HOLINESS AND THE MISSIONARY VISION OF THE WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1869–1894

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In her classic survey Western Women in Eastern Lands, ecumenical mission leader Helen Barrett Montgomery stated that the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was "the greatest Woman's Missionary Society of the country." Not only did it appoint and pay for its own missionaries, but it sent the first female physicians to India, China, Japan, and Korea, and it opened the first women's hospitals in India, China, and Korea. Missionaries from the society began the first colleges for women in Asia. By 1910, the WFMS had the largest budget, the most teachers, the most Bible women, the largest number of schools and colleges, and the most contributing members of any woman's missionary organization in the United States.

Although Methodist women were famous supporters of foreign missions in the late 1800s, a forgotten aspect of their work was the extent to which holiness thought and spirituality shaped the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society during its first quarter century. The language of consecration and self-sacrifice permeated the movement. Many founding leaders were either sanctified or open to the experience in others. At least into the 1890s, memberships and donations were solicited at regional camp-meetings, and many participants linked their missions commitment to experiences of consecration or "perfect love" attained at women's missionary gatherings. Sanctified Methodist women sent out in the 1880s and 1890s were still spreading holiness ideas on the mission field into the 1920s. Rather than leaving the denomination, many missionary women deepened their spiritual commitments within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Holiness piety flourished in the decentralized structures and small groups of WFMS, even as such ideas were being discouraged in the larger church.

I

The idea for the WFMS emerged from the needs of missionary wives in India, Mrs. Lois Parker, and Mrs. Clementina Butler, both of whom advocated the sending of single women to do evangelistic work among the segre-
gated classes of Indian women. Feeling that missionary wives were overburdened by family responsibilities, Parker and Butler encouraged Methodist Episcopal women to support unmarried women as missionaries. The financial and organizational support of women was necessary, they concluded, since the appointment of single women was not a priority with the denominational mission board. In 1869, the Parkers arrived in Boston on furlough and were greeted by the Butlers, also on furlough. After a service at the Tremont Street Church, the women discussed whether something could not be done to organize Methodist women. A meeting of the Methodist women in the Boston area was called, and despite a terrible storm, eight women founded the WFMS. Within two months, the Methodist women of the Boston area had adopted a constitution, founded a financially viable missions periodical The Heathen Woman’s Friend, negotiated with the Methodist Board of Missions, and appointed two missionaries to India, one of whom was the first woman medical missionary. The first actual mission work supported by the society was the adoption of a Bible woman in India.2

By 1870, a system of branch organizations was developed whereby Methodist women across the country ran their own regional operations and selected their own mission projects and personnel, coordination of the enterprise being left to an Executive Committee. The branch system provided for a high degree of regional autonomy and grassroots participation in the local auxiliaries. Each branch had its own corresponding secretary who communicated with the missionaries appointed by that particular branch. In effect, the consensus of volunteers at the home base rather than denominational officials set many policies.

The founders of the WFMS were Methodist women whose success in founding a women’s society separate from the Methodist mission board was due to their courage, their education and social standing, and the support of their husbands, many of whom were prominent educators and missionaries. But another source of their success was the vigor of their spiritual lives, grounded for some in the experience of holiness, or “perfect peace.” The theology of the holiness movement provided for a second religious experience after one’s initial conversion. The experience of the “second blessing,” “perfect love,” or “sanctification” released the believer from original sin and per-

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mitted her to live a "higher" spiritual life, one more fully consecrated to God's purposes on earth. Women experienced the "second blessing" as complete submission to God's will, often including accepting a call to mission or ministry. As women across Methodism experienced holiness, they felt freed from the silence imposed on them by their gender roles, and they began speaking out in church and committing themselves to mission work on behalf of others.

The desire to use one's spiritual experience for the service of others inclined spiritually-awakened women to support the new missionary society. Lois Parker, a moving force behind the initial organization, was the wife of Edwin Parker, missionary to India (and future bishop) who had taken upon himself the task of leading the other India missionaries into the "second blessing." As a sanctified teacher, Lois Parker had a vision of Indian womanhood, educated, converted, and full of the Holy Spirit for the improvement of life in India. Another early organizer of the WFMS was Annie Ryder Gracey, wife of J. T. Gracey, missionary to India. Mrs. Gracey held a number of offices in the WFMS, the most important being the head of literature production and distribution for the national organization. She wrote and printed many pamphlets and circulars instrumental in inspiring people of all ages to support mission work. She wrote several books, including the first history of medical work in women's missionary organizations, and a collection of biographical sketches of eminent missionary women. Founding president of the Philadelphia Branch, Mrs. Gracey often served as a worship leader at mission gatherings, a position that permitted her to promote the claims of holiness. In 1881, for example, she preached a sermon at the Lynn, Massachusetts, district meeting on "Woman with the Bible." As recorded in The Heathen Woman's Friend, "She urged the necessity of special consecration, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit." 3

Other founding leaders of the national WFMS supported holiness theology. Even as holiness ideas began overflowing the banks of the Methodist Episcopal Church with the founding of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness in 1867, many Methodist lay women consecrated themselves to missionary activity within their own denomination.

II

By dividing the organization into semi-autonomous branches, the WFMS succeeded in both nurturing the independence of women at the

4 "New England Branch," The Heathen Woman's Friend, August 1881, p. 45. (Hereafter designated HWF) Mrs. Gracey wrote many of the pamphlets published by the society. Her books included Medical Work of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Methodist Episcopal Church [with supplement] (Boston: W.F.M.S., 1888); Eminent Missionary Women, with Introduction by Mrs. Joseph Cook and Mrs. S. L. Keen (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898).
regional and local levels and in providing enough centralization to make the organization effective. The branch structure permitted regional differences in spirituality and style to co-exist within a larger organization. During the first quarter century of the WFMS, articles in The Heathen Woman’s Friend most often mentioned holiness and consecration meetings in connection with the Western and the New England Branches, with significant references in the New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati branches.5

The organization of the Western Branch most clearly demonstrates the importance of holiness piety at a regional level. In March 1869, Lois and Edwin Parker travelled to Rockford, Illinois, to visit with Mrs. Jennie Fowler Willing and her husband. The purpose of the Parker–Willing lunch was to convince Mrs. Willing to take on the organization of a western branch of the nascent WFMS. The task of organizing auxiliaries west of the Mississippi meant that Mrs. Willing would have to travel from church to church, speak on behalf of missions, and convince women in local churches to begin mission circles. Willing agreed to take on the job and was elected one of the first three Corresponding Secretaries of the national WFMS with the responsibility of recruiting and maintaining contact with Methodist women in the west.

Jennie Fowler was a self-educated woman who in 1853 married an itinerant Methodist pastor. The Willings were both converted and sanctified, but were caught in the upheaval that resulted in the formation of the Free Methodist Church in 1860. Although the Willings agreed with the pro-sanctification stance of the Free Methodists, they did not agree on separating from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Because of the controversy, the Willings lost their experience of “perfect love” and transferred to the Rock River Conference. Jennie regained her experience, however, when a medical doctor told her that her eyes would fail if she persisted in academic self-study. Relying on faith in God, she began studying every day and was re-sanctified. In 1874, she was elected Professor of English Language and Literature at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, the first woman in an otherwise male faculty.

Jennie Fowler Willing was licensed to preach in 1873, but lost her license in 1880 as did all women in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In her final years, she founded and taught in the New York Evangelical Training School and Settlement House. She was a frequent contributor to Guide to Holiness in the 1890s, arguing that sanctification removed original sin and was the divine work of the Holy Spirit. A biblical literalist but woman’s rights advocate, she believed from her own experience that biblical holiness was

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5The branches of the WFMS with the years of founding were as follows: New England (1870), New York (1869), Philadelphia (1870), Northwestern (1870), Cincinnati (1870), Baltimore (1871), Western (1870), Atlanta (1871). In 1883, the Western Branch was split into the Des Moines, the Topeka, and the Minneapolis branches. In 1889, the Pacific Branch was organized, and in 1892 the Columbia River Branch. See Baker, 46–58.
supportive of higher education and equal rights for women in church and society.6

After the initial recruitment of members for the Western Branch by Jennie Fowler Willing, other holiness women became its leaders. Mrs. Lucy Prescott, as Corresponding Secretary, was responsible for dividing the Western Branch into three new branches in 1883. Prescott was the daughter of a minister from the Boston area and married a Methodist itinerant. After she was widowed, she became an evangelist, organizing auxiliaries in small towns throughout the west. Upon her death in 1929, at the age of 102, it was noted that “she not only professed the blessing of perfect love, but was a shining example of that grace in which she lived for more than sixty years.”7

Miss Isabella Leonard was the assistant Corresponding Secretary of the Western Branch. Leonard travelled throughout the country, holding revival services and organizing missionary societies in their wake. A worldwide evangelist, in 1884 Leonard recruited in Australia another sanctified woman, Sophia Blackmore, who became the pioneer missionary of the WFMS in Singapore. The Heathen Woman's Friend contains many references to Léonard’s sermons and Bible studies on holiness, for she was a popular devotional leader at missionary gatherings. For example, at the 10th Anniversary Meeting of the Western Branch in 1880, Leonard “conducted a Bible reading on Scriptural holiness . . . in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and many bowed at the altar to seek the ‘cleansing from all unrighteousness.’”8

The most famous holiness evangelist and officer of the Western Branch was “Mother” Mary Clarke Nind, who traveled around the world promoting holiness and organizing mission auxiliaries. Born a Congregationalist, she engaged in preaching and sought sanctification, thus incurring church discipline for holding “Methodist doctrines in a Congregational Church.”9 After joining the Methodist Episcopal Church, she was sanctified in 1867 and finally felt at peace with herself. Nind was catapulted into prominence in 1871 when because of a shortage of speakers she was asked on brief notice to address the anniversary meeting of the Western Branch. Wearing an old brown dress that bespoke her humble economic status, Nind gave a powerful address that had appeared to her in a vision from the Holy Spirit.

In 1877 alone, Nind traveled 7,000 miles by rail and foot to organize mission circles in obscure locations in the West, often arriving late at night with none to greet her. Despite the reluctance of the minister or the apathy of the “opinion makers” in various congregations, she would preach a sermon

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7Quoted in Effie Grout Lindsay, Fifty Eventful Years, 1883–1933: Minneapolis Branch, Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Methodist Episcopal Church (n.p., n.d.), 13.
8“Western Branch 10th Annual Meetings,” HWF, July 1880, 19.
and seek to get women to consecrate themselves to missionary outreach. Nind recalled; “Having been called into the work of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, it proved to be the open door for the preaching of the gospel.” In 1888, her fame as a preacher was such that she was elected by the Minneapolis Conference to the Methodist Episcopal General Conference, but was with several other women delegates refused seating because she was a woman. In 1894 she conducted a grand tour of foreign mission fields, visiting her missionary daughter Emma Lacy in China and holding meetings for Chinese women. Still in harness for the WFMS, she died in a fire in 1905.

With sanctified leadership, meetings of the Western Branch often presented the claims of holiness simultaneous with those of missions. The leaders of the Branch believed that personal consecration was the first step toward commitment to missions. Accordingly, they held consecration meetings as part of the missionary gatherings, guiding women and girls into experiences of conversion and sanctification, with increased mission outreach the ultimate goal. The experience of holiness with the concomitant organization of missionary societies permitted Methodist women to preach and to evangelize, roles that were denied them in many other denominations during the 1870s and 1880s.

The annual meetings of 1880 and 1881 were long remembered by supporters of the Western Branch for the levels of consecration reached by the participants. The 10th Annual Meeting hosted 100 delegates with “Holiness unto the Lord” taken as the theme. Sunday opened with a testimony and praise meeting over which “the Holy Spirit mightily moved.” The 11:00 preacher was Reverend William Taylor of the South India Conference who spoke on the divine call of women to “‘prophesy,’ giving a forcible and lucid exposition on women ‘speaking’ and ‘teaching,’ clearing away all obstacles, and putting the old objections to flight.” He then preached on “perfect love.” Many were sanctified in the afternoon meeting.

The 11th annual meeting of the Western Branch was held in Maryville, Missouri, April 7–11, 1881. The Sunday morning speaker was Mary Clarke Nind. Then at 2:00, Isabella Leonard preached in the Methodist Episcopal Church on “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” In her sermon, Leonard answered from the Bible objections to holiness theology. The Friend reported, “The Holy Spirit helped her so that when she invited to the altar all seeking the precious experience or desiring light on the subject, great numbers came, the interest and power being so great that many remained in the church until the evening service.”

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10 Quoted in Mary Clarke Nind, 31.
11 For the story of Nind’s travels, see Georgiana Baucus, In Journeyings Oft: A Sketch of the Life and Travels of Mary C. Nind (Cincinnati: Curts & Jennings, 1897).
13 “Western Branch,” HWF, June 1881, 283.
Another powerful feature of the 1881 meeting was the singing in four languages as a symbol of the worldwide mission of the church. The total effect of the meeting was summarized as follows: "Thursday morning, during the opening exercise, the Holy Spirit came upon us, and from that hour till the closing praise meeting, on Monday afternoon, there was a continued outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that often in the midst of business we were constrained to sing the Doxology or offer prayer for some one providentially detained whose heart was with us. Many were quickened into a deeper religious life, and some received clearly the blessing of perfect love." The 1879 annual meeting of the New England Branch was similarly marked by experiences of holiness: "The rich testimonies to God's unbounded grace, to the blessed baptism of the Spirit experienced by so many hearts, as they have given themselves to this missionary work made it indeed, to many a one, a Pentecostal time."

In addition to annual branch meetings, local and regional groups recruited members by holding special missionary services at the summer camp meetings held at campgrounds around the United States. One worship service at the camp meeting would be designated as the women's missionary meeting, and women would often engage an exciting speaker, such as a returned missionary or a holiness evangelist, to attract the interest of the campmeeting crowd. In November 1886, the Dover district of the New England Branch reported that increasingly some of the greatest spiritual power at the campmeetings was being exhibited by young women. The sanctification of one young woman after reflecting on missions in China was followed by the sanctification of four others. The connection between missions and holiness that had inspired the founding generation of the WFMS in 1869 was still a vital force for their daughters in the 1880s.

In 1881, the Philadelphia Branch held a series of prayer meetings marked by deep religious experience at children's, young people's, and altar meetings. Mrs. B. Hinkle reported of the meetings: "We have asked two things of the Lord Jesus for this term of the eldership (I John v. 14, 15),—the revival of missionary interest, and increased experience of vital holiness all over the district. The daily meetings at 5 A.M. conducted by Mrs. Stevens, were promotive of the latter, and we know it will promote the former, for entire consecration and personal devotion to Christ, and love for the perishing, are inseparable." A prayer service held by the New England Branch in Boston in 1887 was characterized as an "upper room" with the presence of the Holy Ghost. "Prayer, inspired by the Spirit, promises from the Word, testimonies,
thank-offerings, and songs of praise filled the two hours, and we found it
difficult to close the services.” ¹⁸

Through prayer meetings, annual branch meetings, mission services at
campmeetings, and district meetings, the Woman’s Foreign Missionary
Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church promoted the inseparability of
personal consecration or sanctification, and commitment to missions.
Sanctified leaders in the Western and New England branches in particular
kept the fires of holiness burning hot. In the women’s mission periodical,
nearly every branch reported some kind of emphasis on holiness during the
first quarter-century of the WFMS.

III

Experiences of perfect love not only had the salubrious effect of recruit­
ing dues-paying members for the missionary auxiliaries, but of recruiting
women willing to serve as missionaries. These missionaries then incorpo­
rated holiness perspectives into their evangelistic work abroad.¹⁹ The official
questions asked of missionary candidates by the WFMS in 1882 show that
whereas sanctification was not required of missionaries, deep spiritual expe­
rience was encouraged. The first question asked prospective missionaries
was, “Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take
upon you the work of a foreign missionary?” The second question involved
willingness to make a lifetime commitment. The third and fourth questions
asked whether the prospective missionary had “an experimental knowledge of
salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord” and whether that had been mani­
fested in bringing souls to Christ. The final questions related to Methodist
doctrine, education, health, teaching experience, and marital status of the can­
didate.¹⁹ The overall tenor of the questions was biased toward those prospec­
tive missionaries who could point with certainty to their conversion, calling
to missions, and experience of the Holy Ghost.

The strong support of well-known holiness Methodists for the WFMS
during the 1880s indicates approval of its missionary candidates. The
Reverend and Mrs. John Inskip often appeared at WFMS functions, John
Inskip being well-known as the first President of the National Camp-Meeting
Association for the Promotion of Holiness. In August 1884, The Heathen
Woman’s Friend noted that “Rev. J. A. Wood, who, with his fellow-laborers,
Rev. William McDonal and the now glorified Inskip, visited India, and spent
one hundred days in work for God on our mission fields, uttered warm com­
mendations of work and workers, and gave some deeply interesting incidents.
He said he believed the great success attending the work at home and abroad

was due to the glorious fact that most of the women at the front were consecrated and saved women.”

From the time of Ann Wilkins to the early 20th century, a substantial percentage of the female missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church were sanctified or had concrete experiences of higher spiritual life. For many women, the call to mission accompanied a yielding to deeper spiritual life. In 1873, Dr. Nancy Monelle was sanctified at a camp meeting and thus resolved to go to India where she spent thirty years as a physician, translator, and advocate for women’s rights. Missionary candidate Alice Jackson of the Cincinnati Branch struggled against God’s call to become a missionary, but in submitting to God, she yielded to the call to mission. Mary Sorter McHenry, missionary wife to India, found a “new life” in the Holy Ghost and thus gave herself to mission work anywhere God might call her. For Sarah Leming of Ohio, “a more profound consecration of her life to God” brought “a great desire to be more effectively prepared for his work.” Frances Wilson of Blandinsville, Illinois, became a Christian in 1880, “but 5 years later, after a more profound experience in spiritual life, decided to become a missionary.”

Teacher Rebecca Daly found that her “beautiful religious experience paled as I hesitated before the Lord; so in the summer of 1890 I offered myself to the W.F.M.S.” Josephine Stahl, a farmer’s daughter, found that “a divine call came to her in a deepened spiritual life” and she went to Calcutta in 1892. In May 1893, Mabel Allen “made a complete consecration of herself to God and experienced the infilling of the Holy Ghost. Immediately came the call to the foreign field, which, as she said, was ‘not only a call, but it has a hurry in it.’”

For some, the second blessing experience occurred separately from their firm decision to become a missionary. Mary Bell Griffiths became a Christian and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Then, in 1884, “God’s word was revealed to her mind in such a way she was conscious of a quickened growth of grace.” Four years later, she was on her way to Japan. Harriet Kemper was
converted at 17, and two years later "she gave herself unreservedly to God and knew what the indwelling of the Holy Spirit meant," then in 1891 went to India.\(^30\) Ruth Collins grew interested in missions while attending Cornell College, and while there "experienced a deeper work in grace." Then in 1893 came the call to India, which she considered for a year before agreeing to go.\(^31\) Elizabeth Goodin went to Peru with the WFMS. She said in 1893: "Up to this time I had not been taught to understand the subject of sanctification, but the rich experiences of the people of Wesley Church, the deeply spiritual sermons of Brother Senseny convicted me of the need of a pure heart, and May 4, 1893, God for Christ's sake cleansed my soul."\(^32\)

Sanctified missionaries in Asia and Africa felt it part of their work as missionaries to help indigenous converts obtain an experience of holiness. In April 1891, Mrs. Elizabeth Fisher Brewster, who had been sent to China by the Baltimore Branch after committing herself to missions at a camp meeting, wrote to *The Heathen Woman's Friend* about the presence of the Holy Ghost at the Hing Hwa Woman's Conference. "The Holy Spirit was wonderfully manifest in our Sunday services. After the morning sermon men and women gathered about the altar; they consecrated themselves to God, asking to be made perfect in love. God heard. Our evening consecration service closed with a testimony meeting, in which many testified of consecration complete—unknown before; of strength and power received beyond what they had asked or thought; of the joy in the Holy Ghost." Brewster noted that a leading woman worker, one of the best women preachers, was made "perfect in love" during the woman's conference.\(^33\) In February 1892, Mrs. Brewster reported on meetings with Chinese deaconesses at which the missionaries met "to pray for the Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit.... God heard our cry for the Holy Spirit, and gave us our desire. All testified to having been cleansed and filled."\(^34\)

In India, where many of the WFMS missionaries were Spirit-filled, indigenous converts followed the missionaries into experiences of perfect love. One of the most famous instances was that of Phoebe Rowe, Indian Methodism's first deaconess and prominent evangelist, and the first indigenous worker adopted as a full missionary by the WFMS. Rowe was a Eurasian Baptist who joined Isabella Thoburn in Lucknow as a teacher at the

\(^{30}\)Huston and Moss, DesMoines Branch, 38.

\(^{31}\)Huston and Moss, DesMoines Branch, 54.

\(^{32}\)Huston and Moss, DesMoines Branch, 60.

\(^{33}\)Mrs. Elizabeth Fisher Brewster, "Personnel of our Hing Hwa Woman's Conference," HWF, April 1891, 232.

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girls' boarding school. During Rowe's second year, Thoburn recalled, "she entered a higher life of faith and a deeper life of love." Resolving to be delivered from her failings, Rowe set aside a day to pray for sanctification. God appeared to her on that day, and the "joyful experience never left her." 35

A Methodist woman whose call to mission occurred simultaneously with her sanctification was Susan Talbott Wengatz. Susan was "wholly sanctified" while in high school and in the process received a call to mission work. In 1909 she married the Reverend John C. Wengatz and went to Angola as a Methodist missionary. The Wengatzes did educational work until 1921 when they began full-time evangelism in the interior. Susan Wengatz preached and conducted revivals by herself and in 1928 began the Taylor University Memorial Bible School for indigenous workers. In the mid 1920s, Wengatz wrote in the *South African Missionary Advocate* defending Methodism from charges that it was spiritually dead, and recounted how in 1926 more than two hundred Africans "entered that second rest" under their evangelistic efforts as sanctified believers. Describing tent meetings she held probably in 1927, Wengatz noted that "In such meetings as these, three hundred sixty-nine believers have definitely received the Holy Ghost baptism. . . . We are convinced that God has not changed, and that all He wants is people to pray and believe Him and the old time power will be assured." 36 Although Wengatz went to the mission field under the regular mission board rather than the WFMS, her missionary career shows clearly that the potent combination of a second blessing with a call to mission sustained holiness perspectives among Methodist missionary women well into the 1920s.

An important indicator of holiness leanings in the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was the mutual admiration between the society and the Reverend William Taylor, worldwide holiness evangelist, apostle of self-supporting missions, and in 1884 elected missionary bishop of Africa. Taylor's self-supporting ideas had caused him to clash with the Methodist Episcopal Board of Missions as early as 1870 when he began organizing Methodist churches in India that wished to remain independent of the mission board. The organizers of the WFMS may have seen parallels between Taylor's situation and their own. They were often in tension with the mission board, were restricted in how they could collect money, and were seen as too assertive by critics. But a further kinship between William Taylor and the women was their mutual commitment to holiness and self-sacrifice. At a time when holiness people and Methodist "outsiders" were the main supporters of William


Taylor’s work to found Methodist churches outside the control of the official mission board, the WFMS supported him. 37

The common ground of holiness, willingness to innovate, belief in women’s capabilities, and support for educational missions meant that so-called “Taylor” missionaries passed into the WFMS with ease. Taylor recruited dozens of “self-supporting” missionaries to work in Latin America, India, and Africa, many of whom were women teachers. 38 As the faith mission movement emerged in the 1890s, some missionaries of the WFMS went out under the society as self-supporting or faith missionaries, wanting to serve under the women’s board but desiring not to depend on it for their sustenance. The common spiritual heritage of “official” WFMS missionaries and self-supporting Taylor missionaries was stronger than whatever differences they may have had over mission theory.

The fluidity of the relationship between the WFMS and the “self-support” movement in Methodist missions is demonstrated in the life of a missionary, Helen Rasmussen Springer. In 1886, Helen heard an early WFMS missionary speak and was drawn to her work among women and girls in India. Helen became active in home missions and decided to become a foreign missionary. In a holiness tent meeting, she became sanctified and assisted others to receive the Holy Spirit. 39 Having read his books, in 1889 she heard Bishop William Taylor speak about the self-supporting mission movement and its successes in India and South America. Taylor appealed for missionaries to join him in Angola who would support themselves by trading and storekeeping. Helen volunteered to go to Africa and sailed for Angola in 1891, at age 22. En route, she met and married William Rasmussen, another Taylor missionary. After her husband died in 1895, Helen returned to the United States where in 1900 her only son died of diphtheria.

When the Methodist Episcopal Mission Board opened work in Rhodesia, Helen Rasmussen became the first WFMS missionary there in 1901. She moved into the villages to reach girls. She began translating the Bible into Chikaranga and in 1905 published a grammar. In 1905 Rasmussen left the employ of WFMS when she married missionary John Springer, who was serving in Rhodesia under the Methodist Board. The Springers felt a divine call to fulfill the dream of Bishop William Taylor to found a line of mission stations across Africa from Rhodesia to Congo. The Springers

38EJK, “New York Branch,” HWF, Jan 1879, 160. William Taylor supported teaching as a chief form of missionary activity, both because it could become self-supporting, and because it was a way to reach the upper classes. See Taylor’s book Ten Years of Self-Supporting Missions in India (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1882), 286.
trekked across Africa and established the sites for future Methodist mission stations. They received authorization from the mission board to found a new Congo Mission as a faith mission within the church, supported by designated gifts. In the Congo, the Springers began a Bible training institute that they hoped would one day become a college. They combined their work toward high educational standards with the holding of frequent camp meetings during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1936 John Springer was elected Bishop for Africa. In 1946 Helen Springer died and was buried in the Congo. The life of Helen Springer shows that commitments to holiness and to higher education, to women's work and evangelism were intertwined on the mission field into the 1930s.

IV

Experiences of holiness or sanctification were a major factor in the founding, recruitment of members, and missionary motivation during the first quarter century of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For many committed Methodist women, experiences of holiness undergirded their missionary vision and empowered them to preach and evangelize in diverse settings. Some sanctified Methodist women missionaries disseminated holiness concerns on the mission field into the 1920s, if not longer. The evidence makes one question whether the contrast between the holiness of independent mission movements and the "worldliness" of late 19th-century Methodism has been overdrawn. The spirituality of the "second blessing" helped inspire Methodist women to create the greatest women's missionary society of their day.