CANADIAN METHODIST WOMEN AND MISSIONS:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF "PIOUS, PLODDING" FEMALES

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“A new type among Women’s Missionary Societies.” This is how Helen Barrett Montgomery, in 1911, described the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. Organized in Boston in 1869, it was unique in that “it was distinctly understood from the beginning that it was not auxiliary to the general Board.”¹ In Canada, Methodist women followed this pattern as they organized missionary societies in two of the Wesleyan denominations prior to the merger of Canadian Methodist groups in 1884. In this they differed from the women of other denominations in their country.² Although the story of one part of the founding of the Canadian Methodist WMS has often been told, it has not been examined in the broader context of the development of this new type of society. To do so, we look first at the earlier experience of Canadian Methodist women, primarily as they worked for missions, but also, briefly, in their other associational activity, to see to what extent it foreshadowed their later independence. Then we must examine the process by which they formed women’s missionary societies, seeking to understand the groups’ nature through their origins. Finally we will look briefly at the expectations concerning women and their role within the church, as we search for that which helped these women to transcend their previous experience and develop “a new type among Women’s Missionary Societies.”

The roots of Canadian Methodism are twofold, from the United States, and from England. Methodism entered what is now Ontario with the arrival of settlers and preachers from the United States. In 1828, the Canadian and U.S. groups separated, and William Case became superintendent of the Canadian Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1833, most of its members joined with another group, the British Wesleyan Methodist Church, to form the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Some who stayed out of this union formed a continuing Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada. In 1874, the larger of these two Canadian groups, the Wesleyan

Methodist Church, joined with the much smaller Methodist New Connexion Church and also the Wesleyan Conference of Eastern British North America, based in the Maritimes. The resulting church took the name the Methodist Church of Canada.

Women in these two Methodist bodies organized missionary societies, the Episcopals in 1876, and the new group in which the Wesleyans were dominant, in 1881. Then in 1884, the remaining divisions within Methodism ended with the union of these two branches along with the Bible Christian Church of Canada and the Primitive Methodist Church in Canada, to form the Methodist Church (Canada, Newfoundland, Bermuda). Soon after this, the two Woman’s Missionary Societies joined in a single society within the newly united church.

The story of Canadian woman’s missionary societies is normally begun in 1880, with perhaps a glimpse back to the 1870s. Yet this picture is incomplete. Records are scanty, but some women joined together on behalf of missions soon after Methodists began missionary work among the native people in Upper Canada (now Ontario) in the 1820s. In 1823, Peter Jones, the mixed-blood son of a government surveyor, was converted, and when he and a few other converts became missionaries themselves, interest in the work increased. Probably in 1827, William Case brought Eliza Barnes from New England to labor in the new missions.

Barnes taught and preached, but she also travelled to raise support for the work. Her destinations included New England, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. She received assistance from the Dorcas Societies that women organized in churches there, and she and other Canadian missionaries encouraged the native women to band together in a similar way. Barnes obtained materials that the women used making articles to be sold at charity bazaars. By 1832, one of the groups had raised seventy dollars. It was anticipated that the women would “apply it towards the establishment and support of a new school among some of the destitute tribes of Indians.” Native women were, themselves, organized supporters of missions.

Some women in Canada’s towns and villages were also organizing. In the summer of 1830, the York Female Missionary Society presented its second Annual Report, and the denominational newspaper, the Christian Guardian, stated that “[a] number of female Missionary Societies have been established in this Province.” These organizations, however, left few

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3To minimize confusion I shall refer to this as the Wesleyan church even after the union of 1874.
4CG, May 15, 1830, 203; see also CG, May 21, 1831, 11.
5CG, Jan. 11, 1832, 34.
6CG, Aug. 14, 1830, 309.
traces, though there are brief records of a missionary society organized by the women of Matilda, in Upper Canada, in 1833.7

Best documented is the Cramahe Female Missionary Society, founded near Colborne in about 1827. Twelve times between 1831 and 1843 the society publicized its work in the Christian Guardian, submitting reports written with stirring rhetoric designed to advance the cause of missions. The group functioned as an auxiliary to the church’s missionary society, sponsoring an annual meeting at which there were the traditional addresses and subscription lists, and sending out its managers to collect funds after these meetings.

In 1839 and 1840 the writer noted the use of missionary boxes by several children, and in 1842, the society’s collection included the proceeds of a small bazaar.8 Readers were told in 1843 that “[t]he frigid temperature both of the weather and the ‘times’ has not entirely congealed the Missionary spirit of the Cramahe Branch Society,” and the sum collected was “a little in advance of last year.”9 The sombre mood of the report is prophetic, for it was the last communication from the group. Later women’s missionary societies would use similar methods to raise both money for missions and awareness of the missionary enterprise, but the Cramahe association did not persist to become part of that later movement.

In an early period when missions to native peoples were nearby and interest was high, women in Cramahe and elsewhere organized in support of this work. But, as John Webster Grant has stated, “By mid-century the enterprise [of Indian missions] had lost much of its glamour.”10 The women’s associations withered, and there is a discontinuity between their early work and the missionary societies that came into being later in the century. It had taken an extraordinary inspiration for the women to maintain their own societies. This was present with the optimism concerning Indian missions in the 1820s and ’30s, and it returned with the excitement concerning missions in the west and, especially, foreign missions, in the 1870s.

Even in the 1820s to 1840s, however, most women were not organized into their own societies. Yet a large number of women were engaging in the same activity as the managers of the Cramahe group: they were collecting for missions on behalf of the missionary society of the Wesleyan church. In the 1830s, this was a recent phenomenon. A writer commended the practice to churches not yet using it, quoting a statement by the late

8CG, Feb. 6, 1839, 53; Mar. 11, 1840, 77; Feb. 23, 1842, 7.
9CG, Apr. 12, 1843, 98.
10John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 92.
Dr. Adam Clarke that “one woman was worth seven men and a half.” Clarke had offered as proof “the example of a town in which during one year the collectors for the Missionary Society were males—the next year females—and the females collected seven and a half times as large a sum as their predecessors.” During the following years there was increasing mention of the work of female collectors, and one writer observed, “A pious, plodding female . . . makes a speech at the end of the year quite as, if not more effective than the most eloquent one on the platform.”

The collector’s lot was not easy. She was expected to expand her calling beyond those households from which subscriptions had been obtained, and to return persistently until the full amount was paid. Especially in the country she faced hazards of “stream, or swamp, or stumps, or drifts in the way, . . . a miser’s scowl or a bigot’s dog.”

Collectors were commended for their resourcefulness. One “carried home with pleasure” a saddle to be sold for the missionary collection. Another pair organized a work bee to fix a piece of bad road; for that they were paid £5. Two others called upon a man who offered them a calf, not expecting them to accept it. They, however, found a buyer, returned the next day with an ancient horse and a rude cart, and, “with female delicacy,” asked for the calf. In the meantime, the farmer had sold the animal, “but now, seeing their zeal, willingly and freely gave them the price of the calf.”

These two enterprising collectors were unmarried, and many collectors were young women; others were “pious mothers” and “worthy widows.” Whatever their age or marital status, most of the Wesleyan collectors were female.

The Methodist Episcopal Church began publishing its own paper, the Canada Christian Advocate, in 1845. In its columns there was less mention of missionary collectors, and less reference to the collectors as female, than in the Christian Guardian. Nevertheless it is clear that in this branch of Methodism, too, collectors “occupy a very important and distinguished post in the great missionary enterprise,” and these collectors were predominantly female.

For women in either denomination, missionary collecting was not a path to tangible reward or public glory. Only briefly did the Niagara

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11 CG, Feb. 18, 1835, 58.
12 CG, Nov. 23, 1842, 18.
13 CG, Mar. 6, 1861, 37.
14 CG, Apr. 8, 1868, 60.
15 CG, Nov. 21, 1855, 26.
16 CG, June 25, 1845, 142.
17 CG, Mar. 6, 1861, 37.
18 CG, Nov. 26, 1845, 22.
19 Canada Christian Advocate [CCA], Dec. 19, 1848, 1.
District of the Methodist Episcopal Church give book premiums to its most successful collectors. The Wesleyans offered a kind of minor immortality: for decades, its missionary society published the names of contributors and the amounts of their gifts, and also the names of those who had collected these sums. For the most part, however, collectors had to be satisfied that "[t]heir memorial is on high." Their activity was acceptable because it was for a "holy cause," and because it lay within the realm of acceptable female activity. Collectors travelled alone or in pairs around town and countryside, but this was no daring venture into public space. An article entitled "A Young Missionary Collector's First Experience" described a strenuous day's work, but the activity is set forth as a series of social calls. Thus the collector was participating in a suitable pastime for Victorian females, but elevating it to a higher purpose. Another writer spoke of collecting as work that daughters did "when home duties have been performed." This endeavor, however noble, must not infringe on domestic responsibilities.

Another acceptable activity for Victorian women was providing hospitality, and in the middle of the century this was also put into the service of missions. To the traditional missionary meeting, an increasing number of congregations added a missionary team meeting given by "the ladies." Women expanded into public space what was essentially a domestic activity as they made cakes and served cup after cup of tea, often supplying the provisions at their own expense so that all the proceeds could go to missions.

These women were busy working together for other causes as well. Frequently in concert with women of other denominations, they organized benevolent associations to care for those in need. Increasingly the women also organized to assist their church. Some joined together to hold a single event, while others organized what were generally known as ladies' aids, which often began in support of a specific object such as raising money for a church building. When that was accomplished, the group either ceased to function, or developed a new role. All of these organizations gave Methodist women experience in associational work, and sometimes the women devised strategies for using money they raised for objects of their own choosing.

There is one further example of how some Methodist women gained organizational experience. In the late 1860s, the Methodist Episcopal women

See, for example, CCA, Feb. 25, 1857, 2.
21CG, Feb. 22, 1843, 70.
22CCA, Dec. 19, 1848, 2.
23CCA, Mar. 26, 1862, 1.
24CG, Mar. 6, 1861, 37.
formed the Ladies' Educational Aid Society "to provide means to assist in educating young men for the ministry of the M.E. Church in Canada."\textsuperscript{26} This group relied on the co-operation and support of the preachers. The society's constitution stated that "[g]entlemen appointed to office shall be members of the Society during their term of office,"\textsuperscript{27} and a report of the anniversary meeting held in 1872 shows the strong role men could play. In the absence of the President, the First Vice-President took the chair and asked Rev. Mr. LaDu "to constitute the business meeting proper, with devotional exercises." Because many members were absent, six men "were appointed on the Central Committee in order to facilitate business."\textsuperscript{28}

Five months later, just before the Society's annual meeting, the \textit{Advocate} printed a letter by the corresponding secretary, Mrs. B. Lane, wife of one of the men appointed to the Central Committee. She wrote:

\begin{quote}
Now, ladies, this is exclusively our Association, and should we fail in the accomplishment of the object in view, I fear that some, especially the gentlemen, might say, "what more could you expect; it is nothing but a ladies' institution."— We do not purpose to give them the opportunity to cast that reflection. We will accept counsel and aid from our gentlemen friends, but, farther, will permit no interference.

In the work of our Society, relative to the co-operation of the gentlemen, we will practically reverse the marriage vow, and ask for their implicit and most cheerful obedience to our mandates.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

Only the timing of the letter, following the anniversary meeting, suggests what tensions may have prompted this assertion. The letter's appearance, however, demonstrates that some women of the Ladies' Educational Aid Society held an ideal of independent action as they collected money for the education of ministers, and made decisions about the applications they received.

By the mid 1870s, Canadian Methodist women had gained associational experience as they labored within their communities, congregations, and denominations. Of these, only Methodist Episcopal women in the Educational Aid Society dealt explicitly, if tentatively, with the issue of the independence of their work. This is the experience that Methodist women brought as they organized their own missionary societies in the last decades of the century.

In 1870, the \textit{Christian Guardian} reprinted a ringing call to action by Jennie Fowler Willing, Corresponding Secretary of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States that had been founded the previous year.\textsuperscript{30} A few months later, the editor noted that "In several parts of the United States, in the Methodist Church,

\begin{footnoteset}
\item \textsuperscript{26}CCA, Mar. 10, 1869, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{27}CCA, Mar. 29, 1871, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{28}CCA, Sept. 4, 1872, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{29}CCA, Feb. 12, 1873, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{30}CG, Aug. 31, 1870, 135.
\end{footnoteset}
Christian women have organized themselves into Missionary societies, and are awaking the interest of the female portion of the church in missionary work."  

Yet not the Methodist Church of Canada, but the Methodist Episcopal Church was the first Canadian body to have such a society. This was largely due to the entrance upon the scene of one woman, Harriet Lyon Jaques. Nowhere in the 20th century accounts of the WMS is Jaques mentioned, yet she deserves attention, both for the results of her work, and for her role as a personal connecting link between U.S. and Canadian Methodism.

Harriet Lyon was born in Benton, New York, in 1830. After graduating from Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, she worked one year as preceptress of Troupsburg Academy, and at the end of the year married its principal, J. R. Jaques. During the next years she worked some as a preceptress, and some at the "onerous duties of a pastor's wife." In 1865 her husband accepted a post at Illinois Wesleyan University. During their ten years in Illinois, Harriet founded a number of local women's groups. When the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, she became Assistant State Secretary, and worked to establish branch societies of the new organization. During her last year in Illinois, she was associated with a particularly strong supporter of women's mission work, namely Jennie Fowler Willing, who had come to Illinois Wesleyan to teach. Willing and Jaques worked together in the Women's Educational Association as well as in the missionary society. Then in 1875, J. R. and Harriet Jaques moved to Belleville, Ontario, as president of the Albert College, and preceptress of Alexandra College, educational institutions of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Canada.

A few months before the Jaques arrived in Canada, the Methodist Episcopal Church had undertaken to strengthen its missionary work. Manitoba was being opened for settlement, and the Episcopalians saw an urgent need for churches there. To facilitate the collection of funds, they organized a denominational missionary society. Local congregations were encouraged to form branch societies, and the constitution adopted for this work stated that "[l]adies are eligible to be officers of the society or branch," thus specifically making a place for women in the new structure.

Women might have experienced no more than this minor change in status if it had not been for the information and enthusiasm brought to Episcopal Methodism by Harriet Jaques. The June following her arrival in

31CG, Feb. 8, 1871, 22.
32CCA, May 5, 1880, 2. Biographical information is from this extensive article, printed following her death on Apr. 24, 1880.
34CCA, July 14, 1875, 2.
Canada, the *Advocate* published a call to the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church to form a Woman's Missionary Society. In it Jaques cited the precedent of groups in England and the United States.³⁵

"With the approval of the Bishop and Missionary Secretary," a meeting was set for June 20 at Alexandra College in Belleville. There the women elected officers, and adjourned until October 12. At the second meeting, they adopted a constitution and discussed the formation of auxiliaries. The Methodist Episcopal women had their own missionary society, largely due to the efforts of Jaques.

The WMS elected as president Ann Eliza Massey, who had earlier been an officer of the Ladies' Educational Aid Society; it chose as treasurer Mrs. B. Lane, author of the statement concerning the roles of women and men in that society, and as vice-president Mary Sisk Carman, wife of Bishop Albert Carman. Jaques became corresponding secretary, an important position requiring considerable effort. As one part of this work, she actively engaged in organizing Conference Societies and local auxiliaries. Jaques' untimely death in 1880 was a significant loss to the organization.

The young society was responsible for handling and disbursing the money that it collected, making contributions through the denominational missionary society. Generally the women chose to support work in Manitoba, frequently designating the specific location, though sometimes leaving the matter open to negotiation.³⁶

The WMS was acting in accordance with its constitution which closely followed that of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society to the south. The constitution of the Canadian group stated, "This Society will work in harmony with and under the supervision of the authorities of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and be subject to their approval in the employment and remuneration of missionaries" who "shall labor under the direction of the authorities of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church."³⁷ In fact, the group never put missionaries in the field. The denomination had neither the foreign missions nor the institutional missions (such as orphanages) in western Canada that might have welcomed a female missionary. Its missionaries labored to plant churches among the settlers, and that was an occupation for male clergy.

A question remains as to how the organization was perceived and perceived itself. In 1890, Mary Carman recounted the history of the Episcopal WMS. She told of opposition to the women's organizing, and

³⁵CCA, June 14, 1876, 3.
³⁶See, for example, Woman's Missionary Society [ME WMS] minutes, June 17, 1880, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, United Church of Canada/Victoria University Archives, Toronto, [UCA].
³⁷CCA, Nov. 15, 1876, 2; Art. 8, Sec. 1.
of a gradual change. "The work went on slowly but surely and at the next General Conference in 1878 our W.M.S. was recognized as one of the regular organizations of the Church."38 Her language differed strikingly from that of the official proceedings of the 1878 Conference. There, the "Committee on Missions reported to the effect . . . that the Woman’s Missionary Society be taken under the care of the General Conference."39 What the women saw as gaining recognition of their "regular" status, the men saw as taking over their "care"! In the nine years of the Episcopal WMS, there was no conflict between the women and their parent body. There was not even an assertion of independence like that made by the Educational Aid Society. Yet the difference in perception of what happened at the 1878 General Conference suggests a potential for disagreement.

The story of the Wesleyan WMS has been recounted much more frequently than that of its Episcopal counterpart, and differs greatly from that of the earlier group.40 It is not the narrative of one woman’s initiative, but of a denomination that needed women’s aid, or, more precisely, a denomination in which some key men recognized that need.

The 1860s saw a resurgence of work among Canada’s native peoples, and in 1873 the Wesleyans added a foreign field to their agenda with the opening of a mission in Japan. Soon there was a request for female workers because of the limitations imposed by Japanese culture on contact of western men with Japanese women. Under considerable financial strain, the General Board of Missions was not ready to expand its work in this way, so the General Conference of 1878 considered a proposal for a Ladies’ Missionary Society, that “would be a valuable auxiliary to our present missionary organization.”41 The group was divided. Some feared that a woman’s society “would interfere to some extent with the financial income of the General Missionary Society,” while one supporter noted that in the United States such societies actually stimulated all work for missions. In the end they agreed to authorize the Missionary Board “to organize such a society during the next quadrennial period, if, in their judgment, the financial condition of the General Society should warrant it.”

A year later, the Missionary Board decided that the time had come. The following June, when the London Conference was in session at Hamilton, the missionary secretary, Alexander Sutherland, met with a group of women to discuss how to organize a missionary society. During the next two weeks the women worked, and on June 23, 1880, a Woman’s Missionary Society was formed, including in its membership women from

38 ME WMS, 78.080C/001, UCA.
39 CCA, Sept. 18, 1878, 2.
41 CG, Oct. 2, 1878, 318.
all the Methodist churches in the city. They hoped that women in other places would follow their example. That fall, Sutherland used the denominational press to encourage the formation of local societies and the organization of a denominational society as well. In April 1881 he met with the Hamilton group. The women elected provisional officers and adopted a constitution for a national group that was formally constituted on November 18, 1881.

This traditional account gives a limited view of the founding of the Wesleyan WMS. For many years, the women tended to legitimize their work by recalling the invitation given by Sutherland and by the denomination as a whole. Thus in her 1907 history of the society, Harriet Platt recorded the appeals of Sutherland and explained, “We have given place to the above to prove that the women of the Church did not 'run before they were sent,' and that they owe their existence as a Society, not to their own desire for prominence, but to the urgent need of the Church for their co-operation in the great missionary enterprise.”

The histories focus on Sutherland, but the records of the Hamilton society’s first year demonstrate the agency of the women involved. At the initial meeting on June 7, 1880, the women decided to use the expertise of one of their number who had been secretary of a branch society in the United States. She was “commissioned to write for a copy of their Constitution and Bylaws, and gather whatever information she could, that would be helpful to us.” Also at that meeting “[a] committee of ten ladies was appointed to draft a Constitution and Bylaws.”

The minutes of the June 23 meeting record that “[t]here was considerable discussion whether or not this Society should place itself under the direction of the General Missionary Society. It was eventually thought best to do so.” The issue, however, was not closed. At a meeting the following February, the secretary reported a visit by a Mrs. Lathrop from the United States. The report continued,

> The time has come for the Society most carefully to weigh the point that we so unsatisfactorily decided at our inception. Are we quite sure we are willing to hand over the funds of the Society to the General Committee and have them transact all our financial business, reserving to ourselves the right, simply to collect the money and determine what shall be done with it, as they will be very glad to have us do? . . . Or shall we strike out on an entirely new line? Assume all the responsibilities ourselves, and take the burden upon our own hearts and heads, which will force us to our knees to seek the wisdom from above? . . . The way in which this question is settled is of the most vital importance at this state of our existence. We must act promptly, or the opportunity for decision and wielding the greatest influence for good will have passed,

43 Hamilton WMS minute book 1880–1883, 18, WMS Records 78.080C/10, UCA.
never to return, or return only when the false step is made apparent, and after much time and energy have been wasted.  

The minutes do not record a decision, but the decision becomes obvious in the subsequent record. Early in April the group agreed to invite Sutherland to its next meeting, and to present him with a document “in which should be clearly set forth ['points of difficulty' crossed out] our proposed plan of labor.” At the meeting on April 29, Sutherland was “scarcely prepared for the plan of operation we laid before him for his approval, but very pleasantly replied mentioning some points he was anxious to guard.” The plan met with the support of Sutherland and the other three ministers present, and the women went ahead with the organization of a denominational society.

As soon as the new society selected provisional officers, the corresponding secretary, Elizabeth Sutherland Strachan, began the work that she continued, confidently and competently, for forty-three years. The women moved forward quickly on their “entirely new line.” After only one year the society sent off its first missionary: Strachan’s cousin, Martha Cartmell, left for Japan in November of 1882. The story of the Japan mission has been retold many times and need not detain us, except that two things must be noted.

The constitution that the women developed for the denominational society had one significant difference from those of the American and Canadian Methodist Episcopal groups. It omitted the reference to “supervision,” and only stated, “This Society shall work in harmony with the authorities of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, and be subject to their approval in the employment and remuneration of Missionaries or other Agents, the designation of fields of labor, and in the general plans and designs of the work.” It also contained a provision that “[a]ll Missionaries or other Agents supported or aided by this Society, shall be approved, before appointment, by the constituted authorities of the Methodist Church of Canada, and shall be subject to the same rules and regulations as other Missionaries or Agents of the said Church.” But, as Rosemary Gagan has observed, “[a]s soon as the WMS was on a firm footing, that clause was conveniently ignored.” The path ahead was far from smooth, for reasons that Gagan has analyzed well, but early in the history of the Wesleyan WMS, the women took charge of their work.

The other point is the importance of the Japan mission in the subsequent writing of history. The Wesleyan and Episcopal WMS groups united

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45Hamilton WMS minute book 1880-1883, 43-5.  
46Hamilton WMS minute book 1880-1883, 49.  
47Hamilton WMS minute book 1880-1883, 52.  
48Missionary Outlook, May 1881, 54.  
following the union of the two denominations. In later years the history of the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church was invariably seen as a continuation of the story of the Wesleyan group, although the Methodist Episcopal WMS had been founded five years earlier. Even the numbering of the annual meetings continued from the Wesleyan sequence. The obvious explanation is the relative size of the two groups: the Wesleyan church was much larger, and its WMS raised considerably more money. But an additional factor was probably at work. The younger group had put Cartmell and other missionaries in Japan. It had visible accomplishments to which the fund-raising of the older group could not compare, and so the Wesleyan history became the history of the combined group.

The two societies prepared for union through letters and through a meeting of the presidents and corresponding secretaries of both groups. At their gathering on April 6, 1885, the women agreed that both sets of officers would be members of the General Board at the first annual meeting. Strachan wrote to her cousin, now in Japan, “It will give them more members in proportion at first but will preserve their dignity and probably prevent alienation of feeling.”50 The Methodist Church now had a single Woman's Missionary Society.

At the first annual meeting of the united group, Sarah Gibbs Gooderham gave the presidential address. She acknowledged the “prejudices against women engaging in evangelistic labors” seen in some denominations.51 She went on:

Happily, we, as Methodist women, have had little to complain of in this respect. Our denomination from the beginning recognized the right of women to exercise their gifts, as God gave them opportunity, for the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. With the history of the labours of Susannah Wesley, Mary Bosanquet and a host of others, whose names are in the book of life before it, Methodism could not be true to its traditions and lay a straw in the way of any Christian woman who felt herself to be divinely called to evangelistic work.

Her statement demonstrates her belief about the place of women in Methodism, and suggests one reason that the women in this WMS had formed not an auxiliary to the denomination's missionary society, but a group prepared to work independently, assuming all responsibilities themselves.

Writing about the conservative approach of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Ruth Compton Brouwer observed that “in contrast to Methodism and Quakerism and some of the small Holiness sects, Presbyterianism had no readily usable
tradition of female leadership in religious roles."\textsuperscript{52} Gooderham had that "usable tradition." She assumed that Methodist women enjoyed a favored status compared with those of other denominations, and the evidence she gave was the evidence of history.

She first mentioned Susanna Wesley, to whom reference was frequent in the \textit{Guardian} and the \textit{Advocate}. Both papers had reprinted the "Centenary Cameo" that appeared in the \textit{Nashville Advocate}. With flourish it commanded, "Uncover your heads in her presence, for she is the gracious mother of us all."\textsuperscript{53} Gooderham also spoke of Mary Bosanquet Fletcher, described in an article reprinted by the \textit{Guardian} as "[n]ext to Susanna Wesley, the chief female saint of Methodism."\textsuperscript{54} She, too, was remembered in Methodist writing, and her biography recommended for pious reading.\textsuperscript{55}

The denominational papers referred to several other women from Methodist history. They wrote of Countess of Huntingdon and, more frequently, of Hester Ann Roe Rogers, no doubt among Gooderham's "host of others." Obituaries in the \textit{Christian Guardian} told of women who were brought to repentance or sanctification by studying Rogers' memoirs.\textsuperscript{56} Often mentioned, too, was Barbara Heck, the "foundress of Methodism in Canada."\textsuperscript{57} Canadian Methodist women were invited to contribute to the building of Heck Hall at Garrett Biblical Institute, and were offered a picture "of Mrs. Heck's grave, proper album size, \textit{four for one dollar}" to help pay for a newly-erected Ontario cenotaph.\textsuperscript{58}

Of more recent memory was Phoebe Palmer. After her first, very successful, Canadian tour in 1853, she had returned regularly to lead evangelistic work in various parts of Canada. Both the \textit{Advocate} and the \textit{Guardian} carried reports of the Palmers' work in North America and Great Britain, and obituaries attested to her influence in the spiritual lives of Canadian women.

Of interest are the names that were not included in the remarks by Gooderham and in the pages of the periodicals. In her book \textit{Petticoats in the Pulpit}, Elizabeth Gillan Muir has demonstrated that many women preached and served as Indian missionaries in Canada in the early 19th century. Yet she also makes it clear that not only was there increasing resistance to female preaching as the century went on: the memory of the

\textsuperscript{52}Ruth Compton Brouwer, \textit{New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876–1914} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 27.
\textsuperscript{53}\textit{CG}, May 4, 1884, 145.
\textsuperscript{54}\textit{CG}, Aug. 17, 1870, 127; it was reprinted from the \textit{New York Independent}.
\textsuperscript{55}\textit{CG}, Jan. 11, 1837, 37; Mar. 8, 1865, 38.
\textsuperscript{56}\textit{CG}, Mar. 8, 1854, 84; Dec. 16, 1868, 208; Jan. 9, 1878, 15.
\textsuperscript{57}\textit{CG}, Oct. 25, 1865, 170.
earlier activity was lost. The women preachers were forgotten, and their stories were not part of the “usable tradition.”

Yet concerning the leadership of early British Wesleyan women, of Barbara Heck and of Phoebe Palmer there was a persisting Canadian tradition.59 It is difficult, of course, to judge how much this tradition was not only “usable,” but used. Articles in the Christian Guardian commended the reading of Methodist memoirs and biography,60 and obituaries demonstrate that many did: many Methodist women were clearly aware of their spiritual mothers. And in 1869, the women of the Melbourne Wesleyan church formed themselves into sewing circles, two of which were the “Barbara Heck” and the “Susanna Wesley.”61

In her presidential address, Gooderham referred to women “who found themselves moved by the Holy Spirit and prompted by the indications of divine Providence, to actively enter upon this work.”62 Although speaking of women’s call to missionary work, she described the experience of many early Methodist women who felt a call to preach or to evangelize. Their dedication and their obvious usefulness led John Wesley to acknowledge their “extraordinary call.”63 These women’s evangelical empowerment was the bedrock on which the unprecedented activity of Methodist women was grounded.64

In women’s work for mission within the Methodist church in latter part of 19th century, there is a little of the language of “extraordinary call.” Women did not so much claim that experience, as remember that it had empowered others; what prevails is the recognition of a historical tradition. This is seen in full flower in a lengthy editorial in the Christian Guardian written six years after the union of the two missionary societies. Entitled “The Women of Methodism,” it acknowledged by name many earlier Methodist women, and added to the list more recent Canadians including “Miss Cartmell,” missionary, and “Mrs. Gooderham,” missionary society president. Women of the WMS began to take their own place in the tradition concerning Methodist womanhood.65

Thus even a preliminary survey of the expectations concerning Methodist women and their role within the church provides some understanding of

59Muir has pointed out that the “mother” image of Barbara Heck was more compatible with domestic ideal for women in the later nineteenth century than were the pictures of women preaching on the frontier.
60CG, May 6, 1840, 109, and Mar. 8, 1865, 38.
61CG, Dec. 29, 1869, 207.
64On the literature concerning this idea, see Margaret McFadden, “The Ironies of Pentecost: Phoebe Palmer, World Evangelism, and Female Networks,” in Methodist History, 31, 2 (January 1993), 64.
65CG, Feb. 25, 1891, 120.
the transformation of "pious, plodding" females. In the early days of the Canadian Methodist missionary enterprise, some women organized in support of missions. These local groups did not survive the general decline of interest in Indian missions in evidence by the end of the first half of the century, though after they disappeared, girls and women continued to do the routine work of collecting for missions. Then in 1876 and 1881, Methodist women organized their own missionary societies, responding in part to the strong example of Methodist women in the United States. They worked "in harmony with" but not finally "under the supervision of" the "parent society." In their previous associational experience the women had but little precedent for this independence. What they had instead was a "usable tradition" of Methodist women's experience. Using this tradition, Canadian Methodist women, like those in the United States, were able to develop a "new type" of woman's missionary society.