subterfuge.[144] At

one point, Townsend brazenly elbowed his way into a meeting of Peru's general staff in

order to cut off any chance of Helio's dealer in Peru effecting a deal.[145] As Townsend

began making sales of aircraft on Helio's behalf, he earned for SIL some sizable

commissions in the form of credits towards the purchase of additional aeroplanes from

the company.[146] When the Helio Corporation insisted on splitting all sales commissions

between SIL and the local dealer, an incensed Townsend complained that the

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[143] RSP to WGNS, 25 June 1958, TA 15964.
[144] WCT to Lynn Bollinger, Helio Aircraft Corporation, 23 February 1957, TA 13045; WCT to Lynn Bollinger, 2 March 1957, TA 13036; WCT to G. A. Alvarado, Export Manager, Helio Aircraft Company, 23 May 1957, TA 12889.
[145] WCT to Lynn Bollinger, 28 February 1957, TA 13038.
[146] WCT to WGNS and KLW, 27 February 1957, TA 12638; WCT to KLW, 29 March 1957, TA 13022.

middleman was 'horning in on' SIL's well-deserved commissions.[147] Eventually he triumphed over his competitor, largely due to the fact that he was producing the sales. Indeed, between the Goodwill Fleet and sales to the Peruvian Army, SIL became Helio Courier's top customer in the late 1950s.[148]

Such tactics were not confined to the founder. In 1961, SIL Brazil director Dale Kietzman expressed his frustration that the government of Brazil was not 'buying' its International Goodwill programme, mainly because government officials suspected that SIL was merely attempting to 'use the prestige of the President of Brazil as a gimmick for raising money in the states'. Kietzman and his administrative team cooked up a solution, one that would presumably allay suspicion that SIL was the central player in the project. In the first place the SIL Brazil team intended to ghost-write cables, which would subsequently be sent by the Friendship Fleet committees in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Greensboro, North Carolina, to the president of Brazil. A second set of ghost-written cables would then be crafted, which the two stateside committees would then send back to the SIL Brazil branch requesting Kietzman to pay a call on the government to check and see if the president's cables had arrived. This latter set of cables, Kietzman intrigued, would provide the 'ostensible reason for a visit to the presidential palace'. It was presumed that this somewhat conspiratorial plan would result in a conference with the president. 'We will', Kietzman wrote, 'be prepared with a complete "dossier" for him to examine on the subject.'[149] It is unclear if this scheme was ever executed. However it is obvious that SIL was wandering far afield from traditional faith mission methods and engaging in practices that would certainly offend the

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[147] WCT to Larry Montgomery, 18 April 1957, TA 13008; Lynn Bollinger to WCT, 13 May 1957, TA 12890.

[148] Lynn Bollinger to William (Bill) Retts, 1 May 1957, TA 13450.

[149] Dale Kietzman to WCT, 10 April 1961, TA 20272.

sensibilities of many less-daring evangelical missionaries.[150]

By essentially becoming an airline, JAARS was able to develop a much more diverse and far larger customer base than would have been possible had it remained solely a missionary carrier. Taking 1966 as an example, nearly fifty per-cent of all JAARS flying was for oil companies, the military and other commercial traffic.[151] This affair was no small undertaking either. By 1970 the JAARS aircraft fleet was flying in the vicinity of 2.5 million passenger miles per year.[152] SIL missionaries also benefited from subsidized rates, allowing them greater freedom of movement than would have otherwise been possible.[153] By operating as both an adjunct to the military and as a commercial enterprise, the JAARS subsidiary of SIL was financially able to deploy the number and types of aircraft of which Townsend had always dreamed.

Townsend's conflict with the leadership of MAF is another graphic illustration of his thoroughgoing break with traditional approaches to missions. Just as he had bridled at the strictures imposed by the Central American Mission, he had little patience with the conventional practices of the MAF. Even though the MAF was innovative in bringing aviation into the mainstream of missionary activity, its leaders felt little or no compulsion to offer more than the most basic aviation services to missionaries. They were content simply to replace the canoe and the burro with the aeroplane. In Townsend's imaginative approach aircraft could perform functions beyond their practical use, by also fulfilling diplomatic and public relation roles. While Bible translation remained a central concern of SIL, the dual-organizational strategy offered ample opportunity for the founder to pursue his own version of the good neighbour

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[150] The reception of SIL's atypical strategies among North American evangelicals are examined in chapter five.

[151] Omer Bondurant, 'Aviation Report - Conference', 1967, p. 1, TA 41011.

[152] Harold Goodall, Hefley interview, 'Aviation Program', c. 1970, TA 943772.

[153] Larry Montgomery, JAARS Annual Report (1955), p. 1, TA 11723.

policy. The dual organization also allowed for the shared progressive goals of the Peruvian state and SIL, such as social uplift, education, national economic development and opening up of the frontier, to coalesce into a partnership of convenience. This of course made for strange bedfellows, and not without effects on SIL, which was taking on aspects of what would later be designated as a non-governmental organization, rather than remaining strictly a traditional faith mission. The purely missional aspects certainly remained in that Bible translation and low-key evangelization were being carried out, but these religious aims coexisted alongside what might be referred to as secularizing forces that led SIL down some unexpected paths for an evangelical mission. Notably one of the most significant outcomes of the policy of serving everyone was that SIL became so deeply embedded in the Peruvian state that it was found to be indispensable, just as Townsend had long desired.

The Catholic Hierarchy's Reaction to SIL

As SIL expanded its operations, especially the bilingual education programme, it was gaining the confidence of the government on the one hand and provoking the ire of the resurgent conservative wing of the Roman Catholic hierarchy on the other. One tactic used by the Roman Catholics in an attempt to thwart SIL's efforts was the spreading of rumours among Peru's indigenous inhabitants. Perhaps the most original of these allegations was one claiming that SIL was abducting Indians and rendering them for fat as a way to supply grease for SIL's aeroplanes. When an SIL missionary casually discarded a human skull, one she had previously discovered in an old Inca burial ground, this rumour took on a life of its own.[154] More potentially damaging on the national scene were recriminations published in Lima papers. The first major broadside

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[154] Lois Hesse personal communication to author, 25 September 2008; Cecil Hawkins, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 10 July 2009.

of several to follow was launched publicly against SIL by Jesuit missionary José Martín

Cuesta on 28 February 1953 in the pro-Catholic and conservative *El Comercio*, one of

Peru's leading papers. Cuesta correctly perceived SIL as a Protestant threat to

Catholicism, and incisively noted that SIL was 'composed exclusively of

evangelicals'.[155] What Cuesta pointed out, but SIL was reluctant to admit, was that the

organization was non-sectarian in whom it served but not in its composition or

missiology. Townsend, and SIL with him, assumed that the simple gospel message and

Bible distribution constituted a non-sectarian Christianity. In his own *El Comercio*

article Townsend stated that '[with] our non-sectarian nature, we are not responsible for

the teaching of rituals and ecclesiastical systems of any nature'. What he failed to

understand was that this minimalist evangelical gospel was in fact a sectarian gospel in

the eyes of Catholics.[156] Cuesta therefore rightly concluded that SIL was 'an organ for

propaganda and dissemination of evangelical Protestantism'.[157] In August, *El Comercio*

featured a second article, this one by a Franciscan, Fr Buenaventure Leon de Uriarte,

vicar apostolic of Ucayali, which was SIL's base of operations. Uriarte charged that the

'grievous wolves' of SIL were carrying out 'among the indigene savages . . . a work of

protestant proselyting [sic] for the evangelical sect'.[158] In both cases, Cuesta and Uriarte

claimed that they were not inveighing against SIL as individuals but were, in fact,

speaking on behalf of all the 'High Ecclesiastical Authorities', including the

conservative archbishop of Lima, Juan Gualberto Guevara. In the early 1950s, SIL was

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[155] Rev Fr José Martín Cuesta, S. J., 'Literacy Campaign in the Peruvian Jungle', (Lima) *El Comercio*, 28 February 1953, p. 3, translation by Robert L. Russell, TA 40703.
[156] WCT, letter to the editor of *El Comercio*, 18 August 1953, p. 1, translation by Cal Hibbard, TA 40686.
[157] Cuesta, 'Literacy Campaign', p. 5, TA 40703.
[158] Fr Buenaventure L. de Uriarte, O. F. M., 'The Summer Institute of Linguistics is a Sectarian and Proselytist Institute', (Lima), *El Comercio*, 15 August 1953, p. 1, (translation by unnamed translator), TA 45594.

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clearly perceived as a growing Protestant threat in the eyes of the conservative Catholic hierarchy.

Peru's Roman Catholic hierarchy underestimated Townsend's political acumen and, at the same time, committed several serious blunders in making their case before the public. Uriarte fumbled badly when he claimed that SIL missionary-linguists were 'false scientists' operating deceitfully under 'the pompous name of Summer Institute of Linguistics'.[159] Townsend easily refuted this point by quoting from the July-September 1948 issue of the prestigious journal *Language*, wherein the Linguistic Society of America lavished praise on SIL by referring to the organization's 'impressive series of publications' and stating that SIL was 'one of the most promising developments in applied linguistics in the country.'[160] Ken Pike and Eugene Nida's efforts to secure SIL's academic credentials effectively blunted attempts to call into question SIL's capacity for making a real scientific contribution to the nations in which it served.

In the second place the Catholic clergy attempt to create suspicion by labelling SIL a conspiracy. With SIL aircraft crisscrossing the Peruvian jungle and flying along the frontier borders of Brazil, Columbia and Bolivia, Uriarte contended that 'the Sovereignty and security of our Nation are at stake'.[161] Cuesta, framing SIL as a Protestant intriguer, called on 'Peruvian authorities . . . to investigate carefully the position of the members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in light of these facts and to consider whether it is in keeping with the Constitution'.[162] In making these accusations and calling for government investigation of SIL, the Catholic leadership in Peru aimed to damage the relationship between the government and SIL. This too

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[159] Ibid., p. 2.
[160] *Language* 24, no. 3 (July-September 1948): p. 4, quoted in WCT to editor of *El Comercio*, 18 August 1953, TA 40686.
[161] Uriarte, 'The Summer Institute of Linguistics is a Sectarian and Proselytist Institute': p. 3, TA 45594.
[162] Cuesta, 'Literacy Campaign': p. 5, TA 40703.

proved to be a misstep. Although the ascent of General Manuel Odría to the presidency

in a 1948 coup signalled that the conservative oligarchy's tenacious hold on the reins of

power remained in force, Odría nonetheless endeavoured to broaden his base of support

by spending lavishly on primary education, public housing and hospitals for the lower

classes.[163] While it is unclear from the available literature where the balance of Odriá's

allegiances lay between the conservative Catholic hierarchy and the progressive

elements on the left, his regime was not bashful about making known publicly exactly

where its sympathies lay in the SIL-Catholic controversy. In the immediate wake of the

vitriolic attacks by Uriarte and Cuesta, Peru's Ministry of External Relations, by

authorization of the president, bestowed upon Cameron Townsend the Merit for

Distinguished Service in September 1953, a commendation which was awarded for

service to Peru in the arts, sciences, industry or business.[164] Moreover, in June 1953

President Oderiá met with Townsend personally in Iquitos, and placed his seal of

approval on the education programme. Then, in September, the Ministry of Education

doubled the bilingual education programme's budget, leaving little doubt that it was

siding with SIL.[165] What the Catholic hierarchy touted as a possible conspiracy was in

fact simply a partnership of convenience, and one that the Odriá regime apparently

considered of sufficient value to risk offending the conservative Catholic hierarchy. In

SIL the military government had a valuable and loyal ally in its project of incorporating

Peru's indigenous peoples into the state.

The final error committed by SIL's Catholic opponents was an attempt to

downplay SIL's service to priests and nuns in the jungle. Townsend had long

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[163] Klaiber, *Religion and Revolution*, pp. pp. 166-167.

[164] Captioned photograph of WCT with Merit for Distinguished Service, n.d., TA 44488; Copy of certificate of Merit for Distinguished Service awarded to WCT by the president of Peru, dated 25 May 1953, awarded September 1953, TA 43205.

[165] CH to WGNS, 15 June 1953, TA 8619; CH to WGNS, 13 September 1953, TA 8605.

admonished his colleagues to love their enemies. He therefore insisted that his pilots

look for opportunities to serve Catholic missionaries, and he instructed JAARS pilots

never to overfly a Catholic mission station without at least stopping to drop off a

newspaper or offer to pick up mail.[166] Ideally pilots would invite Catholic priests or nuns

aboard SIL's aircraft, thereby relieving them of long and hazardous foot or canoe

journeys. It would be naïve to assume that Townsend's motives for insisting on these

practices were unadulterated. His pilots were expected to carry cameras for the express

purpose of snapping photographs of Catholic missionaries boarding SIL aeroplanes.[167]

Townsend himself occasionally boarded flights so that he could build relationships with

these isolated Catholic missionaries, who truly welcomed the opportunity for stimulating

conversation and news of the outside world. At other times he would simply invite them

over to enjoy Elaine's homemade bread and pickles.[168] This strategy of serving

Catholics was an especially effective ploy in Peru, where the local clergy mainly drew

support from the community and where the Catholic hierarchy's authority and the

Pope's directives rarely penetrated to the local level.[169] Townsend cunningly took

advantage of this cleavage to win the support of the provincial clergy at the expense of

the national and regional Catholic leadership. In addition, SIL also shared its linguistic

research with local priests working in the jungle. Grateful for the hospitality and

services rendered, these Catholic missionaries often dropped Townsend a letter or note

as a token of their appreciation. Townsend was thus able to quote from one of these

many letters in his *El Comercio* article. In this case he chose a recent June 1953 letter

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[166] Lester Bancroft, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 17 September 2009.

[167] WCT, 'Overcome Evil with Good', c. 1968, p. 2, TA 50001; Cal Hibbard, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 6 August 2007; Merrill Piper, Hefley interview, c. 1970, TA 43701.

[168] Elaine (Mielke) Townsend, Hefley interview. C. 1970, TA 43484.

[169] Edward J. Williams, 'The Emergence of the Secular Nation-State and Latin American Catholicism', *Comparative Politics* 5, no. 2 (January 1973): p. 264.

from a Dominican missionary, Francísco Alvarez, who had expressed his appreciation for SIL's sharing 'the results of the [linguistic] investigations' and thanked the organization for the 'great service you did me when you flew me from Atalaya to Sepahua'.[170] Townsend not only quoted from these letters in his article refuting his adversaries' claims, but he was also known to carry these letters and photographs as he made his rounds of government offices, proffering them as examples of SIL's 'service to all'.[171] Therefore, even before the Catholic hierarchy mounted its attacks, Townsend had steadily built up SIL's defences for the coming battle through a strategy of divide-and-conquer.

Townsend not only insisted that SIL should serve Catholics and that it should share its research with them, but he also publicly lavished praise on his antagonists. 'One of the heroes whom I admire the most', Townsend averred in his 1953 *El Comercio* article, 'is the celebrated Fray Bartolomé de las Casas'. This kind of approbation was not limited to this sixteenth-century Dominican friar, since Townsend frequently praised Catholics in his public pronouncements and in his written discourse. In 1958, Ken Pike bared his soul to Townsend, recounting how he 'reacted with violence inwardly' to these pro-Catholic proclamations. He admitted to Townsend that 'to read some of these letters which you have written to some of these people in South America about turns my stomach'. Pike nonetheless chose to follow Townsend's lead on 'the basis of God's will and getting out the Scriptures'.[172] SIL's founder was practising, as it were, the biblical injunction to be as innocent as doves and as wise as serpents. Serving Catholics was a foil, or as he often put it, '"pouring coals" of kindness upon

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[170] Fr Francísco Alvarez, O. P., to WCT, 23 June 1953, TA 9308, also quoted in part in WCT, letter to the editor of *El Comercio*, 18 August 1953, p. 5, TA 40686.

[171] William Cameron Townsend, 'Overcome Evil with Good', c. 1968, TA 50001; Cal Hibbard, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 6 August 2007.

[172] KLP to WCT, 8 December 1958, p. 2, TA 14277.

their heads'.[173] Even his international goodwill projects figured in his strategy of combating the Catholics. In December 1953 he crowed to his friend Henry C. Crowell, vice president of Moody Bible Institute and the Quaker Oats heir, that 'Combating the Vatican with the *Moisés Sáenz* is like fighting Japan with the atom bomb'. Crowell had financed the maiden flight of the *Moisés Sáenz* from the U.S. to Mexico. Townsend therefore expressed his gratitude to the 'Crowell Fund for helping us get the bomb'.[174] It would be a mistake to conclude that Townsend's strategy was entirely Machiavellian, since he genuinely enjoyed a number of Catholic friendships. A perfect example was his long and warm relationship with the Maryknoll priest, Father Joseph A. Grassi, who had attended classes at SIL in Norman, Oklahoma, in 1957.[175] It remains true, however, that there was certainly a subversive side to his designs. This was clearly on display in a September 1953 letter to SIL members in which Townsend allowed that 'we are accomplishing a tremendous amount to loosen that monster's grip' in Peru.[176] Townsend was a formidably astute political strategist, and his tactics did much to keep SIL's Catholic adversaries on the defensive.

There is no question that WBT-SIL was a Protestant evangelical organization, but by serving and befriending the Catholic missionaries in the jungles, by assiduously avoiding ecclesiastical forms and clerical functions, by dampening outward shows of religiosity, by discouraging SIL members from clustering around other evangelical missionaries, and by operating under the authority of government ministries, SIL presented a maddeningly difficult-to-hit target. Moreover, having put his antagonists on the defensive and having secured SIL's place in Peru had a lasting impact upon

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[173] John McIntosh to Harwood Hesse, 10 May 1954, TA 11074.

[174] WCT to Henry C. Crowell, 21 December 1953, TA 8767.

[175] Fr Joseph A. Grassi to KLP, 18 August 1958, TA 15820; Fr Joseph A. Grassi, 21 September 1965, TA 22616; WCT to Fr Joseph A. Grassi, 22 November 1966, TA 23478; Joseph A. Grassi to WCT, 25 June 1970, TA 27784.

[176] WCT to WBT-SIL members, c. September 1953, TA 8824.

Townsend's mind. 'I believe', he wrote in September 1953, 'our position is impregnable.' This imbued Townsend with a great deal of confidence in his particular approach. 'I believe', he added, 'that God has given us the principles on which we can go into every land on the face of the earth, Russia included.'[177] From this point forward Cameron Townsend was unyielding in his insistence that the patterns established in Mexico and Peru were inviolable.[178]

The methods that Townsend developed in Mexico proved just as useful in Peru. SIL's linguistic expertise opened the door to Peru because it supplied a key ingredient in Peru's modernization project. The dual-organization approach and the development of JAARS facilitated SIL's becoming an extension of the Peruvian state. The dual approach also permitted Townsend to utilize SIL's quasi-secular status to pursue projects under the banner of international goodwill, something that would have been difficult or impossible for a typical faith mission. All this secured for SIL multiple benefits, such as friends in high places at home and abroad along with wealthy donors. The strategy of 'service to all' was clearly an important ingredient in securing for SIL a respected position in Peru, since it allowed for the fullest expression of the organization's progressive approach, and thus for SIL to engage effectively in the Peruvian project of state modernization. Ultimately the single most important factor for SIL's achievements in Peru was Cameron Townsend's extraordinary mind and personality. It was he who developed the basic principles guiding the organization, demolished perceived barriers and led the charge into new territory both geographically and ideologically. Townsend's mantra of 'service to all' at once formed the basis for success in otherwise difficult-to-access countries while, at the same time, it created a

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[177] William Cameron Townsend, transcript of a speech given at 1953 WBT-SIL corporate conference, p. 8, TA 42373.

[178] The organization's development from the mid-1960s is detailed in chapter six.

new kind of evangelical missionary organization, one that sought not only to save souls but also to weaken the social and political influence of Catholicism, to make productive citizens of indigenous peoples, to strengthen the fabric of the modern nation-state and to foster better relations between nations.

CHAPTER FIVE

ON THE HOME FRONT

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'Mr Nyman believed fully in the inspiration of the Word of God.
He was a fundamentalist; not the fighting kind, but the loving kind of fundamentalist.
And from the outset, Wycliffe has been the same.'

William Cameron Townsend (1961)

'When God is in a thing, we mortals don't need to worry.'

William Cameron Townsend (1963)
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The expansion abroad of the WBT-SIL combination rested on cultivating a

dedicated North American constituency from which the organization could draw recruits

and funds. As the organization developed its base of support, it was forced to contend

with some rather significant structural shifts occurring within evangelicalism. In the

1940s and 1950s 'progressive fundamentalists' parted ways with the separatist and

militant 'classical' form of fundamentalism that had taken shape in the 1920s and

1930s.[1] This project of reform opened up fissures within the fundamentalist coalition,

and WBT-SIL found itself caught up in this conflict between classical fundamentalists

and the emerging 'new evangelicals'. Indeed, from the early 1950s, WBT-SIL's

innovative strategies troubled a growing number of fundamentalists at home in North

America. As the criticism mounted against WBT-SIL, it became apparent that the

organization was transgressing the boundaries of both classical fundamentalism and the

faith mission ethos. WBT-SIL's increasingly uneasy relationship with the conservative

Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association in the late 1950s was the most

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[1] Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 233.

significant symbol of changing perceptions of the organization among fundamentalists. Despite these controversies over its innovative strategies, WBT-SIL experienced uninterrupted growth in both personnel and finances. How was it that the organization enjoyed such enduring success even as it came under fire from a number of outspoken fundamentalists?

A twofold approach is taken here toward answering this question. In the first place WBT-SIL is considered within the context of the post-World War II reordering of conservative evangelicalism. Under fire from fundamentalists and other faith missions, WBT-SIL was faced with the prospect of either having to change its strategies or risk offending conservatives on the right. In the second place the organization's success at home was contingent upon Wycliffe's ability to promote the rather unusual work of SIL to an evangelical public that was accustomed to traditional faith mission methods. An examination of these topics will demonstrate that WBT-SIL resourcefully met the challenges it faced at home in North America and by doing so it took yet another step in altering the contours of what it meant to be a faith mission.

WBT-SIL and North American Fundamentalism

In the first decade and a half after its founding, WBT-SIL was assumed to be, if somewhat unconventional, essentially a fundamentalist institution. This perception was reinforced by the Pioneer Mission Agency's administrative oversight of SIL and its sponsorship of Camp Wycliffe until 1941. Also, in the early years before moving to the University of Oklahoma, Camp Wycliffe's Bible School-like posture reassured fundamentalists that, despite its focus on linguistics, it was not only missionary-minded but also theologically conservative. For instance, Camp Wycliffe's brochure of 1936

served notice that 'no modernists need apply'.[2] Wycliffe's acceptance into the conservative and separatist Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA) in 1949 also suggested to the faith mission community that WBT-SIL was a legitimate fundamentalist mission. Up to at least 1950, by most appearances WBT-SIL was deserving of its place in the fundamentalist coalition.

To Cameron Townsend belongs a disproportionate share of credit for securing WBT-SIL's place in North American fundamentalism. During the organization's formative years of the 1930s and 1940s, he built up an impressive array of contacts among fundamentalist personalities and institutions. Townsend was a member of the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, a leading fundamentalist outpost on the West coast, and his wife Elvira maintained close ties to her home church, the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, where the prominent fundamentalist teacher Harry Ironside led the congregation.[3] By 1930, Townsend was well enough acquainted with Charles Fuller to convince the radio evangelist to publicize his fanciful 'air crusade to the wild tribes' on the radio.[4] Oswald J. Smith, the well-known pastor of the People's Church in Toronto, Canada, was another advocate and supporter of Wycliffe.[5] In 1945, when Youth for Christ (YFC) was still in its infancy, Townsend cemented a personal relationship with YFC's Torrey Johnson.[6] This short list could be lengthened considerably to include, among others, the YFC evangelist Jack Wyrtzen, the theologian and president of Dallas Theological Seminary Lewis Sperry Chafer, editor of the *Sunday School Times* Charles G. Trumbull and the popular Bible teacher Donald Grey

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[2] Camp Wycliffe brochure, 1936, TA 2073.

[3] Elvira (Malmstrom) Townsend, 'From Central America', The Moody Church News (photocopy), March 1923, TA 1002; Elvira (Malmstrom) Townsend, 'A Letter from Mrs. Townsend', The Moody Church News (photocopy), January 1928, TA 1428.

[4] WCT to Karl D. Hummel, 1 November 1930, TA 1491.

[5] Oswald J. Smith to WCT, 11 August 1943, TA 3551.

[6] WCT to WGNS, 21 March 1945, TA 3952; WCT to WGNS, 26 March 1945, TA 3949.

Barnhouse. The list of Bible schools in which WBT-SIL regularly publicised its efforts

and from which it drew recruits was just as extensive. Among these were some of the

largest and best known schools of the day, such as Moody Bible Institute, the Bible

Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), Columbia Bible College, Prairie Bible Institute and

Denver Bible College. These associations and relationships offer ample evidence that

Townsend had, by the mid-1940s, established WBT-SIL as a noteworthy member of the

North American fundamentalist network.

WBT-SIL's acceptance in fundamentalist circles was also enhanced by its

projecting an unabashed faith mission image. Whereas the mainline mission boards paid

salaries to their missionaries from denominational coffers, Wycliffe missionaries had no

such ready-made sources of income. They had to garner their own support which, if the

necessary funds were forthcoming, served as a seal of God's calling. Missionaries were

not permitted to solicit funds under the faith system. Thus potential donors had to be

approached by indirect means that did not violate the principle of never asking for funds

directly. For example, Ken Pike addressed this subject in a *Sunday School Times* lesson

of May 1948 entitled 'Living on Manna'. Pike took the biblical story of God's providing

manna for the Israelites during their forty-year desert sojourn as a metaphor for the faith

principle. 'The missionary who has no guarantee of income', Pike wrote, 'may similarly

find himself in a strange country with no way of supporting himself.'[7] This short lecture

aimed to reinforce the idea that a missionary walked by faith, depending on God alone

to provide. By constant reminders of this tenet, churchgoers were conditioned to respond

to the Lord's leading by fulfilling their part of the contract. Thus the missionary

heroically stepped out 'in faith', which in turn offered the church member at home the

privilege of vicariously participating in the missionary venture and in the outworking of

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[7] Kenneth L. Pike, 'Living on Manna', *Sunday School Times* (16 May 1948): p. 387, TA 44385.

God's plan. This approach was a hallowed tenet of faith missions, where the mantra of 'full information, no solicitation' was the order of the day; to ask directly for money was not only taboo but was also thought to usurp the work of the Holy Spirit.

'Turning Trials into Triumphs' was the title of Cameron Townsend's parting speech at the close of WBT-SIL's September 1959 biennial conference. He began his address by recounting the Old Testament story of the prophet Daniel. Townsend reminded his audience of how Daniel served King Darius while still remaining faithful to God, and of how jealous government officials plotted Daniel's demise. Townsend never tired of metaphorically casting WBT-SIL into this kind of biblical narrative, for it fitted perfectly with his triumphal vision of WBT-SIL conquering its enemies through unwavering faith in God. 'Now as we scatter from this Conference', Townsend announced to his assembled colleagues, 'I'm reminded of the words of our Lord when he said to the seventy, "I send you forth as lambs among the wolves".'[8] The 'wolves' Townsend spoke of were not only Catholic antagonists but now included a growing number of conservative evangelicals. Disturbing news began to trickle back from Peru and Ecuador concerning SIL's peculiar activities from the early 1950s. Missionaries serving in proximity to SIL's operations were dismayed to discover that SIL workers were attending diplomatic functions where liquor was served, and that SIL members were avoiding gatherings of other evangelical missionaries. Fellow missioners also noted that SIL members seemed to have a propensity for concealing their real identity, often referring to themselves as linguists rather than explicitly as missionaries.[9] This remained one of the most persistent complaints throughout the decade of the 1950s. Africa Inland Mission's Ralph T. Davis, during his tenure as president of the IFMA,

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[8] William Cameron Townsend, 'Turning Trials into Triumphs', September 1959, TA 50017.
[9] Details of these events are discussed in chapter four.

complained to Townsend in a 1958 letter that 'I have never been able to be convinced in my own heart that the primary purpose of you and Wycliffe, as such, was the spiritual purpose of your work rather than the scientific'. 'Are you fish or fowl?', Davis queried.[10] Perhaps the most disturbing reproach along this line came from within the Moody Bible Institute, the premier fundamentalist missionary training school in North America. In the mid-1950s, Harold R. Cook, a Moody professor of missions, was often heard complaining of how WBT-SIL members referred to themselves as missionaries at home but apparently denied this when on the foreign field. Cook was also known to have frequently spoken of the dual organization's 'Chameleon-like character' during class discussions.[11] The occasion when some non-SIL missionaries were turned out of SIL's guesthouse on to the streets of Lima in 1954, for fear that they might not temporarily mask their evangelical missionary identity during a government official's visit, seemed to prove to opponents that SIL was less than forthright about its intentions.[12] This incident became something of a staple criticism that circulated for years after the original event had occurred. The organization's policies abroad in the 1950s were cause for mounting consternation at home, which threatened WBT-SIL's established position in the fundamentalist coalition.

Amongst the novel strategies instituted by Townsend, serving Roman Catholics may have been the most controversial. In mid-twentieth-century America, fundamentalists were not the only purveyors of anti-Catholicism. Mainline Protestants had their own fears, as exemplified by a series of anxious articles published in 1944 and 1945 by Harold Fey, the editor of *Christian Century*, entitled 'Can Catholicism win

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[10] Ralph T. Davis, quoted in WCT to KLP, 10 November 1958, TA 14410.

[11] John W. Newman to Robert William 'Bill' Wyatt, 10 December 1957, TA 13681; GMC to WCT, 14 December 1957, p. 2, TA 12660.

[12] This episode is described in chapter four.

America?'.[13] Indicative of a wider cultural anti-Catholicism was the publication of *American Freedom and Catholic Power* in 1949, by Paul Blanshard, who was the assistant editor of *The Nation*, a widely read magazine of politics and culture. As the title suggested, Blanshard worried that Catholic power was a threat to American democracy and the nation's freedom.[14] Fellow missionaries were therefore naturally alarmed when they discovered WBT-SIL's pilots flying Catholic priests and nuns in the organization's aircraft. The use of aircraft to serve everyone was, in the words of Philip E. Howard, Jr, the president and editor of the *Sunday School Times*, nothing less than 'lending aid and comfort to the enemy'.[15] When Donald Moffat, a representative of the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE), heard that SIL was flying Catholics in 1953, he demanded an explanation of why WBT-SIL condescended to serving the 'Romanists, who are . . . the instruments of Satan in every way'. 'If ever there was a counterfeit that springs from Hell', Moffat exploded, 'it is the Roman church.'[16] In late 1957, C. Stacey Woods, the secretary general of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), expressed his dismay over the attendance of Catholic priests at Camp Wycliffe. Woods admitted that 'we must be "as wise a serpents, as harmless as doves"', but he believed that it was also just as important 'to have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness'. He therefore informed Townsend that the IVCF was determined to stand by its policy of not collaborating with any organization that consorted with Roman Catholics.[17] This news was disturbing indeed, for the IVCF was an important source of WBT-SIL recruits. By choosing to serve Roman Catholics, WBT-SIL risked offending its entire North American constituency.

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[13] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, p. 188.

[14] Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1949] 1950).

[15] Philip E. Howard Jr to WCT, 6 June 1956, TA 12289.

[16] Donald Moffat to Carolyn Orr, 21 November 1953, TA 9492.

[17] C. Stacey Woods to WCT, 29 October 1957, TA 12728.

Even as Townsend was securing WBT-SIL's place within North American fundamentalism, he was flirting with the acceptable boundaries of the movement. With his innovative strategies in Mexico, which he then further developed in South America from 1946, he often transgressed these boundaries. WBT-SIL's unusual policies remained largely hidden from view until events in Peru and Ecuador attracted attention in the early 1950s. Among many fundamentalists, WBT-SIL had been considered a kindred spirit. Thus, when it became known that the organization had embarked on a path that was, at many points, inimical to the fundamentalist tradition, it struck fear and loathing into the hearts of a number of WBT-SIL supporters. The revolts of 1947 and 1948, at Camp Wycliffe and in the Peru branch of SIL respectively, were ample evidence of the unintended consequences of Townsend's innovations.[18] Although WBT-SIL had wrapped itself in fundamentalist integuments, the organization was quite unlike the typical fundamentalist institution. In effect the paradoxes of the dual organization were to blame for the growing unease among observers of WBT-SIL. At home Wycliffe, with its conservative doctrinal basis and faith mission stance, stressed born-again conversions through Bible translation; in academic circles and abroad SIL eschewed separatism and militant anti-modernism, evinced a progressive social outlook and chose to serve non-evangelicals, Roman Catholics included. The fundamentalist image created by Wycliffe was an illusion. WBT-SIL, in all its parts combined, was broadly evangelical in nature. As the organization's nature and strategies came to light over the 1950s, WBT-SIL's place within the fundamentalist coalition became an increasingly uneasy one, and the most telling evidence of this apprehension was the organization's fitful relationship with the IFMA in the late 1950s.

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[18] These transient upheavals over Townsend's methods are discussed in chapters three and four respectively.

Progressive Fundamentalism and the IFMA Controversy

During the 1940s and 1950s progressive fundamentalists made significant strides towards establishing a broad, but also rather loose, evangelical front shorn of the most unconstructive traits of classical fundamentalism. Beginning in the late 1930s, with bright hopes of igniting revival fires, progressive fundamentalists sallied forth to win America for Christ. While still hewing closely to the doctrinal 'fundamentals of the faith', they aimed to put a cheerful face on their religion. One of the most visible aspects of progressive fundamentalism was the appearance of the evangelical youth movements, such as the IVCF, the YFC, in which Billy Graham launched his evangelistic career, Dawson Trotman's Navigators and Percy Crawford's radio ministry, the *Young People's Church of the Air*. Progressive fundamentalists also constructed new institutional bases. The formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1942 was the paramount example of the new evangelical thrust to establish a nation-wide presence and to re-engage American culture. This cadre of younger fundamentalists combined their fathers' old-time religion with an updated and fashionable approach to presenting the gospel.[19] By the mid-to-late-1940s, progressive fundamentalists were well on the way to creating a viable alternative to the older separatist and militant fundamentalism that was a product of the contentious 1920s and 1930s.

The progressive fundamentalist movement sparked heated controversy. With the founding of the NAE, some militant fundamentalists sniffed apostasy. One of the most pugnacious was Carl McIntire, the leader of the newly established militant and separatist American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), who led the opposition against the NAE. McIntire was quick to charge the NAE leadership with a failure to 'fight the

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[19] Bruce Shelley, 'The Rise of Evangelical Youth Movements', *Fides and Historia* 18 (January 1986): pp. 47-63; Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Okenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*.

enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ' in the Federal Council of Churches.[20] Anything less

than full-throated opposition to modernism and ecumenism quickly drew the wrath of

those, such as McIntire, who saw it as their calling to police the boundaries of

fundamentalism. These internecine quarrels heralded the coming rupture between

classical fundamentalists and the post-World War II new evangelicals. Billy Graham's

1957 New York crusade, during which he cooperated with mainline Protestants, is

generally considered as the seminal event that finally drove a lasting wedge between the

classical fundamentalists and the progressive fundamentalists. As George Marsden, the

most recognized and widely quoted scholar of American fundamentalism, fittingly put

it, 'By the time of Graham's New York crusade . . . it was all over for the classic

fundamentalist coalition'.[21] Graham was the public face of the emerging new

evangelicalism. Hence, when he deigned to cooperate with mainline Protestants, it lent

to the militant and separatist fundamentalists all the evidence they needed to make a

decided break with the new evangelicals. Numbered amongst these sectarian

fundamentalists was a collection of iconoclastic individuals, organizations,

denominations, colleges, and churches, such as McIntire's ACCC, the Independent

Fundamental Churches of America, the General Association of Regular Baptists, Bob

Jones, Jr, and Bob Jones University, and scores of militant-separatist Bible churches.[22]

After about 1960, then, in the wake of Billy Graham's innovations and the emergence of

the new evangelical movement, the classical fundamentalist churches and institutions

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[20] Quoted in Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, p. 151.

[21] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), p. 165.

[22] David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, NC: Unusual Publications, 1986), pp. 261-278, 289-30, 361-372; George W. Dollar, *The Fight for Fundamentalism* (Orlando: Daniels Publishing, 1983); James O. Henry, *For Such a Time as This: A History of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America* (Westchester, IL: Independent Fundamental Churches of America, 1983), pp. 200-250.

comprised something of a separated subgroup within North American evangelicalism.

Joel Carpenter has on more than one occasion suggested that faith missions largely escaped the polemics between the classical fundamentalists and the new evangelicals.[23] In his 1997 work on the mid-twentieth-century emergence of progressive fundamentalism, Carpenter asserted that 'Faith missions leaders were generally moderate to "progressive" along the spectrum of attitudes within fundamentalism toward relations with other Christians'.[24] There is, however, sufficient evidence to suggest that there was a greater degree of partisanship within the faith mission leadership than Carpenter posited. In point of fact there was a rather sharp divide between the classical and progressive fundamentalists in the North American conservative missionary community in the 1940s and 1950s. A dearth of scholarly accounts of individual faith missions is partly to blame for Carpenter's conclusions, and this is emphasized by the fact that he relied upon a single popular account of the Sudan Interior Mission for evidence. Carpenter also drew inference from the fact that the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) executive Ralph T. Davis was an early leader in the formation of the NAE until he was forced to withdraw in order to protect AIM's conservative evangelical reputation when Carl McIntire went on the offensive against the NAE.[25] In any case, the expanding fissure in the fundamentalist coalition was mirrored in the faith mission community during the 1950s and early 1960s. This rift was perhaps most obvious in the IFMA's refusal to cooperate with the NAE-sponsored Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) after the EFMA's founding in

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[23] Joel A. Carpenter, 'Propagating the Faith Once Delivered', in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 125; Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, pp. 83-84.

[24] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, pp. 83-84.

[25] Roland V. Bingham, *Seven Sevens of Jubilee!* (Toronto: Evangelical Publishers, 1943, pp. 101-108, in Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, pp. 83-84, 151 and 276-277, footnote 34.

1945.[26] That the IFMA sided with the classical fundamentalists would prove significant for WBT-SIL, since it ultimately forced WBT-SIL to choose sides in the debate.

The impetus for the establishment of the IFMA in 1917 had come from four non-denominational faith missions, the Africa Inland Mission (AIM), the Central American Mission (CAM), the China Inland Mission (CIM) and the South Africa General Mission, when they were restricted from full participation in the Foreign Missions Conference of North America by the more powerful mainline denominational missions.[27] In the wake of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, the IFMA became something of an 'accrediting association', and thus served to certify a mission's conservative credentials at a time when some denominational mission leaders seemed to be edging towards theological liberalism.[28] In 1946 the IFMA once again left no doubt as to where it stood when its member missions voted unanimously to reject formal relations with the EFMA. The IFMA's refusal to collaborate with the EFMA was based upon the IFMA's strict separatist stance and its wariness over the EFMA's cooperation with mainline denominations.[29] (In 1963, driven by aspirations for hastening world-wide evangelism and prompted by desires for demonstrating evangelical solidarity over against ecumenism and liberalism, the IFMA at last established a cooperative relationship with the EFMA).[30] The IFMA missions' unwillingness to join hands with the progressive fundamentalists in the EFMA signalled that there remained a rather stark division within the faith mission community at mid-century.

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[26] Edwin L. Frizen, Jr, *75 Years of IFMA, 1917-1992: The Nondenominational Missions Movement* (Wheaton, IL: Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, 1992), pp. 192-193.

[27] J. Herbert Kane, *Faith Might Faith: A Handbook of the International Foreign Mission Association* (New York: Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, 1956), p. 8.

[28] Ibid., p. 11.

[29] Frizen, *75 Years of IFMA*., p. 193.

[30] Ibid., pp. 256-270.

Wycliffe applied to the IFMA in 1948 at the urging of Oswald J. Smith, who saw it as a way for the young organization to secure accreditation amongst North American fundamentalists.[31] During the application process, the IFMA raised only two concerns. One unnamed member mission secretary, apparently well informed on the organization's strategy, was concerned that SIL's standing as scientific organization might be harmed if Wycliffe joined the religiously-orientated IFMA. Another unnamed mission secretary expressed scepticism over the religious status of Wycliffe members, wanting to know whether they were 'missionaries' or simply 'translators and scientists' (this question was very likely posed by Ralph T. Davis).[32] As for Townsend, he was ambivalent about joining the IFMA. He understood that his policies were potentially problematic, so he directed WBT-SIL secretary William Nyman to provide a detailed description of SIL's overall strategy to the association. He then ended his instructions to Nyman by remarking 'it might be better for us to withdraw our application'.[33] As it turned out, the IFMA board was apparently satisfied with Wycliffe's explanations and conferred membership on 17 March 1949.[34] Townsend's apprehensions were not misplaced, as WBT-SIL's relationship with the IFMA would eventually prove.

Wycliffe's fortunes in the IFMA dimmed considerably with the election of J. O. Percy of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and Ralph T. Davis of AIM to the respective positions of general secretary and president of the IFMA in 1956.[35] The installation of Percy to the post of general secretary intimated that the IFMA's sympathies, at least for

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[31] Oswald J. Smith to WGNS, 10 May 1948, TA 5145; WGNS to WCT, 15 May 1948, TA 5068; WCT to WGNS, 17 May 1948, TA 5141; Oswald J. Smith to WCT, 28 June 1948, TA 5489; Minutes, WBT board of directors, 16 April 1949, WSA.

[32] A. B. Holm, secretary, IFMA, to WBT, 6 December 1948, TA 5037.

[33] WCT to WGNS, 5 February 1949, TA 5818.

[34] WGNS to A. B. Frost, 5 April 1949, BGA, Folder 5, Box 6, Collection 352, Records of the IFMA; WBT board of directors, minutes, 16 April 1949, WSA.

[35] Phillip (Phil) Grossman (hereafter 'PG') to WCT, 19 November 1956, TA 12200.

the next few years, would remain with the separatist-orientated classical fundamentalists rather than with the emerging new evangelicals. Percy wariness of the new evangelicals was exemplified by his antipathy towards Billy Graham's eschewal of separatism.[36] As for Davis, although he had been willing to associate with the new evangelicals in the NAE, he remained cool towards WBT-SIL and continued to harbour doubts about the mission's dual strategy.[37] While both men denied any personal animosity towards Wycliffe, both Percy and Davis leaned in the direction of WBT-SIL's critics, while at the same time working to ensure that the IFMA itself remained within the confines of classical fundamentalism.[38]

The opening moves of the conflict between WBT and the IFMA came from a familiar quarter. Although it was not a member of the IFMA, the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) nonetheless felt compelled to lodge a number of charges against Wycliffe with the association in February 1957, including complaints that SIL was transporting Catholics in its aircraft, that SIL members were attending diplomatic functions where wine and cocktails were served, and that SIL was making literacy and Bible portions available to Catholic missionaries. The ABWE was also distressed over what it saw as a deception being carried out under the guise of the dual-organizational structure.[39] Then, in June 1958, SIL offended the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU), a longstanding IFMA member mission, when a SIL pilot landed two Roman Catholic priests on a GMU airstrip in Ecuador. Townsend made an already tense

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[36] WCT to J. O. Percy, 4 May 1957, TA 12926; J. O. Percy to WCT, 22 July 1957, BGA, Folder 4, Box 8, Collection 352, Records of the IFMA; WCT to J. O. Percy, 2 October 1957, BGA, Folder 7, Box 10, Collection 352, Records of the IFMA.

[37] PG to WCT, 5 November 1958, TA 15020.

[38] Kenneth L. (Ken) Watters (hereafter KLW) to Turner Blount, 24 July 1958, TA 15891; Ralph T. Davis to WCT, 3 November 1958, TA 15024; WCT to KLP, 10 November 1958, TA 14410; WCT to Ralph T. Davis, 13 November 1958, TA 15025; PG to GMC, 24 November 1959, TA 17410; Frizen, *75 Years of the IFMA*, pp. 197-279.

[39] Harold Key to ABWE, 11 February 1957, TA 14143.

situation worse when he suggested to GMU vice president R. J. Reinmillar that the
GMU should take any complaints about the incident to Ecuadorian government officials
rather than lodging them with SIL. After all, Townsend pointed out, it was the
government that owned the aeroplane, and SIL therefore merely operated the aircraft as
a common carrier under the government's authority.[40] Townsend had little patience with
his missionary brethren when they failed to embrace, or at least make an attempt to
understand, his strategy of service to all. In fact, he could become downright prickly,
and he acerbically added in a second letter to the GMU that he hoped SIL would one day
have the opportunity to serve 'Mohammedans, Buddists [sic], Atheists, Jews, and
everyone'.[41] In the wake of these incidents, Townsend remained intransigent, and the
situation between Wycliffe and the IFMA deteriorated.[42]

Wycliffe's Northeast region home director, Phillip 'Phil' Grossman, met with the
IFMA in late August 1958 in an attempt to smooth ruffled feathers, but this encounter
was doomed before it was even underway, since Townsend's 1953 *El Comercio* article,
with its glowing praise of Roman Catholic missionaries, had mysteriously fallen in to
the hands of the IFMA general secretary.[43] (Grossman only reported that it was
forwarded to Percy by a 'large Bible school'). Already incensed over Townsend's sharp
responses to the GMU, Percy was further agitated after reading the *El Comercio* article.
In fact, he was sufficiently disturbed to demand that any future communiqués should
come not from Townsend, but rather from the president of Wycliffe's board of
directors.[44]

WBT-SIL's leaders remained circumspect, still believing that WBT-SIL could

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[40] R. J. Reinmiller to WBT, 6 June 1958, TA 14710; WCT to R. J. Reinmillar, 13 June 1958, TA 14709; R. J. Reinmillar to WCT, 18 June 1958, TA 14682.
[41] WCT to R. J. Reinmillar, 6 July 1958, TA 14681.
[42] J. O. Percy to Turner Blount, 26 June 1958, TA 15910.
[43] Details of Townsend's *El Comercio* article are covered in chapter four.
[44] PG to WBT board of directors, 28 August 1958, TA 15796.

maintain amicable relations across the full spectrum of religious sympathies, from the new evangelicals to the classical fundamentalists, even if the widening distinction between these two parties was making this increasingly difficult. Harold Key, SIL's Bolivia branch director, remarked in February 1959 that 'I am not much in favour of our being out of IFMA'.[45] Key's comment reflected the general consensus of opinion among WBT-SIL's leaders at the time. However a minority was coming to the conclusion that the organization belonged in the progressive camp. WBT-SIL treasurer and board member Kenneth L. (Ken) Watters was representative of this latter group. In a July 1958 letter, Watters suggested that to many WBT-SIL leaders it seemed that the organization had more in common with the IFMA than the EFMA. However he went on to argue that the 'EFMA has the NAE stand which is much more in keeping with our methods and policies than many who are in the IFMA'.[46] Watters meant by this comment that the IFMA's separatist stance ran counter to the NAE and WBT-SIL's more cooperative spirit. Townsend naturally championed the idea of Wycliffe joining the EFMA, and, by the end of 1958, he reported that board members Dick Pittman and William Nyman had drawn the same conclusion.[47] It was beginning to dawn on some of the key WBT-SIL leadership that the organization was in fact too radical for the IFMA; yet, as of early 1959, there was still no unanimity that quitting the IFMA or that joining the EFMA was the correct move.

At the height of the IFMA controversy, Wycliffe was the recipient of overtures from progressive fundamentalists and specifically from the EFMA. In January 1958, Billy Graham professed to Townsend that 'Wycliffe is increasingly on my heart'. Graham went on to explain that,

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[45] Harold Key to WCT, February 1959, PSC.
[46] KLW to Turner Blount, 24 July 1958, TA 15891.
[47] WCT to KLP, 29 November 1958, TA 14337.

> since we are planning a foreign department in our organization [the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association], I am asking our Board of Directors to give priority to Wycliffe Translators in their prayers and consideration. I want you to count me a part of the great Wycliffe family.[48]

If WBT-SIL's top leaders were of a mixed mind about where the organization belonged in the emerging evangelical landscape, they were nonetheless quick to take Graham up on his overture and in 1958 installed him on the WBT-SIL board of directors, where he remained until 1964.[49] Graham's tenure on the WBT-SIL board was largely that of a figurehead but, as SIL's Mexico branch director Ben Elson observed in late 1959, Billy Graham was 'to many people[,] much more of an accreditation than [the] IFMA'.[50] Indeed securing Graham for the board in the midst of the IFMA controversy was, in and of itself, a significant move that telegraphed to the evangelical world Wycliffe's position within the evolving religious milieu. The following year, in May 1959, Larry Love wrote from the Billy Graham team office in North Carolina, reassuring Townsend that he had personally interrogated Harold J. Ockenga and the EFMA's executive secretary Clyde Taylor, as well as 'others', about their attitudes towards WBT-SIL. Love reported that they all expressed unwavering support for Wycliffe.[51] Wycliffe's Dale Kietzman, who had extensive experience representing WBT-SIL in the U.S., also confirmed what he saw as broad support coming from a wide spectrum of evangelicals.[52] WBT-SIL had not changed its stripes, but by placing Billy Graham on the board of directors it had taken an important step towards allying itself to the new evangelicalism, where the organization was obviously welcome.

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[48] Billy Graham to WCT, 6 January 1958, TA 15418.

[49] Phil Grossman 'Summary Report of West Coast Trip', May 1958, TA 16016; *Translation*, (Spring 1964): n.p.

[50] Ben Elson, 'Report of Impressions of the Meeting between IFMA and WBT', 2 October 1959, TA 17504.

[51] Larry Love to WCT, 18 May 1959, TA 17119.

[52] Dale Kietzman to WCT, 27 July 1959, TA 17046.

The differing approaches between Townsend and the rest of the Wycliffe leadership to the IFMA controversy lent to Percy and Davis the impression that many of Wycliffe's leaders were not in step with their founder. They therefore assumed it was possible to isolate Townsend, and thereby keep one of the association's largest and most influential member missions under the IFMA umbrella. What appeared as a rift between Townsend and the board was in fact something of a mirage. Internal debate was not only expected but encouraged in WBT-SIL. In May 1947 the board reminded the membership that 'in view of the many severe and delicate problems which we have to face [,] . . . we reaffirm the necessity of complete freedom of expressing opinions and judgments . . . within the organization'.[53] It must also be recalled that when all was said and done the membership and the board most often fell into step with Townsend.[54] For example, Ben Elson recalled in a 1970s interview that 'There hasn't been a major decision in Wycliffe without a person thinking, "How will this affect Uncle Cam [?]. How will he take it?" He's got weight. He counts for ten on the board'.[55] Thus, while there were debates between the organization's upper echelon of leaders and Townsend, these clashes rarely if ever resulted in irreparable schisms. Unlike so many other fundamentalist and conservative evangelical enterprises, intramural quarrels in WBT-SIL were generally conducted without lasting fissiparous effects. It is natural then that Percy failed to realize that the board was unlikely to countermand Townsend, at least publicly. At the time of the IFMA controversy the organization's leadership was, if far less hasty in making sudden changes of direction, generally committed to Townsend's policies and strategies; thus there was a very strong tendency for the leadership to close ranks when faced with an irresoluble crisis.

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[53] SIL board of directors, minutes, 18 May 1947, WSA.

[54] Cameron Townsend's extraordinary capacity to win over detractors is detailed in chapter four.

[55] BFE, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 21, TA 43768.

During an April 1959 visit to the SIL branch in Peru, Percy was dismayed to discover that not only was WBT-SIL's leadership committed to Townsend's strategies, but so too were most its members. Although thoroughly impressed by SIL's efficient operations and genuinely touched by Townsend's 'deep spiritual concern', Percy nonetheless reported in a confidential memo to the IFMA board of directors that he could not abide by SIL's policy of serving Catholics, nor its cooperation with the Peruvian government, nor its members' tendency to downplay their missionary status. These points constituted what Percy saw as a 'lopsided program'. Percy also contended that, even if Wycliffe withdrew from the association, that such a move would still not 'answer the criticism of Dr. Bob Jones [Jr] and others'.[56] By legitimizing the criticism of this militant fundamentalist who had joined the fray against WBT-SIL in late 1958, Percy unambiguously indicated where the IFMA's sympathies lay in the rift between the classical and progressive fundamentalists.[57] He was plainly urging Wycliffe to align with the non-progressive wing of fundamentalism. Percy closed his letter to the IFMA board by suggesting that WBT-SIL members should come out decidedly as missionaries, that the organization should align itself unconditionally with other 'fundamental missionary bodies', that it should refuse to serve non-evangelicals and, lastly, that it come clean with the general public about the true nature of the dual organization.[58] Needless to say, with this line drawn, there seemed to be little or no recourse but for Wycliffe to separate from the IFMA.

At the WBT-SIL board's request, Ken Pike undertook one last effort to win the

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[56] J. O. Percy, 'Confidential Memo to Official Board', IFMA, 4 May 1959, BGA, Folder 9, Box 10, Collection 352, Records of the IFMA.

[57] KLW to John Whaley, Bob Jones University, 4 December 1958, TA 16823; Bob Jones Jr to Walter M. Montano, editor, *Christian Heritage*, 6 December 1958, TA 16819; WCT to Bob Jones Jr 12 December 1958, TA 16822; Bob Jones Jr to WCT, 29 December 1958, TA 16817.

[58] Percy, 'Confidential Memo'.

confidence of its critics in the IFMA. In a series of September 1959 working papers Pike took pains to explain WBT-SIL's policies in a reasoned and winsome fashion.[59] The entire thrust of Pike's apologetic evidenced a progressive posture. The reader was led point-by-point to the realization that WBT-SIL was following a bold strategy of eschewing separatism for positive engagement as a means of furthering the gospel. This progressive sentiment was on full display when Pike summed up WBT-SIL's threefold strategy that combined,

> (1) a spiritual contribution worked out especially through our Bible translation activities; (2) scientific research and publication; and (3) cultural (e.g. educational, medical, and literacy) service.

Perhaps the most pointed evidence that WBT-SIL's thrust had little in common with classical fundamentalism came when Pike emphasized that the 'whole man, we feel, must be affected by the Gospel—his spirit, intellect, and culture'.[60] WBT-SIL was expressing much the same variety of sentiment on the foreign mission front as were the new evangelicals at home in America.

The position outlined by Pike was in keeping with a salient feature of the new evangelicalism that George Marsden has remarked upon. Marsden observed that the better-educated new evangelicals, such as Carl F. H. Henry and Harold J. Ockenga, 'while remaining premillennialist in a general sense, abandoned the central dispensationalist preoccupation with reading the prophetic signs so as to indicate that the present was incontrovertibly the end time'. According to Marsden the new evangelicals were therefore more optimistic of the potential for 'transforming culture to bring it more

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[59] Ken Pike, 'IFMA Issue', Work Papers I-VI, WBT, September 1959, Mexico Branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics Archives, Catalina, Arizona (hereafter 'MBA').

[60] Ken Pike, Work Paper, VI.1, September 1959, MBA (emphasis in the original).

in conformity with God's law and will'.[61] Contrasting views on the outworking of history between classical fundamentalism and the new evangelicalism is an especially helpful characteristic to focus on when attempting to situate WBT-SIL in the shifting currents of mid-century evangelicalism. During the course of this study an attempt was made to ascertain the level of adherence to premillennial-dispensationalism that existed in WBT-SIL before the early 1980s. Archived materials are bereft of any indication that this eschatological theory had much influence on WBT-SIL. Interviews revealed that very few of the organization's missionaries ever possessed more than a rudimentary knowledge of dispensational theology. Furthermore some members who carried dispensationalist ideas into the organization dropped them after a period of intense Bible study and translation. A perfect case in point was Eugene Loos, who joined WBT-SIL in 1952. Loos, a Baptist, parted ways with dispensational eschatology after 'examining the statements that came out of that camp with scriptures themselves'.[62] Close scrutiny of the scriptures during translation had the same effect on SIL missionary-translator Richard Blight. Soon after he joined WBT-SIL in 1951 he dropped his dispensationalist beliefs. When asked about what led to this change of mind, he flatly responded by stating that 'I read the Bible'.[63] Perhaps the most significant evidence of dispensationalism's diminutive status in WBT-SIL came in 1958 when Ken Pike's sister, Eunice Pike, published *Words Wanted*, a book intended for WBT-SIL home constituency in which she openly criticized dispensationalism.[64] WBT-SIL was, from its founding, of a decidedly progressive cast of mind and never wedded to dispensationalism, and it was therefore ideologically situated on the new evangelical

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[61] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 76.
[62] Eugene Loos, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 25 June 2009.
[63] Richard Blight, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 2 July 2009.
[64] Eunice V Pike, *Words Wanted* (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1958), pp. 176-184.

side of the developing fault line of the 1950s.

In October 1959 the IFMA requested permission from Wycliffe for Pike's papers to be submitted for expert theological scrutiny. The choice of two leading fundamentalist academics, John F. Walvoord, the president of the Dallas Theological Seminary, and Charles J. Woodbridge, a former Fuller Seminary professor, attested to the IFMA's conservative bias. Ken Pike's response to the IFMA's proposed reviewers is instructive. Upon receipt of this request from the IFMA, Pike suggested that the review board should also include Fuller Seminary progressives Paul Jewett and George Eldon Ladd.[65] Pike's submission of these two Fuller professors as potential reviewers demonstrated that he understood very well that WBT-SIL had more in common with the new evangelicals than the classical fundamentalists, and that only by balancing the review board in this fashion would WBT-SIL gain an equitable hearing.

The proposed review of the IFMA working papers never took place, mainly because of Townsend's protestations that there was little chance of convincing the 'old line mission boards in the IFMA' of the wisdom of Wycliffe's position.[66] Townsend was probably correct in his assumption, since the divide between old guard fundamentalists and the new evangelicals was sufficiently wide as to force WBT-SIL to choose sides. That the gulf between Wycliffe and the IFMA remained too wide for reconciliation was in evidence at an informal meeting between the disputing parties in Racine, Wisconsin, on 2 October 1959. Townsend was not in attendance, having become *persona non grata* in the eyes of the IFMA leadership, but some of Wycliffe's top brass, including Ben Elson, George Cowan, Dick Pittman, Ken Pike, Harold Goodall, Turner Blount and Phil Grossman, appeared to defend Wycliffe. Leaders from AIM, CIM, CAM, SIM, the Berean Mission and the South Africa General Mission were present on behalf of the

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[65] GMC to WCT, et. al., 19 October 1959, TA 16987.
[66] WCT to WBT-SIL board of directors, 22 October 1959, TA 16377.

IFMA. The Wycliffe team's strategy was to avert verbal combat and to present a united front, while making their case one last time. SIL's policy of serving Catholics and its cooperation with foreign governments remained the chief points of contention. The meeting was therefore mainly a rehash of longstanding issues, and it ultimately ended in a stalemate that brought no resolution to the crisis.[67] Rather than risk possible ejection from the IFMA, Wycliffe opted to withdraw from the organization. On 1 December 1959, George Cowan despatched a letter to the IFMA making WBT's withdrawal effective on 1 February 1960.[68] The long struggle to convince its critics in the IFMA had come to an end.

As progressive evangelicals began embracing WBT-SIL, other fundamentalists stepped up their criticism. An apt example was Robert T. 'Fighting Bob' Ketcham, who was one of the founders of the separatist General Association of Regular Baptists (GARB), which was formed in 1932. While serving as the GARB's national representative in 1960, Ketcham took WBT-SIL to task in the GARB's *Baptist Bulletin*. Ketcham confessed that Wycliffe operated the finest school available for training missionaries in the science of linguistics, but the organization's stance on serving Roman Catholics was simply too much for this separatist and militant fundamentalist to bear. With a number of GARB churches supporting Wycliffe missionaries, he felt that it was his solemn duty to warn GARB member churches exactly what it was that they were endorsing when they backed a Wycliffe missionary.[69] Always one to turn events to

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[67] Ben Elson, 'Report of Impressions of the Meeting Between IFMA and WBT', 2 October 1959, TA 17504; RSP to WCT, 5 October 1959, TA 17000; Lorin Griset, 'Personal Report on the Racine Meeting with I.F.M.A. Board', 7 October 1959, TA 17501; GMC to RSP, et. al., 8 October 1959, TA 17499; KLW to WCT, et. al., 23 October 1959, TA 16982; J. O. Percy to KLW, 10 December 1959, BGA, Folder 4, Box 16, Collection 352, Records of the IFMA.

[68] GMC to 'Member Missions of the I.F.M.A.', 1 December 1959, TA 17389.

[69] Robert T. Ketchum, 'Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Roman Catholic Church', typed copy of *Baptist Bulletin* article, n.d, TA 18950.

his own advantage, Townsend clipped the Ketcham article and mailed it to at least one bishop in Peru, as proof that SIL was paying a price to serve Catholics.[70] On the home front the article had less salutary benefits. Acting on the evidence of Ketcham's article, the fundamentalist Prairie Bible Institute in Alberta, Canada, stopped recommending Wycliffe to its graduates.[71] Apparently Prairie did more than halt recommendations. Wycliffe lost a potential candidate in 1965 after he attended classes at Prairie where, in the words of Wycliffe's candidate secretary Otis Leal, the student was 'poisoned against Wycliffe'.[72] After the early 1960s the sources of criticism directed at the organization originating almost exclusively from within the militant and separatist wing of fundamentalism and, as the next chapter will show, from anthropologists defending indigenous culture.

If progressive fundamentalists were willing to accept, or at least overlook, most of WBT-SIL's unusual policies, there still remained the stumbling block of anti-Catholicism, since few evangelicals, even after 1960, were prepared to embrace the idea of assisting Roman Catholics. No evidence was uncovered during the course of the present study to suggest that WBT-SIL was ever able to convince any other evangelical organization to cooperate closely with Roman Catholics. However, WBT-SIL managed to persuade at least two sceptics that its policy of service to all was legitimate. In October 1958, C. Stacey Woods admitted a change of heart on this very issue. Woods wrote Townsend confessing that 'God gives different commissions to different people, so that in the complex army of the Lord, different folks do different things'. Woods now

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[70] WCT to Monseñor Gustavo Prevost, Obisipo Vicario Apostolico, Pucallpa, Peru, 6 April 1960, TA 18471.

[71] PG to L. E. Maxwell, principal, Prairie Bible Institute, 25 April 1960, TA 19521; L. E. Maxwell to PG, 29 April 1960, TA 19473; PG to L. E. Maxwell, 19 May 1960, TA 19472; L. E. Maxwell to PG, 13 June 1960, TA 19437; PG to Pat Cohan, 19 September 1960, TA 19315.

[72] Otis Leal to WCT, 23 August 1965, TA 22670.

acknowledged that 'even in the Roman Catholic Church there are those who are truly born again and devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ'.[73] Grady Parrot of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship softened his anti-Catholicism in 1954, after MAF was confronted with the question of flying a very ill priest out of the jungle to a hospital. Parrot was struck by the need for a humane response to these kinds of situations, and soon after the rescue flight he took time to inform Townsend of his change of heart, even though the MAF did not change its position on not serving Catholics under normal circumstances.[74] That the policy of lending aid to Catholics caused less difficulty for WBT-SIL than might have been expected was due to the fact that it was seldom mentioned by members or in the organization's publicity. According to one long-serving translator, revealing to churches and supporters that SIL served Catholics was only done with 'discretion'.[75] When queried about how they handled the Catholic issue in the U.S., the near unanimous response of interviewees echoed that of WBT-SIL translator Glen Stairs, who offered that 'We didn't talk about it'.[76] Some things were apparently better left unsaid, and this circumspection served WBT-SIL well, since there is little evidence that SIL's service to Catholics was cause for much criticism after about 1960.

Behind all the noisy polemics created by the fundamentalist leadership, there remained a large number of conservative evangelicals in the pews who did not join in the fray. In 1942, Harold J. Ockenga spoke of the 'Unvoiced Multitudes', adducing that there were millions of conservative evangelicals outside the bastions of militant and

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[73] C. Stacey Woods to WCT, 14 October 1958, TA 15053.

[74] Grady Parrot, quoted in WCT to Harold Key, 18 January 1954, TA 10359; James C. Truxton, vice-president, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, to Eldon Larsen, 'Policy Discussion with Neill Hawkins', 21 July 1960, BGA, Folder 38, Box 62, Collection 136, Records of the MAF.

[75] Dorothy Minor, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 10 September 2008.

[76] Glen Stairs, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2009.

separatist fundamentalism.[77] The theologian and former editor of *Christianity Today*, Carl F. H. Henry, concurred, and he once estimated that about eighty-five percent of the Northern Baptist Convention churches were evangelical in the mid-1940s, even if they did not identify with the militant and separatist fundamentalists.[78] Evidence of this broader evangelicalism was also manifest when churches affiliated with the Federal Council of Churches by their denominational hierarchy, but not necessarily by their own choice, joined the NAE by way of a clause allowing them to do so individually.[79] To make the point that many conservative evangelicals did not openly self-identify with the classical fundamentalists is not to undercut the significant impact that fundamentalism had on the evangelical mind. The difficulties that Wycliffe recruits experienced in adjusting to Townsend's methods and the reactions by other conservative evangelicals to WBT-SIL attest to the widespread influence of fundamentalist tendencies. So too does Carl Henry's somewhat contradictory remark on another occasion that 'In the 1930s we were all fundamentalists.'[80] The considerable effects of fundamentalism notwithstanding, it was the destiny of the larger body of relatively more irenic evangelicals located across the religious spectrum who ultimately shaped the contours of post-World War II evangelicalism.

WBT-SIL's success after about 1960 therefore rested more on its capacity to win the favour of this large body of moderate evangelicals and progressive fundamentalists than it did on convincing its most vocal critics on the far right. The way in which the Wycliffe side of the dual organization promoted the work of SIL to a North American

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[77] Harold J. Ockenga, 'The Unvoiced Multitudes' in *Evangelical Action!: A Report of the Organization of the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action* (Boston, 1942), p. 35, quoted in Marsden, *Reforming*, p. 49.

[78] Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), pp. 110-111.

[79] Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), p. 27.

[80] Quoted in Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 10.

audience is the subject that will occupy the remainder of this chapter.

WBT-SIL Publicity Efforts in North America: Tradition and Invention

Despite incurring more criticism from within the evangelical community than at any other period in its history, WBT-SIL continued to grow apace during the 1950s. In 1959, at the peak of the IFMA controversy, Wycliffe picked up 135 new recruits, the greatest number in one year up to that time.[81] In December 1962, Townsend informed Billy Graham that WBT-SIL had recently become the largest North American evangelical mission with 1325 missionaries, having surpassed SIM, which counted 1263.[82] The decade of the 1950s was marked by an astounding expansion of WBT-SIL. On a fiscal year basis, the organization expanded from 269 members and $307,000 in receipts in 1951 to 1122 members and $2.2 million in 1961.[83] In addition, by the early 1960s, WBT-SIL was also on the way to becoming a more international organization, with Wycliffe branches in the U.K., Australia and Canada sending a small number of missionaries to serve with SIL in Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America.[84] How can it be explained that such an unusual organization as WBT-SIL enjoyed this level of success? An exploration of the factors that propelled and sustained WBT-SIL's growth will reveal that the organization was at once extraordinarily innovative while, at the very same time, it maintained an unbending commitment to aspects of the faith mission paradigm.

Interviews conducted in the course of this study indicate that an overwhelming

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[81] WCT to J. Robert Story, general secretary, Unevangelized Fields Mission, Australia, 19 January 1960, TA 18589.

[82] WCT to Billy Graham, 12 December 1962, TA 20743.

[83] CH to WCT, 16 November 1965, TA 24153.

[84] Ethel E. Wallis and Mary Bennett, *Two Thousand Tongues to Go: The Adventures of the Wycliffe Bible Translators Throughout the Word Today* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959), pp. 258-274; Phyllis Thompson, *Matched with His Hour: The Story of the British Home Base of the Wycliffe Bible Translators* (London: Word Books, 1974).

majority of WBT-SIL candidates were, at some point in their lives, nurtured in socio-religious settings that venerated missionary service as a Christian ideal. Although the evidence is rather limited, recruits coming of age in the 1930s who subsequently joined the organization before about the mid-1940s, seem to have been mostly inculcated with missionary idealism in the church and at home. Canadian George Cowan, who joined in 1942, fondly recalled his once meeting the well-known missionaries to China, Jonathan and Roslyn Goforth, at a Presbyterian church that his father pastored in the 1930s. For Cowan, the overawing presence of the Goforths and the allure of China sparked his enthusiasm for missions at a tender age.[85] (The closure of China to missionaries in 1950 likely benefited WBT-SIL's growth; however there is no specific evidence to support this contention). Eugene Nida, Ken Pike and Marianna Slocum, all of whom joined before 1941, also traced their missionary calls to influences at church and home.[86] With the rise of the evangelical youth movements and emergence of progressive fundamentalism in the mid-1940s, inducements to consider a missionary vocation increasingly originated outside the confines of home and church. Interviews with members who joined from the late 1940s revealed that most attributed their missionary calling to attendance at Bible school or college. Missionary rallies and participation in campus missionary clubs were also important influences. When asked what moved him to become a missionary, SIL translator Richard Blight recollected his days as a student at Wheaton College. Blight was especially inspired during a campus-wide revival that broke out in 1949.[87] At Wheaton, Blight was also in the company of other passionate

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[85] George M. Cowan, interview by author, Santa Ana, California, 20 August 2007.

[86] Eugene A. Nida, 'My Pilgrimage in Missions', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12 (April 1988): p. 62; Eunice V. Pike, *Ken Pike: Scholar and Christian* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), p. 7; Marianna Slocum, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 5 June 2008.

[87] Richard Blight, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 2 July 2009.

mission-minded students, and two of his contemporaries (Jim Elliot and Roger Youdarian) were later enshrined as martyrs when they were speared to death in Ecuador in 1956.[88] WBT-SIL was the beneficiary of a mid-twentieth-century evangelical social milieu that was awash with a rising tide of enthusiasm for missions.

What attracted WBT-SIL candidates specifically to Wycliffe? The mission's particular focus on languages and linguistics was one factor, especially in drawing academically gifted missionary recruits. College attendance in the United States doubled in the decade following World War II.[89] At the war's end, only forty percent of students were completing high school and a mere sixteen percent were entering college. By 1980, seventy-five percent were graduating from high school and about forty-five percent were entering college.[90] The education boom immediately following the war was due in part to returning servicemen taking advantage of the G. I. Bill. Camp Wycliffe, with its University of Oklahoma connection, became a government-approved institution for students under the G. I. Bill. WBT-SIL certainly benefited from this nationwide upsurge in education. By 1977, nearly 10,000 students had taken course work at SIL in Norman, Oklahoma.[91] Robert Longacre and Mary Ruth Wise, two of SIL's most outstanding career linguists, are typical examples of both this post-war surge to pursue educational opportunities and of the academic attraction of SIL. Their comments during interviews usefully summed up the sentiment of more than a few WBT-SIL recruits. Longacre, a

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[88] Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor* (New York: Harper (1957); Steve Saint, *End of the Spear* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).

[89] George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 390.

[90] Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-1980* (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1983), p. 324.

[91] Frank E. Robbins, 'Training in Linguistics', in *The Summer Institute of Linguistics: Its Works and Contributions*, eds., Ruth M. Brend and Kenneth L. Pike (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1977), p. 61.

member since 1946, recalled that 'I fell in love with linguistics at first sight'.[92] Wise, who joined the organization in 1951, recollected the occasion of her college roommate's returning from Camp Wycliffe 'talking to me about linguistics and translation . . . Latin and grammar and all that, it [was] wonderful'. Wise said that to 'proselytize would not be my thing', but she relished her studies at SIL and on her first furlough garnered an MA in linguistics from the University of Michigan. 'Languages', she emphasized, 'are fun, the most wonderful things.' She eventually went on to earn her Ph.D. in linguistics.[93] Following World War II, WBT-SIL drew upon an expanding number of young evangelicals eager to pursue higher education and to use their academic talents in a missionary vocation.

Bible translation was the single most important factor attracting recruits to WBT-SIL. The organization's goal of translating scripture was given as the chief reason for joining the mission with almost monotonous regularity during interviews. This comes as little surprise, owing to the Bible's prestige among evangelicals.[94] WBT-SIL missionary Florence Gerdel, who joined in 1946, expressed the sentiment of her fellow missionaries when she exclaimed, 'what could be more important in the whole world than giving people the Bible?'[95] Nancy Lanier, a member since 1952, offered that for her it was 'the importance of the Word'.[96] Jack Henderson, another long-serving Wycliffe missionary, was present at a mid-1940s Word of Life rally where the evangelist Jack Wyrtzen spoke of the 'the problem of Bible-less tribes'. Henderson recounted that this was what 'really

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[92] Robert E. Longacre, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 29 June 2010.

[93] Mary Ruth Wise, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 30 June 2009.

[94] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 12-14; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 223-224.

[95] Florence Gerdel, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 15 June 2008.

[96] Nancy Lanier, interview by author, Catalina, Arizona, 31 July 2009.

impressed' him to join Wycliffe.[97] Already primed for missionary careers and imbued

with a passion for the Bible, prospective evangelical candidates often leapt at the

opportunity to serve with Wycliffe when they discovered its overarching goal of

scripture translation.

Due to an unfortunate absence of detailed records, it is nearly impossible to

determine the specific sources of organizational funding for the period of this study.[98]

There is evidence to suggest that, up to at least the late 1970s, actual cash flows to the

organization originated largely from individual missionary sources of support.

According to former Wycliffe president Bernie May, funds collected by individual

missionaries accounted for approximately ninety percent of organizational income.[99]

Extant records tend to confirm May's estimate. For example, of the $4.2 million

collected by WBT-SIL in 1966, donations to individual WBT-SIL members accounted

for $3.5 million, or eighty-three percent of the total.[100] Direct contributions by friends

and churches to missionaries under the faith model (a system in which no salaries were

paid, thus obliging individuals to seek out their own sources of financial support), were

clearly a very significant source of income. However, this reckoning fails to account for

non-cash proceeds from such sources as donated aircraft and government sponsorship of

SIL programmes and operations. The organization's financial fortunes thus rested on

two pillars. WBT-SIL missionaries relied exclusively upon the faith model for their

personal remuneration. This was a method with a long and cherished tradition among

conservative evangelicals. Where WBT-SIL was most innovative, as partly detailed in

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[97] Jack Henderson, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 24 September 2009. NB: Henderson recalled that he attended this rally in either 1944 or 1945.

[98] It is unclear to what degree detailed financial records were ever maintained. It is very likely that many financial records were lost or destroyed during Wycliffe's move from Huntington Beach, California, to Orlando, Florida, in 1999.

[99] Bernie May, personal communication to author, 4 November 2011.

[100] *Translation* (September-October 1967): p. 18.

the previous chapter with the International Goodwill Fleet, was in developing corporate sources of income and non-cash support for large projects. As the organization expanded, it maintained the faith model while, at the same time, with Townsend leading the charge, it developed entirely new and creative approaches to publicizing the organization's efforts. Both methods of funding contributed in important ways to WBT-SIL's on-going expansion, and therefore each must be surveyed in its own right.

The faith mission method of garnering funds had deep roots in WBT-SIL. Unlike many other faith missions, such as the SIM and the CIM, WBT-SIL did not pool funds for equal distribution among its missionaries.[101] The only nod in the direction of supporting under-funded members was the use of any excess corporate funds to 'top off' an individual missionary's low support in an emergency. Aside from this minor concession, the pattern in Wycliffe was for missionaries to depend exclusively on their personal support base, and not on the organization or fellow missionaries. With full confidence in the faith mission approach, Townsend unhesitatingly sent recruits out without the promise of sufficient financial support.[102] Well into the 1950s it was not unusual for WBT-SIL missionaries to depart for the foreign field without adequate means of sustaining themselves. Cal Hibbard, Townsend's secretary for forty two years, nicely summed up his chief's advice to newly minted missionaries. In Hibbard's words, Townsend would say to new translators, 'let your people know you're going, be sure to let them know when you've arrived, and they will realize, "Hey, these guys are down there, we better help them!"'.[103] Adele Elson, who joined Wycliffe in 1942, recalled that Townsend's main concern was placing new recruits on the field. Once they had arrived,

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[101] Harold Lindsell, 'Faith Missions and Money', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 119 (January 1962): p. 33; J. O. Percy to KLW, 26 May 1959, BGA, Folder 7, Box 13, Collection 352, Records of the IFMA.

[102] WCT to Lambert Anderson ((hereafter 'LA') and Doris Anderson, 22 July 1952, TA 7546; Bruce Moore, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 1 July 2009.

[103] Cal Hibbard, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 6 August 2007.

he believed, the funds would naturally follow. 'I think that was his strategy', Elson

submitted, 'and it worked'.[104] In reality, there were times when it did not work so well,

but Townsend remained adamant that his missionaries should not look to the corporation

for financial assistance. 'THE LORD DOES NOT FAIL', he emphasized to George

Cowan in 1946 when some Wycliffe missionaries attempted to draw upon

organizational resources. 'I pity the worker who depends on the organization',

Townsend intoned, 'and all I can do is refer them to their Boss', meaning their only

alternative was to rely on God himself.[105] Townsend maintained an unshakable belief in

this version of the faith mission model for individual missionary support. WBT-SIL

chose to follow its founder unswervingly on this point, even as he later carried out

radical departures from the faith model when it came to organizational projects.

The faith model was effective in permitting WBT-SIL missionaries to garner

support from evangelicals located across a very wide spectrum of institutions. For

independent missionaries one of the most difficult institutions from which to extract

backing was the mainline denomination. The primary obstacle encountered was that

there was simply no mechanism or convention for supporting faith missionaries. One

solution which bypassed denominational structures was for a Sunday school class to

take up an occasional collection for a Wycliffe missionary. At other times it might be

another group within the church, such the local women's missionary society. This was

the case for Marianna Slocum, who remained a member of the First Presbyterian Church

of Ardmore, Pennsylvania, for many years after joining Wycliffe in 1940. The church

did not officially underwrite Slocum's support, but a semi-regular collection was taken

by the women's missionary society. In addition other members of the church supported

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[104] Adele Elson, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 6 August 2007.
[105] WCT to GMC, 13 November 1946, TA 904247.

Slocum on an individual basis.[106] Wycliffe missionaries Gloria and James Wroughton,

who joined in 1945 and 1950 respectively, likewise obtained income from what they

referred to as a 'liberal Methodist church'. In the Wroughtons' case it was a wealthy

family in the church that regularly donated funds over a fifty-year span.[107] Wycliffe

missionaries could also cultivate financial backing from the far right. Wycliffe's Frank

and Ethel Robbins drew support from a GARB church, despite the fact that the firebrand

Robert Ketcham delivered a broadside against Wycliffe at the church on the very same

weekend that they had first visited the congregation in 1960. In this instance the local

pastor, his GARB affiliation notwithstanding, remained committed to supporting

Wycliffe.[108] WBT-SIL faith missionaries were in effect free agents, and they were

therefore able to garner support from evangelicals of various stripes ensconced within

these otherwise inaccessible settings.

One of the most effective features of the faith model was that it often engendered

tremendous loyalty. It was quite common for donors to contribute on a regular basis for

decades. A not unusual example comes from Ben and Adele Elson, whose small Sunday

School Union church took on their support at $35 a month in 1942, and thereafter

continued this pattern of giving in ever-increasing sums over the years right up to the

time of their interview with this author in 2007.[109] The personal nature of the

relationships between donors and Wycliffe missionaries was a powerful factor in

sustaining these longstanding alliances. In the mainline denominations missionaries had

to rely on the overall financial health of the denomination at large. Conversely Wycliffe

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[106] Marianna Slocum, interviews by author, Dallas, Texas, 5 June and 15 June 2008.

[107] James O. (Jim) Wroughton, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 20 June 2008; Gloria Wroughton, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 20 June 2008.

[108] Frank E. Robbins, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 2 September 2008.

[109] Ben Elson, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 6 August 2007; Adele Elson, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 6 August 2007.

missionaries built up enduring sources of support on a personal basis at the grassroots level, where they were able to establish a devoted following that was not dependent upon the vagaries of a single institution. Thus the faith model of missions created and sustained deep relationships. Wycliffe missionaries and their constituents at home made common cause in pursuit of a vision to take the Bible to every language in the world.

WBT-SIL plainly maintained key elements of the faith missionary enterprise. It was therefore successful in projecting a traditional image that resonated with its evangelical public. At other times, however, especially at Townsend's insistence, the organization engaged in direct solicitation and placed before the public strikingly progressive images of its work which bore little resemblance to the more modest faith mission style. By turning to an examination of some of the most significant of these innovations, it will become apparent that WBT-SIL crafted an entirely new style of presenting missionary activity to both Christian and non-Christian publics.

Into the late 1950s the organization's leaders felt that publicity efforts remained insufficient. This concern was more an indication of their ambitions for undertaking deputation and promotion on a grand scale than a reflection of any lack of industry. In the organization's earliest days L. L. Legters had set the pace for hard-driving deputation. In 1934, Legters bemoaned the fact that he had 'spoken only 474 times' in the past year, his survey trip to Mexico with Townsend having slowed his frenzied pace.[110] In 1949, Wycliffe produced *Oh for a Thousand Tongues*, one of the earliest, if not the first ever, missionary promotional films. Even more extraordinary for its time, the film was produced in full colour.[111] *Oh for a Thousand Tongues* was put together with the help of Moody Institute of Science's Irwin Moon, creator of the 'Sermons from

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[110] LLL to PMA, 8 October 1934, TA 901852.
[111] 'Prayer Bulletin', WBT, August 1950, BGA, Folder 6-5, Collection 352, Records of the IFMA.

Science' series, and it was narrated by the warm and familiar voice of the popular radio evangelist, Charles Fuller.[112] This film, the first of hundreds to follow, featured the work of SIL in Mexico and Peru, and was shown in hundreds if not thousands of churches and at other venues across America well into the 1960s. More than a few recruits point to this film as their first introduction to WBT-SIL. A glimpse of former Wycliffe president George Cowan's log, detailing over 3,000 speaking engagements, also reveals tireless efforts to promote Wycliffe. Among Cowan's entries from the 1950s and 1960s are reports of sharing the podium with personalities such as Billy Graham, Jack Wyrtzen and Dawson Trotman, and speaking at IVCF, Campus Crusade and YFC rallies.[113] Clearly WBT-SIL was mounting a significant promotional effort on the home front, but Townsend had much bigger plans in mind.

The dreary travail of drumming up funds and publicizing WBT-SIL's work in one church after another was not Townsend's forte. Wycliffe's founder preferred to direct his energies at flamboyant public relations events. An excellent example of his penchant for the unusual was his transformation of George Cowan and SIL translator Florence Hansen's marriage ceremony into a publicity stunt. Townsend cleverly arranged for their 1943 wedding to take place during a Church of the Open Door missionary rally. At Townsend's urging, George Cowan gave a rousing missionary message only minutes before dashing back on to the platform to take his marriage vows.[114] This inclination for the striking publicity event over more mundane deputation work was one of Townsend's outstanding characteristics, and it was one that would help to shape the public's image of the organization.

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[112] William Cameron Townsend, 'Charles Fuller and Wycliffe Bible Translators', 3 April 1968, TA 42694.

[113] George M. Cowan, 'Speaking Log', in author's possession.

[114] George M. Cowan, interview by author, Santa Ana, California, 20 August 2007; WCT to WGNS, 19 October 1943, TA 3406; WCT to WGNS, 25 October 1943, TA 3398.

Alert to the possibilities of exploiting television to further his ambitions, Townsend endeavoured to arrange a spot for Wycliffe on the nationally televised Ralph Edwards show.[115] Edwards's 'This is Your Life' was a human-interest programme, where each week both celebrities and ordinary citizens were interviewed before a live audience by Edwards. The enterprising Townsend landed a place for Wycliffe on the 5 June 1957 episode, during which Wycliffe's Rachel Saint appeared with two of SIL's converts.[116] Rachel Saint was the sister of the MAF pilot Nate Saint, who was one of the five 'Auca martyrs' speared to death in January 1956 by a group of Huaorani (Auca) in Ecuador.[117] Saint was accompanied on Edwards' television show by Dayuma, a Huaorani converted to Christianity through her missionary efforts in 1956. Joining them from the jungles of Peru was the Shapra chief Tariri Nóchomata Yátarisa, who had been converted through the efforts of SIL missionary-translators Doris Cox and Lorrie Anderson in 1953.[118] The television appearance was a broadcast success, and the recorded episode was again carried as a fall rerun on national television on 8 September 1957. The response to the two showings was largely upbeat, with only a few critics voicing disapproval. One individual phoned the organization's home office to complain about that 'fouled up Wycliffe Bible Translators' run by that 'confused Townsend'.[119] Peru's ambassador to the U.S. lodged a more serious protest. He charged that the

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[115] WCT to Ralph Edwards, 3 December 1956, TA 11945; WCT to Ralph Edwards, 23 January 1957, TA 13079; WCT to PG, 23 January 1957, TA 13081; PG to WCT, 13 February 1957, TA 13578; WGNS to WCT, 13 February 1957, TA 13051.

[116] WCT to John W. Newman, 10 May 1957, TA 12912.

[117] The term 'Auca' is considered an epithet meaning 'savage'; thus 'Huaorani' is preferred.

[118] WCT to Rachel Saint, 10 May 1957, TA 12916; Doris Cox to WCT, 17 September 1953, TA 41251; Ethel Emily Wallis, *The Dayuma Story: Life Under Auca Spears* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960); Ethel Emily Wallis, *Aucas Downriver* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973); Russell T. Hitt, *Jungle Pilot: The Gripping Story of the Life and Witness of Nate Saint, Martyred Missionary to Ecuador* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1997).

[119] William G. Nyman Jr to WCT, 5 October 1957, TA 14215.

presentation proffered an image of Peru as still largely savage, and requested that Tariri

should not make a scheduled appearance during Billy Graham's New York Crusade.[120]

More encouraging reports came from such sources as Pete Kyle McCarter, the acting

president of the University of Oklahoma. McCarter communicated to Ken Pike that,

after viewing the show, the University faculty was 'very proud' of its association with

SIL.[121] On the whole, the television programme proved to be a resounding success for

WBT-SIL. With this achievement to his credit, Townsend was imbued with confidence

to attempt even more audacious feats of publicity.

It comes as little surprise, then, to find Townsend setting up at enormous expense

a 'Pavilion of 2000 Tribes' at the 1964-1965 World's Fair in New York City. This

project was a singular vision of Cameron Townsend, and once again he charged out of

the gate virtually alone. But, as with other ventures, this one too would extend the

imagination of his less inspired colleagues. In November 1962, Townsend secured board

approval to proceed with plans for Wycliffe to erect an exhibit at the upcoming fair,

with the caveat that the undertaking should not place the corporation in debt.[122] The

estimated budget for building the pavilion and running the fair operation came to

$392,000, an exorbitant sum compared to WBT-SIL's 1963 annual budget of $2.4

million.[123] There were no reserves in the corporate accounts for the project; thus

Townsend had to look elsewhere for funds. Proving once again that he was rarely at a

loss for ideas, Townsend cunningly secured a $100,000 bank loan by convincing twenty

wealthy acquaintances to underwrite $5,000 tranches of the debt.[124] As Townsend saw

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[120] GMC to Robert Wyatt, 28 October 1958, TA 13299.

[121] Pete Kyle McCarter to WCT, 18 June 1957, TA 12770.

[122] WBT-SIL board of directors, minutes, 29 October 1962, WSA; WCT to Billy Graham, 1 November 1962, TA 20763.

[123] 'Estimated Cost Sheet for World's Fair', 1963; *Translation* (Spring, 1963): p. 6, TA 41709.

[124] Copy of 'Guaranty', October 1963, TA 41713; C. A. Black, business

it, this plan bypassed the injunction against plunging the corporation into debt. He also

believed that the bank note would easily be repaid from cash flows generated by

charging admission to the pavilion. Presumably the underwriters would only have to

make good on the $5,000 notes if fair receipts fell short, something which Townsend

considered an utter impossibility. He insisted that Wycliffe would easily collect

$200,000 in ticket sales at fifty cents apiece, even if only one out of every two hundred

fair-goers visited the pavilion.[125] On 4 October 1963, Townsend signed a contract with

the fair organizers, and the very next day he landed his twentieth underwriter for the

bank loan.[126]

In his approach to the fair, Townsend appears to have intuitively understood that

the mid-century realignments within evangelicalism went hand in glove with larger

cultural forces that were at work in American society, and that WBT-SIL could take full

advantage of these currents. The after-effects of World War II and the beginnings of the

Cold War reawakened many Americans to the idea of American exceptionalism and to a

renewed sense of America as the keeper of the world's moral compass. For example,

President Harry S. Truman gave voice to this outlook in the early phase of the Cold

War, when he stated that 'to save the world from totalitarianism' it was imperative 'for

the whole world [to] adopt the American system'.[127] For America to fulfil this

challenging role, influential elites from military generals to religious leaders insisted that

the country had to pay more than lip service to halting what was perceived as its

declining moral character. The neo-evangelical theologian Carl Henry warned in his

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manager, C. Davis Weyerhaeuser, Co., to Lawrence Routh (hereafter 'LR'), 15 October 1963, TA 21597.

[125] WCT to Harold Key, 6 December 1963, TA 21300.

[126] WCT to Harold Key, 5 October 1963, TA 21328; WCT to WBT-SIL members, 9 October 1963, TA 921321.

[127] Quoted in Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 80.

1946 *Remaking the Modern Mind* of the imminent cultural collapse should the nation fail to shore up its rotting Judeo-Christian pillars.[128] Henry's work was of a part with a much broader thrust to restore America's moral fibre. The U.S. Air Force's 'Character Guidance' programme is another fitting illustration of this nationwide drive to renovate America's moral character. This programme sought to instil the values of Christian morality in military personnel.[129] The Air Force's Character Guidance programme is but a single example of an overall shift in America's social consciousness that would see religiosity in America at its apogee around 1960. When progressive fundamentalists set sail for their passage out of separatist and militant fundamentalism, they benefited from the same cultural winds that were carrying large swathes of American society in a more religiously orientated direction. With the fair project, as will be seen, Townsend took full advantage of this cultural mood.

The idea of progress was also taking on greater prominence in the American mind in the wake of the Depression, and even more so after World War II. The atomic age portended potential annihilation, but it also held out the promise of ever-increasing scientific development and economic prosperity. This general trend was especially notable from the late 1930s, as evidenced by corporate America's concerted effort to demonstrate its capacity for nearly unlimited innovation at the 1939 and 1964 New York World Fairs. Robert Moses, New York City's planning representative for the 1939 World's Fair and the president of the 1964 equivalent, claimed that the 1964 World's Fair would be 'an Olympics of Progress' and 'an endless parade of wonders of

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[128] Carl F. H. Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946).

[129] C. T. Lanham, 'The Moral Core of Military Strength', speech to the National Small Business Men's Association, 16 February 1949, p. 4, quoted in James Gilbert, *Redeeming Culture: American Religion in the Age of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 96.

mankind'.[130] The proliferation of consumer goods sustained this assertion, and corporate America contended that the future held out the promise of even more advancement. At the 1964 fair the automobile manufacturer General Motors boasted that future modes of transport would lead to the colonization of not only the most inhospitable areas of the earth, but also the ocean floor and outer space.[131] Obscured by all this triumphal propaganda were the social and ecological costs, as well as the underlying complexity of technological production. These facts were conveniently ignored. Thus the two World's Fairs did not seek so much to educate the public as to engage in boosterism. 'People go to a World's Fair', explained General Electric's J. E. 'Jiggs' Weldy in 1964, 'because they are seeking excitement, and that is the only reason they go.'[132] James Gardner, an exhibit designer, confirmed Weldy's outlook. Gardner allowed that 'with entertainment you can couple a little bit of education, but not very much, because people don't go to a World's Fair to study'. If it was difficult to educate people, there remained the fair's potential for influencing attenders' attitudes since, as Gardner claimed, they arrived 'full of anticipation and excitement. . . . They are', he pointed out, 'psychologically ready for you to influence them.'[133] The idea of progress, with its the high regard for technological innovation and problem solving, and sleight-of-hand image-making,

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[130] 'Your Day at the New York World's Fair, 1964-1965', brochure, Organization Day Office, World's Fair Headquarters, 26 July 1963, quoted in Michael L. Smith, 'Representations of Technology at the 1964 World's Fair', in *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History*, eds., Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 223.

[131] Roland Marchand and Michael L. Smith, 'Corporate Science on Display', in *Scientific Authority & Twentieth Century America*, ed., Ronald G. Walters (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 173.

[132] J. E. 'Jiggs' Weldy, 'Exhibit Designs and Techniques that Attract the General Public', in *Key Facts for Advertisers on the NYWF 1964-1965: Third Report* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1962), quoted in Marchand and Smith, 'Corporate Science on Display', p. 18.

[133] James Gardner, 'Exhibit Designs and Techniques that Attract the General Public', in *Key Facts for Advertisers*, pp. 25-26, quoted in Marchand and Smith, 'Corporate Science on Display', pp. 169-170.

which was baldly designed to manipulate public opinion, were aspects of popular culture which Townsend was also ready to employ in his efforts to publicise WBT-SIL.

In an expansive mood as the fair approached Townsend gave free rein to his natural creativity. The entrance to the Pavilion of 2000 Tribes led to an exhibit of photographer Cornell Capa's black-and-white stills of SIL's fieldwork and of some Amazonian indigenous people groups. The Hungarian-American Capa was a well-known photographer, whose work had been published in the immensely popular *Life* magazine. Townsend and Capa had met in Lima in the 1950s, and they subsequently struck up an enduring relationship. Even though Capa held no strong religious convictions, he nonetheless became a WBT-SIL enthusiast.[134] Displayed in the pavilion's auditorium was a ten-foot by one-hundred-foot mural portraying Chief Tariri's transformation from 'From Savage to Citizen', as it was triumphantly entitled. Townsend had commissioned artist Douglas Riseborough to paint the pantoscopic mural for $15,000, and the painter exercised an extraordinary degree of artistic licence in depicting the life of Tariri. Violence, nudity and bloodshed, along with severed and shrunken heads, were all graphically displayed in full colour. SIL's Lorrie Anderson, who was well acquainted with Tariri and his people from having lived among them for many years, regarded Riseborough's depiction of the Shapra and Tariri as not 'true to life'. In fact she refused to show snapshots of the mural to Tariri, fearing his 'wrath'. She also worried that if he ever saw the mural, he would 'be furious'. Anderson took Riseborough to task, letting it be known that the Shapra never went naked, did not kill women and had had long ago ceased to dismember their enemies as depicted in the mural. For Anderson the mural was a fraudulent portrayal of Shapra violence.[135] Riseborough frankly admitted talking 'liberties' as a means 'to strengthen the

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[134] Cornell Capa, Hefley interview, c. 1970, TA 43753.
[135] Loretta (Lorrie) Anderson to Douglas Riseborough, c. late 1963, TA 21479.

symbolism' and to create 'an emotional impact' that would 'shock the audience into attention'. As he saw it, the mural was not only about the 'savagery of Tariri's world', but was also 'a symbol for evil man throughout the world'.[136] Whether or not the average fair attender would make the connection between the mural's presentation of Shapra violence and a universal human depravity was questionable. This did not worry Townsend in the least. He had no difficulty whatsoever fitting Tariri into the role Riseborogh had cast for him, and he unabashedly extolled the virtues of the mural by claiming that it was 'one of the greatest paintings of this century'.[137] In pursuit of the World's Fair project, Townsend once again exhibited an extraordinary degree of pragmatism, coupled with a readiness to engage in artifice rather than settling for a less dramatic reality.

Riseborough's presentation of the Shapra also invoked the idea of progress and its correlation with Christianity. Thus it held a natural appeal for Townsend, and his ideological disposition was on full display when he addressed Wycliffe's supporters on the subject of the fair in a newsletter in which he declared,

> The tremendous picture, 1000 sq. ft. of inspired painting by David Riseborough[,] shows in five symbolic panels the transition of a headhunting chief of the Amazon jungle from witchcraft and boa worship to modern medicine and the Word of God. In the final great scene the artist portrays the chief cutting the umbilical cord that holds the oncoming generation of tribesmen to their hopeless past, freeing them with the 'Sword of the Spirit' that they might ascend the stairs of learning, with Christianity protecting them from the dangers of modern civilization.[138]

Of course this posture was also in keeping with the overall tenor of the fair itself. The Pavilion of Two Thousand Tribes was calibrated to the ideological temper prevailing at

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[136] Douglas Riseborough to WCT, 3 July 1963, TA 21503.
[137] WCT to Frank Sherrill, 24 January 1963, TA 21638.
[138] William Cameron Townsend, 'A Message about the Pavilion of 2000 Tribes at the New York World's Fair', 31 August 1964, TA 22214.

the fair, where the idea of progress and scientific achievement were trumpeted in pavilion after pavilion. Circling the globe with American-style technological progress was a common theme, and this fitted well with Wycliffe's presentation. The 1964-1965 World's Fair came at a moment in American history when the idea of progress and Christian civilization were enjoying their last and almost uncontested moment together in the sun. Within a few short years, as the next chapter details, WBT-SIL would come under severe criticism from a number of quarters for this very kind of sentiment, but the mid-1960s still constituted a moment ideally suited for Cameron Townsend to offer to the public his vision for humanity.

'The "Pavilion of 2000 Tribes" is a success in every way except financially', Townsend announced in August 1964.[139] By considerably over-estimating the fair's profit potential he nearly capsized the organization. Ken Watters, the corporation's ever-vigilant treasurer, had written Townsend in October 1963 confessing that 'I am scairt [*sic*], and this project could break Wycliffe's back if . . . we don't come up with some solution here pretty soon.'[140] Throwing caution aside, Townsend shifted into a no-holds-barred solicitation mode, and he pressed his fair management team to do the same. Wycliffe's fair manager, Harold Key, operating under pressure from the general director in late 1963, remarked that he felt he was pursuing a method of 'full solicitation without full information'.[141] A year later the financial situation had not improved, partly because charging the fifty-cent admission had proved to be a serious miscalculation. Fairgoers were exiting the pavilion complaining that they had paid to hear a sermon. The admission fee was hastily dropped in favour of a free-will offering. Despite the fact that over 600,000 fairgoers visited the mural, while an additional half million passed through

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[139] Ibid.
[140] KLW to WCT, 29 October 1963, TA 21457.
[141] Harold Key to WCT, 10 November 1963, TA 21584.

the pavilion's outer exhibit hall, the attempt to cover the fair's expenses with collections failed.[142] Organizational leaders contemplated dropping out of the fair, but Townsend demurred. If need be, he was ready to take the unprecedented action of mortgaging or even selling Wycliffe's Santa Ana, California, headquarters building if it would keep the fair operation solvent.[143] In a desperate move to raise cash, Townsend sold 'shares' in the 'glorious project' under the rubric of a 'Share-the-Fair Program' to his own Wycliffe missionaries and to some of Wycliffe's supporters at $100 each.[144] When the WBT-SIL board attempted to restrain Townsend, he reacted, as he had in the past, by threatening to resign. He also lectured the board that there were no 'moral' or 'religious' grounds for disdaining solicitation. 'Paul solicited', he pressed, and 'D. L. Moody solicited', and therefore it must be legitimate to do so.[145] Rather than exercise restraint, Townsend instead suggested that 'something could likely be done to improve our salesmanship'.[146] The board, in characteristic fashion, relented.[147] The fair project was proving a financial debacle, and the strain it produced was further altering the organization's faith mission approach.

Despite all efforts to raise additional funds, the financial crisis eventually reached the point where the underwriters of the bank loan were forced to make good on their $5,000 guarantees, with at least one complaining to the effect that Townsend had 'pulled the wool over our eyes'.[148] Lawrence Routh, a North Carolina electrical

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[142] Ben Elson, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 6 August 2007; WCT to LR, 27 January 1965, TA 22968.
[143] WCT to RSP, 29 August 1964, TA 921782; WCT to BFE, 2 September 1964, TA 21778; WCT to WBT-SIL board of directors, 9 September 1964, TA 21950.
[144] WCT to Harold Key, 17 August 1964, TA 21788; WCT to 'Wycliffe Family', 2 September 1964, TA 21779; BFE to WCT, 29 September 1964, TA 21932; WCT to Dr Robert F. Wildrick, 14 October 1964, TA 21707.
[145] WCT to WBT-SIL board of directors, 7 September 1964, TA 21773.
[146] WCT to LR, 27 January 1965, TA 22968.
[147] BFE to WCT, 29 September 1964, TA 21932.
[148] Lorin Griset, quoting Amos Baker, Hefely interview, c. 1970, TA 43774.

contractor who had helped to develop an operational base for JAARS in Waxhaw, North Carolina, was charged with pressuring the somewhat reluctant underwriters.[149] When all was said and done, Townsend had landed WBT-SIL $200,000 in debt, while dropping any pretence of persevering with the faith method for organizational funding.[150] The upshot of Townsend's excursions beyond the boundaries of the faith model for securing funds was the establishment of a new laymen's volunteer organization that was free to pursue a more direct approach to fundraising outside the confines of WBT-SIL. Lawrence Routh once again came to the rescue. In the wake of the World's Fair financial debacle he undertook 'Operation 2000', which consisted of a series of banquets held around the country designed to clear Wycliffe's debt and to fund future Bible translation projects. Operation 2000 functioned as a third party under lay auspices separate from WBT-SIL proper; hence, Routh was able to engage in an unabashedly direct style of solicitation. The programme was a natural context, argued Wycliffe's Dale Kietzman, in which to exploit the 'faith promise' approach to fundraising developed by Oswald J. Smith, the well-known mission's advocate and pastor of the People's Church of Toronto, which encouraged donors to pledge, 'in dependence on God', a specified amount over and above their regular tithe.[151] There was a definite technique involved, and one had to master the subtleties of drawing members of the audience into making the pledge on the one hand without offending them on the other. Just how delicate was the technique to carry out successfully? Smith himself once remarked to Wycliffe's Harold Goodall that 'There is only one man in 10,000 who

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[149] Frank Sherrill, Charlotte, North Carolina, to LR, 5 November 1964, TA 22144; LR to Frank Sherrill, 6 November 1964, TA 22143; LR to KLW, 6 November 1964, TA 22168; George M. Ivey, president and treasurer, J. B. Ivey & Company, Charlotte, North Carolina, 9 November 1964, TA 22162; LR to Amos Baker, 11 November 1964, TA 22164.

[150] 'Comparative Statement of Fair Project', 31 March 1965, TA 41700.

[151] James C. Hefley, *God's Freelancers: The Story of Wycliffe Associates* (Orange, CA: Wycliffe Associates, 1983), p. 35.

knows how to take up a Faith Promise Offering.'[152] In 1967, Operation 2000 developed into a separate organization known as the Wycliffe Associates (WA), which was set up as a lay organization that involved prosperous Christian businesswomen and businessmen, such as Routh, in providing construction and other services to WBT-SIL, as well as operating the nationwide banquet series on a continuing basis. Wycliffe Associates provided a platform for more direct funding appeals outside the core WBT-SIL organization, thus advantageously allowing the mission to maintain its faith status.

In order to provide for more engaging missionary speakers at banquets and other venues, WA drew upon the public relations expertise of Claude Bowen, a Chicago-based Dale Carnegie franchisee. Dale Carnegie was a popular promoter of 'self-improvement' methods and author of the often reprinted *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936). Bowen trained both SIL's public relations men and Wycliffe speakers in Carnegie's techniques. Thus the WA banquets were a blend of Oswald J. Smith's finely tuned solicitation methods and Dale Carnegie's strategies for structuring public presentations. All this was designed to hold banquet attenders in rapt attention, while at the same time overcoming their scepticism so that they would ultimately make a financial commitment.[153] The WA approach was transformational in that it combined increasingly bold faith funding methods with the psychology of modern marketing techniques.

In the wake of the World's Fair, individual missionaries continued to follow the faith mission dogma of full information, no solicitation, while organizationally Wycliffe maintained a somewhat modified approach that permitted mildly worded appeals for

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[152] Oswald J. Smith to Harold Goodall, 9 June 1966, TA 24554.
[153] John Alsop, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 4 September 2008; Ben Elson, 'Executive Director's Report', 3 December 1975, p. 2, TA 31940; LA to WCT, 22 September 1977, TA 34011.

funding large projects.[154] Conversely Wycliffe Associates employed a rather direct fund-

raising style under the rubric of 'faith promise' which, with its religious phrasing,

obscured the shift away from the older and more reticent faith mission style of the past.

Thus, from the mid-1960s, the WBT-SIL-WA combination utilized a variety of

approaches to developing financial support. These new channels of soliciting funds

outside the traditional faith approach became even more important in the 1970s, as the

organization continued to expand. (These developments are taken up in the next

chapter). As with the dual-organizational structure, the multifaceted approach to funding

allowed WBT-SIL missionaries, the WBT-SIL organizational fundraisers and WA lay

advocates to calibrate the style and nature of their appeals to an almost infinite variety of

audiences, thus tremendously enlarging the organization's potential donor base. If

statistics are any indication, then the organization's approach to developing resources

both human and financial was successful, despite the fact that the World's Fair project

itself proved a financial debacle. From the 1,122 members and $2.2 million in receipts

of 1961, WBT-SIL expanded to some 2,500 missionaries from the U.S., U.K., Australia

and Canada working in twenty-three countries and just over $6.7 million in revenue by

1971.[155]

WBT-SIL not only survived but thrived during the mid-century restructuring of

North American evangelicalism. In part this was due simply to the fact that the

progressive fundamentalists won the day, and the organization therefore found itself in a

growing company of cooperative evangelicals from about 1960. When Wycliffe joined

the IFMA in 1949, the organization's practices were not yet widely known and the

rupture between the classical fundamentalists and the new evangelicals lay some years

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[154] Minutes, WBT corporate conference, 4 June 1965, WSA; Minutes, WBT executive committee, 17 March 1966, WSA.

[155] *Translation* (October-December 1971): p. 15; *Translation* (July-September 1971): p. 14.

in the future. WBT-SIL's 1959 departure from the IFMA did not signal that it had changed its stripes, but rather it indicated that the expanding rift between the classical fundamentalists and new evangelicals had widened sufficiently so as to force a choice on the organization. After having held out hopes for maintaining harmonious relations across the full spectrum of evangelicals, Wycliffe leaders finally concluded, as Townsend had before them, that WBT-SIL was better served by breaking with the fundamentalists in the IFMA. On the other hand the organization's success also hinged on creative action. With Townsend leading the way, Wycliffe pragmatically adapted itself to the vagaries of both the broader American cultural milieu and the evangelical subculture to build support for the fieldwork of SIL. The organization married the time-honoured faith mission ethos to a public relations strategy built on the idea of progress and willingness to employ marketing techniques that proffered exciting images of Christian transformation. In other respects, mainly on the point of serving Catholics, no publicity at all best served the organization. By pursuing bold engagement with popular culture, while at the same time holding fast to aspects of the traditional missionary faith model, WBT-SIL created a breathtakingly diverse approach to publicising its activities. Thus, partly as a result of its own progressive outlook in a cultural context where such attitudes were in the ascendant, and partly by dint of its own efforts to align its promotional efforts with the sentiments of various publics, WBT-SIL was phenomenally successful in establishing a generous base of support at home in North America that undergirded its growing operations abroad.

CHAPTER SIX

STAYING THE COURSE

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*'I despise scientists who use humanity as laboratory instruments in their research
but think nothing of their welfare, just as I detest ecclesiastical emissaries
who seek only to inject their dogma while leaving the people
in economic, intellectual and moral stagnation.'*

William Cameron Townsend (1935)

*'And for forty years I've been opposed to any kind of act or attitude whatever
which might affect this colonial-power attitude.'*

William Cameron Townsend (1977)

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Beginning in the early 1970s anthropologists critical of WBT-SIL alleged that

the organization was both an agent of U.S. imperialism and a destroyer of indigenous

cultures. Some critics also claimed to have uncovered what they believed was a

conspiracy in the dual-organizational structure. WBT-SIL had, by the 1970s, become a

well organized and amply funded global operation. It was also one of the largest, if not

the largest, private organization dedicated primarily to working among the world's most

isolated indigenous people groups, and it therefore attracted an outsized share of

attention from anthropologists. At a moment when WBT-SIL was enjoying the fruits of

its hard won victories—having carved out for itself a respected place among American

evangelicals, linguistic scholars and foreign government officials—it was once again

faced with a set of challenges that held the potential to do the organization irreparable

harm. As the criticism in anthropological circles mounted and as nationalist elements

within Latin American countries agitated to eject SIL, the organization manoeuvred to

maintain its position; but with its evangelical character and missionary purpose, there

were limits on just how much change was possible. In fact a casual observer of WBT-

SIL in the early 1980s would have had difficulty distinguishing any real material change at all in the organization's basic strategies. This begs the question: Why, when all was said and done, did the attacks mounted against WBT-SIL in the 1970s and early 1980s prove largely ineffective? The main thrust of the present chapter is directed towards answering this question.

Imposing Order on Chaos

The period extending from the late 1960s to the early 1970s was one of particularly good fortune for WBT-SIL. In the early 1970s the organization crossed the threshold of 2,500 members, and its missionary-linguists were labouring in over 20 countries to translate the Bible into some 500 languages.[1] SIL Peru director Jim Wroughton could well have been speaking for the organization in its entirety when he reported to the WBT-SIL board of directors in 1967 that 'the branch is approaching peak development'.[2] It was also in 1967 that a campaign to reach 'every tribe by 85' was launched. Confidence was not in short supply. The initiative to begin a Bible translation project in every people group that lacked scriptures by 1985 was based on the expectation that Wycliffe could recruit an additional 6,500 personnel.[3] In nearly every respect, as WBT-SIL entered the 1970s, its strategies were paying handsome dividends, and the organization was anticipating a bright future now that it had secured for itself a reputation among its varied constituencies.

WBT-SIL's rapid expansion did not, however, come without growing pains. As early as 1963 Phil Grossman, the chairman of the executive committee of the board of directors, was fretting over problems associated with the organization's 'chain of

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[1] *Translation* (July-September 1971): p. 14; Eunice V. Pike, 'Historical Sketch', in *The Summer Institute of Linguistics: Its Works and Contributions*, eds. Ruth M. Brend and Kenneth L. Pike (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1977), p. 1.
[2] Jim Wroughton to WBT-SIL board of directors, 6 March 1967, TA 25811.
[3] *Translation* (April-June 1970): pp. 12-13.

command'.[4] Lines of authority, especially those running to and from the general director, were in disarray. Events surrounding Townsend's World's Fair project had also become a significant source of frustration.[5] The fair project, Ken Pike complained to Townsend in 1966, 'took up all our push and let all our other avenues wither pretty badly'. Pike worried too that the strains of the fair effort had left the organization's home office in Santa Ana 'in a near state of total collapse'.[6] Pike was not the only WBT-SIL leader increasingly frustrated with Townsend at a time when the organization was increasingly in need of a steady hand on the tiller. George Cowan's patience had reached the breaking point over Townsend's unilateral decision-making and circumventions of the board. Wycliffe's ordinarily self-possessed president uncharacteristically took Townsend to task in September 1966, protesting that

> it is inconceivable that a responsible Board of Directors should
> be by-passed in actions which will have repercussions
> throughout the entire membership and affect our total world-
> wide image and public relations.[7]

Over the past few decades WBT-SIL leaders had mostly allowed Townsend to have his way. By the mid-1960s, however, the organization had grown too large for Townsend's unstructured and loose management style, and WBT-SIL's leaders were suffering the consequences of an underdeveloped organizational structure.

Late in 1964 the WBT-SIL board (which remained mostly one and the same as the executive leadership team),[8] commissioned Spenser Bower of the Christian Services Fellowship, a management consultancy firm, to undertake a study of the organization's

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[4] PG to WCT, 18 January 1963, p. 1, TA 21555.
[5] The World's Fair project is discussed in chapter five.
[6] KLP to WCT, 30 March 1966, TA 24176.
[7] GMC to WCT, 25 September 1966, TA 23972.
[8] *Translation* (Summer-Fall 1964): p. 15.

management practices.[9] Bower's 1966 report suggested greater administrative

centralization, and it also proposed the elimination of the general director position in

favour of an executive director, the primary aim of which was to establish tighter

administrative control over the actions of the chief executive. Bower's recommendations

met with the board's approval. In June 1966 the WBT-SIL board appointed Ben Elson,

who was serving as the deputy general director at the time, to the post of executive

director of WBT-SIL. Having invested Elson with administrative authority over the day-

to-day operations of the organization, and also having come to the realization that the

seventy-year-old Townsend was perhaps beyond his prime, the board endeavoured to

entice the general director from power by proffering him the role of 'honorary

founder'.[10] In their exertions to impose order on the prevailing organizational chaos,

WBT-SIL's leaders concluded that Townsend should be shorn of some of his executive

authority.

'Please squelch the suggestion of an honorary title for me', Townsend snapped at

Ben Elson in February 1967, 'I wouldn't accept it.' Townsend was also bitterly opposed

to Bower's report. Centralized administration ran contrary to his long-standing disdain

for centralized mission structures. Worse yet was having his range of action

circumscribed. 'Someone', he argued, 'has to be a counterbalance to bureaucracy with

daring vision that is thoroughly submissive to God.'[11] Townsend was still motivated by

his particular brand of Keswick theology, where the old refrain of 'let go and let God'

was turned inside out. Submission, for Townsend, meant yielding to God's call for

daring and confident action.[12] From his perspective the current leadership lacked the

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[9] SIL board of directors, minutes, 2-4 June 1964, WSA.

[10] WBT board of directors, minutes, 30 May-4 June 1966, TA 42533; GMC, Hefley interview, c. 1970, pp. 1-2, TA 43763.

[11] WCT to BFE, 21 February 1967, TA 25090.

[12] The influence of Keswick theology and Townsend's variation on the theme are

kind of dynamism that only he could supply. Throughout the first half of 1967

Townsend battled to maintain his freedom of action. Defending himself at the 1967

corporate conference, he inveighed against bureaucracy. Townsend admitted that 'our

executives and other officers . . . are absolutely essential', but he veered awfully close to

condescension when he only grudgingly allowed that 'There is no way of getting along

without bureaucrats'. Pressing his argument, he pointed to the World's Fair as an

example of something that would never have come to fruition 'without a General

Director with a little bit of vision'.[13] Townsend was obviously not about to go quietly

into the night simply because Bower's report suggested it, or because WBT-SIL's

leaders wished to conduct business without his erratic ways and extravagant projects

thwarting their designs for a more orderly operation.

When Townsend argued that he was indispensable because he was the

organization's chief architect of audacious publicity and outsized fundraising, the weight

of the evidence was certainly on his side, and he was not bashful about reminding those

who sought to undermine his authority of this fact. 'Who of you executive officers

loaded down with bureaucratic responsibilities could have secured recognition for our

organization from USAID for excess government property?', he demanded in 1967.[14] In

1965 Townsend had successfully lobbied U.S. legislators to place SIL on the United

States Agency for International Development's (USAID) list of approved non-

government organizations.[15] This came at a time when U.S. foreign aid to Latin America

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discussed in chapter two.

[13] WBT corporate conference, minutes, 23 May 1967, p. 2, TA 42337.

[14] WCT to BFE, 21 February 1967, TA 25090.

[15] WCT to U.S. Senator Fred R. Harris, 25 June 1965, TA 22717; WCT to U.S. Senator Milton R. Young, 28 June 1965, TA 22395; WCT to U.S. Senator Edmund M. Muskie, 10 September 1965, TA 22352; WCT to U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye, 15 September 1965, TA 22335.

was at an all-time high.[16] The increased funding was due in large part to the launching of the Alliance for Progress, which was a programme of social engineering intended as an anti-Communist prophylactic.[17] One of the Alliance's main goals was improving adult literacy.[18] SIL was therefore an ideal partner since it had a proven track record in this area. Townsend's efforts to obtain USAID backing eventually paid off quite handsomely. In the two months of May and June 1973 alone SIL was approved for $570,000 dollars of surplus equipment, and for the entire year of 1973 SIL was the recipient of approximately one million dollars in goods.[19] USAID eventually moved into direct funding of SIL's bilingual education programmes, with contributions totalling over a million dollars by the early 1980s.[20] This was a classic case of Townsend employing his diplomatic talents to harvest funds from unlikely quarters, and with overwhelming success. Townsend was correct in pointing out that he did more than any other single individual in WBT-SIL to fill the organization's coffers.

Townsend was also quite bold in playing on the sympathies of business moguls eager to extend America's influence abroad. J. Howard Pew of the Sun Oil Company was a frequent donor from the 1950s to the late 1970s. Pew, a conservative Presbyterian, worried over the baleful effects that Communism and socialism could have on free

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[16] Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 151.

[17] Jeffery F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 11-13.

[18] Federico G. Gil, 'The Kennedy-Johnson Years', in *United States Policy in Latin America: A Quarter Century of Crisis and Challenge, 1961-1986*, ed. John D. Martz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), pp. 11-12.

[19] Edward Boyer to Harold L. Beaty, 24 September 1973, TA 30028; Alan R. Pence to Edward Boyer, 22 March 1974, TA 31165.

[20] Ambassador Matane Paulias, Papua New Guinea Ambassador to the U.S., to WCT, 14 June 1977, TA 34133; Bernie May to Edward Warnock, 18 April 1977, TA 42762; FER to GMC, 11 December 1978, TA 35643; Morris Carney, interview by author, Waxhaw, North Carolina, 7 June 2006.

enterprise.[21] The Pew Foundation's early donations ranged from between five and twenty thousand dollars, but Townsend longed for greater sums so he audaciously pressed Pew for forty thousand dollars in August 1960.[22] The foundation demurred and as much as suggested to Townsend that he had overplayed his hand.[23] Undaunted by this mild rebuke, Townsend brandished the Red menace card. 'I believe,' he wrote to Pew board member Frederick B. Hufnegal, Jr, in September 1960, 'that Russia will go to any expense necessary to enable Castro to turn Cuba into a showcase of progress that will attract Latin Americans toward the communist orbit.' 'What are we as a nation', he challenged, 'going to do to safeguard our Western Hemisphere against Kruschev's [sic] and Castro's aims?' Naturally Townsend had a proposal in mind. He suggested another aircraft for WBT-SIL's stable in Brazil, the dedication of which would feature Brazil's former President Juscelino Kubitschek who, Townsend averred, was a 'most outstanding leader of democracy'. 'All this and more', he offered, could be had 'for only $35,000!'[24] Hufnegal took the bait and even agreed to head the committee for the Brazil Helio Courier aircraft project.[25] Perhaps the most infamous character from WBT-SIL's constellation of wealthy backers was Nelson Bunker Hunt.[26] Hunt was a Dallas, Texas, oilman and multibillionaire who, in connivance with his brother William Herbert Hunt, nearly cornered the global silver market in the late 1970s. The Hunts' scheme ultimately

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[21] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), p. 155.

[22] WCT to Allyn R. Bell Jr and Frederick B. Hufnegel Jr, 17 July 1960, TA 18224.

[23] Allyn R. Bell, Jr, to WCT, 2 August 1960, TA 18223.

[24] WCT to Frederick B. Hufnegel Jr, 28 September 1960, TA 18182.

[25] WCT to WBT-SIL members, 18 April 1961, TA 19888; 'Gift Airplane to Brazil', *Chamber of Commerce News*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 30 November 1961, TA 43396; Frederick B. Hufnegel Jr to WCT, 16 July 1962, TA 20997.

[26] Rudy A. Renfer to WCT, 11 November 1966, TA 23913; 'The International Linguistic Center: Answering Basic Human Needs Around the World', brochure, Wycliffe Bible Translators and Summer Institute of Linguistics, Dallas, Texas (n.d.), in author's possession; Clark W. Breeding to WCT, 3 April 1978, TA 35252.

collapsed when the U.S. government intervened to restore market equilibrium. Like Pew, Nelson Hunt was also an ardent anti-Communist and supporter of right-wing political causes.[27] Townsend was obviously not at all reluctant to affiliate WBT-SIL with anti-Communist interests as a means of reaping funds.

At the very moment when WBT-SIL's upper leadership was attempting to diminish Townsend's power, the general director himself unexpectedly bumped up against the limits of his influence. In October 1966, Paul W. Witte, a Catholic and a former student of SIL's University of Oklahoma programme, made known his desire to join the organization as a Bible translator.[28] Townsend, who had recently been pressing WBT-SIL members to attend Catholic mass on occasion, was thrilled with the prospect of Witte joining the organization.[29] Here was his chance to demonstrate that SIL was truly non-sectarian. Townsend understood that success in this venture would require bypassing the board of directors in order to win the favour of the membership at large. In a series of open letters, written between late 1966 and early 1967, Townsend openly challenged the board. 'Sometimes we get candidates who are gifted and dedicated', he wrote in his Christmas 1966 circular, 'but whom the Board cannot accept because they have been ruled to be incompatible to us due to some viewpoint they hold in fact or theory.'[30] Townsend kept up the drumbeat, and in an April 1967 letter he even argued that Roman Catholicism was just another denomination. 'Can we honestly tell officials that we are non-sectarian within the Christian framework if we rule out true Christians just because of the denomination to which they belong?'[31] Townsend found himself fighting an uphill battle. Despite his relentless urgings, opposition to Witte joining WBT

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[27] Jerome Tuccille, *Kingdom: The Story of the Hunt Family of Texas* (Ottawa: Jameson Books, 1984), pp. 287-369.
[28] Paul W. Witte to WBT, 26 October 1966, TA 23910.
[29] WCT to WBT membership, 10 February 1965, TA 50828.
[30] WCT to WBT-SIL branches, 7 December 1966, TA 924340.
[31] WCT to WBT-SIL members, 10 April 1967, TA 24964.

mounted.[32] A survey of opinion taken in SIL's Ecuador branch in 1967 revealed that

seventy-five percent of members agreed that 'membership in a heretical organization

[Roman Catholicism] is sufficient reason to bar a candidate from WBT'.[33] In June 1967

the matter was taken up by the WBT-SIL conference,[34] the highest body of authority in

the organization, and Townsend failed in his bid to secure Witte's membership. The

conference passed a motion stating that 'we reaffirm our full confidence in the existing

legislation and general procedures relating to the processing of applicants'. In addition

the motion stated that 'Applicants who maintain views widely divergent from the

doctrines of evangelical Christianity shall not be accepted for membership on the

grounds of doctrinal incompatibility.'[35] WBT-SIL members had learned to serve

Catholics, but embracing them as fellow members proved too radical an idea. Townsend

not only suffered defeat at the hands of his fellow missionaries, but they took the

opportunity to state clearly that WBT-SIL was evangelical in its religious character.

Even before Townsend's defeat at the 1967 conference, the recently appointed

executive director Ben Elson, who had had previously served as the SIL Mexico

director, was boldly asserting his authority. This was plainly visible when Elson met

Townsend's series of open letters to members on the Witte issue with his own despatch

in May 1967, in which he opposed the general director.[36] For the most part, however,

Townsend was simply eased out of administrative affairs as Elson expanded his range of

control. By 1970 Townsend was complaining that he was no longer receiving board

meeting minutes without requesting them, and he was falling into the habit of dropping

despondent lines to confidants, such as one in a letter to Dick Pittman, where he

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[32] Frank E. Robbins, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 2 September 2008.

[33] Ecuador branch conference, minutes supplement, 1967, p. 1, TA 39985.

[34] The WBT-SIL conference was made up of elected members from each of SIL's branches around the world.

[35] WBT policy board, minutes, 17 May-1 June 1967, p. 36, WSA.

[36] BFE to WBT-SIL membership, 4 May 1967, TA 25762.

grumbled that 'Ben doesn't tell me much news & I don't get with the others much so I don't have much to pass on'.[37] Townsend's occasional periods of melancholy would likely have had detrimental effects, not only on his well-being but also on the organization, had the board and conference not unhesitatingly backed his ambitious gambit of establishing a foothold for SIL in the USSR (discussed below). Increasingly distanced from the operational aspects of running the organization, and expending most of his energies on annual visits to the Soviet Union, the seventy-five year-old Townsend finally resigned from his general director post without fanfare and accepted the title of 'Founder' at the 1971 WBT-SIL conference.[38]

The 1971 conference proved significant for another reason. WBT-SIL's evangelical missionaries sometimes found it difficult to suppress their evangelistic impulses. Some were even 'slipping into a general missionary approach', reported Townsend's secretary, Cal Hibbard, from Peru in 1969. Hibbard also worriedly pointed out that 'our membership is increasingly emphasizing our spiritual work and is not placing enough emphasis on our scientific interests and achievements'.[39] There remained within the organization the ever-present threat of evangelistic activism and strains of anti-intellectualism undermining SIL's commitment to scholarship. To sustain SIL's focus on linguistic research and academic production therefore required vigilance on the part of Ken Pike and the organization's cadre of professional linguists.[40] The issue of scholarly production came to a head at the 1971 conference and, with Pike

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[37] WCT to RSP, 30 January 1970, TA 27406.
[38] WBT-SIL conference, minute extracts, 24 May-June 2, 1971, p. S-14, WSA.
[39] CH to Richard Rolland, 22 July 1969, TA 27032.
[40] Robbins, 'Training in Linguistics', in *Works and Contributions*, eds., Brend and Pike, p. 65; Kenneth L. Pike (with Hugh Steven), *Pike's Perspectives: An Anthology of Thought, Insight, and Moral Purpose* (Langley, BC: Credo Publishing Corporation, 1989), pp. 58-61; Gary F. Simons, 'The Call to Academic Community', in *Language and Life: Essays in Memory of Kenneth L. Pike*, eds. Mary Ruth Wise, Thomas N. Headland and Ruth M. Brend (Arlington: The University of Texas at Arlington and SIL International, 2003), pp. 86-87.

leading the charge, the delegates voted to 'reaffirm our historical commitment to

producing and publishing technical linguistic papers and monographs as an essential and

substantial part of our task'.[41] Ken Pike had conquered his own anti-intellectual

tendencies in the 1930s and, with the help of Eugene Nida, had set SIL on a scholarly

course.[42] During his long career in WBT-SIL, Pike continually encouraged students and

SIL translators to give equal attention to the heart and the mind.[43] In addition to the 1971

reaffirmation, Pike was greatly aided in his efforts to maintain the scholarly aspect of

SIL by the development of the Dallas-based International Linguistic Center (ILC) in the

early 1970s. SIL maintained its own linguistic school on the ILC campus, and it also

established a cooperative academic programme with the nearby University of Texas at

Arlington (UTA). The SIL-UTA cooperative programme, which began in September

1972, provided for the sharing of faculty between the two schools and for students to

pursue graduate degrees in linguistics.[44] The creation of a permanent centre dedicated to

the SIL side of the dual organization was an important factor in sustaining the

organization's academic character.

The leadership of WBT-SIL had, by the early 1970s, effectively brought WBT-

SIL under greater administrative control and managed Townsend's transition from

general director to honorary founder. Of particular note, however, is the fact that none of

Townsend's basic policies was altered. In fact the strategies developed by the founder

were routinely emphasized. A fine example is George Cowan's 1977 'Restating the

Foundations', wherein he dilated on trusting God for the impossible, pioneering Bible

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[41] WBT-SIL conference, minute extracts, 24 May-June 2, 1971, p. S-7, WSA.

[42] These events are discussed in chapter three.

[43] Kenneth L. Pike, *With Heart and Mind: A Personal Synthesis of Scholarship and Devotion*, 2nd ed. (Duncanville, TX: Adult Learning Systems, Inc., [1962] 1996).

[44] Sarah C. Gudschinsky, 'Literacy', in *Works and Contributions*, eds. Brend and Pike, p. 53; Robbins, 'Training in Linguistics', in *Works and Contributions*, eds. Brend and Pike, p. 61; Robert A. Longacre to Clark W. Breeding, 1 June 1977, TA 34475.

translation and service to all.[45] On the other hand, by the early 1970s WBT-SIL was a better organized and more bureaucratic organization than Townsend would have preferred. The loosely structured mission Townsend launched in the 1930s had become an example of what the historian of missions Andrew Walls referred to, in a somewhat apprehensive tone, as 'Missions Incorporated'. 'In some broken-backed nations', Walls noted, these large and highly-developed missions 'now have the most flexible, powerful, and efficient organization in the country.'[46] 'Managerial missiology', complained the professor of marketing James F. Engel and the theologian William Dyrness, has 'developed a sophisticated missions apparatus with complex lines of communications, patterns of fund rasing and multiple layers of administration.'[47] Whether one bemoaned or commended this state of affairs, it certainly described WBT-SIL as it entered the decade of the 1970s. It was an evangelical mission with a worldwide reach and was comfortable in the corridors of power.

Opposition from the Left

As WBT-SIL laboured to build up its operations in Latin America, Asia and Africa, at home it established relationships with American business magnates, especially those who spent lavishly to further their political and economic views. The organization also joined hands with the U.S. government through the USAID programme. An unintended consequence of these relationships was that WBT-SIL inadvertently painted itself as a target for critics, such as one who asserted in 1973 that the 'WBT world-wide "evangelical advance"' was nothing less than 'a religious manifestation of U.S. cultural

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[45] George M. Cowan, 'Restating the Foundations: A Message to the 1977 International Conference of the Wycliffe Bible Translators', September 1979, TA 34365.

[46] Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 238.

[47] James F. Engel and William Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 89, 50.

and economic imperialism'.[48] By the early 1970s WBT-SIL was coming to be seen by

growing number of critics as a symbol of American expansionism.

The cultural mood in the early years of the Cold War had a chilling effect on the

left. In the apt phrasing of one social historian, 'the fifties was a dry season for the

American Left'.[49] By 1968, with the development of what has been broadly referred to

as the 'New Left', this was no longer the case. The emergence of the counter-culture

movement, the civil rights movement, campus riots and the Vietnam War protests

together signalled that the American consensus of the 1950s was shattered.[50] The

ferment of the 1960s was global in nature. In Europe political, social and economic

strife were symbolised by the Paris riots and strikes of 1968. Outside the West there was

a rising tide of anti-colonialism and nationalism. Perhaps the most visible manifestations

of the tumult outside the West were the Cuban revolution in 1959 and the formal

decolonization of Africa. In 1960 alone, for example, no fewer than seventeen African

nations gained independence from their European colonizers. This was also a period

when America's Cold War foreign policy was generating its fair share of resentment. As

the Vietnam War escalated, the U.S. was increasingly seen by the left as an imperial

power, and certainly not as the altruistic bearer of democracy and freedom. The

commonplace sentiment on the left at home and abroad concerning U.S. foreign policy

by about 1968 can readily be summarized by quoting Democrat Senator William J.

Fulbright, who complained that under President Johnson America displayed an

'arrogance of power'.[51] The years around 1968 marked a watershed moment when left-

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[48] Laurie Hart, 'Story of the Wycliffe Translators: Pacifying the Last Frontiers', *Latin America & Empire Report* 7, no. 10 (December 1973): p. 17.

[49] Peter Clecak, 'The Movement of the 1960s and its Cultural and Political Legacy', in *The Development of American Culture*, eds. Stanley Coben and Lorman Ratner (New York: St Martin's Press, 1983), p. 261.

[50] Ibid., pp. 264-270.

[51] Thomas G. Patterson, J. Garry Clifford and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American*

right political polarization took on a renewed significance.

In the late 1960s the discipline of anthropology was swept by the same intellectual currents that were spurring on the New Left. What followed was a paroxysm of self-flagellation and a frenzied effort to right the wrongs of the past. The anthropologist Kathleen Gough, in a landmark 1968 article in *Current Anthropology*, charged that 'Anthropology is a child of Western Imperialism.'[52] Another anthropologist, William S. Willis, Jr, argued in the same year that anthropologists' study of primitive cultures amounted to a form of 'intellectual exploitation . . . that parallels the economic exploitation by imperialists'. Willis also indicted anthropologists for having been '"penny" imperialists in making modest profits from studying dominated colored peoples'.[53] This 1960s leftward intellectual turn in the discipline of anthropology found anthropologists poised to attack anything that smacked of imperialism. In her 'New Proposal', Kathleen Gough bemoaned the 'American rejection of Marxist and "rebel" literature . . . since the McCarthy period'. By way of response she issued a call for critical anthropological studies of the oppressors and the phenomenon of Western imperialism.[54] Gough also pressed for an examination of 'revolution', which, she imagined, 'now begins to appear as *the* route by which underdeveloped societies may hope to gain freedom from Western controls'.[55] The substance of Gough's argument was that anthropologists should cast a critical eye upon the hegemonic and anti-revolutionary powers, mainly the United States, which were impeding the incipient social transformation of underdeveloped nations. Longstanding

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Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895: Volume II, 4th ed. (Lexington, KY: D.C. Heath and Company, 1995), p. 407.

[52] Kathleen Gough, 'New Proposals for Anthropologists', *Current Anthropology* 9, no. 5 (December 1968): pp. 403-435.

[53] William S. Willis Jr, 'Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet', in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dale Hymes (New York: Pantheon Books, [1969] 1972), p. 126.

[54] Gough, 'New Proposals for Anthropologists': p. 406.

[55] Ibid.: p. 405.

enmity among many anthropologists toward Christian missions ensured that the

missionary enterprise also came under scrutiny.[56] Leading anthropologist Stanley

Diamond claimed in 1974 that 'The universalism of Christianity is no more than a

symptom of imperial control by Western civilization of the cultural space of other

peoples.'[57] Both Western nations and missionaries, according to the emerging

anthropological critique, were obstructing the aspirations of revolutionary forces in the

'third world'.[58]

The concerns of the left also registered in the upper echelons of liberal

Protestantism. The World Council of Churches (WCC) 1968 Assembly in Uppsala,

Sweden, is a notable case in point. The editor of the assembly's report, Norman Goodall,

noted that

> the most obvious and widely acknowledged feature of the
> Assembly was its preoccupation—at times, almost obsession—
> with the revolutionary ferment of our time, with questions of
> social and international responsibility, of war and peace and
> economic justice.[59]

The WCC fused rhetoric with action in January 1971 by sponsoring the Barbados

Symposium. At Barbados the WCC brought together a dozen social scientists, mostly

Latin American anthropologists, to ruminate on the problems affecting 'politically

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[56] Claude E. Stipe et. al., 'Anthropologists versus Missionaries: The Influence of Presuppositions (and Comments and Reply) *Current Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (April 1980): pp. 165-179; Robert J. Priest, 'Missionary Positions: Christian, Modernist, Postmodernist', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 2001): pp. 29-68; John W. Barton, 'Some Reflections on Anthropology's Missionary Positions', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, no. 1 (March 2007): p. 209-217.

[57] Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1974), p. 31.

[58] The term 'Third World' to designate less developed nations came into wide usage during the Cold War, but in the post-Cold War era it usage has declined due to the rise of multiculturalism. B. R. Tomlinson, 'What Was the Third World?', *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (April 2003): pp. 307-321.

[59] Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report, 1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), p. xviii.

powerless and disenfranchised tribal peoples'.[60] The signatories of the Declaration of

Barbados concluded that 'the suspension of all missionary activity is the most

appropriate policy on behalf of both Indian society as well as the moral integrity of the

churches involved', and, if missionaries persisted in their objectives, they 'must be held

responsible by default for crimes of ethnocide and connivance with genocide'.[61]

Conversion of indigenous peoples to Christianity under the influence of Western

missionaries was, according to the authors of the declaration, tantamount to cultural

destruction.

SIL was mentioned only sporadically in the symposium's report but, when it was

singled out, it came in for rebuke. Stefano Varese, a contributor from Peru's Ministry of

Education, contended that,

> in accordance with the conceptual models of its Anglo-Saxon
> and Protestant origin, the SIL is spreading among members of
> the native communities a spirit and value which are markedly
> individualistic and capitalistic in the purest Weberian sense of
> the term.[62]

From Varese's perspective, SIL's efforts were seen as antithetical to Latin American

communal social values, and the organization's programme was inherently imperialistic,

since it presumed to impose Western values on non-Western peoples.

In December 1973 the American anthropologist Laurie Hart took aim

specifically at WBT-SIL in a withering article entitled 'Story of the Wycliffe

Translators: Pacifying the Last Frontiers'. Hart's piece was published in the North

American Congress on Latin America's (NACLA) journal *Latin America & Empire*

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[60] 'Declaration of Barbados for the Liberation of the Indians', in *The Situation of the Indian*, ed. W. Dostal (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1972), p. 376.

[61] Ibid., pp. 376-381.

[62] Stefano Varese, 'Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Selva of Peru', in *The Situation of the Indian*, ed. Dostal, p. 138.

Report.[63] NACLA was formed by a group of New Left students with the support of some mainline Protestant groups. The upstart organization was given free working space in Manhattan by the Presbyterian (USA) office of the Interchurch Center. The Presbyterians also underwrote the printing of NACLA's newsletter (the precursor to NACLA's journal). In addition NACLA received grants from the United Methodist Church and from the National Council of Churches' Division of Youth Ministries.[64] As the title of her article implied, Hart saw SIL's project as nothing less than aiding and abetting internal colonialism, since the organization's strategy constituted a process for placing the indigenous peoples into a 'decultured' state so that they could be psychologically reconstituted as citizens of the dominant culture. All this was odious to Hart and her New Left militant co-revolutionaries at NACLA. She decried the 'pacification' of the indigenous peoples through the inculcation of Christian doctrine, and charged that if missionaries really cared for these peoples they would 'support resistance', 'work to incorporate the isolated defensive struggles' and engage in the 'long-term fight against the system of exploitation'.[65] Evangelical religion, with its focus on 'millennial expectation' and 'submission', was, for Hart, anathema, for it presumably dampened the will of the indigenous peoples to foment revolution. Hart's criticism of WBT-SIL was, as Kathleen Gough had called for in 1968, unmistakeably grounded in Marxist revolutionary ideology.

The twenty-three year-old budding anthropologist David Stoll fired the next round at WBT-SIL. Stoll's 'Onward Christian Soldiers' appeared in the 26 March 1974 edition of the *Michigan Daily*, a University of Michigan campus newspaper. The work of SIL had come to Stoll's attention while pursuing his bachelor's degree at the

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[63] Hart, 'Story of the Wycliffe Translators': pp. 16-31.
[64] North American Congress on Latin America, 'History', official web site, https://nacla.org/history (accessed 20 February 2012).
[65] Hart, 'Story of the Wycliffe Translators': p. 29.

university. The article was essentially a recapitulation of Hart's 1973 NACLA piece, and he confessed his debt to her work. Yet Stoll's critique was far more personal in that it was directed, in part, at Ken Pike, whom Stoll had encountered at the university. Repeating the ethnocide charge, Stoll found it 'shameful' and 'inexcusable' that the university was, by its association with the president of SIL, complicit in the destruction of indigenous cultures.[66] After the article's publication, Pike invited Stoll to examine SIL at first hand in Latin America in order to acquire a better understating of its work.[67] Stoll took Pike's advice and, as a result, launched a successful academic career as an outspoken critic of WBT-SIL.

The first book-length condemnation of WBT-SIL arrived on the scene in 1981. The work, entitled *Is God an American?*, was a collection of essays by North American and European anthropologists.[68] The authors of *Is God an American?* represented what anthropologist John Bodley defined as 'idealist' anthropologists. These idealist anthropologists argued that indigenous peoples should be allowed to maintain their way of life rather than having to capitulate to modernizing forces. 'Realist' anthropologists, on the other hand, assumed that indigenous peoples would inevitably succumb to the inexorable march of progress and the state-making process.[69] In the broadest sense *Is God an American?* was an idealist criticism of what was seen as a realist-orientated SIL. The authors of this volume found WBT-SIL guilty of two principal offences: collusion with U.S. imperialism and ethnocide. According to one contributor, Luis A. Pereira, SIL

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[66] David Stoll, 'Onward Christian Soldiers', *The Michigan Daily* (26 March 1974): p. 2; Kenneth L. Pike's tenured position at the University of Michigan is discussed in chapter three.

[67] CH to FER, 7 May 1982, TA 938931.

[68] Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, eds., *Is God an American?: An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (London: Survival International/Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1981).

[69] John H. Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 5th ed. (New York: AltaMira Press, 2008), pp. 251-282.

was serving the interests of 'the northern oppressor' in the 'guise of the Good Shepherd'. SIL was therefore carrying out a strategy of pacification among the Indians that tried 'to turn hatred into fatalistic adjustment, adjustment to regimes which in turn exist only at the mercy of, and for the benefit of, Big Brother from the north'.[70] A French-Canadian contributor, Bernard Arcand, found it 'especially disturbing' that SIL would introduce 'Christian mythology' as an 'alternative' into the indigenous peoples' pre-existing cultural matrix. For Arcand this was both 'ludicrous' and 'criminal'.[71] The authors of this scathing critique were nearly unanimous in their judgement that WBT-SIL was the handmaiden of a U.S. Cold War foreign policy that aimed to keep Latin America in a state of dependence. The organization's purported contributions toward this end were the dampening of indigenous peoples' revolutionary impulses through cultural destruction and the inculcation of gullible Indians with evangelical religion as a means of pacification. By way of conclusion the editors of *Is God* stated that, by aligning itself with the interests of the United States, SIL had itself become the 'Indians' problem'.[72]

WBT-SIL's dual-organizational strategy also invited critique. David Stoll was particularly exercised over the elastic rhetoric that accompanied the dual strategy, and he referred to the dual organization as 'a versatile fiction' in his own 1982 book-length analysis of WBT-SIL entitled *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?*[73] He also dilated on this topic in *Is God an American?* There Stoll assailed the dual organizational rhetoric, claiming that it 'violate[d] the evangelical standard of honesty'. WBT-SIL was,

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[70] Luis A. Pereira, 'Go Forth into Every Part of the World and Make All Nations My Disciples', in *Is God an American?*, eds. Hvalkof and Aaby, p. 111.

[71] Bernard Arcand, 'God is an American', in *Is God an American?*, eds. Hvalkof and Aaby, p. 77.

[72] Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, 'No Tobacco, No Hallelujah', in *Is God an American?*, eds. Hvalkof and Aaby, p. 185.

[73] David Stoll, *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, 1982), p. 12.

Stoll declared, willing to 'sanctify semantic Machiavellianism as basic Christianity'.[74] From Stoll's perspective Townsend had 'constructed a new and sanctified semantic universe, a cult of divine expediency derived from evangelical meanings but essentially privy to Wycliffe itself'.[75] More than any other critic, Stoll exploited the real and imagined contradictions of the dual-organization discourse in mounting his attack against WBT-SIL.

Some critics also considered the academic side of the dual organization a mere pretence. Belgian anthropologist André-Marcel d'Ans alleged that SIL's scientific character was simply a 'fraud'. 'I can state that the Institute's so-called "scientific" articles are based on poorly collected data and a confused and obscure methodology', d'Ans asserted.[76] The methodology d'Ans referred to was Ken Pike's 'tagmemic' theory of grammar, and it is true that when Noam Chomsky's 'generative' theory of grammar arrived on the scene it more or less sealed the fate of tagmemics outside SIL.[77] In 1982 David Stoll argued that SIL remained committed to Pike's method of grammar analysis because Chomsky's was a far more 'demanding' theory, implying that SIL translators were unable to master this presumably more complex method of grammatical analysis.[78] According to some of its critics, SIL's scientific character was mostly a ruse; and furthermore it was their contention that the organization's linguists were incapable of grappling with advancing theoretical developments in linguistics.

In mounting their arguments the critics did not have to dig very deep for supporting evidence. In fact Wycliffe was partly a victim of its own publicity. Laurie

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[74] David Stoll, 'Words Can Be Used in So Many Ways', in *Is God an American?*, eds. Hvalkof and Aaby, p. 24.

[75] Ibid., p. 31.

[76] André-Marcel d'Ans, 'Encounter in Peru', in *Is God an American?*, eds. Hvalkof and Aaby, p. 145.

[77] Kenneth L. Pike, 'Reminiscences by Pike on Early American Anthropological Linguistics', in *Language and Life*, eds. Wise, Headland and Brend, pp. 46-47.

[78] Stoll, *Fishers of Men*, p. 251.

Hart was able to quote directly from a 1973 article carried in the organization's official publicity organ *Translation*.[79] The piece in question explained to the public that the purpose of SIL's Brazilian bilingual education programme was 'to integrate [the Indians] into the Brazilian way of life and instill in them a sense of responsibility'. The article then went on to spell out that for 'such a complete psychological restructure' to be successful, 'the student needed to cultivate a more helpful attitude toward integration while appreciating their own language and culture'. At least one indigenous student was apparently bewildered by the overwhelming and seemingly contradictory implications of the education programme's goals, and the reluctant pupil sought to be excused from classes. 'You can choose between your own way of life or the life of the *civilizado*', offered an SIL missionary to the young Kiangaing student, adding that

> each has its price and recompense. For your way the price is
> lack of progress, hunger, and death, and the recompense is life
> without the pain of change. For the civilizado way, the price is
> work and maintaining what you've achieved. Your recompense
> is that you will have more.[80]

Here was an unambiguous case of an attempt to reconstruct indigenous culture and communal economic organization along specifically individualist and capitalistic lines. WBT-SIL's own rhetoric and actions seemed to sustain the charge that it sought to replace the traditional social order with what looked an awful lot like the Western, if not specifically the American, way of life.

The *Translation* piece reflected the essence of SIL's philosophy of culture change. In 1959 Ken Pike had articulated SIL's outlook on the future for indigenous peoples and their languages. 'Eventually, of course', Pike averred, 'in most of the areas where we work, the indigenous converts must be absorbed into the national culture, with

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[79] Hart, 'Story of the Wycliffe Translators': pp. 20-21.
[80] Isabel Murphy, 'The Chosen Ones', *Translation* (October-November 1973): p. 6.

the national language.'[81] Townsend, in a 1972 work entitled *They Found a Common Language*, offered glowing praise for the Soviet Union's goal of eliminating linguistic fragmentation as part of its attempt to unify its satellite countries. 'Out of the hodgepodge of one hundred tongues', Townsend wrote, 'has come one predominant and useful language.'[82] Essentially WBT-SIL accepted the assumption that in the wake of modernization indigenous peoples were destined for integration, if not extinction. SIL's realist stance on culture change left the organization exposed to the arguments of its idealist critics.

Reaction and Response by WBT-SIL

The intellectual transformation taking place in the discipline of anthropology from the late 1960s registered in SIL only with the onset of the criticism aimed specifically at the organization. In the dramatic phrasing of the long-serving SIL anthropologist Thomas N. Headland, Laurie Hart's 1973 NACLA article 'exploded like a hand grenade tossed into the organization'.[83] Responses to the criticism varied, but there was widespread recognition that SIL had to take action to limit the damage. After reading the NACLA report in 1974, the SIL Ecuador director John Lindskoog concluded that 'Somehow we've got to get the focus off hurry-hurry, flash-bang efficient U.S. way of doing things.'[84] The condemnations of WBT-SIL sparked efforts to refashion the organization into a more international and inclusive one, in hopes that this would diminish SIL's distinctly Western, and especially American, character. Biennial conference proceedings in the 1970s were regularly punctuated with discussions and

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[81] Kenneth L. Pike, 'Our Own Tongue Wherein We Were Born', *The Bible Translator* 10, no. 2 (April 1959): p. 15.

[82] W. Cameron Townsend, *They Found a Common Language: Community through Bilingual Education* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), p. 13.

[83] Thomas N. Headland, personal communication to author, 8 February 2012.

[84] John Lindskoog to Clarence Church, 14 March 1974, TA 31172.

work papers on how to integrate nationals into SIL's work. The 1973 session featured a paper entitled 'The Involvement of Citizens of All Countries in the Work of SIL'. Four years later, in 1977, a paper entitled 'Dewesternization of WBT/SIL' was read and widely discussed.[85] In the middle years of the 1970s there was deep concern within the organization over how to include nationals in SIL's work as a means of lowering of its Western-orientated profile.

Efforts to train indigenous translators and place them into SIL projects proved frustrating for a number of reasons. In 1973 the SIL Brazil branch reported a 'lack of general success' in its attempts to train nationals in practical linguistics, and then subsequently to deploy them in Bible translation projects. One of the main reasons given was that local Christians were unwilling to provide financial support to national missionaries.[86] The long tradition in Anglo-American evangelicalism of sending missionaries and providing for their financial support was a foreign concept in the predominantly Catholic Latin America. There too was the lack formal education among the small people groups where SIL concentrated its efforts.[87] Likewise the high level of technology employed by SIL was an obstacle for nationals. A report from Peru noted that SIL's 'technology and standards are . . . far advanced over that of the countries we are working in', and few expatriate missionaries were ready to adapt their 'technology to . . . practical levels'.[88] WBT-SIL's missionary endeavour was too costly and too technologically advanced for most non-Western peoples to participate on anything resembling an equal footing.

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[85] 'The Involvement of Citizens of All Countries in the Work of SIL', corporation conference, study paper, May 1973, WSA; 'Dewesternization in WBT/SIL', corporation conference work paper, 1977, TA 934486.

[86] 'Brazil branch report to the 1973 biennial conference', p. 5, WSA.

[87] Ibid., p. 4.

[88] Paul Wyse, 'Some Observations on National Involvement in Support Affairs in Peru', item (D), p. 2, TA 41094.

Whereas the attempts to integrate nationals into the organization were mostly unsuccessful, the criticism of SIL was effective in provoking SIL to place greater emphasis on anthropology. SIL had built its academic reputation in an almost exclusive fashion on linguistics. The outsized focus on linguistics is evidenced by the fact that linguistic publications outnumbered ethnographic descriptions and anthropological articles by a factor of about five to one before the mid-1970s.[89] At the 1971 biennial conference, the SIL anthropology coordinator Dale W. Kietzman complained of anthropology's 'second rating' in the organization. 'We have no specific standard of [anthropological] training, and we provide none', Kietzman pointed out.[90] Kietzman recognized that SIL's flank was exposed, since it lacked the same level of sophistication in anthropology that it had attained in linguistics.

The criticism of WBT-SIL spurred SIL's handful of anthropologically trained translators into action. In the mid-1970s SIL anthropologists began suggesting that the organization's language development projects could, contrary to previous statements on the matter, actually increase the likelihood of cultural survival. Dale Kietzman argued before the 1976 Congress of Americanists in Paris that the promotion of vernacular languages and mother-tongue literacy were significant factors in 'maintaining ethnic pride and reinforcing tribal mores', which in turn had a direct effect on 'maintaining group identity and unity'.[91] SIL anthropologists also took pains to explain how the organization's advocacy of indigenous territorial rights was an important factor in in these people's survival. SIL's first full-time anthropologist, James Yost, in a paper

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[89] Alan C. Wares, ed., *Bibliography of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Volume One: 1935-1975* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1979).

[90] Dale W. Kietzman, 'Report of the Coordinator of Anthropology and Community Development', 1971, p. 2, WSA.

[91] Dale W. Kietzman, 'Factors Favoring Ethnic Survival', in *Actes du XLIIe Congrès International des Américanistes*, Paris, 2-9 September 1976, vol. II, p. 535 (extract on file at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics (GIAL), Dallas, Texas).

presented at a 1978 meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology in Merida, Mexico, described how SIL's actions to secure a land reserve for the Waodani of Peru, something these people had long sought, was a key factor leading to a marked increase in their rate of survival.[92] Paternalism was yet another aspect of SIL's work that the organization's anthropologists now strove to counter. Toward this end, Yost argued 'that the Waodani [should] be allowed to adapt to [the] expanded physical, social, ideological and technological environment as they would prefer to adapt to it, not as outsiders would prefer to see them adapt to it'.[93] External criticism was an important factor pushing SIL to reinterpret the nature and effects of its language development and translations projects in terms more compatible with the idealist perspective.

However, as an evangelical missionary organization, there were limits on just how far SIL could actually shift its programmes or philosophy of culture change in the direction of the idealists. SIL anthropologist William R. Merrifield, in a paper read at the 1976 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), affirmed that SIL remained 'committed to culture change, and without apology'.[94] The basis for SIL's philosophy rested on the assumption that a 'Biblically-based ethic has universal relevance to the extent that it mirrors the nature of the Creator'.[95] Merrifield cautioned that SIL's presumption of universality should not be taken to suggest that the organization practiced coercion, since not 'everyone was expected to receive with alacrity the invitation to become a Christian'.[96] Presentation of choice, Merrifield

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[92] James A. Yost, 'Community Development and Ethnic Survival: The Wao Case', a paper presented to the Society for Applied Anthropology, Merida, Yucatan, Mexico, (April 1978): pp. 2-3, 9, copy in author's possession.

[93] Ibid.: 9.

[94] William R. Merrifield, 'On the Ethics of Christian Mission', a paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Houston, Texas, (29 November-3 December 1977): p. 3, copy in author's possession.

[95] Ibid.: p. 4.

[96] Ibid.: p. 6.

emphasized, was the key to SIL's outlook. 'We believe', wrote Merrifield, 'that people are unable to choose unless they are presented with alternatives.'[97] In fact, 'using force to prevent a change', Merrifield argued elsewhere, could itself 'be simply a form of repression'.[98] What mattered most in SIL's view was that social change dynamics should lead to constructive cultural adaptations. In a 1976 exposition of SIL's official philosophy of culture change, the organization embraced the United Nations 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' for determining 'positive' cultural change. Destructive or 'negative' features, such as bathing a sick child in urine as a medicinal curative or revenge killings, were routinely discouraged. Encouraged were those aspects of culture that led to the 'well-being' of the society and that fostered 'security' for its people.[99] In this important articulation of SIL's philosophy of culture change, the authors emphasized that there was a great deal of commonality between WBT-SIL's understanding of Christian ethics and the United Nations 'Declaration of Human Rights', and even the AAA's own statement of ethics.[100] Trusting in the fundamental morality of its position, WBT-SIL unswerving stood by its Christian-based philosophy of indigenous culture change.

As the decade of the 1970s unfolded, there was little to suggest that SIL had altered its basic strategies. Anthropology had gained some measure of prominence, and SIL anthropologists preached the gospel of cultural sensitivity. They had also undertaken a project to recast SIL's philosophy of culture change in more idealist terms.

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[97] Ibid.: p. 8.

[98] Philip Baer and William R. Merrifield, *Two Studies of the Lacadones of Mexico* (Norman: Summer Institute of Linguistics of the University of Oklahoma, 1971), p. 355.

[99] Eugene Loos, Patricia Davis and Mary Ruth Wise, 'Culture Change and the Development of the Whole Person: An Exposition of the Philosophy and Methods of the Summer Institute of Linguistics', in *Bilingual Education: An Experience in Peruvian Amazonia*, eds. Mildred Larson and Patricia Davis (Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, [1976] 1981), pp. 358-361.

[100] Ibid., p. 386.

Yet the organization had made little headway in its project of 'de-Westernization' and it remained steadfast and unapologetic in its stance on the desirability of 'positive' cultural change. The twin goals of Bible translation and Christian conversion also endured. Critics were therefore both dismayed and mystified at SIL's staying power. In March 1980 the *Latin America Press* expressed its puzzlement that, even after years of anthropologists' calls for SIL's expulsion and promises by government to eject the organization, the mission nonetheless 'show[ed] no signs of faltering'.[101] During the 1970s SIL left only three countries, none of them in Latin America. The fall of South Vietnam precipitated SIL's evacuation and it was expelled from Nepal and temporarily ejected from Nigeria.[102] Why, then, with persistent calls from the left did the organization continue to prosper in the late 1970s and beyond?

An attempt to answer this question will be undertaken in two parts. In the first place it is useful to examine more closely the criticism from within the intellectual setting in which it arose. This exercise will demonstrate the degree to which a specific and transient historical setting shaped the critical anthropologists' analysis of WBT-SIL. The second task in hand will be to take the measure of the criticism against WBT-SIL on its own merits. Was any of the criticism in fact deserved and, if so, in what way? It is expected that this twofold analysis will facilitate the formulation of an answer to the question of explaining WBT-SIL's resilience.

The Criticism in Context

Kathleen Gough's 1968 call for anthropologists to shift the focus of their ethnographic research away from the so-called primitive peoples and toward a critical

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[101] 'Indian Control Law Coming Up for Debate in Columbian Congress', *Latinamerican Press* 12, no. 11 (13 March 1980): p. 1, TA 43940.
[102] WCT to Billy Graham, 17 May 1979, TA 36300; John Bendor-Samuel, interview by author, Nairobi, Kenya, 21 February 2006.

examination the 'oppressors', reflected something of a recurring fashion in

anthropology. In the 1920s and 1930s an often unstated objective of many

anthropologists was to present a critique of middle-class values, liberal democracy and

capitalism.[103] In the period between the late 1960s and early 1980s many anthropologists

were possessed of a similar sentiment, which was exemplified by a tendency to blend

cultural critique with elements of the social liberation and counter-culture movements.

The 'need for a body of revolutionary theory which deals with the question of

consciousness, culture, and social action so evident in today's world', wrote

anthropologist Mina Davis Caufield in 1969, 'is a need which I feel for my *own*

liberation.'[104] The influence of the sexual revolution and counter-cultural movements on

anthropology was manifest at the 1970 AAA annual meeting in San Diego. The

anthropologist Herbert S. Lewis later recalled of the 1970 AAA sessions that, 'By

overwhelming voice vote the membership of the AAA gave its blessing to sexual

relations of any kind between consenting adults, and the smell of pot was in the air'.[105]

The criticism of WBT-SIL was situated within an intellectual milieu where

anthropologists were once again challenging Western social and moral values.

Political scientist Robert A. Gorman made the apropos observation in 1982 that

'New Leftism sounds the revolutionary alarm. It is tactical, not theoretical.' 'Theory',

Gorman added, 'is an afterthought, an epiphenomenon conditioned by praxis.'[106] When

New Left political activism found its way into the discipline of anthropology it tended to

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[103] George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 111-119, 128-131.

[104] Mina Davis Caulfield, 'Culture and Imperialism', in *Reinventing Anthropology,* ed. Hymes (New York: Pantheon Books, [1969] 1972), p. 209.

[105] Herbert S. Lewis, 'The Radical Transformation of Anthropology: History Seen through the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association, 1955–2005', *Histories of Anthropology Annual* 5 (2009): p. 213.

[106] Robert A. Gorman, *Neo-Marxism: The Meanings of Modern Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 274.

usurp detached and objective enquiry. The results of this variety of thought were readily

apparent in many of the works critical of WBT-SIL. A case in point is the French-

Canadian anthropologist Bernard Arcand's chapter in *Is God an American?*, which reads

more like yellow journalism than serious scholarship. WBT-SIL missionaries typically

hailed 'from rural America', Arcand claimed, therefore he concluded that they were

'considered backward, ugly farmers by other Americans'. In part Arcand was unable to

treat WBT-SIL missionaries in a serious fashion because, as he stated at the outset,

'Religious beliefs are not very interesting. I could never work up much enthusiasm for

the idea that some people consider the sun a deity, while others wait for a messiah.'[107]

Likewise David Stoll's analysis repeatedly miscarried. When a lack of evidence

impeded an argument, he simply settled for guilt by association. For example, in one

place he struck a conspiratorial tone by obliquely suggesting that the meeting of the SIL

Asia area director Dick Pittman with President Ramón Magsaysay of the Philippines in

1952 and with South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1956 both had some

mysterious connection with the CIA. The only evidence Stoll provided was to point out

that both presidents were, at the time, 'under the tutelage of Colonel Edward Lansdale of

the Central Intelligence Agency'.[108] Caught up in the revolutionary ferment of the day,

anthropologists critical of WBT-SIL had pronounced tendency to lapse into an anti-

intellectual frame of mind in order to achieve their polemical ends.

SIL scholars found themselves in decidedly unsympathetic company in 1976 at

the 41st Congress of Americanists in Paris. SIL's Mary Ruth Wise, who held a Ph.D. in

linguistics from the University of Michigan (1968), took to the podium on 3 September

to read a paper on SIL's philosophy of culture change and development. When she

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[107] Arcand, 'God is an American', in *Is God an American?*, eds. Hvalkof and Aaby, p. 77.
[108] Ibid., p, 87.

reached the point of explaining the role of Bible translation in SIL's programmes, the audience raucously erupted. The moderator was unable to contain the outburst, and Wise was forced to leave the platform with the reading of her paper unfinished. In a subsequent session Wise brought along two Peruvian bilingual teachers, Gerardo Wipio Deicat, an Aguaruna, and Leonardo Witantcout, a Ticuna, to share their experiences and insights on indigenous issues. Witantcout fared only marginally better than had Wise when he argued before the gathering that the Indians themselves had the right to choose elements of Western culture if they so desired. For example, Witantcout reasoned that if indigenous peoples wished to give up polygamy, it was within their prerogative to do so. Shouts of protest immediately erupted from the floor that there was nothing wrong with polygamy.[109] Clearly liberation from prevailing social mores trumped scholarly objectivity. At the Congress of Americanists both a professional SIL scholar and an indigenous teacher came up against the harsh reality that SIL's Christian moral underpinnings were held in contempt by a number of anthropologists.

Anthropologists' eagerness to excoriate Western society and Christian missionaries was sometimes matched by an equal propensity to extol or even self-identify with indigenous culture. Whereas Bernard Arcand was bored by religion, American anthropologist and fellow *Is God an American?* contributor Richard Chase Smith was fascinated by the subject. 'We visited the center of the Amuesha universe [and] communed with a group of stones which had the power to hold this earth together', Smith quoted from his ethnographic field notes taken in Peru. 'I could feel the power radiating from them. There was something alive about them', he added. At some later point, after Wycliffe had purportedly driven a 'Christianizing wedge' into

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[109] Mary Ruth Wise, interview by author, Dallas, Texas, 30 June 2009; William R. Merrifield, 'Report of Paris Meeting: 41st International Congress of Americanists', 2-9 September 1976, TA 33224; William Cameron Townsend, 'Report on Congress of Americanists, Paris, France', 3 October 1976, TA 50130.

Amuesha society, thereby altering their religious practices, Smith lamented 'how very sad [the stones] must feel now, abandoned, broken, and forgotten'.[110] There was a marked tendency among some of WBT-SIL's opponents to characterize primitive society as inherently superior to Western civilization. SIL was therefore looked upon as an unwelcome, and even retrograde, intrusion into indigenous society.

Smith was not the first, nor the most distinguished anthropologist to abandon scholarly objectivity and drift into uncritical veneration of indigenous society. In 1983 anthropologist Derek Freeman uncovered considerable evidence that the celebrated anthropologist Margaret Mead had mischaracterized adolescent sexuality in Samoan society. It was rare before about 1970 to find anthropologists conducting field research where fellow anthropologists had previously laboured. In this case it proved devastating, since Freeman offered up compelling evidence that Mead's research of the 1930s was marred by her preconceived notions of the nature of primitive society, and by her desire to portray primitive society as superior to that of the socially and morally repressive West.[111] Freeman concluded his work with a call for 'A More Scientific Anthropology'.[112] It was a timely plea. By the early 1980s the excesses of the late 1960s and 1970s had produced a sense of confusion within the discipline of anthropology. In the apt phrasing of the anthropologist Herbert Lewis, 'the rebellions within anthropology . . . were over-determined'.[113] The influence of postmodernism within the discipline of anthropology beginning in the mid-1980s ensured that Freeman's hopes were more often met with uncertainty than with confidence. 'In anthropology and all other human sciences at the moment', observed anthropologist George E. Marcus in

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[110] Richard Chase Smith, 'The Summer Institute of Linguistics: Ethnocide Disguised as a Blessing', in *Is God an American?*, eds. Hvalkof and Aaby, p. 123.

[111] Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[112] Ibid., pp. 294-302.

[113] Lewis, 'The Radical Transformation of Anthropology': p. 208.

1986, '"high" theoretical discourse—the body of ideas that authoritatively unify a field—is in disarray.'[114] The confidence so recently displayed by many anthropologists was giving way to greater circumspection. An appropriate example is Stanley R. Barrett's *The Rebirth of Anthropological Theory* (1984), wherein he observed 'that social behavior is both complex and contradictory'. Barrett therefore argued that 'Virtually every value, norm, decision, and act has alternative (or alternatives) that are potentially its negation'. Barrett summed up by concluding that 'there is no mechanism, whether theoretical, methodological, moral, or pragmatic, to determine which alternative beliefs or actions open to man are intrinsically superior and preferable.'[115] Hvalkof and Aaby's *Is God an American?* and David Stoll's *Fishers of Men* were products of a particularly volatile moment in anthropology, but they were also exemplars of a genre soon to fall on hard times as anthropologists began to reckon with the excesses of the recent past and to adjust to the unsettling intellectual currents of the immediate future.

It is useful to peer briefly over the horizon beyond the chronological limits of the present study in order to examine another critical work on SIL and the path later taken by David Stoll. As anthropologists busied themselves with putting their house in order, attacks on WBT-SIL were left to investigative journalists such as Gerald Colby and Charlotte Dennett, who together published a nine-hundred-page tome purporting to link Nelson Rockefeller and Cameron Townsend as co-conspirators in exploiting Latin America's natural resources.[116] Despite its extraordinary length, the authors of *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon* never furnished any evidence that the two men

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[114] George E. Marcus, 'Ethnography in the Modern World System', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 166.

[115] Stanley R. Barrett, *The Rebirth of Anthropological Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 5.

[116] Gerald Colby, with Charlotte Dennett, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995).

had ever met.[117] Considering Townsend's good fortune for stumbling upon well-connected and moneyed figures, Colby and Dennett should have dug a little deeper. According to James Wroughton, a retired SIL government relations officer, the two men did in fact cross paths at the 1945 Peace Conference in Chapultepec, Mexico. Seven years later, in 1952, Townsend sent Wroughton to call on Rockefeller at his hotel in Lima, but the oil magnate had no time for SIL.[118] Reviewers of *Thy Will* in the national press consistently found fault with Colby and Dennett's work.[119] A *Washington Post* reviewer commenting on the strained attempt to link Rockefeller and SIL suggested that 'the authors would have done better to jettison the ill-fitting missionary sub-plot altogether'.[120] Of particular interest is David Stoll's 1996 review. He took Colby and Dennett to task for engaging in 'power-structure research', which, he added, 'turns everything into a function of deals between powerful white males'. Indicative of just how far Stoll had travelled from the 1970s and early 1980s was his taking the opportunity of the review to suggest that SIL's cooperative and uncritical stance towards Latin American governments might actually have benefited indigenous peoples. Stoll noted that by serving the state, SIL missionaries 'could give hard-pressed native people medicine and schools they would otherwise not have had, not to mention', he added, 'the Bible translations that some have appreciated'.[121] David Stoll's coming to SIL's defence is a fitting example of an anthropologist discarding a politicised ideological

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[117] Arthur Lightbody, 'Wycliffe Bible Translators' Statement Regarding Charges in Gerald Colby and Charlotte Dennett's *Thy Will Be Done*', Press Release, 30 May 1995; Rusty Wright, 'Wycliffe Denies CIA Connection', *Christianity Today* 39, no. 10 (1 September 1995): p. 62.

[118] Jim Wroughton to Nelson Rockefeller, 28 June 1952, TA 8404; Jim Wroughton, telephone interview by author, 6 March 2009.

[119] Robert Lloyd to Arthur Lightbody, media reviews of *Thy Will Be Done*, confidential memo, 6 February 1996, copy in author's possession.

[120] Pamela Constable, 'Imperialism in the Rain Forest', (New York), *Washington Post*, 21 May 1995, final edition, p. X06.

[121] David Stoll, 'Missionaries and Foreign Agents', *American Anthropology* 98, no. 3 (September 1996): p. 637

outlook for a more dispassionate appraisal of the evidence regarding WBT-SIL.

The Criticism: An Evaluation

Shifting intellectual currents in anthropology ensured that the polemics against SIL dwindled after the early 1980s. Despite the transience and politicized nature of the criticism, were the arguments lodged against the organization nonetheless merited? For example, was SIL a scholarly pretender or, conversely, was its scholarship of a higher calibre than the critics contended? Perhaps the most obvious evidence in SIL's favour was its longstanding cooperative programme at the University of Oklahoma.[122] Likewise the University of Texas would not likely have embraced SIL if the organization's linguists were incapable of holding their own academically. Then too, Stoll's inference that SIL linguists were ill equipped to engage with Chomsky's generative grammar was a particularly fragile assertion. In the 1970s SIL maintained cooperative summer programmes at the University of Texas at Arlington, the University of Washington (Seattle) and the University of North Dakota, as well as at universities in Canada, England and Australia. Depending upon the institution in question, SIL faculty could be found teaching from no fewer than three differing theoretical perspectives, that is, transformational (generative) grammar, stratificational grammar and Pike's tagmemics.[123] Moreover SIL linguists had carried out research from a Chomskyan generative perspective from as early as 1966.[124] To be sure, with its large corps of non-professional linguists, not every missionary translator matched SIL's cadre of professional linguists in academic quality or quantity of production. Yet it remains true

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[122] Chapter three details the SIL-University of Oklahoma cooperative linguistic programme.

[123] Brend and Pike, eds., *Works and Contributions*, pp. 8, 63, 96-97.

[124] John P. Daly, 'Generative Syntax of Mixteco', Ph.D diss., Indiana University, 1966; Bruce A. Sommer, 'Kunjen Syntax: A Generative View', Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii, 1970; Klaus Wedekind, 'An Outline of the Grammar of Busa (Nigeria)', Ph.D. diss., University of Kiel, 1972.

that the organization enjoyed a fine reputation as an institution of applied linguistics,

and its better-trained linguists were capable of engaging with a variety of theoretical

models.

The charge of ethnocide proved equally hollow. In 1975, Catherine A.

Callaghan, an associate professor of linguistics at Ohio State University, recommended

that the AAA ethics committee should investigate SIL on the charge of ethnocide. The

two primary sources of Callaghan's concern were David Stoll's 'Onward Christian

Soldiers' article and Laurie Hart's NACLA piece.[125] In Ken Pike's rebuttal of the

AAA's ethics case he was fortunate to be able to include SIL's 1974 bibliography, with

its list of publications spanning 508 languages in 29 countries. These items were

published in 188 different journals, including the prestigious *Language* of the Linguistic

Society of America. Pike also went on record with a concise articulation of WBT-SIL's

strategy of serving indigenous peoples from within the framework of state

modernization. In his discussion of 'cultural pluralism', Pike declared on SIL's behalf

that

> we believe that the separate cultural entities in the modern world
> need to be provided an opportunity for self-realization within the
> larger society to lead to national coherence-in-diversity within
> which each group ultimately supports the other.[126]

Pike's petition did not avoid the evangelical character of SIL nor evade the

organization's Bible translation efforts. Indeed he also argued that, with the onslaught of

'secularism' and the inevitable introduction of the 'presuppositions of western

civilization', mother-tongue scriptures provided indigenous people with an anchor for

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[125] Catherine A. Callaghan, associate professor of linguistics, Ohio State University to James Spradley, AAA, committee on ethics, Macalester College, 17 April 1975, copy in author's possession.

[126] KLP to Alan R. Beals, recommendation subcommittee on ethics, AAA, 21 May 1975, p. 6, copy in author's possession.

'hope, dignity and courage, without which neither culture or [the] individual may survive'. [127] With the submission of Pike's report to the AAA, SIL's reputation hung in the balance with the most important scholarly anthropological organization in North America.

In November 1975 the reviewing subcommittee of the AAA's committee on ethics issued its report, in which the reviewers stated that 'further investigation of the matter . . . is unlikely to be fruitful'. In fact the committee applauded SIL for its timely 'remedial measures' taken after its workers had, on one occasion, inadvertently introduced a foreign disease into an indigenous community. It was the ethics subcommittee's opinion that 'the organization [SIL] is almost unique among anthropological organizations in its concern with disease prevention and medical treatment'.[128] The subcommittee's report was unanimously accepted by the full AAA ethics committee and, at the 85th AAA meeting of May 1976, the AAA executive board also unanimously placed its seal of approval on the report.[129] The AAA not only exonerated SIL of the ethnocide charge, but also acknowledged SIL as a bona fide anthropological organization and, perhaps most notably, offered its tacit approval of SIL's evangelical position with respect to cultural survival.

The concept of ethnocide was itself a dubious one. In a sense the notion of ethnocide was the product of an over-determined idealism which presupposed a hypothetical primitivism that did not reflect the actual experience of indigenous peoples in a globalizing world. SIL translator and anthropologist Thomas N. Headland, who arrived among the Agta people of the Philippines in 1962 expecting to find an isolated

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Recommendations subcommittee for Case 75-2 to committee on ethics of the American Anthropological Association, 19 November 1975, p. 1, copy in author's possession.

[129] Edward J. Lehman, AAA executive director, to KLP, 20 September 1976, copy in author's possession.

primitive people, was both chagrined and surprised when he one day happened to hear a

G-string-attired Agta singing, in English, the familiar American chorus, 'Oh, come to

the church in the wildwood'. 'So much for the isolated people at the end of the world',

Headland somewhat plaintively recollected in 1990.[130] In 1975 SIL anthropologist

James Yost was approached by some Waodani in Ecuador requesting that he should

inspect an airstrip which they had recently constructed at their own initiative. This effort

was undertaken, Yost discovered, 'to bring them outside goods and an outside

teacher'.[131] Idealist anthropologists might have wished to keep primitive cultures in a

pristine state, but manufactured products and new ideas were fast becoming coveted

commodities. To withhold these goods, Yost observed, led only to 'frustration and

desperation'. As with Headland, Yost had begun his missionary career with idealist

tendencies. He was therefore originally opposed to the Waodani learning Spanish.

However, when the people themselves expressed a desire to learn Spanish, he was

forced to alter his position.[132] Indigenous peoples could and did make choices of their

own accord as they managed their expanding range of social interactions. To claim that

SIL was guilty of ethnocide suggested that indigenous peoples were hapless receptacles

into which SIL poured its ideology; in actuality these peoples often made choices based

upon their own estimation of the value of what was on offer.

Furthermore there is mounting evidence that indigenous language development

and mother-tongue Bible translation functioned less as tools of cultural imperialism than

as instruments of indigenous liberation. In the first place, when Western missionaries

undertook to spread Christianity in the vernacular, they placed themselves in a rather

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[130] Thomas N. Headland, 'Paradise Revisited', *The Sciences* 30, no. 5 (September-October 1990): p. 45.

[131] James A. Yost, 'Twenty Years of Contact: The Mechanism of Change in Wao ('Auca') Culture', in *Cultural Transformations in Ethnicity in Modern Ecuador*, ed., Norman E. Whitten (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 688.

[132] Yost, 'Community Development and Ethnic Survival': pp. 8-9.

vulnerable position since they were dependent upon the indigenous peoples for the acquisition of the language. In turn, once having acquired literacy and the Bible, indigenous peoples were in possession of resources for asserting both their political and religious independence. The Gambian historian Lamin Sanneh, speaking in part from his own experience, argued in a 1987 article that when '[a]rmed with a written vernacular Scripture, converts to Christianity invariably called into question the legitimacy of all schemes of foreign domination—cultural, political and religious.'[133] Sanneh likewise concluded in *Translating the Message* (1989) that '[m]issionary translation was instrumental in the emergence of indigenous resistance to colonialism'.[134] Among the many examples Sanneh provided as evidence supporting his thesis is the close connection between Zulu language development and Bible translation by missionaries and the emergence of a renascent Zulu cultural awakening.[135] Other scholars have confirmed Sanneh's claims. A sociological study of religion in El Salvador, where American evangelicals expended considerable missionary resources in the mid-twentieth century, revealed weak to non-existent correlations between right-wing North American politics and evangelicalism and Salvadorian Protestantism. 'The diffusion of Protestantism in El Salvador', conclude the authors of this study, 'may be a cultural challenge, but it is not overtly political.' 'Rather', the researchers concluded, 'Protestantism has provided a strategy for emotional husbandry and personal survival in one of the most difficult environments for the poor in this hemisphere.'[136] David Stoll is

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[133] Lamin Sanneh, 'Christian Missions and the Western Guilt Complex', *Christian Century* 104, no. 11 (8 April 1987): p. 16.

[134] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 123.

[135] Ibid. 167.

[136] Kenneth M. Coleman *et. al.*, 'Protestantism in El Salvador: Conventional Wisdom versus the Survey Evidence', in *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America*, eds. Virginia Garrard-Burnett and David Stoll (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 134.

yet another witness of the connection between missionary language development and indigenous agency. In 1996, while Stoll still maintained that 'SIL can be criticized on many scores', he nevertheless forthrightly noted that 'much of the leadership of the current native rights organization in the Peruvian Amazon comes out of its [SIL's] bilingual schools'.[137] The introduction of vernacular Bible translations and literacy by missionaries, while seen as tools of cultural imperialism by critics of the Western missionary enterprise, in reality often led to the erosion of the missionaries' supposedly hegemonic power and, as well, to the political and cultural empowerment of previously illiterate indigenous peoples.

The charge that SIL was an instrument of U.S. imperialism suffers much the same fate as the ethnocide accusation upon closer inspection of the evidence. For example, the extent to which SIL was esteemed in nations where it served is exemplified by the response to its impending departure from Peru. During the 1975-1976 transition from presidency of General Juan Velasco Alvarado to that of General Francisco Morales Bermúdez, SIL came under fire from several quarters.[138] Anti-SIL linguists from the linguistics department of the San Marcos University, while serving on a commission reviewing SIL's work, voted to oust the organization.[139] It was the contention of these linguists that the Peruvian government should employ Peruvian linguists rather than relying on SIL.[140] There were also calls for SIL's departure from the Confederación Nacional Agaria, a left-of-centre organization of small-scale farmers, which hoped to appropriate SIL facilities.[141] Adding to the anti-SIL ferment were rumours, originating

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[137] David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?: The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 330.
[138] LA to SIL Columbia branch, 23 July 1975, TA 32095.
[139] LA to WCT, 5 January 1976, TA 33107.
[140] LA to WCT, 22 March 1976, TA 33473.
[141] LA to WCT, 17 April 1976, TA 933011.

from Columbia, that SIL was a front for the Central Intelligence Agency.[142] In March

1976 SIL received word that its contract would be allowed to lapse and that it would

have to depart by the end of the year.[143] As the Peru branch of SIL made preparations in

April 1976 for handing over its operations to various Peruvian ministries, branch

director Lambert Anderson asked 'the Lord to do a miracle, [one] that would be

something that would be completely outside of anything' he could expect. Soon

thereafter, on 4 May, he received a letter signed by the entire linguistic department

faculty of the prestigious University of Trujillo backing SIL.[144] The University of

Trujillo letter was only a single incident in a larger floodtide of support for SIL.

Announcements appearing in several of Peru's leading newspapers publicizing SIL's

imminent departure were the occasion for advocates of SIL to rise up in defence of the

organization. The 25 April editions of Lima papers *La Prensa* and *Expresso* both carried

a 'Declaracion' in support of SIL, which was signed by sixty-six public figures

including academicians, politicians, government ministers, lawyers, businessmen,

doctors, Air Force commanders, Navy admirals and Army generals.[145] Forces arrayed

against SIL had suddenly run afoul of influential friends cultivated by SIL government-

relations men and Townsend himself over the past three decades. At the same time that

Anderson reported this good news, he also commented that the Concilo Evangélico del

Peru (Evangelical Council of Peru) came over the radio declaring their wish for SIL to

remain in Peru.[146] Support was also registered at the other end of Peru's social strata

when twenty-five indigenous leaders, from five different people groups where SIL

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[142] LA to FER, 29 January 1976, TA 33525.
[143] LA to WCT, 22 March 1976, TA 33473.
[144] LA to WCT, 4 May 1976, TA 32996.
[145] 'Piden Siga Funcionando Instituto Lingüístico de Verano en el Perú', *La Prensa*, Lima (25 April 1976), TA 56259; 'Declaracion Sobre El Instituto Linguistico De Verano', *Expresso*, Lima (25 April 1976), TA 56260; LA to WCT, 26 April 1976, TA 33004; Annotated copy of *Expresso* article with signatories', TA 41103.
[146] LA to WCT, 17 May 1976, TA 32987.

worked, came knocking on the Peruvian president's door in Lima, with over 1,500 signatures in hand endorsing SIL.[147] This outpouring of support was a testament to the effectiveness of both SIL's diplomatic efforts over the years and to the widespread support the organization enjoyed at all levels of society.

It is crucial to note here that the forces on the left attempted to unseat SIL only during the disorder that accompanied the toppling of the left-leaning Velasco regime by the right-of-centre junta of General Bermúdez in August 1975. If SIL had been widely considered an imperialist instrument, it surely would have been expelled during the years of the Velasco presidency, for it was a period when Peru went so far as to join the Non-Aligned Movement, establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and purchase Soviet military weaponry in order to demonstrate its independence from the U.S.[148] When General Velasco took power in 1968 he announced that Peru 'must stop being a colony of the United States', and he pledged the 'definitive emancipation of our homeland'.[149] It would appear that SIL's antagonists on the left overplayed their hand by attempting to remove the organization. Once Bermúdez consolidated his power, SIL's contract was quickly reinstated. Branch director Lambert Anderson sent out an elated memo in July 1976 relating that 'the premier who signed the resolution against us last April 15 suddenly, three months and one day later, was himself deposed'.[150] Summing up the year's events in his November report to the executive committee, Anderson noted that a new five-year contract was in the making, which gave SIL even more freedom of

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[147] Ibid.

[148] Ronald Bruce St John, *The Foreign Policy of Peru* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), pp. 193, 199.

[149] 'Manifiesto del Gobierno Revoluciionario', *Peruvian Political Party Documents*, folder 6, reel 1, quoted in *Latin America's Cold War*, Hal Brands (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 80.

[150] LA to Gerald 'Jerry' K. Elder, 20 July 1976, TA 32877.

action than the previous contract.[151] SIL loyally served governments regardless of

political colouring, which was a significant factor in the organization's long-term

success abroad.

SIL's linguistic, literacy and community development efforts garnered for the

organization a steady stream of accolades and awards. Two examples among many were

the Philippine government's honouring of SIL with the Ramon Magsaysay Award for

International Understanding in 1973 and the Bolivian government's awarding SIL with

its Medal of Honour for work in bilingual education in 1980.[152] Townsend was

decorated on numerous occasions. At the 7th Inter-American Indigenista Congress in

September 1972, the secretary general of the Organization of American States, Galo

Plaza, named Townsend 'Benefactor of the Linguistically Isolated Peoples of America'.

Five years later, in 1978, Mexico awarded Townsend the Order of the Aztec Eagle, the

nation's highest honour bestowed upon foreigners.[153] The steady stream of tributes paid

to SIL and the lengthening list of awards collected by Townsend during the 1970s offer

additional support for the contention that SIL was generally looked upon with favour by

the governments of the states it served.

Had critical anthropologists taken time to examine Townsend's efforts to

establish SIL in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, they would have been confronted with

convincing evidence undermining their accusations that SIL was in collusion with U.S.

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[151] Lambert Anderson, 'Branch Director's Report to the E.C.', 30 November 1976, TA 41097; 'Peruvian Branch of SIL Gets Official Support', *The Linguistic Reporter* 19, no. 6 (March 1977): p.1, TA 42762; LA to WCT, 28 March 1978, TA 35261.

[152] *The Ramon Magsaysay Awards: 1973-1975* (Manila: Carmelo & Bauermann Printing Corp., 1982), pp. 104-119; 'Press Release for 1973 Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding', TA 43167; Margaret Hickey, chairman, advisory committee on voluntary foreign aid, Department of State, Agency for International Development, Washington, D.C., to Edward R. Boyer, 1 October 1973, TA 30015; SIL International, 'Awards and Commendations', http://www.sil.org/literacy/awards.htm (accessed 20 February 2012).

[153] 'Honors Received by W. Cameron Townsend', n.d, TA 43129.

hegemonic ambitions. In the late 1960s the septuagenarian Townsend cast about for the

'toughest nut' to crack, as Wycliffe's president George Cowan later put it.[154] The Iron

Curtain loomed as the ideal challenge for this intrepid missionary-diplomat. With the

support of the WBT-SIL conference and board, Townsend planned his last major

undertaking.[155] A bit of arm twisting among his diplomatic contacts in Mexico

eventually secured for Townsend an invitation to the Soviet Union under the auspices of

the Russian Academy of Sciences in the fall of 1968.[156] In many ways Townsend's

venture in the Soviet Union was the Mexico experiment all over again. He and Elaine

formed relationships with linguists at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow and toured

the Caucusus region as bilingual education specialists. During their expedition of 1973-

1974 they even towed a camper trailer behind an enormous Chrysler New Yorker sedan,

driving from Armenia to Leningrad, much as he and Elvira had done forty years before

in Mexico.[157] Townsend returned to the U.S.S.R. every year until 1979.

The measure of just how far Townsend was willing to push his pragmatic

approach in pursuit of his aims is evident in his glowing appraisal of the Soviet Union's

experiment in socialism. From Moscow in 1968 he crafted a letter to his old friend

Lázaro Cárdenas, the former president of Mexico. 'Perhaps', Townsend wrote,

> the simple fact that they [the Russian linguists in the Academy of Sciences] have
> received us as friends will serve as proof that everything in the USSR is not as
> bad as it has been painted in the capitalistic press of my country.[158]

In his estimation Soviet-style socialism was remarkably similar to New Testament

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[154] GMC, Hefley interview, c. 1970, p. 14, TA 43764.

[155] WBT-SIL conference, minute extracts, 24 May-June 2, 1971, p. S-14, WSA.

[156] WCT to Boris A. Kazantsev, Consejero de al Embajda de al Unión
Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas, Mexico City, 29 July 1968, TA 26021; William
Cameron Townsend, 'Though I Be Nothing . . . I Can Do All Things Through Christ:
Report on First Trip to USSR', April 1969, TA 50045.

[157] William Cameron Townsend and Elaine Mielke Townsend, *The USSR as We
Saw It: From Armenia to Russia: Many Languages, Much Progress, Sincere Friends*
(Waxhaw, NC: International Friendship, 1975).

[158] WCT to Lázaro Cárdenas, October 1968, TA 25970.

Christianity. 'Soviet philosophy and Christian principle have quite a bit in common', he wrote in his 1975 publicity book, *The USSR as We Saw It*. He also engaged in a bit of historical revisionism in his attempt to present an optimistic picture of the Soviet Union. Downplaying the unpleasant aspects of the Soviet history, Townsend allowed that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and others had had 'suffered at the hands of tough atheists', but he almost casually brushed this off; after all, he had not observed any persecution, so it 'must be a thing of the past'.[159] In 1977 he complained in writing to Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin that he was 'so tired of the constant propaganda' emanating from the U.S. 'about persecution of Christians and dissenters in the USSR'.[160] Likewise most of the blame for poor US-Soviet relations fell on the shoulders of his fellow Americans. Townsend remarked to Dobrynin in 1976 that he was 'embarrassed that détente has been opposed by so many of my fellow citizens'.[161] Here was nothing less than a complete reversal from his earlier Red scare tactics. Townsend was hardly a reliable Cold War warrior or an unalloyed proponent of U.S. foreign policy. What critics failed to understand was the sincerity with which WBT-SIL and Cameron Townsend took the 'service to all' policy.

In a more general sense the critics' analysis of WBT-SIL faltered because they exaggerated the hegemonic role of the U.S., while at the same time they under-estimated Latin American agency. On this point recent post-revisionist Cold War historiography provides a helpful corrective. The Duke University historian Hal Brands offers compelling evidence that Latin American governments were far more capable of managing the heavy hand of U.S. influence in the region than many scholars have

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[159] Townsend and Townsend, *The USSR as We Saw It*, pp. 42-43.
[160] WCT to Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin, 3 March 1977, TA 33872.
[161] WCT to Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin, 7 April 1976, TA 32642.

previously suggested.[162] For example, Brands reveals that the widespread presence of anti-revolutionary and anti-Communist sentiment among Latin American military governments was not simply a U.S.-inspired phenomenon. National Security Doctrine (NSD), which was a body of theory concerned with imposing internal state control as a means to counter revolution, was in fact more a legacy of French military training prior to World War II than an U.S.-inculcated idea. Indeed the presence of NSD in many cases pre-dated the Kennedy administration's counter-insurgency efforts in the region.[163] To substantiate his argument, Brands fittingly points out that Venezuela received far more U.S. military assistance than did Peru in the 1970s; yet it was Peru which experienced two coups in less than a decade whereas Venezuela's military government became less interventionist in internal affairs.[164] Many Latin American governments also took the U.S. debacle in Vietnam as a sign of weakness, and this led to a more assertive diplomacy on their part in the 1970s, as amply attested by the Velasco regime's overtures towards the Soviet Union.[165] The U.S. was certainly a powerful force in the region. However, anthropologists critical of WBT-SIL exaggerated the hegemonic power of the U.S over Latin American nations.

On the other side of the ledger, Townsend's contradictory positions on Communism, ranging from outright anti-Communist remarks to glowing pro-Soviet statements, is just one example of many that lends some credibility to Stoll's contention that WBT-SIL's rhetoric sometimes breached the 'evangelical standard of honesty'. Stoll was not alone in presuming that evangelicals should hew a little closer to the facts than the somewhat elastic versions of the truth deployed by WBT-SIL. The charter

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[162] Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).
[163] Ibid., p. 79.
[164] Ibid., p. 80.
[165] Ibid., pp. 131-134.

board member Eugene Nida, it will be recalled, stated that it was the dubious nature of dual-organizational rhetoric which finally led him to resign in1953.[166] Townsend had long taught his troops that a partial truth was not equivalent to falsehood. 'Was it honest', Townsend asked rhetorically in 1975, 'for the Son of God to come down to earth and live among men without revealing who He was?'[167] If Jesus had not always felt compelled to tell the whole truth, then apparently WBT-SIL was under no obligation to do so either. This variety of thinking could all too easily lead to an ends-justifies-the-means pragmatism, such as employing sleight-of-hand techniques in order to deploy government-donated equipment towards religious ends. Blocked by law from bequeathing a USAID-donated helicopter to the Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF), SIL creatively evaded this impediment by 'contracting' that the MAF should operate the SIL-owned helicopter.[168] WBT-SIL took on a good measure of its founder's pragmatism, and was therefore, at least on occasion, willing to obfuscate rather than clarify its actions as a means of accomplishing its goals.

If the organization is to be faulted for slipping into a pragmatic frame of mind, it must also be pointed out that WBT-SIL offered social goods that both the state and indigenous peoples often desired. The critics, for all the noise they created, had little of tangible value to offer indigenous peoples save for an ideological perspective that was useful only as a fulcrum for political agitation or revolutionary designs. On the other hand SIL could help alleviate the very real ills that these peoples suffered, such as poor health and powerlessness, the latter of which was at least partly due to a lack of education and illiteracy. As the critics discovered, a willingness to invest finances and

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[166] Eugene Nida's service with WBT-SIL and his resignation are detailed in chapter four.

[167] William Cameron Townsend and Richard S. Pittman, *Remember All the Way* (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1975), p. 61.

[168] Bernie May to RSP, 3 December 1974, TA 31044.

life-long careers in remote areas serving the needs of the poor made for a force that was difficult to dislodge. Therefore it was WBT-SIL's contributions of substance to nations and indigenous communities alike that ultimately checked the critics.

The accusations made by critics that WBT-SIL was a collaborator in U.S. imperialist ambitions and that it was guilty of ethnocide do not hold up very well under close scrutiny. That WBT-SIL weathered the storms of the 1970s was due in no small part to the weak foundations upon which the criticisms were constructed. By equating the Western missionary endeavour with cultural imperialism, many anthropologists' interpretations of missionary intentions miscarried. As the case of WBT-SIL illustrates, when an effort is made 'to see things their way', as Quentin Skinner has advocated, a more balanced understanding emerges.[169] By the time that Cameron Townsend passed from the scene in 1982, the major thrusts of the anthropologists' attacks were all but over. The most significant effect the critics had on WBT-SIL was in pressing the organization to shift its philosophy of culture change from a decidedly realist to a more idealist perspective. In actual practice, however, there was little fundamental alteration in its programmes. As the critics turned their gaze elsewhere, WBT-SIL was left to pursue much the same set of strategies and goals that propelled the organization over the past four decades.

WBT-SIL circa 1982

Cameron Townsend was laid to rest at the Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS) headquarters in Waxhaw, North Carolina, in April 1982. In that year, WBT-SIL's missionary presence extended to forty countries on four continents (North America, Latin America, Asia and Africa), where 4,500 members of the organization

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[169] Skinner, Quentin, *Visions of Politics: Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), p. vii. NB: Quentin Skinner's methodology is discussed in chapter one.

laboured in or in support of over 761 indigenous language projects. In keeping with this pattern of growth the organization's reported income had risen from $6.7 million in 1971 to $44 million in 1982.[170] By all appearances Townsend's legacy was secure. The JAARS headquarters was a fitting resting place for this inventive missionary and champion of international goodwill. Missionary aircraft buzzed around in the sky overhead, and situated next to Townsend's final resting place was a museum dedicated to former Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas and the nation of Mexico. It was here too in Waxhaw that Townsend had once dreamt of building an 'International Friendship City'.[171] Such grand visionary schemes perished with the founder, and WBT-SIL was thereafter mostly content to build upon the foundations laid by Townsend. While there would be no more projects akin to the World's Fair venture or the International Goodwill Fleet, the organization nevertheless remained fully committed to Townsend's basic strategies. In WBT-SIL's annual report of 1982, members were reminded of Townsend's 'five principles': trusting God for the impossible, the linguistic approach, service to all, pioneering in unwritten languages and giving people the Bible.[172] These five principles served as points of light leading the organization into the future.

'It used to be said of faith mission builders', WBT-SIL's arch-critic David Stoll wrote in 1981, 'that they were men greatly used of God [sic]: Cameron Townsend used God, faith became his handmaiden.'[173] On rare occasions Stoll perceptively hit the mark, and here he rather concisely summed up Townsend's particular inflection of Keswick

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[170] *Translation* (October-December 1971): p. 15; *Translation* (July-September 1971): p. 14; 'The World of Wycliffe', Progress Report, a special edition of *In Other Words* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): p. 1, on file at GIAL.

[171] Draft map by WCT of envisaged International Friendship City, c. 1969, TA 46447; WCT to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (son of Lázaro Cárdenas), 11 May 1973, TA 46446.

[172] 'The Five Principles', Progress Report, a special edition of *In Other Words* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): p.18, on file at GIAL.

[173] Stoll, 'Words Can Be Used', p. 31.

theology. In the 1930s Townsend and L. L. Legters had turned the older, more restrained

faith mission approach on its head with their enthusiastic and confident style which

assumed that success was tantamount to God's approval of their venture. Wycliffe

president George Cowan kept up the tradition of 'trusting God for the impossible' in

Townsend's stead. In a 1982 article, written for Wycliffe's in-house organ *In Other*

Words, Cowan disputed the old Keswick refrain of 'let go and let God'. 'Some think that

faith is doing nothing and letting God do everything', he wrote. But this was not at all

the case in the Wycliffe world, where the goals that Townsend articulated were

considered as the objects of one's faith. 'Faith goals', Cowan contended, 'is not a

contradiction in terms but a call to trust and obey, to work toward certain objectives.'[174]

In the same issue former pilot Bernie May enthused that 'there's no need to slow down'.

'Our Lord has gone before us', May emphasized, 'and as long as he says that way is

clear, there's no need to throttle back.'[175] Townsend had long ago taught his disciples to

think of WBT-SIL's strategies as God-given; therefore it was quite proper to

operationalize one's faith by pursuing the organization's ends. 'Faith mission', in the

Wycliffe vernacular, meant grasping the future with both hands.

At the International Linguistic Center in Dallas, Ken Pike's presence ensured

that SIL held fast to its scholarly commitment. Although Pike retired as president of SIL

in 1979, he continued lecturing and writing for nearly two more decades.[176] Thus

another generation of evangelical students was encouraged to apply both their 'hearts

and minds' to the missionary task.[177] Pike also relentlessly pushed students and

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[174] George M. Cowan, 'Faith and Goals: A Contradiction of Terms?', *In Other Words* 8, no. 3 (April 1982): p. 4, on file at GIAL.

[175] Bernie May, *Climbing on Course: Living at Cruising Speed'*, *In Other Words* 8, no. 3 (April 1982): p. 8, on file at GIAL.

[176] Thomas N. Headland, 'A Tribute to the Life of Kenneth L. Pike', in *Language and Life*, eds. Wise, Headland and Brend, p. 13.

[177] Ibid., p. 16.

missionary-translators to 'publish or perish'.[178] This call to publish was heeded, and

scholarly production proceeded apace. As of 1982, SIL's bibliography listed 9,513

entries, a good number of which were published in refereed journals.[179] The measure of

Pike's own scholarly success was exemplified in 1985 when he was elected to the

prestigious American Academy of Sciences.[180] In the early 1980s, scholarly pursuits

remained alive and well in SIL.

Townsend's insistence on humanitarian service remained undiminished in SIL as

he departed the scene. In 1979 the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO) recognized SIL's contribution to indigenous peoples by

awarding the institute with the New International Reading and Association Award.[181]

Perhaps Ken Pike's nomination in 1982 for the Nobel Peace Prize was the most

significant indicator that SIL had lived up to the ideal of service to humanity.[182] In part

these accolades for SIL were the result of the organization's concern for the 'whole

person' as opposed to the narrower aim of Christian conversion.[183] This perspective

remained a hallmark of WBT-SIL. In its 1981 statement on the mission's philosophy

and methods, SIL maintained that it was the organization's 'conviction that every human

being has the need and the right to fulfilment as a whole person'.[184] Serving humanity

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[178] Pike, *Pike's Perspectives*, p. 1.

[179] *Bibliography of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992).

[180] Thomas N. Headland, 'Kenneth Lee Pike: A Biographical Memoir', in *Biographical Memoirs*, vol. 84 (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2004), p. 4, copy in author's possession.

[181] 'Serving People Around the World: Progress Report, 1979', report, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Huntington Beach, CA, 1979: p. 5, copy on file at GIAL.

[182] 'To Honor Kenneth Lee Pike on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday: Papers of his Nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize for the Year 1982', complied by Adam Makkai, executive director of the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States (June 1982), on file at the PSC.

[183] Discussed in chapter five.

[184] Loos, Davis and Wise, 'Culture Change and the Development of the Whole Person', in *Bilingual Education*, eds. Larson and Davis, p. 368.

endured as a fundamental aspect of the organization's overall strategy as it entered the decade of the 1980s.

Measured by interview responses, what Wycliffe missionaries were probably most proud of was that by the time of Townsend's passing in 1982, 160 New Testament translations had been completed by WBT-SIL missionary-translators and their indigenous assistants. However, research conducted over the previous decade had revealed that the task before the organization was much larger than previously thought. In 1982, WBT-SIL estimated that some 3,000 language groups were still without mother-tongue scriptures.[185] 'There is', wrote Bernie May to Wycliffe supporters, 'much, much more to be done.'[186] For the remainder of the 1980s, WBT-SIL had the goal of recruiting 3,000 additional members and publishing 500 more translations of the New Testament.[187] Pioneer Bible translating remained at the centre of the organization's efforts.

Cameron Townsend was intensely distrustful of bureaucratization and centralized management. It was therefore left to his lieutenants to impose some administrative order on WBT-SIL. As they went about this process the organization's leaders were careful to preserve Townsend's guiding principles. The marriage of the founder's strategies with ample funding proved a powerful and durable combination. In a sense it was the organization's power that distressed its critics. They feared its capacity to do exactly what it set out to accomplish: effecting indigenous social, religious and psychological change. This brought the organization into conflict with anthropologists over the ethical legitimacy of these objectives. In the main it was the revolutionary

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[185] 'The World of Wycliffe': p. 1.

[186] Bernie May, WBT to 'Dear Friends', letter included in *In Other Words* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982), on file at GIAL.

[187] 'Faith Goals for the 1980s', *In Other Words* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): p. 16, on file at GIAL.

intellectual milieu of the 1960s and 1970s that invested anthropologists with the confidence that they held the moral high ground. The convulsions that wracked anthropology in many places during the 1960s and 1970s were of sufficient intensity to blind WBT-SIL's critics to the fact that the organization was generally supplying desired social and religious goods. Once the intellectual mood shifted in the early 1980s, the criticism directed at WBT-SIL by anthropologists dissipated. In light of the evidence presented here, WBT-SIL's critics often mischaracterized the organization. This was particularly the case with the ethnocide charge. Had there been material grounds for this accusation, it is almost certain that the AAA, when it was at its most politicised and radicalized moment, would have uncovered damning evidence. The generally favourable response to SIL's projects by governments and indigenous peoples alike, also suggests that the criticism directed at WBT-SIL was mostly undeserved. The critical campaign mounted against WBT-SIL by anthropologists miscarried in the long run because it was transient and mostly unjustified. Most importantly, however, the criticism failed to do lasting damage because it was a point of view not widely shared by the peoples and the nations served by WBT-SIL.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The intellectual currents of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism have influenced Protestant missions in varying degrees. The mission historian Andrew F. Walls has convincingly argued that the 'voluntary society' arose in the early part of the eighteenth century in response to the 'consciousness of individual responsibility', which was itself a characteristic of Enlightenment thought.[1] The rationalization of missionary activity along individualist lines rather than under the aegis of the state church was ideally suited to an entrepreneurial approach to missions, especially among British and American boards. 'The principle of the voluntary society', Walls wrote, 'is: identify the task to be done; find appropriate means of carrying it out; unite and organize a group of like-minded people for the purpose.'[2] Acting upon Enlightenment assumptions missionary societies from the eighteenth century developed along the lines of a commercial enterprise. In the early-to-mid nineteenth century the business-like practices of many voluntary missionary societies came in for reproach from antagonists who had been affected by Romantic sensibilities. Of these critics the Church of Scotland minister Edward Irving was the first and most important. Irving sermonized against caution and planning in missionary activity, and urged instead that missionaries should depend on the supernatural and spiritual intuition. What Irving preached, the minister and orphanage founder George Müller put into practice by never asking for money. Following the path blazed by Irving and Müller faith mission advocates, such as the China Inland Mission founder Hudson Taylor and the American Presbyterian minister

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[1] Andrew F. Walls, 'The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening', in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), pp. 29-30.

[2] Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 229.

and missions promoter Arthur T. Pierson, forsook salaries and shunned solicitation in favour of trusting God alone to supply their financial needs. [3] The rise of the faith mission movement was a Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment-styled voluntary society model of missions.

With its dual structure WBT-SIL was, perhaps more so than any other mission of its day, a compound of both the Enlightenment-style voluntary mission and the Romantic-style faith mission. Therefore when the Christian missionary impulse was refracted through the multi-dimensional character of the WBT-SIL dual organization it was bound to cause confusion since it at once maintained elements of a typical faith mission while at the same time boldly breaking with convention. On the side of tradition, WBT-SIL missionaries eschewed direct solicitation, and instead opted to garner their personal financial support 'in faith'. Thus at home in North America WBT-SIL members unabashedly presented themselves as faith missionaries and projected a familiar missionary image to the evangelical public. Since the reading of the translated scriptures was expected to result in conversions to Christianity, the organization's primary religious aim was in keeping with that of most faith missions. Likewise the mission remained evangelical in its religious temperament. Viewed from the perspective of this set of factors, WBT-SIL maintained the most salient characteristics of a classical faith missionary enterprise. On the other hand, when operating abroad under the banner of SIL, members often masked their missionary identity to one degree or another and, significantly, they did not preach, baptize converts or found churches under SIL auspices. Faith mission constraints on funding fell by the wayside at the organizational level, as occurred with the Goodwill Fleet and Cameron Townsend's fundraising exploits during the World's Fair project. The organization's focus on literacy and

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[3] David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), pp. 185-190.

education, not to mention cooperating with governments and serving Roman Catholics, were all in one way or another departures from the norms of mid-twentieth-century faith mission practice. This merging of traditional faith mission qualities with a number of decidedly uncharacteristic features at once provoked criticism from nearly all sides while also creating an entirely new style of mission that ultimately proved remarkably successful.

The restructuring of the faith mission model carried out by Townsend was an exercise that necessarily involved the articulation of new ideas in the spiritual vernacular. In other words it was essential to invoke a higher authority for the renovations in mission thought and practice that he envisaged. Keswick theology, or Victorious Life Testimony, was an important motive force in faith missions, but submission to the rigours of missionary life and selfless devotion to the missionary task were also essential elements of Keswick spirituality. Townsend, along with his co-conspirators L. L. Legters and Howard Dinwiddie, transformed the Keswick mantra of 'let go and let God' into something closer to 'take hold and do for God'. One looks in vain to find Townsend passively enduring impediments obstructing his goals or patiently waiting on funds to arrive 'in faith'. On the contrary, it is obvious that Townsend was entirely self-possessed in assuming that he knew exactly what God wished him to accomplish. Impelled by his entrepreneurial temperament and fortified by this re-styled Keswick spirituality, WBT-SIL's founder turned the faith mission template inside out. As WBT-SIL set out to 'trust God for the impossible' the generally modest and measured conduct of conventional faith missions, exemplified by the Central American Mission and the Missionary Aviation Fellowship, gave way to a far more dynamic and unrestrained pursuit of the organization's aims.

Although he would never have expressed it in philosophical terms, Townsend

manifested an optimistic view of the outworking of history. It would be difficult in fact to find among his North American evangelical contemporaries any other figure that shared the same level of confidence in the potential for human progress. Townsend's mind-set, marked as it was by a strong belief in the enlightening effects of biblical literacy and basic education, shared much in common with the early twentieth-century exponents of Progressivism. Townsend was so deeply committed to the idea of progress, in a popular sense, that it coloured just about every endeavour he embarked upon, from the uplift of indigenous peoples to designs for international goodwill. The founder's pervasive optimism created in WBT-SIL an organizational culture that was less susceptible to the pessimistic and unconstructive qualities that were so often features of fundamentalist organizations. Rather than expending energy shoring up the ramparts of a separated fundamentalist citadel, WBT-SIL missionaries instead directed their efforts outwards in a more public-spirited fashion. This is not to suggest that WBT-SIL followed the path trodden by the social gospellers, for few if any members of the organization would have conflated human progress with born-again conversion. In WBT-SIL, however, missionary activity was understood as more than the mere gathering up of souls for eternity. Conversion to Christianity was also valued for its putative power to expand the cognitive horizons of indigenous peoples so that they could better come to terms with modernity, and thus enjoy a richer life in the present. WBT-SIL's progressive socio-political outlook was a key factor in the successful realization of the founder's varied strategies, such as service to all, bi-lingual education and international goodwill.

In pursuit of his aims, Townsend emphasized submission to governments of all political persuasions and advocated a respectful stance towards all religious perspectives. By following in the founder's footsteps, WBT-SIL ended up serving just

about everyone from Catholics to Communists. Whereas less daring evangelicals worried that these strategies might lead the faithful down the road to perdition, Townsend demonstrated that it was possible to cooperate with secularists and to serve non-evangelicals without necessarily diluting one's evangelical witness. Moreover, what Townsend understood but many of his detractors struggled to comprehend was that benevolent service could draw the levers of power and means of influence closer to hand. As a master of the art of persuasion, Cameron Townsend schooled his people in the art of soft power rather than in the use of the blunt instruments employed by militant fundamentalists. Whether for merely objective purposes or out of authentic compassion—and most typically some combination of both—WBT-SIL broke with the prevailing evangelical taboos to serve what were otherwise considered adversaries or even enemies of the faith.

SIL-WBT's pragmatic adaptation to varied circumstances did not pass without consequences for the organizational mind-set. The mission's readiness to equivocate bordered at times on what might be referred to as a form of 'situational ethics'. When the entire truth threatened the organization's plans, a partial truth was often considered sufficient. WBT-SIL charted new frontiers where old verities could hinder if not halt its progress. For radically new ideas such as those Townsend was experimenting with to take root, it was perhaps obligatory to create favourable circumstances for their maturation. Only when it was observed that these innovative approaches were effective in practice was it possible to pull back the veil completely. There was, however, the ever-present danger of slipping into a strategy of the ends justifying the means, and this indubitably happened on more than one occasion. In pursuit of what was seen as the greater good, WBT-SIL tore a page from the good book and followed the scriptural injunction to be wise as serpents but innocent as doves in an effort to accomplish its

aims.

Ultimately the strategy of 'service to all' succeeded because WBT-SIL had something of value to offer developing nations beyond its religious objectives. It was WBT-SIL's willingness to serve nearly anyone regardless of religious or political convictions that undermined the arguments of the organization's secular opponents. Anthropologists critical of Christian missions made a rather poor choice in singling out WBT-SIL as the organization upon which to construct their anti-mission arguments. On the surface, WBT-SIL appeared as a likely candidate for censure; after all it was the largest private organization at work among the world's indigenous peoples, it publicly espoused a Christian-based philosophy of culture change and it was assumed by its critics to be populated by narrow-minded fundamentalists. SIL's realist philosophy, with its overtones of cultural imperialism, seemed to imply that the organization cared little for the future hopes of indigenous peoples, and that it was more concerned with Christianizing and Westernizing these peoples than anything else. Without a doubt the World's Fair mural of the early 1960s, which depicted Chief Tariri's transformation from 'From Savage to Citizen', would have been enough to send shivers down the spine of just about any anthropologist of the 1970s. SIL's realist outlook, which survived into the mid-1970s, obscured the fact that it was actually providing social and religious goods that were often appreciated and desired. Eventually, as the leftward revolutionary upheaval within the discipline of anthropology began to abate in the early 1980s, critical anthropologists either conceded that SIL, for all its purported sins, perhaps did more good than harm or mostly went on to ignore the organization altogether. Much of the literature produced in the 1970s and early 1980s critical of WBT-SIL, especially the early writings of David Stoll and the essays published in the Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby volume, is a product of a politically volatile period in the discipline of

anthropology, and these works should therefore be handled with a measure of scepticism.[4]

WBT-SIL's apolitical service also undercuts assumptions that the organization was of a piece with U.S. right-wing politics. Billy Graham's tenure on the WBT-SIL board of directors, Vice President Richard Nixon's christening of a SIL aircraft, the wooing of anti-Communist and pro-capitalist donors and Townsend's anti-Communist rhetoric must all be set alongside WBT-SIL's service to governments from across the political spectrum. With his grand visions for fostering international goodwill, including in the USSR, it is obvious that WBT-SIL's founder was largely free of political provincialism. The apolitical character of Townsend's hopes for international peace differs sharply from that of other mid-century evangelicals. Carl F. H. Henry, the neo-evangelical theologian, immediately comes to mind, along with his fellow faculty members at Fuller Seminary. Even as Henry and his neo-evangelical brethren set out to reform the fundamentalist mind, they remained steadfastly conservative in their domestic political convictions and staunchly anti-Communist in their international outlook.[5] Townsend, however, was too pragmatic and idealistic to be straightjacketed into any narrow political ideology. From the time he took up Mexico's cause against North American oil companies in the 1930s to his glowing reports of life in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, Townsend demonstrated that he was prepared to ally himself and his organization to just about any regime in order to gain a foothold for SIL. WBT-SIL

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[4] David Stoll, 'Onward Christian Soldiers', *The Michigan Daily* (26 March 1974); David Stoll, *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, 1982); Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, eds., *Is God an American?: An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (London: Survival International/Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1981).

[5] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 60-63.

certainly played upon the sentiments of the conservative right in the U.S. for financial support, but this in no way dictated the organization's political stance outside North America. Under Townsend's direction, WBT-SIL became adept at advantageously adapting itself to varying social and political contexts both at home and abroad. If this pragmatic approach meant serving regimes hostile to the U.S., such as was the case in Peru from 1968 to 1975, then SIL was prepared to do so. WBT-SIL was hardly an ideological hostage of the conservative right in the United States.

The strategy of service to all was made possible by the dual organizational construct. On a practical level, the dual structure offered WBT-SIL the flexibility to adapt both its programmes and its publicity to widely differing constituencies. By incorporating SIL as a humanitarian and scientific organization, governments found it convenient to partner with the organization. The non-religious nature of SIL, or at least the appearance thereof, fostered close cooperation between the organization and government ministries, and this was particularly the case in nations where secularizing forces were attempting to disentangle the church from the state. Concomitantly the Wycliffe side of the organization presented to the North American evangelical public a recognizable faith mission image, and it drew heavily upon the traditions and ethos of the faith mission legacy to build support. While the dual-nature of WBT-SIL was perhaps confusing at times, the public relations and programmatic benefits of the dual strategy outweighed the complications it sometimes generated.

Separation of the religious and scientific aspects of the organization also contributed to the flourishing of scholarship in SIL. Unlike most Bible colleges, which existed solely within the evangelical subculture, SIL was obliged to maintain a level of scholarly attainment on par with nationally-recognized university standards. With its scientific reputation at stake, SIL rose to the challenge. The academic status that SIL

achieved, along with its secular veneer, furnished it with the opportunity to develop linguistic programmes in cooperation not only with the University of Oklahoma and the University of Texas but also with many other academic institutions and universities around the world. Intra-organizationally the SIL side of the organization also created something of an academic haven that helped to insulate it from the strains of anti-intellectualism that occasionally threatened to undermine scholarly activity, especially when such endeavours seemed far removed from the immediate goal of Bible translation. It is not difficult to imagine that scholarship would have suffered if the organization had been constituted in a unitary fashion under the religiously orientated Wycliffe Bible Translators.

There was, however, at least one drawback to sequestering the religious and scientific facets of WBT-SIL into separate domains. Despite the organization's tremendous academic achievements, by Mark Noll's demanding criteria, SIL seems not to have wholly escaped the 'scandal of the evangelical mind'.[6] When SIL missionary-translators applied their minds to linguistic research, they did so in much the same manner as did non-Christian linguists. The Enlightenment tendency to maintain a distinction between facts and values was observed rather assiduously in SIL. In part it was SIL's deep concern for presenting a scientific image that encouraged the organization's translators to compartmentalize the scientific and religious aspects of their work. Concern for maintaining a secular approach to science seems to have largely circumscribed specifically Christian thought on language and translation. In addition, the very nature of descriptive linguistics, with its narrow focus on the structure of language and its shunning of theoretical reflection on the nature of language and communication, contributed to a view of science in SIL as primarily a method for

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[6] Mark Noll's *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* is discussed in the introductory chapter and in chapter three.

problem solving rather than an exercise in abstract philosophical thought. Evidence uncovered during the course of the present study indicates that it was chiefly Eugene Nida and William Wonderly who approached linguistics and translation from a distinctively Christian point of view. In Nida's case the harmonization of Christian thinking and science resulted in the development of the theory of dynamic equivalence, which ultimately reshaped approaches to Bible translation around the world. It is noteworthy that the full flowering of Nida's theory occurred after he joined the American Bible Society, where it was not necessary to maintain the sharp distinction between science and religion, as was the case in SIL. On the other hand, Ken Pike's contributions to linguistics evidence little debt to any explicitly Christian mode of thought. Within the WBT-SIL context, Pike and his students felt compelled to observe the wall of separation between scientific facts and religious values. While it can therefore be said that a good number of SIL missionary-linguists rose to the top of their profession, it must nonetheless be pointed out that they rarely reflected on language or translation from a distinctly Christian perspective, which is exactly what troubled Noll most about evangelical thinking in the twentieth century.

The distinctly linguistic nature of SIL was an important factor in yet another respect. Some of the most heated debates in mid-twentieth-century North American evangelicalism were sparked by differences of opinion on matters of doctrine and theology. In WBT-SIL theology ranked well behind linguistics in importance when it came to scholarship. The dearth of seminarians and theologians in the organization emphasizes the fact that theology was of far less scholarly interest than linguistics in SIL. Moreover, doctrinal discussions remained internal affairs, and these debates therefore never became public spectacles. In the case of WBT-SIL, Wycliffe satisfied the Christian public by publishing the organization's conservative doctrinal statement,

while behind the scenes quietly allowing for some latitude in theological position, so long as such deviations remained within broadly evangelical boundaries. By not quibbling over doctrinal punctilios publicly, explosive polemics over such matters were largely avoided. WBT-SIL was therefore never near the centre of the doctrinal controversies that sporadically rocked North American evangelicalism throughout much of the twentieth century. While WBT-SIL did come under attack from the evangelical right for its intrepid policy towards Catholics and for its service to governments, these strategies seemed to have had less devastating effects than the hotly contested theological debates that fractured so many other organizations and relationships. This relegation of theology in WBT-SIL to a secondary status, coupled with an overwhelming attention to linguistics, eliminated a considerable source of potential tension both within WBT-SIL and from without.

Another factor in WBT-SIL's successfully avoiding internal splinters was its distinctive organizational structure. In the first place, the extensive overlap between the board of directors and the executive management eliminated potential conflicts between what would have otherwise been two seats of power. Populating of the board of directors with an overwhelming majority of WBT-SIL leaders ensured that the board had its finger on the pulse of the organization, whereas a truly external board would probably have had inferior knowledge of the day-to-day workings of the mission. Board decisions were therefore, more-or-less by design, in alignment with the objectives of the executive leadership. In the second place, the principle of democracy, where the ultimate power over the organization was vested in the membership through elected delegates to the biennial conference, served to create a sense of ownership while at the same time widely diffusing power. Under this democratic organizational structure, neither the board of directors nor the upper management could forcibly act contrary to the desires of

the broader membership. In the third place, the founder's subordinate position
(theoretically) to the board of directors tempered somewhat Townsend's power, by
forcing him to win the favour of a majority of the membership to effect any significant
change of direction. Townsend's failed bid to include Roman Catholics in the WBT-SIL
membership ranks is the most visible instance of the membership curtailing his power to
act. WBT-SIL's unconventional structure at once distributed power widely and created a
sense of shared responsibility for the organization. Although greater administrative
control was imposed from the mid-to-late 1960s, this basic organizational structure
remained in place into the 1980s. In effect WBT-SIL was less a top-down organization
than it was a close-knit familial association, and this democratic structure contributed to
the unity of the membership and to the fact that the organization never experienced a
significant rupture or split of any consequence.

A democratic organizational structure did not, however, prevent WBT-SIL from
evolving into a modern para-church mission. Edward Irving's 1824 sermon lamenting
the business-like mission structures of his day would pertain as well to WBT-SIL in the
1970s. The very fact that the organization hired a management consultant in the early
1960s indicates just how far WBT-SIL had come towards merging the faith mission
approach with modern management practices. Likewise the rather direct funding appeals
launched under the banner of Wycliffe Associates were a long way from orphanage
founder George Müller's hand-to-mouth faith style of obtaining funds. The rise of the
sophisticated missionary organization is what led Andrew Walls to refer to these large,
powerful and technocratic missions as 'Missions Incorporated'.[7] By not only adapting
but avidly pursuing efficiency and technological innovation, WBT-SIL was a trendsetter
in the refashioning of the traditional faith mission into a modern para-church enterprise.

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[7] Walls, *Missionary Movement*, p. 238.

By successfully navigating the precarious landscape of post-World War II evangelicalism, WBT-SIL provides an important counterexample to the current historiography of the new evangelical intellectual and scholarly renaissance where Fuller Seminary and its faculty loom large.[8] The Fuller project was plagued by internal dissension and external criticism when it was perceived by the traditionalists on the faculty and the fundamentalist public that the progressives had gone soft on scriptural inerrancy. In addition were the disappointments experienced by some of the Fuller faculty, in particular George Eldon Ladd and Edward J. Carnell, when their scholarship was opposed by fundamentalists and then failed to achieve the hoped for status outside of the evangelical subculture. The strains these issues produced were costly. Wracked by dissension, the faculty split with the traditionalists eventually making their departure. Within the progressive group two faculty members experienced mental collapse; Ladd succumbed to depression and alcoholism and Carnell died of a sleeping pill overdose at forty-seven years of age.[9] SIL's fruitful engagement with secular academia—Ken Pike's tenure at the University of Michigan being an outstanding example—clearly makes for a study in contrasts with the troubled development of Fuller Seminary. While it is true that SIL experienced its own internal debates over the role and status of scholarship, scriptural inerrancy and mission strategy, these controversies never became comparable with the clashes afflicting Fuller. As the case of WBT-SIL attests, there was an equally

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[8] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*; Rudolph Nelson, *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind: The Case of Edward Carnell* (New York, 1987); Gary Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), pp. 49-101; John D'Elia, *A Place at the Table: George Elson Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Okenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 201-206.

[9] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, pp. 220-228; D'Elia, *Place at the Table*, pp. 150-151, 161-163, 170; Nelson *Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind*, pp. 117-121.

significant but rather different scholarly advance paralleling that of Fuller. Indeed, in

SIL evangelicals can rightly claim to have created one of the world's foremost

institutions of applied linguistics, and it therefore deserves a prominent place in the

historiography of evangelical institutions of higher learning.

This examination of WBT-SIL in its North American setting reveals that the

post-war divide between the fundamentalists and the new evangelicals was mirrored in

the faith mission community. The fact that the conservative Interdenominational Foreign

Mission Association (IFMA) shifted towards an unfavourable view of WBT-SIL while

the progressive Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) held out a welcome

in the late 1950s is indicative of this cleavage. Therefore the faith missions of the IFMA,

including some of the largest, such as the Africa Inland Mission and the Sudan Interior

Mission, should not unconditionally be classified as 'moderate' or 'progressive', as Joel

Carpenter specified in his study of the emergence of progressive fundamentalism.[10] The

mission historian Klaus Fielder also underestimated the degree to which the

fundamentalist-evangelical divide was reflected in the cleavage between the IFMA and

EFMA before the early 1960s.[11] An important corrective to Carpenter and Fielder's

views is Edwin L. Frizen's study of the IFMA. Frizen's work is an overlooked and

important source that details the separatist instincts of the IFMA and its oppositional

stance towards the new evangelicalism before the early-to-mid 1960s.[12] Therefore

Frizen's history of the IFMA and the account presented here of the Wycliffe-IFMA

controversy both indicate that the faith missions belonging to this conservative and

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[10] Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 83-84.

[11] Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa* (Irvine, CA: Regnum Books International, 1994), pp. 14, 27-28.

[12] Edwin L. Frizen, Jr., *75 Years of the IFMA, 1917-1992: The Nondenominational Missions Movement* (Wheaton, IL: Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, 1992).

separatist association were clearly not as moderate as Carpenter and Fielder have contended.

Lastly, it is now feasible to return to a central question posed in the introductory chapter: can WBT-SIL legitimately be lumped together with other American missionary institutions as disseminator of 'fundamentalist Americanism', as was claimed in 1996 by the authors of *Exporting the American Gospel*?[13] It should be recalled that the 'belief system' of 'fundamentalist Americanism' was defined by the authors of this volume as a composite of 'Biblical inerrancy, dispensationalism, and millenarianism, along with strong doses of Americanism'.[14] Moreover it was argued in *Exporting the American Gospel* that this potent form of conservative evangelicalism was one that not only 'encouraged authoritarianism' but one that was also marked by 'an aggressive tendency to identify U.S. interests with God's interests' and by 'an intolerance of peoples from different cultures'.[15] Among North American evangelical faith missions it would be difficult to find an organization that was further removed from this brand of fundamentalism than WBT-SIL. While the connections drawn between American fundamentalism and global fundamentalism by the authors of this work are not under scrutiny here, it is unmistakable that Brouwer, Gifford and Rose were led astray in their assessment and classification of WBT-SIL by having based their assumptions on David Stoll's *Fishers of Men, Founders of Empire?* That book, as has been shown here, was guilty of misrepresentation. The evidence presented in the course of the present study suggests a negative response to the above question: WBT-SIL was not a purveyor of 'fundamentalist Americanism', nor should it be classified under this rubric.

What then can be said of WBT-SIL within the context of mid-twentieth-century

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[13] Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 18, 185.
[14] Ibid., p. 265.
[15] Ibid., p. 270.

North American evangelicalism? By practising engagement from the 1930s rather than separation and affirmation rather than confrontation, WBT-SIL had more in common with the progressive fundamentalists than it did with the classical fundamentalists. Indeed, Townsend founded the mission on a non-separatist and non-militant approach. To be sure, these points were debated in 1947 and 1948, but no change of course in the direction of militancy or separatism ever transpired. Moreover the classical fundamentalists' affection for premillennial-dispensationalism was not mirrored in the WBT-SIL mind. After a few rounds of debate in the early 1950s there was even some flexibility permitted on the most essential of fundamentalism's doctrines, scriptural inerrancy, by crafting a somewhat ambiguous statement on biblical inspiration. In essence the 1955 statement simply marked a return to the wider interpretation of inspiration that had been the status quo on the topic since the organization's founding. Then too there was WBT-SIL's concern not only with born-again conversion but also with education, social justice and international goodwill. Perhaps more than anything else, WBT-SIL's 1959 departure from the IFMA attested to the organization's non-fundamentalist status. It can therefore be stated with confidence that WBT-SIL never truly bore the marks of a fundamentalist institution, since it lacked the cluster of tendencies that defined fundamentalism. The mission was, on the whole, from its earliest days not so much fundamentalist in character as it was broadly evangelical in nature, and it remained so into the 1980s.

WBT-SIL's influence on North American evangelicalism is more difficult to assess. The dual-organization structure certainly limited the organization's impact on evangelicalism, since the Wycliffe side of the mission presented a rather traditional image to the church-going public. Moreover the organization was not active in promoting revival in America nor was it self-consciously involved in the project to

remake fundamentalism. As with SIL's academic achievements, which were directed into linguistics and not towards the rehabilitation of evangelical theology, the organization's missionary aims were less concerned with spiritual life at home than abroad. Yet, by recruiting, training, indoctrinating and deploying hundreds and then thousands of progressive-minded missionaries, WBT-SIL became an important participant in post-WWII evangelicalism. The organization not only sustained rapid growth to become the largest North American faith mission by the early 1960s, but it accomplished this feat despite its status as one of the most unusual missions in its radical strategies. For these two reasons, if for nothing else, WBT-SIL certainly deserves a larger place in the historiography of twentieth-century North American evangelicalism than it has yet been afforded.

Sensitized to the plight of Guatemala's indigenous peoples at a tender age, Cameron Townsend conceived of social justice for these peoples in terms of upward mobility and biblical literacy. To accomplish his aims, he turned the Keswick-style spirit of personal submissiveness and patient waiting on God into an aggressive and confident acting upon what God presumably desired for his chosen vessels to accomplish. To overcome the obstacles presented by a growing nationalism in the developing world, Townsend conceived the dual organization. The dual structure was a novelty that irritated friends and foes alike, but proved its worth in creating conceptual space for the flowering of new modes of action and thought. In the years before World War II, when many faith missions were exhibiting such fundamentalist characteristics as separatism and anti-intellectualism, the organization steered a course towards a position where these qualities could be mostly curtailed or even dispensed with while yet retaining at least some of the cardinal features of a faith mission. This movement away from traditional faith mission structures carried WBT-SIL far from conventional mission

practice into cooperating with governments and serving Roman Catholics. Essential to this transformational project was WBT-SIL's pragmatic and progressive organizational mindset. The mission was by design able to take full advantage of the nationalistic and anticlerical realities of Latin America, thereby providing a platform from which to assist indigenous peoples in their transition to modernity and from which to carry out mother-tongue Bible translation projects. Likewise at home in North America WBT broke with traditional faith mission reticence in order to appeal to a consumer-orientated marketplace. While there is no doubt that WBT-SIL was given to shading the truth on more than a few occasions, the organization never abandoned its dual commitment to humanitarian service and the provision of a translated New Testament for every known language group. In the final analysis, WBT-SIL prospered because it remained true to the vision of Cameron Townsend. It adapted its programmes and public image to a variety of contexts at home and abroad, while at the same time placing service to indigenous peoples and non-Western nations above sectarian or political interests.

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Dissertations

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National and Indigenous Peoples in Ecuador', Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1995.

Loucks, Clarence Melvin, 'The Theological Foundations of the Victorious Life: An Evaluation of the Theology of the Victorious Christian Life in Light of the Present and Future Aspects of Biblical Sanctification', Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 1984.

Appendix I: Interviews

John Alsop, 4 September 2008, Dallas, Texas

Lorrie Anderson, 28 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Herman Aschmann, 20 July 2006, Dallas, Texas

Elmer Ash, 22 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Ruth Ash, 22 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Lester (Les) Bancroft, 17 Sept 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Margaret Bancroft, 17 Sept 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Doris Bartholomew, 4 August 2009, Catalina, Arizona

John Bendor-Samuel, 21 February 2006, Nairobi, Kenya

Dick Blight, 2 July 2009, Dallas, Texas

Faith Blight, 2 July 2009, Dallas, Texas

Morris Carney, 15 June 2006, Waxhaw, North Carolina

George Cowan, 21 August 2007, Santa Ana, California

Ellis Diebler, 14 June 2006, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Martha (King) Diebler, 14 June, 2006, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Florence Gerdel, 5 June 2008 and 15 June 2008, Dallas, Texas

George Hart, 14 June 2006, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Adelle Elson, 6 August 2007, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Benjamin (Ben) Elson, 6 August 2007, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Alda Fletcher, 24 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

George Fletcher, 24 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Grace Fuqua, 3 September, Dallas, Texas

Cecil Hawkins, 10 July 2009, Dallas, Texas

Jack Henderson, 24 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Don Hesse, 29 August 2008, Dallas, Texas

Lois Jean Hesse, 29 August 2008, Dallas, Texas

Calvin (Cal) Hibbard, 6 August 2007, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Hilda Hoogshagen, 31 July 2009, Catalina, Arizona

Searle Hoogshagen, 31 July 2009, Catalina, Arizona

Esther Jenkins, 29 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Rister Jenkins, 29 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Nancy Lanier, 31 July 2009, Catalina, Arizona

John Lind, 27 July 2009, Wilcox, Arizona

Royce Lind, 27 July 2009, Wilcox, Arizona

Robert Longacre, 29 June 2010, Dallas, Texas

Betty Loos, 25 June 2009, Dallas, Texas

Eugene Loos, 25 June 2009, Dallas, Texas

Edward (Ed) Loving, 17 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Loretta Loving, 17 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Arthur Lynip, 17 June 2006, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Bernard (Bernie) May, 18 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Eugene Minor, 10 September 2008, Dallas, Texas

Dorothy Minor, 10 September 2008, Dallas, Texas

Bruce Moore, 1 July 2009, Dallas, Texas

Evelyn Pike, July 2006, Dallas, Texas

Frank E. Robbins, 2 September 2008 and 9 September 2008, Dallas, Texas

Eugene (Gene) Scott, 21 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Marie Scott, 21 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

William (Bill) Sischo, 29 July 2009, Catalina, Arizona

Marriana Slocum, 5 June 2008 and 15 June 2008, Dallas, Texas

Donald (Don) Smith, 18 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Emily Stairs, 29 June 2009, Dallas, Texas

Glenn Stairs, 29 June 2009, Dallas, Texas

Viola (Vi) Stewart, 29 June 2009, Dallas, Texas

Martha (Duff) Trip, 29 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Robert (Bob) Tripp, 29 September 2009, Waxhaw, North Carolina

Vivian (Forsberg) Van Wynan, 7 July 2009, Dallas, Texas

Katherine Voightlander, 29 July 2007, Catalina, Arizona

Mary Walker, 29 July 2009, Catalina, Arizona

Kenneth L. (Ken) Watters, 21 July 2006, by telephone

Mary Ruth Wise, 30 June 2009, Dallas, Texas

Gloria (Grey) Wroughton, 20 June 2008, Dallas, Texas

James (Jim) Wroughton, 20 June 2008, Dallas, Texas

Appendix II: SIL University Affiliations (1990)

Universidad Nacional de Santiago del Estero, Argentina

Université Nationale du Benin, Benin

Université Nationale de Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

University of Yaoundé, Cameroon

Trinity Western University, Canada

Université Marien Ngoua, Congo

Universdad Católica de Valparaiso, Chile

Guizhou University, China

Université d'Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire

Université de al Sorbonne, France

Universidad Mariano Gálvez, Guatemala

Cenderwasih University, Indonesia

Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

Pattimura University, Indonesia

University of Nairobi, Kenya

Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique

L'Université de Niamey, Niger

Universidad de Lima, Peru

University of the Philippines, Manila

University of Juba, Sudan

Mahidol University, Thailand

Payap University, Thailand

Thammasat University, Thailand

Makerere University, Uganda

University of Reading, United Kingdom

University of North Dakota, USA

University of Oregon at Eugene, USA

University of Texas at Arlington, USA

Note: The character of these affiliations varied but were comprised of either one or more SIL members teaching at the institution, engagement with SIL in cooperative research projects or sponsorship of SIL linguistic research. (Compiled by SIL's Richard Pittman and Calvin Hibbard, TA 43212).