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Abstract

The papers of William Robertson Angus, Jr., missionary to China and the Philippines. Rutgers University Class of 1922; Hartford Seminary Class of 1925; graduate work at Yale University; licensed by the Classis of Bergen, 1925; commissioned by the RCA board of Foreign Missions, 1925; Amoy Mission service, 1925-1952; Honorary Doctorate of Divinity, Rutgers, 1947; recommissioned and sent to the Philippines as a missionary, 1952-1967. The collection includes Angus’ metrical paraphrases of books from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Apocrypha; drafts of the poetry volume South Fukien; articles, essays, sermons and lectures; RCA missionary service materials; an oral history transcript; correspondence; and photographs and slides of RCA China missions.

Accession No.: H00-1381
Provenance: William R. Angus, Jr.
Donor: William R. Angus, Jr.
Dr. and Mrs. Jack Hill
David Robertson Angus
Photographs: 310 images (30 slides) (Box 1); one image Box 2
Processed by: Rebecca A. O’Shesky, July 1991
Alicia Irvine, September 2000
David Andrews, December 2000

Biography

William Angus was born on October 4, 1901, in New York City. He went to local schools in the city and at Oradell and Park Ridge, New Jersey. In 1922, Angus earned his B.S. in Agriculture (Soil Fertility) at Rutgers University. He took his theological training at Hartford Seminary, receiving his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1925. Angus later undertook graduate work at Yale University Language School, 1946-1947.

After getting his B.D., Angus was licensed by the RCA Classis of Bergen. While studying the Amoy Chinese Dialect, he met his future wife, Agnes Buikema, who preferred to be called by her middle name, Joyce. Once commissioned by the RCA Board of Foreign Missions, Angus departed for the Amoy Mission district in 1925 to become an evangelist to the country churches of China. Joyce was also sent to China to be an English instructor. They were married on July 5, 1927. They had three children: Margery Anne, David Robertson, and John Galen Angus.

In 1930, the Anguses’ home city of Changchow was overrun by the forces of Mao Tsetung, and the family was forced to flee the city. Afterward, they took a year’s furlough, spent in Princeton, New Jersey, and returned to their work in China. Events following the 1941 U.S. entry into World War II caused the family to be separated for five years. William, traveling the countryside on mission business, was not allowed back to find his family. Joyce and the three children were made prisoners of war and eventually repatriated to the U.S. on the first S.S.

The family took another furlough, during which Rutgers University awarded William an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity in 1947. Later that same year, the Anguses returned to missionary work in China. They stayed until 1952, when Communist pressure forced them to leave. The Anguses were recommissioned and sent as missionaries to the Philippines. They remained there until William retired in 1967.

Moving to Orange City, Iowa, the Anguses opened their home to Chinese and Philippine students studying at Northwestern College. William continued his private work on metrical paraphrases of books of the Bible and on a collection of poems on his China service. After battling terminal illness, Joyce died in 1974. William created a scholarship in her name at Northwestern for American and foreign students going into mission work, and foreign students needing financial aid. He died on October 8, 1984, and his name was added to the memorial scholarship. The Angus house in Orange City has since become a part of the Northwestern campus.

Scope and Content

The William Angus, Jr. Papers span the years 1906-1983, with memorial materials from the year 2000. Box 1, and one-quarter of Box 2, contain diverse papers from Angus’ lengthy missionary service, including correspondence, articles by Angus and others, newsletters and news clippings, some verse works, an oral history transcript, and photographs and slides of China and the Philippines.

Boxes 2-5 contain manuscript and typescript drafts and bound copies of Angus’ decades-long efforts at paraphrasing books of the Bible in the meter of blank verse. Angus’ original attempts at publication resulted in small, bound volumes of Old and New Testament books entitled “Exercises in Metrical Paraphrase,” some of which are collected in Box 2. Angus also used this title as a working title for early drafts in the series he later titled The Bible in Verse: A Metrical Paraphrase. Advancing this project occupied Angus from the late 1960s until his death.

One quarter of Box 5, and all of Box 6, collect the drafts and bound copies of South Fukien: A Missionary’s Miscellany, the collection of narrative poems about his China years that Angus edited and arranged into book form during the 1950s. Where his versification of the Bible is considered and eloquent in its simplicity of language, South Fukien, through its many drafts and formal changes, is superlative at elevating a personal narrative to a work of universal appeal and historical importance. Angus shares the gifts of novelist Graham Greene for spotting dramatic situations amid everyday life in the Orient, and for pointing out a clear cut moral above ideological confusions.

Container List

Box 1

Articles

“Chinese Preaching to Villagers,” 1938
“Country Pastors in China,” 1938
“The Tiger, the Bull, and the Fox,” 1938
“Two Friends of Evangelism,” 1938

Board of Foreign Missions, RCA, Newsletter, 1937-1938
China Notes, Newsletter, 1969-1970
Correspondence
1942-1943
1944
1945-1946

Essays
“Behind the White Screen,” n.d.
“Pieces of China, n.d.
Lecture Notes, ca. 1965-1970
Maps, n.d.
Note, Card, Drawing, n.d.
Notes on Chinese Customs, n.d.
Oral History Project Transcript, 1977
Paraphrased Psalms sent to Hymnbook Committee, 1981

Philippines Service
Church and Community Newsletter, Correspondence, Notes, Articles, 1967-1970
Church Literature

Photographs
Amoy Mission Region, 1948, n.d. (14 images)
Chinese Groups, 1925. 1948, n.d. (35 images)
Missionary Groups, ca. 1906, 1947, n.d. (11 images)
“Recollections of Toa-bo” (booklet), 1921
Tong-An and An-Khoe areas, 1932 (70 images)
William and Joyce Angus, 1967, n.d. (9 images)
William and Joyce Angus and Miss Go Teaching Choirs, Easter Services, n.d. (10 images)
Psalms set to Christmas Carols, n.d.
RCA Chinese Mission Reports, 1941-1946, n.d.
Reference Articles
“Chinese Church Living with More Persecutions,” The Presbyterian Journal,
March 4, 1970

“Good News for Everyone,” American Bible Society Record, January 1977
Slide box
  Slides: China, Hong Kong, Philippines, U.S. (boxes, packets), n.d. (30 images)
  Gift, Tie Clip, n.d.

Box 2

Photograph, Hangchow, China, 1949

Exercises in Metrical Paraphrase

The Bible in Verse: A Metrical Paraphrase
  Genesis, 1982
  Exodus, 1982
  Leviticus, 1982
  Numbers, 1981
  Deuteronomy, 1981
  Joshua, n.d.
  Judges, n.d.
  Ruth, n.d.
  Isaiah, 1971

Box 3

The Bible in Verse: A Metrical Paraphrase (cont.)
Jeremiah
  1970
  26-52, Draft, n.d.
I Samuel, n.d.
II Samuel, n.d.
I Kings, n.d.
II Kings
  n.d.
  Manuscript Draft, n.d.
I Chronicles, Manuscript Draft, n.d.
II Chronicles, Manuscript Draft, n.d.
Ezra
1975
Draft, n.d.
Nehemiah
1975
Draft, n.d.
Esther
1970
Draft, 1970
Job, 1974
Proverbs, 1972
Ecclesiastes
1967
Draft, 1967

Box 4

*The Bible in Verse: A Metrical Paraphrase* (cont.)

Ezekiel
1970
1-24, Draft, n.d.
Matthew, Draft, 1969
Mark, Draft, 1968
Luke
Draft, n.d.
Draft, 1968
John, Draft, 1968
Acts, Draft, 1967
Romans, n.d.
I Corinthians, n.d.
II Corinthians, n.d.
Epistles: I and II Peter, I-III John, Jude, 1969
Revelation, 1975
The Apocrypha
The Additions to Esther, 1983
Baruch, n.d.
I Esdras, 1982
II Esdras, 1982
Judith, 1983
Jesus the Son of Sirach, 1-38:30, n.d.
Box 5

_The Bible in Verse: A Metrical Paraphrase_ (cont.)
The Apochrypha (cont.)
  Tobit, 1982
  The Wisdom of Solomon, 1983
Errata Sheets, n.d.
Manuscript Passage Paraphrases, n.d.
Sample Verse Passages, n.d.
Transcripts of Taped Readings in Matthew and Mark, n.d.
Bound Copies
  The Psalms, 1973
  Matthew, 1969
  Mark, 1969
  Luke, 1969
  John, 1969
  Acts, 1967
  The General Epistles, 1969
  Revelation, 1970

_South Fukien: A Missionary’s Miscellany_
Poems
  Folder 1, 1925-1951
  Folder 2, 1925-1951
  Folder 3, 1925-1951
  Folder 4, 1925-1951
  Folder 5, 1925-1951

Box 6

_South Fukien: A Missionary’s Miscellany_ (cont.)
Poems (cont.)
  Folder 6, 1925-1951
  Folder 7, 1925-1951
Early Typescript
  Section One: Love Poems, n.d.
  Section Two: Amoy and Points West, n.d.
  Section Three: War Years, n.d.
  Section Four: The Mammon of Inflation, n.d.

Typescript
  Amoy and Points West, n.d.
  The Mammon of Inflation, n.d.
  The War Years, n.d.
  Last Years, n.d.
  Amoy and Points West
    Folder 1, 1954
Folder 2, 1954
Forty-Eight Selections, n.d.
Bound Copies, Blue Carbon
Index of Titles, n.d.
Book One: Change, n.d.
Book Two: Unrest, n.d.
Book Three: War, n.d.
Book Four: Inflation, n.d.
Book Five: Communists, n.d.