Gringo in the Andes: Thomas B. Wood and the Normal School System in Ecuador

by Paul E. Kuhl

Cannons boomed. Church bells pealed. And crowds roared their welcome as the Patriot Army paraded into Quito underneath garlanded triumphal arches and ended a ten-month civil war on September 4, 1895. The infantry rode on donkeys and mules, and the cavalry on nicely-groomed horses. Comprising Indians from the highlands, mestizos from the coastal provinces, and whites from the cities, this all-volunteer army had no uniforms. On their hatbands some soldiers wore letters and numbers identifying battalions, and on this festive occasion the officers wore their insignias of rank. Brandishing shiny, new Manlichers, Mausers, and machetes, Blacks from Esmeraldas proudly followed their battle flag, a skull and crossbones encircled by the slogan, “No Quarter Asked or Given. Alfaro or Death?”

“Viva Alfaro! Viva el Partido Liberal! Viva el Jefe Supremo! Viva Alfaro!” chanted the crowd as Eloy Alfaro arrived in the capital to establish the first liberal government in Ecuador’s history. Known as the Old Fighter, Alfaro had been struggling for much of his fifty-three years for this moment. Not counting a teen-ager’s flight to avoid the wrath of Montecristi’s Jeff! POLITICO, who had discovered the identity of the local chicken and goat thief, Alfaro had been forced into political exile nine times. His liberal politics were so contrary to conservative rule that he lived most of his life in Central America. Between forays into Ecuador, Alfaro, a fairly successful merchant, opened his home and his pocketbook to liberal partisans from all over Latin America. The well-known poet Juan Montalvo had celebrated Alfaro’s ill-fated exploits, and by 1895, after nearly thirty years of revolutionary activity, Alfaro enjoyed a warm international reputation and was the consensus leader of Ecuadorean liberalism. When revolution broke out in December 1894, Alfaro was living in Nicaragua. Liberals rallied to the cry “Viva Alfaro!” and summoned the Old Fighter in June 1895. Upon his arrival, rebels presented him the wealthy port of Guayaquil and all of the coastal provinces. After a few sharp encounters, dispirited conservatives either laid down their arms or
fled the country, and in four months Alfaro controlled virtually all of Ecuador.²

Two weeks after the takeover, *alfaristas* ransacked the Archbishop's palace in Quito. They stole all the jewelry and vestments, burned the ecclesiastical records, and almost destroyed the palace. The Archbishop fled to sanctuary in the American legation.³

Radical liberals clamored for the new government to tear down monuments to conservative presidents, change street names, raze churches and convents, and expel all priests, nuns and monks. These excesses were vivid demonstrations of the issues that most sharply divided conservatives and liberals—separation of church and state and freedom of religion. In the past thirty years conservatives had embraced many typically liberal ideas, such as orderly elections, respect for the constitution and all other written laws, opposition to dictatorships, regard for personal liberties, concern over great imbalance in the distribution of wealth and a commitment to material progress.⁴ But conservatives had not taken any steps to divorce church and state from matrimonial vows solemnized in Spain, consummated during the colonial era and renewed in each of Ecuador's ten constitutions. The Roman Catholic Church was the only legal religion in the country and was supported by a property tax. Citizenship was reserved for Catholics. Priests served in both houses of congress, and the Archbishop of Quito held a portfolio in the cabinet. Ecclesiastical courts had exclusive jurisdiction in legal cases involving clergy and in cases pertaining to the sacraments, customs, functions, property and privileges of the Catholic Church. In all schools bishops supervised the selection of textbooks and staff to see that instruction conformed to Catholic doctrine. The Church had absolute freedom from governmental interference, and secular powers were at the hierarchy's disposal for advice and enforcement of church law.⁵

The Archbishop's palace had been saved only by Alfaro's prompt dispatch of troops. Trying to effect reform and rule peacefully, he trod the thankless path of the middle ground. Liberal extremists suspected betrayal of the cause when he issued orders to protect all Church property and named a conservative as governor of Quito and the province of Pinchincha. He asked Pope Leo XIII for diplomatic recognition and sent agents to the Holy
Sea to press for the canonization of the seventeenth century Quito recluse, Mariana de Jesus de Paredes y Flores. Unimpressed, conservatives suspected insincerity and braced themselves for an all-out attack on religion when the Old Fighter called for elections to validate the revolution and to extricate church from state in a new constitution.  

Meanwhile, in Callao, Peru, an American missionary wrote with great exultation and exaggeration, “The revolution has triumphed,—its chief, General Alfaro has entered the capital Quito . . . . Priestcraft exhausted its resources against him . . . . Now is our time to enter Ecuador without delay.”  

Since 1891 Thomas Bond Wood of the American Methodist Episcopal Church had been Superintendent of Missions in northwestern South America, which included Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Central America. Thus far, Ecuador’s exclusion of all non-Catholic cults had been effectively enforced and Wood’s attempts at proselytism were frustrated. But, since 1870 when he began missionary work, Wood had strived to “change the policy of South American Methodism from fort­holding to conquest.”  

Having an A.B. (’63) and an A.M. (’66), and an LL.D. at Greencastle, Indiana., (’82) from Indiana Asbury University (now DePauw University) and an A.B. and A.M. (’64 and ’67) from Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut, Wood had combined education and ministry all his adult life. He was licensed to preach in 1863, and he taught natural sciences and German at Wesleyan Academy in Middletown, Connecticut from 1864 to 1867. For the next three years he was president of Valparaiso College in Indiana. He arrived in Argentina during the administration of the school-teacher President, Domingo F. Sarmiento, a friend of Horace Mann and an admirer of American public education. There Wood helped to build schools for Methodism and for the national government. From 1874 to 1877 he was chairman of the board of examiners of city public schools in Rosario, a city second in importance only to Buenos Aires. In 1875, he was a member of the city council and helped reform schools and persuaded the city to ban bullfights. Refusing to give up his preaching, Wood turned down in 1875 an offer to be the first president of the National University at Rosario and in 1876 an offer of the superintendency of public instruction for Santa Fe province. He accepted a position as professor of physics and
astronomy at that university and taught there from 1875 to 1877, and he served on the Santa Fe provincial school council for two of those years. Wood also handled administrative affairs for the new National Observatory at Cordova and translated for the astronomer, Dr. Benjamin A. Gould.9

In addition to these activities, Wood studied Argentine law and was admitted to practice in federal courts in 1875. Also, from 1872 to 1877, he was the United States Consul in Rosario.10

Argentina constitutionally tolerated non-Catholic religions, but Wood constantly endured popular hostility and abuse. In Uruguay, where he worked from 1877 to 1881, Wood joined anti-clerical forces in a successful struggle to extend freedom of the press to "foreign cults" and to establish civil control over marriages, birth records and cemeteries.11

In recognition of his abilities and energy, the Methodist Episcopal Board of Foreign Missions named Wood the Superintendent of Missions in South America and made him personally responsible for work in Brazil and Paraguay, as well as Argentina and Uruguay. Twice in 1885, Wood traveled to Brazil and was granted interviews with Emperor Dom Pedro II. The emperor reluctantly permitted the Methodist Episcopal Church to operate in Brazil, allowing even teaching of religion from Protestant Bibles in missionary schools. The next year Wood addressed the lower house of Paraguay's congress and was gratified when that body acknowledged the legality of Protestant marriages. Back in Uruguay from 1888 to 1891, Wood established a university in Colonia Valdense.12

After the administrative change which gave Wood responsibility for northwestern South America, he moved to Callao, Peru. Constitutionally Peru protected Catholicism, but it forbade only the "public" profession of any other faith. So, in Callao and Lima, Wood bought homes and conducted worship services in these private dwellings. The Catholic Church had monopolized education by custom not law, and Wood established secondary schools in Callao. He had the support of foreign merchants and diplomats and of Peruvians who were either anticlerical or who regarded American education as superior to that taught in Catholic schools.13

From time to time Wood sent colporteurs into the interior of Peru and to Ecuador and Bolivia. He used native converts and agents of the American Bible Society for this work. These trips
were calculated challenges to the exclusionary laws of these Andean countries. Wood used his twenty years of experience, his legal training and the help of North American organizations to prod the governments into altering their laws. As the colporteers probed, Wood tried to interpret the internal moods of each country and to find allies who would initiate change by supporting a court case or introducing new legislation. In Ecuador in 1892, four colporteers distributed Bibles and literature widely in the liberal port of Guayaquil. Their softening barrage was followed by an evangelical assault by the Argentine preacher Francisco Penzotti. Penzotti had caused a sensation in Peru two years earlier by being jailed and held without bail for public preaching in Callao. His incarceration roused the sympathy of many Peruvians who favored religious liberty. Wood reported that a judge of the Supreme Court sent Penzotti a friendly letter, and a deputy introduced a bill to change the constitution. A few newspapers endorsed the bill and Penzotti's cause. Penzotti refused to exchange freedom for a pledge to refrain from preaching, and he stayed eight months in a cell with thieves and murderers while his case was tried in Peruvian courts. Finally, early in 1891, the Supreme Court acquitted Penzotti of criminal charges. This liberal interpretation of what seemed to be an unqualified exclusion of teaching worship by any non-Catholic religion had opened Peru to Methodism, and Wood hoped for similar results in Ecuador.\(^{14}\)

In Guayaquil, Penzotti's fame had preceded him and the authorities handled his arrival very gingerly. Customs officials condemned and confiscated most of the Bibles and hymnbooks as immoral literature, but they allowed Penzotti to take a few in as personal baggage. These he sold as soon as he could. Using the home of a willing family, Penzotti preached for several days and established the nucleus of a church in Guayaquil. These new adherents gave him a public farewell when he continued his tour of the northwestern district.\(^{15}\)

This small success was the first victory of Methodism in a country called "the most Catholic in the world." Never before had authorities equivocated. In 1886 Penzotti and the Reverend Andrew M. Milne, from New England, had failed to get any Bibles past the customs officials, and only a precipitous departure saved books from the fire and themselves from jail. In 1889 and 1890, Ecuadorean Zoilo Irigoyen narrowly escaped imprisonment as he tried to sell Protestant literature in Guayaquil. In 1893 Wood
himself traveled to the unwelcoming port to take the pulse of the people. While there he discreetly held private services and baptized one child without any interference. Penzotti returned for a quiet visit in 1894, but Wood concluded that even though Ecuadoreans were hungry for the evangelical message, a permanent mission could not be sustained.16

During the liberal revolution, hopes picked up. Mrs. Wood wrote to Antonio Viteri, an Ecuadorean preacher in exile in Argentina, “It seems that the day is coming when you can enter Ecuador. Sometimes we imagine that we can see rays of light from that direction, but regretably, it gets darker than ever.”17 Anticipating victory, Wood arranged for Viteri’s transfer to the Peru district. He assured Viteri that people personally in touch with Alfaro predicted success and that Methodism would go to Guayaquil as soon as the victory was complete.18

After the seizure of Quito, Wood reported to the Missionary Society that he was in “constant touch with one of Alfaro’s cabinet members” and was “watching the indications of providence as closely as possible to plan as wisely as possible for adding one nation more to the domain of American Methodism.” There must be no delay. “My British Baptist friends have their eyes on Ecuador and will rush in there ahead of me if you continue to keep my budget down. . . . They have already mentioned to me the attractiveness of that opening.”19 In Wood’s quarter-century of missionary work in South America, he had recorded many firsts. He had been the first to: organize in Latin America a chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; found a chapter of the Good Templars; publish anywhere in the world a Spanish-language evangelical weekly; secure a charter from a Latin American government authorizing a Protestant school to confer the bachelor’s degree (at Colonia Valdense); photograph the moon; and preach a Protestant sermon at the headwaters of the Amazon.20 Now that Ecuador’s first liberal president was inaugurating a policy of religious toleration, Wood wanted Methodism to lead all other denominations.

Wood’s conclusions that the powers of priestcraft were exhausted and that Alfaro had complete mastery of the situation were far from accurate. Rumblings of conservative discontent prompted Alfaro to warn that only if clergy stayed out of political affairs would the government refrain from interfering with the church. Radical thugs (garroteros) belied his words by harassing
churchmen and destroying property. Then, in June 1896, conservatives launched a geographically scattered counter-revolution. Prominent in the leadership were foreign clergy. In the west, Austrian-born Bishop Schumacher led an uprising. From Colombia Spanish Capuchins joined insurgents. A Spanish bishop attacked from a Peruvian sanctuary, and Italian Salesian manufactured bullets in Cuenca. Most of the rebellion was suppressed easily, but conservatives managed to control the provinces south of Quito and the important city of Cuenca had to be taken by storm. Flush with victory, liberals convened the constitutional convention on schedule in Guayaquil. Alfaro blamed the revolt entirely on fanatical foreign clergy, and, to cheers of approval, he declared that these “ambitious bastards” would fail utterly in any future challenges to the new regime. 21

Alfaro’s Minister of the Interior and Police, J. de Sapierre, was the administration’s spokesman on religious matters. In this hour of triumph, he exclaimed, “the night of despotism has disappeared with the beautiful dawn of liberty which today begins to shine in the heaven which gives shelter to those heroes who gave the first cry of independence in South America. The triumph of the Liberal Party in Ecuador is the command, ‘Let there be light’ for their prosperous eternity...” 22 The Minister repeated Alfaro’s frequent pledge that tolerance of all cults was a basic goal of the Liberal Party and that good relations with the Vatican was considered essential for progress. Before outlining reforms, Sapierre severely castigated the Church. The ignorance and superstition of the religious orders, he charged, had made the country into an intellectual wasteland inhospitable to liberty, science, morality, culture, and civilization. Control of the consciences of Ecuadoreans had brutalized the creativity of their minds. Religion is good and essential for society, Sapierre continued, but a convent on every corner was too much. The greed of the orders had perpetuated the desperate plight of the poor, and the religious lived in luxury, hypocritically claiming to practice “the same humility, poverty, love, and charity preached by the Martyr of Golgotha.”

Ecuadoreans, exhorted Sapierre, had to break out of their moral lethargy, abolish the abuses, and guarantee absolute freedom of conscience. To do that, Ecuador needed a new concordat that recognized the supremacy of civil authority. The new government had to suppress the religious orders and give
ecclesiastical benefices to native, secular clergy. The government had to nationalize church property, exclude foreign clergy, control salaries, and provide for civil marriages and public cemeteries. To rescue the masses from the brink of savagery, Ecuador needed a school system based on modern, scientific principles of education. Sapierre pledged to build a public Normal School system operated by foreign educators already expert in new methods, perhaps Germans, maybe Colombians. Education had to be secularized. Continued control by the clergy meant a clipping of the wings of Ecuadorean intelligence condemning it to the routine of a vegetable, "a deed incompatible with the aspirations of a liberal government." Ecuador must have a co-educational, compulsory, free school system.23

The convention responded by constitutionally recognizing the right of citizens to practice any religion that did not threaten public morality. The constitution abolished ecclesiastical courts and prohibited future immigration of foreign priests. Foreign clergy already in Ecuador were barred from holding any benefices, and no priests were eligible to sit in congress.24

Conservative reaction to the constitution was fierce but futile. Jesuits led much of the fighting in 1897, and an angry Alfaro came within an eyelash of persuading congress to suppress the controversial society. The next year, Alfaro recommended that congress enact a civil marriage law that would accommodate non-Catholic foreigners. Conservatives defied Alfaro and kept the
bill in committee, and the Old Fighter responded by suspending collection of the property tax, thereby forcing the Church to support itself from donations.25

From December 1898 to February 1899 a major conservative uprising threatened the capital. Upon victory, Alfaro extorted a two-million sucre loan from the clergy and prominent conservatives, and he pressed congress for further reform. In September, congress passed a new Law of Patronage. This bill placed the regulation of all church property and personnel tightly in the hands of the government. It froze the number of orders in the country; councils and synods needed government permission to convene and presidential consent was required for the publication of all church literature. The next month, the civil marriage bill passed through both houses.26

Liberal reform was almost complete. Nearly all of Sapierre’s goals had been achieved. Control of cemeteries was to be a priority item in the next congressional session. The major item of unfinished business was education. No foreign educators had been attracted to warring Ecuador. The expulsion of rebellious clergy had crippled the schools. A new secular system had to be developed soon, somehow, by someone.27

Wood had been watching in great frustration from the Peruvian sidelines. Very soon after Alfaro’s victory in 1895, Wood’s superiors ordered him to stay out of Ecuador. The Missionary Society thought that he had enough work to do in Peru.28 The initial disappointment was followed by others. The Missionary Society increased its work in India and South Africa by trimming the Latin American budget by a 7% average, and the Peru district by 9%. This budget cut prevented any Methodist “agitation for religious liberty” at the Guayaquil convention. As a secret experiment, Wood sent one native female teacher to start a school there, but without any financial support the effort did not last. Alfaro’s victory was a “providential sign” for more, not less, money Wood thought; but, he noted somewhat bitterly, the head
office took "more joy in one letter from India telling of getting ahead of the British than in all the news from Latin America." 29

The cut was so severe that the Peruvian mission went into debt in 1896. The next year was even worse. An additional cut forced Wood to close one school, combine two others, discontinue two Sunday schools, stop preaching in two places, and help a few Peruvians employed by the mission find other work. Besides cutting back in Peru, Wood had to spend much of 1897 in Chile to supervise work there. Wood's plans for Ecuador were paralyzed by changes in the home office, and to make matters worse, one of the American missionaries was cut from his staff. The emphasis on India continued. A new cut in 1898 drove Wood to the verge of despair. Although he had finally managed to get Viteri moved to Peru, the society had not forwarded the expenses, and the debt soared to the impossible sum of $3,873.33. The drastic reduction of his operation led anti-Protestant Peruvians to conclude that Catholicism had defeated Methodism, and the foreign community, Wood reported pitifully, stigmatized him as a "carpetbagger." 30

The fourth consecutive cut in 1899 included the termination of Wood's daughter Elsie as a representative of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. Elsie's loss was such a blow that Wood took the initiative. He appealed to wealthy Methodist women to donate directly to his mission, and he sent his wife to the United States to present his case to the Indiana Conference and to the Missionary Society. In the meantime he decided to answer his own "cry from Macedonia." He applied for and received his first leave-of-absence since 1881. 31

The anguish of retrenchment had been aggravated by the knowledge that other Protestants already were plowing the Ecuadorian fields. Shortly after Alfaro's victory, the Christian and Missionary Alliance of New York and the Gospel Missionary Union of Kansas City, Missouri had established themselves in Guayaquil. These missionaries brought out the worst in Ecuadoreans who generally had a high regard for North American institutions and society. They did, however, believe that the characteristic traits of Americans were selfishness and greed, and they resented the unflattering portraits of Ecuador that many American writers had drawn in print. One thing about the United States that Ecuadoreans really hated was Protestantism. The activities of these first two groups provoked a few spectacular reactions, despite the new era of toleration. The first group of
missionaries which tried to cross the *cordillera* into the highlands was turned back by a mob in Guaranda. The next year the missionaries made it to Ambato at the crest of the Andes, and there they met a similar fate. Knowledge that Protestants would eventually get to Quito prompted an editor to warn parents to guard their little girls from the missionaries who would ravish them and send them to Lima for immoral purposes.\(^\text{32}\)

Alfaro did what he could to protect the missionaries. In February 1898, a priest printed over 600 lurid and inflammatory handbills urging righteous citizens to force the Protestants out of the country. Alert police seized the priest and most of his propaganda. The cleric was speedily imprisoned far from Ambato. News of the priest's situation aroused the town, and a crowd seized Protestant Bibles and literature and burned them in one of the main plazas. Fearing greater violence, perhaps another revolution, Alfaro had a long conference with the U.S. Minister Archibald J. Sampson and urged him to ask all American missionaries to leave the interior for their own safety. He would provide an armed escort to ensure their protection. After complying with Alfaro's request, Sampson wrote to the U.S. Consul General, Perry M. De Leon, "In some way manage to have a talk with the head of one of the American Missions and suggest that no more missionaries leave the coast for the interior . . . (Their presence), owing to the extreme fanaticism of the people, is an absolute menace to the Nation." \(^\text{33}\)

In January 1899, Sampson learned that one of the groups had bought property in Ambato.\(^\text{34}\) Then, on the ides of March, Sampson reported that the Reverend E. B. Tarbox and the Reverend William G. Fritz of the Christian and Missionary Alliance were narrowly saved from martyrdom by the Quito police. A mob led by a Father Matens had surrounded the missionaries' quarters and offered them Charlemagne's choice, conversion to Catholicism or death. Upon the refusal of the baptismal gown, the mob shattered all the windows and shouting "Kill the Protestant Devils!" were battering down the doors when the police arrived. The government arrested nine, promised to protect the missionaries, and began dispatching officials to listen to every Catholic sermon in the Capital.\(^\text{35}\)

Meanwhile, Methodism had had to lean heavily on the American Bible Society. The two groups had worked well together in the past, and now the Bible Society regularly canvassed
Ecuador. One of their members was Penzotti. For brief periods the
native preachers, Viteri, Antay and Irigoyen, followed the paths of
the Bible Society and reported favorable receptions. Despite the
"blundering about" of the "Fisherites and Simpsonites," Wood
was convinced that Ecuador was ready for the evangelical
message. 36

Accompanied by the veteran Milne, Wood arrived in
Guayaquil in mid-November 1899. They visited Consul General
De Leon and Fritz as well as Irigoyen and Viteri. De Leon and
Fritz had concocted a plan to uplift the Ecuadoreans by building
English schools in the major cities. The two wanted to take
advantage of anticipated commercial and official ties with the
United States when the American-built railroad reached Quito.
They wanted to satisfy the "universal desire" of Ecuadoreans to
learn English, and they had asked Andrew Carnegie for $100,000
for an institute in Guayaquil and $500,000 for schools in five other
cities. Fritz believed that Protestantism had to be an essential part
of the curriculum if Ecuador were ever to modernize. De Leon
differed. He wrote Carnegie:

No suspicion of Church should attach to the donation. These people
are Christian and Catholics, and in my opinion when their Church is put
on the same liberal plane as that of our own country, have as good a
religion if not the best, in the world. Be that as it may, it would be very
unwise to mix religion with education.

Wood, who had worked for nearly thirty years with Spanish-
language schools in four South American countries, believed that
the plan was the dictate of practical wisdom, even though
Carnegie did not. 38

After one week in Guayaquil, Wood was ready to test the
Ecuadorean maxim, "The country is for the birds to fly over and
not for men to traverse." 39 From Guayaquil they took an
eight-hour steamer trip to Babahoyo, then selected the best path to
travel 100 miles to Ambato, 10,648 feet above sea level. It was a
grueling ten-day trip, of which one previous traveler had
remarked, "No one should be obliged to travel over the muletrack
unless he has killed his father and mother." 40 Wood suffered from
the rapid drop in temperature, the soaking rains, and the steep
climb. During one of the storms and just outside Ambato, Wood
"was gasping and almost vomiting with mountain sickness
(soroche, which can be fatal)." He feared that leg cramps might
cause him to fall off his mule, but the muleteer and the rest of the party refused to stop because the rains threatened to wash out the road completely. As he grimly hung on, he turned to see how Milne was doing and "looked at a sight that made me yell oh! and throw up both my hands... The clouds had lifted on that side and there stood Chimborazo, hanging right over us with the great cone of rocks and snow fields! That sight was worth all our hardships." While gasping, gagging, and nursing a severe headache, Wood caught several more glimpses of the world's tallest active volcano (25,077 feet). A lingering twilight and a star-speckled sky exuded a soft glow from the snowcapped ranges and left Wood enchanted with the Ecuadorean Andes.41

Throughout his stay in Quito, though, he continuously suffered from *soroche*, and for months after descending the malady lingered. Quinine treatment rendered him partially deaf.42 Once in the capital, Wood and Milne met Antay and began preaching in Spanish and English.43 They did not provoke any riots, but somehow they did attract the attention of the Alfaro cabinet. The Minister of Public Instruction, Doctor José Peralta, represented Alfaro in a series of meetings which resulted in both men achieving long-held goals. Wood signed a contract on December 22, 1899, to establish a Normal School system in Ecuador.44 Acting as a non-salaried agent of the Republic of Ecuador, Wood was to recruit teachers from Chile and the United States. Ecuador would pay all of his travel expenses in three installments. Travel expenses for teachers would also be paid, even for replacements to go to Chile. By September 1, 1900, Wood had to have filled these six positions: three directors for Normal Schools, one for men in Quito, one for women in Quito, and one for men in Cuenca; and three teachers, one in each of the model schools associated with the Normal Schools. All personnel had to be fluent in Spanish and experienced teachers capable of teaching "education in its amplest form, and also languages, and the theory and practice of teaching in all the branches indispensable for normal training for primary education." Wood was also authorized, but not obligated, to hire a director and teacher for a school in Guayaquil and additional teachers in Quito and Cuenca. Native assistants, hired by Peralta, would teach Spanish grammar, Ecuadoran geography, history and civics, and morals and religion. Wood's staff was free from duty on Sundays and free from participating in any Catholic ceremonies.
Wood finally had the opportunity so long denied him by the Missionary Society. Upon returning to Guayaquil early in the next century, Wood began working on the Society to cooperate with his plan. Although it was not written in the contract, Wood had Peralta's and Alfaro's permission to hire missionaries who would evangelize on Sundays and other free times. His hopes were to obtain leaves-of-absence for teachers in the missionary schools in Chile who might be interested and to use the Missionary Society's facilities to recruit the remaining teachers in the United States. In this manner Methodism could catch up with and surpass the blundering Simpsonites and Fisherites without spending a cent. Wood had reached Guayaquil just in time to have a conference with Bishop William X. Ninde, a Vice-President of the Missionary Society, who was on his way to inspect the South American missions. Wood discussed the contract as though it were "probable, not sure," but Ninde approved it heartily and extended Wood's leave. With Ninde's support, Wood had no trouble persuading Ira La Fetra, the Presiding Elder of the Chile District, to transfer teachers who signed contracts to teach in Ecuador.

For a while Wood was unsure of Ecuador's capability of fulfilling its end of the bargain. He wrote his wife, "They made things very formal when I was there, but I was slow to believe that they were reliable enough to deposit the money." The first deposit was nine days late and came after Sampson "poked" them about it, and Wood did not get the money until February 12. "Even now," he wrote the next day, "I do not say much about it, and shall not till I get the 1000 sucres in hand (the second payment)."

Because of the support of Ninde and La Fetra, Wood made only a short trip to Iquique, Chile in late February. Before leaving for New York, Rosina A. Kinsman, Alice H. Fisher, and the Reverend Henry Williams had signed contracts for the enterprise, thus filling half the quota.

By March 24, the second payment was nine days overdue, and Wood had heard nothing at all from Peralta. "I am not surprised at this," Wood wrote Sampson, "but shall grow more anxious about it everyday till news comes." One week later Wood again asked Sampson to nudge Peralta, who had not communicated at all since December and was throwing Wood off schedule. Finally, on April 7, through legation channels, Wood learned that the money had been deposited.

The same day Wood reported his activities to the Corre-
sponding Secretary of the Missionary Society. He wrote jubilantly, "This opportunity is wonderful. I trust you will rejoice with me in view of the new possibilities involved in it." He then cautioned the secretary, "Please do not publish anything about it till I get there, as I am anxious that the Jesuits there shall not get hold of it till certain parts of the far reaching plan are further developed." 51 Hoping to cut off any doubts about the scheme, Wood asked Bishop Ninde to do his best to get the secretary and other Board members to support the plan.52

Wood began recruiting by mail immediately. In an appeal to an old friend in Albuquerque, Wood described the kind of men he wanted. "They must be Saxon born and bred and know Spanish enough to teach small boys. . . ." Neither college education nor normal training were prerequisites; Wood regarded "practical success in teaching better than either—indispensable. They must be Methodist true and tried, and though they need not be preachers, they must be Christian workers. Men with wives are most desired but single men may apply. The wives must be Methodists, and no drawback to the Christian work of their husbands." 53

Wood then embarked on the long hard trip to New York. On June 19, 1900, he complained to his wife:

Never did sea sickness take such a deep hold on me in so short a time as between Colón [Panama] and New York. This morning I feel the table rocking under my elbows as I write. Forty-eight hours after leaving the ship;—with two good nights' rest between! In walking the streets I feel the rising and sinking of a plunging vessel, and in passing a curbstone I brace out my legs against danger of losing my balance by a lurch. The loss of food and rest have left me sensibly weakened. But each day makes me feel better.54

Despite his queasiness, Wood went to Mission Headquarters to present his plan. The Board of Directors gave him the singular honor of asking him to attend the afternoon session of June 19 and report on his work. The members cheered as Wood displayed his contract with the official seals affixed to it. His moment of glory was short-lived. After the meeting he learned that on the recommendation of the chairman Doctor Leonard, the Board had voted without discussion to refuse to permit the transfer of teachers to Ecuador.55

In private meetings with Doctor Leonard, Wood learned the
chairman’s objections. Leonard insisted that Ecuador was out of Wood’s jurisdiction and that the scheme was irregularly pursued outside of proper channels. Furthermore, the Chilean mission was very weak and needed protection from the raids of the overly aggressive Wood.56

Wood then realized that neither Ninde, the Board member responsible for South America, nor La Fetra, the director of the Chilean missions, had communicated their approval of the plan to the Board. With Leonard, Wood reviewed his conversation with Ninde and wrung from Leonard consent for the sub-committee on Chile to reconsider the transfer of teachers, even though Leonard remained opposed to the plan. Wood wrote and telegraphed Ninde to come to New York to help reverse the decision and to secure the Board’s approval.57

The situation was heavy with irony for Wood, who had feared that a lack of faith on Ecuador’s part might have ruined the plan. Even though Wood’s payments had been late, the Ecuadorean Consul General in New York already had orders to pay the expenses of teachers heading for Ecuador and substitutes going to Chile. Wood may have outwitted the Jesuits, but now he had his own Methodists to contend with. Contracts were already signed, the news was public information, and the Missionary Society was about to put Wood and Methodism in the position of “breaking solemn contracts, putting us in contempt for bad faith before the authorities in Ecuador, and among the liberals generally through all those lands, where my project is notorious.” 58 To demonstrate Ecuador’s commitment and to underscore the absence of expense to Methodism, Wood obtained $1,353 from the Ecuadorean Consul General and deposited it in the Society’s treasury. Leonard was unimpressed.59

Wood worked zealously to reverse the decision but found himself fighting an inert bureaucracy. Ninde arrived and helped erase the impressions that Wood had been acting without the cooperation of his superiors and was trying to ransack the Chilean schools. By a two-to-one vote, the sub-committee on Chile asked the Board to reverse its decision. After his victory Wood nearly despaired when two of his supporters returned home. Some Board members seemed so cool to the idea that they indicated to Wood that he should prepare to accept a refusal to endorse his plan. The suggestion sent Wood’s mind reeling. “I can’t even think what I’ll do,—it bewilders me so utterly! . . . I cannot face those public men
to mock them with *broken contracts*. I cannot face the ignominy that will come on the ladies for breaking their contracts, ... contracts with a sovereign power, involving expenditure of public funds, exercise of supreme authority, based on them. . . .”

When the Board met on July 18, Dr. Leonard declared that he did “*not want Methodism to expand in South America, (because it was) spread too thin already!*” The greatest concern of the opponents was for the health of the Chilean mission. After clearly establishing the willingness of the authorities in the Chile mission and schools by reading letters from them, Wood satisfied most, and the vote was “almost unanimous in my favor. Hallelujah and Hallelujah.”

During the struggle to reverse the Board’s action, Wood had continued to recruit. To a man seeking the post of director of the men’s school in Quito, Wood wrote that his salary would put him in the same income bracket as high government officials “and will command respect and influence accordingly.” An applicant concerned about his health and the cost of living read, “The Andine highlands are favorable for weak lungs. . . . You can live cheaper in Cuenca than in Poughkeepsie,—and have a *position* incomparably more advantageous for exercising a wide influence,—*molding a nation in transition.*” To another concerned about health, Wood explained that the danger of malaria existed in Guayaquil, but that there were “no diseases peculiar to the highlands.” To all Wood advised packing warm clothes and rain gear because all four seasons could exist in a single day.

What else could be brought? To Miss Kinsman, Mrs. Wood wrote, “*Bring your flannels and your canary if you like.*” She had to think carefully about her small organ and big piano, though. The organ could be carried by mule, but it would take a dozen men and cost 300 silver soles to transport the piano up the *cordillera.*

Concerning books, Mr. Wood counseled, “The textbooks you name will never be needed in the discharge of your contract duties. But they come under the rule: the more you take, the more you will have. Take all the books that you are fond of. They will seem to you like old friends.”

On July 21, four days after the Board’s endorsement, Wood received the last signed contract in the mail. Ten days later Wood, William T. Robinson, Merritt M. Harris, and C. M. Griffith left New York. With some relief Wood wrote, “The Consul General has given me all the money I could ask for and Castilian cordiality
without stint. The Mission office is calm and cordial toward me after the month of storm.” 67 When the four arrived in Panama, they witnessed the bloody suppression of an unsuccessful revolution, and they crossed the isthmus during a yellow fever epidemic without becoming ill. Reporting to Bishop Ninde, Wood wrote, “So the brethren that accompany me have had their introduction to the anxieties of war and pestilence” and were “of good Heart.” 68

The rest of their trip was uneventful. They arrived in Guayaquil on August 17 and found an unasked for $400 waiting for them.69 After some difficulty hiring drivers and mules, they headed for Quito on the twenty-first. Climbing the *cordillera* was tiring but relatively easy. Wood got only a mild case of *soroche*, and the scenery again made his sufferings bearable. “Once more I write to you from the heart of the Andes,” he wrote his wife. “Chimbo is indescribably grand.” As the party approached Quito on August 30, two days ahead of the deadline, Wood reported “a splendid” view of the mountain valley.70 The sunset peered through the peaks of Pichincha and the western range of the *cordilleras* and threw shadows across the valley darkening all the eastern *cordilleras* except Pancillo, which had a rosy glow on its snowcapped summit. The four rode into Quito by “snowlight” and checked into the capital city’s newest accommodation, “Gran Hotel de Francia.” 71

The next day Wood bought a new hat and pair of cuffs and reported to Minister Peralta. After greeting Wood, Peralta announced that the teachers from Chile were on their way and that the government would open the schools as soon as possible. Then he said, “‘Let’s go see the President!’ He marched me straight into a cabinet meeting! All rose up for me!! Alfaro put out his hand most cordially.” 72

Wood had completed his task.

**FOOTNOTES**

I am grateful to the Consortium on Research Training for funding a trip which made it possible to complete research for this paper.


2 Alfaro is Ecuador’s greatest figure and has inspired a sizeable body of literature. Three comprehensive biographies giving diverse interpretations are: Roberto Andrade,

3 Tillman to Olney, Quito, September 20, 1895, in United States Department of State, General Records of the Department of State (Record Group 59), Diplomatic Despatches, Ecuador, Microcopy T-50, XV; hereinafter referred to as Despatches with volume number.


6 Tillman to Olney, Quito, October 1, 1895, Despatches, XV, and Cevallos Garcia, Historia, p. 385.

7 T. B. Wood to Leonard, Callao, September 11, 1895, p. 174, Archives of DePauw University and Indiana Methodism. MSS Thomas Bond Wood, Document Case 521, folder 6. Hereinafter referred to as DePauw, D. C. #, f. #. My work at DePauw was facilitated by Dr. David E. Horn and his cheerful efficient assistants, Virginia D. Brann and Julie J. Young.


9 Wood Register, p. 6, DePauw.


11 Ibid., p. 543.

12 Ibid., pp. 454-55.

13 Ibid.


The annual reports were at the library of the Commission on Archives and History at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. My thanks go to Dr. John H. Ness, Jr. and Evelyn M. Sutton for their kind assistance.


17 Ellen Dow Wood to Antonio Viteri, Callao, August 6, 1895, p. 79, DePauw, D. C. 521, f.6.


22 Informe del Ministro de lo Interior y Policía a la Convenció Nacional de 1896-1897 (Quito: Imprenta Nacional, 1897), pp. 4-32, passim.

23 Ibid.

24 Tillman to Olney, Quito, January 20, 1897, Despatches, XVI; Mecham, Church and State, p. 188; Loor, Alfaro, II, pp. 546-553.

25 Loor, Alfaro, II, pp. 578, 591.

26 Sampson to Hay, Quito, February 22, 1899, Depatches, XVI; Mecham, Church and State, p. 188; Loor, Alfaro II, p. 626.

27 Sampson to Hay, Quito, January 20, 1900, Depatches, XVII.

28 T. B. Wood to Smith, Callao, October 6, 1896, DePauw, D. C. 522, f.2.

33 Sampson to DeLeon, Quito, February 25, 1898, despatch 6, American Consulate General, Guayaquil, Legation Correspondence, 1897, #1050, pp. 35-35½, National Archives Building, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84.
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35 Sampson to Hay, Quito, March 15, 1899, Despatches, XVI.
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39 De Leon to Hill, Guayaquil, October 30, 1899, unnumbered despatch, United States Consulate General, vol. 8, #1081, Despatches to the Department of State, October 5, 1896-June 14, 1905, p. 149, National Archives Building, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84.
42 T. B. Wood to Ellen, Lima, February 13, 1900, DePauw, D.C., p. 523, f.1.
50 T. B. Wood to Sampson, Lima, April 7, 1900, p. 376, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.1.
52 T. B. Wood to Ninde, Lima, April 7, 1900, pp. 387-88, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.1.
53 T. B. Wood to Dr. Thomas Harwood, Lima, April 16, 1900, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.1.
56 Ibid., pp. 607-609.
57 Ibid.
59 T. B. Wood to Ninde, Panama City, Colombia, August 13, 1900, p. 37, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.3.
61 Ibid., p. 675.
64 T. B. Wood to Merritt M. Harris, New York, July 16, 1900, p. 664, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.1.
65 Ellen Dow Wood to Miss Kinsman, Lima, June 13, 1900, pp. 4-5, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.2.
67 T. B. Wood to Joe and Susie, July 31, 1900, p. 19, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.3.
68 T. B. Wood to Ninde, Panama City, Colombia, August 13, 1900, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.3.
69 T. B. Wood to Ellen, Guayaquil, August 23, 1900, p. 59, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.3.
70 T. B. Wood to Ellen, Guaranda, August 27, 1900, p. 59, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.3.
71 T. B. Wood to Ellen, Quito, September 2, 1900, p. 61, DePauw, D.C. 523, f.3.
72 Ibid., p. 62

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