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Lauren Austin

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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"Our great weakness is that we lack women leaders. Japanese women have never been trained to lead, but to follow. We must develop leaders among women in industry. Miss Topping is fitted to do this."¹ This quote comes from Toyohiko Kagawa, perhaps the most influential Japanese Christian of the twentieth century. He was the leader of many economic co-operative movements that involved labor, education, healthcare, agriculture, and many others. Many of these movements were spiritually motivated; — Kagawa believed that Jesus was the perfect example of peace and cooperation. He called it "Brotherhood Economics."² He achieved international fame during his lifetime, writing over a hundred books and speaking in many different countries.³ As a co-operative movement suggests, he had the help of many brilliant and humble people who served beside him. Helen Faville⁴ Topping joined Kagawa in 1925 as his secretary, but she proved useful and influential in a number of different ways. She organized his speaking tours, translated his books, became his representative in other nations, and was a life-long friend whom Kagawa greatly admired.⁵ Helen Faville Topping was irreplaceable to Toyohiko Kagawa because of her influence as both an American citizen and a Japanese missionary, being familiar with the intricacies and differences of both worlds, but with the sharp skill and tireless spirit necessary to promote peace during a time of increasing conflict between the two nations.

An extensive biography of Helen Faville Topping does not exist. When people look at the life of Toyohiko Kagawa, they do not immediately see this steadfast woman who labored beside him. There has been some research revealing similar women in early 20th century Japan, but not nearly enough. Manako Ogawa,
from the University of Hawaii, in her article "‘Hull-House’ in Downtown Tokyo: The Transplantation of a Settlement House from the United States into Japan and the North American Missionary Women," focuses on North American missionaries and their establishment of the Kobokan settlement which was a relief effort for the slums. They were a female organization that focused on helping poor Japanese women. The Young Women's Christian Organization (YWCA) was also instrumental in the Kobokan, of which Topping served as general secretary before her time with Kagawa, so there is some overlap between different organizations.6

Seija Jalagin, a historian from the Oulu University (Finland), investigates the role of Finnish missionaries during a slightly earlier time period, right after the turn of the twentieth century. In her article “Negotiating for Space and Autonomy: Strategies of Finnish Missionary Women in Japan, 1900-1941,” she takes a feminist approach and shows that men were the only ones that were allowed to lead in the Finnish missions and that it hindered the mission itself when women were not given a satisfactory role in the responsibilities. It was often that the Japanese leaders were much more appreciative of the female missionaries, treating them as equals in the church—and encouraging them in their work. The female missionaries often sided with their Japanese counterpart over their Finnish leaders and even defied the home mission board, which proved to have little control over the situation because of the distance separating them, not just geographically, but culturally.7

Throughout history, the church has always been dependent on the efforts of both men and women, but in different ways. Unfortunately, due to the less visible role of women, it is often hard to find them in the historical record. They have often been buried under the men they followed. Because women were usually given more unobservable tasks, it is very rare to get a glimpse into the life of individual female missionaries. Topping emerges rather easily in the archival sources that I have used, due to her specific role as a speaker, writer, and international influence. She was unlike other female missionaries in the sense
that she was not always behind the scenes, but very much in the public eye during her time with Toyohiko Kagawa. She promoted him even beyond his death in 1960.\(^8\) She is also unique because of the message she carried, which was primarily concerned with cooperative movements and social reform that could only be accomplished through "redemptive love that transcends race."\(^9\) It was the social gospel.\(^10\)

In order to understand Topping's importance, it is essential to first examine her education. Her parents were highly educated missionaries who raised Helen with their values, emphasizing the spirit of cooperation among fellow humans. Her grandfather was also influential in Topping's life. He believed that social science had to catch up to physical science. Although she spent much of her childhood in Japan, she received schooling in America, attending the Parker School in Chicago at the age of eleven in 1901.\(^11\) This school was headed by Colonel F.W. Parker, who was one of the leading educators in America during that time. "School was like church every day,"\(^12\) she wrote dreamily about her experience there. He had a profound impact on Topping, even at a young age, and she took his teachings to heart. In her article “Pioneering Peace” Topping expounded on his principles: "A great deal of our lives as missionaries is spent in 'breaking down the middle wall of partition' that lies between the nations, by learning each other's languages, ideas, customs, etc., and by learning not to disturb the other fellow ... by learning what not to do. Everything to help and nothing to hinder."\(^13\) She went on to write the first extensive biographical work on Parker during the years 1945-1955\(^14\) and was appointed the educational chair in his name at Pacifican College in Manila in 1951.\(^15\)

Topping graduated with her Masters in Educational Sociology from Columbia University in 1925 but pursued study afterwards with various professors, including Robert E. Park from the University of Chicago. They had extensive communication throughout her early years with Kagawa, discussing many ideas for sociological research in Asia, since she was in a fantastic position to do it.\(^16\) He visited Kagawa's Honjo Settlement in 1929 at Helen's invitation and described his experience in a letter, "I do
not need to say I was profoundly impressed by what I saw and what you told me of life among the laboring classes in Japan. I had the impression that this was my nearest approach to actual revolution."17 During Park's visit with Kagawa, he became acutely interested in the subject of the Eta, the outcasts of Japan, and urged Topping to pursue this line of study because of Kagawa's intimacy with the slums. She received approval from the university and Park promised to apply for financial aid to fund the project. Topping wrote to him in 1931, "Dr. Kagawa has ... turned over to me a quantity of pamphlet material, to be translated, and two of his personal notebooks on the Eta, precious relics of his first years in Shinkawa."18 This slum was reputedly the worst in Japan, and it was where Kagawa had first set up camp in the year 1909, when he was fresh from theological training at the Kobe Theological Seminary.19 Although her research in this area was never completed due to Kagawa's consuming dependence on her, it remained an important matter to them.20

Topping had a strong background of social work with the YWCA. She worked predominantly with Japanese girls, both in the United States and Japan. While on the West Coast, she spent five years helping Japanese female immigrants (1913-1918) before she was sent to Japan to found the first YWCA in Kobe.21 On working with Japanese girls during that time she wrote, "I tried to use and encourage native leadership. I insisted that we were working together. I didn't try to force the Jesus of the Western world into Japanese hearts. I tried to make them see the Jesus of their own ideal."22 Christianity had become so intertwined with Western culture, that some did not know how to separate the two in order to reach people in Asia. Topping recognized that they were two distinct things. The West did not define Jesus.

The YWCA started out as a Christian social program that provided services to women in need but it became part of a larger movement after the 1940's to involve women in international and governmental affairs. They were highly democratic and advocated for equality, but many Japanese members were bullied into silence during WWII and would not speak out against the brutality of
their country. It was only after WWII that Japanese women began to assert more authority and demand reforms. They were influenced heavily by Western YWCA members, many of whom were forced out of the country during the war. Although Topping left the organization to work with Kagawa, she continued to collaborate with the YWCA afterwards in order to teach young women and promote female leadership.

It was during these years in Japan with the YWCA that Kagawa first came to know Topping. In his article Another Dawn, Richard T. Baker wrote that, "It was an inevitable meeting, sure to come sooner or later. For both possessed hearts acutely interested in the struggling Japanese." She attended his church services in the slums. His sister-in-law and many of the female church members were also involved with the YWCA during that time. Kagawa writes, "She uses our language like a Japanese. She has the personality of a Japanese woman combined with the education and experience of an American woman. Our Japanese women are attracted to her as a friend and they feel that she understands them. We always think of her as one of ourselves. We forget that she is not a Japanese." She was invited on staff March 7, 1925 as the first non-Japanese person.

Topping proved immediately invaluable to Kagawa. Because of her background in missionary social work, her experience and knowledge of the Japanese people, and her education, she was not coming into his work a novice. She had great skill at organization on a grand scale. Kagawa put her to work, and she was eager for it. In asking for support from Western countries, Kagawa praised Topping and recognized that money was not the primary need. It was people. "If you think you might send just money, that is not enough. Character first, money second. ... I want to tell you of an American Missionary. ... Miss Helen Topping. ... She is a good organizer and we owe much of the start of the Kingdom Movement to her work and to her prayers. ... She knew our need, and she sacrificed herself." The Kingdom of God Movement was one of Kagawa's many organizations, which began in 1929 with the help of Dr. John Mott, an American pastor and Kagawa disciple. It had three main
objectives: "Evangelism (one million souls for Christ); Education (training 5,000 lay workers to aid the clergy); and Social Organization (formation of economic cooperatives)." The movement would evolve as the future of Japan changed, but its emphasis would remain the same.

Topping traveled extensively with Kagawa. Between the years 1927-1934, she traveled four times to China and to the Philippines "reporting various conferences." She can also be credited with the work of organizing Kagawa's 1935-1936 American tour, and she accompanied him at his request. It was by and large his most successful trip to the United States, with thousands of people flocking to hear him speak about the Kingdom of God movement. Helen often stayed after Kagawa's speaking engagements to deal with any more questions from the public.

There was nearly room for waiters to pass through during a New York dinner given in his honor. W.P. Lipphard of Missions magazine wrote, "So great was the demand for tickets that only 150 could be allotted to New York Baptists. Similarly restricted were ... other denominations. Even so, the capacity of the room was taxed to the limit." In another issue of Missions magazine the author wrote, "The organization of Toyohiko Kagawa's amazing itinerary through the United States ... was the subject of frequent favorable comment. ... Who was responsible for this efficiency? The question was often asked and it may now be answered. It was Miss Helen F. Topping." She had spent time in the United States during the year 1934 in order to stir up the public's excitement for Kagawa, and she was amazingly successful in her efforts.

Topping had a large number of fairly important acquaintances, which is not too surprising due to the role she had as Kagawa's interpreter in the West. When Kagawa arrived in San Francisco in November 1935, he was detained because of his trachoma. Topping went all the way to Washington in order to plead for his release and urged many of her friends to write President Roosevelt to see to the matter. One of those friends was Charles R. Crane, a wealthy diplomat. He was able to convince Roosevelt to release Kagawa. He wrote Topping on
January 25, 1936, "I made a trip to Washington to lay before the Government the importance of Kagawa's visit as when difficulties arose at San Francisco the President was all prepared and quick to act. Perhaps you would care to see the message I sent him at the time. I think there will not be any more efforts to interfere with your valuable work." He continued with a post script that reads, "A nice message from the President in return and an invitation to see you both." Charles Crane was very enthusiastic about Kagawa and hoped that Topping might have a chance to meet with President Roosevelt. Apparently she did prepare a statement regarding Kagawa's tour and had it forwarded to Roosevelt through Charles Crane. President Roosevelt replied to Charles, "I am glad to have the information concerning Mr. Kagawa's activities, contained in Miss Topping's letter, and appreciate your courtesy in sending it to me." Kagawa would have been sent back to Japan immediately without President Roosevelt's intervention in the matter. It is lucky that he had such friends around him.

At the close of his American tour in June 1936, Kagawa commissioned Topping to go abroad to Great Britain and other European countries as his representative, studying the cooperative movements taking place there, and teaching the people. In a letter to Doctor Yomanouchi on September 1945, Kagawa wrote, "I understand that you already know something of Miss Helen Topping and of the great service she has been to me in all my work both in Japan and in various other countries." Although this letter is dated after the war, it is verification of her service to him across the world.

She was very well received in Europe, where the cooperative movements originated, although England had not allowed Kagawa entry into the country during that time. On her being invited back to Cambridge in 1937, a spokesman for the protestant church remarked, "We have never had a missionary." She agreed to go back and work with the churches and different organizations for a time, schooling them in the Kagawa Cooperative method that combined the spiritual with the economic. Afterwards, she commenced a world tour, traveling...
throughout Europe, Australia, Hawaii, and the Philippines before returning to the United States in 1941, where she had "fourteen conference appointments and various others" that summer alone.45

Topping was also multilingual, which proved invaluable during her speaking tours. She spoke English and Japanese fluently, and could carry conversation in French without difficulty.46 Her natural ability to "hold her audience spellbound"47 was greatly enhanced by her ability to speak a variety of languages. It opened up doors for Kagawa's message to be taken to other countries where it might not have been understood due to language barriers.

During her time in Paris in 1938, she spoke at the International Cooperative Women's Guild Congress as a "delegate from the newly organized Women's Cooperative Guild of Japan."48 This was during the Second Sino-Japanese War, about which Kagawa and his followers were extremely heartbroken because of their love for China. Topping touched on the war at the Congress writing, "This is not a racial war between Japan and China. The real issue is between economic imperialism and international economic cooperation."49 The Chinese delegates whom she met told her that they were counting on Kagawa to meet the present crisis.50

It was during her trip to the Philippines that Topping spent most of her time. Kagawa wanted her back in Japan only four months into her stay, but the Filipinos were "amazingly eager for her message ... and were insistent that she remain another year in Manila, where they had given her a permanent position as director of the Extension Institute of Union College."51 While she was there, Topping spoke at the First National Institute on Cooperatives and was soon after also appointed the executive secretary of the Cooperative Institute of the Philippines. It governed a number of different cooperative organizations in the Philippines, more than 100 in total.52 She was able to use her position and influence very effectively. The people did not necessarily want Kagawa. They wanted her.
Although she always spoke with Kagawa's economic and spiritual principles in mind, she was not a puppet by any means. She taught with her own authority, having been immersed in the cooperative spirit her whole life. A Philippine newspaper described her as a "Cooperative Apostle." Some of the criticism towards the cooperative movement came from government officials who publicly mocked Topping. She had a very dim view of cooperatives being mandatory. She was very firm in her belief that cooperatives had to be on a voluntary basis; otherwise, they would not work. Those that witnessed the exchange praised her calm and quiet remarks and sent her kind letters afterwards. It must be remembered that women hardly had such roles as she did during that time period, and there were those that would not have taken a female leader seriously, no matter how intelligently she spoke.

Despite opponents in the government, Topping was well loved in the Philippines, and had a lot of success despite any enemies she might have made along the way. They were a very small minority compared to the affection she received from the people who knew her. She also designed and taught cooperative classes at Pacifican College in Manila and was granted an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters for her generous work among the people. One of her students described her as "big hearted and willing to serve with sacrifice in order to elevate other people." There are other letters that she received from students as well, thanking her for her many kindnesses. The cooperative movement would not have made it a day without leaders like Helen. It needed good leaders—not just skilled ones. She inspired people to believe in world peace during war-time.

In March 1941, Topping was back in Japan and "Kagawa introduced the latest stage in her many-sided work with him to his church congregation as being the Christian Peace Cooperative Movement." She was only able to spend a very short time in Japan before she was sent back to the United States due to the growing tension between the two nations. It was Kagawa's idea that she stay in the United States during the war. He believed that she would be very valuable to him there, more so than in
Japan. She made good use of her time as usual and was invited to speak at events regularly. In June 1942, the Plowshare wrote an article on her, "Miss Helen Topping, Kagawa's English Voice, conducted a series of forums she reported on Kagawa's plans for a conference of those nations to build the economic foundations of peace, and to secure national goodwill through cooperatives." She even managed to take graduate classes at American University in Washington, D.C. She was always looking for a new learning experience.

Although communication was difficult between Topping and Kagawa during WWII, he completely entrusted her with the task of working towards cooperative peace in America. A letter from Fremont Avenue Christian Church reads, "Writings from Japan are strictly censored at this time, and Kagawa cannot write as he would like. Therefore he has sent his secretary, Miss Topping, to this country to speak on the world peace situation." Kagawa had thought it a better idea for her to be in America during this time, in order to keep channels of communication and good feelings flowing as much as possible. There were other female missionaries that worked with Kagawa, such as Betty Killburn, who were trapped in Japan and placed into internment camps during the war. Topping helped nurse Betty back to health when she was finally released back to America. Had she stayed in Japan, she would have met the same fate.

After the war was over, Japan was reeling from the shock of Hiroshima. Kagawa and his followers felt the pain of it acutely. They had been working towards world peace for decades, having been witnesses to some of the most atrocious and bloody conflicts in history. If anything, they were even more convinced that cooperation was the only way to world peace. Kagawa needed Helen more than ever and was desperate for her swift return to Japan. In 1945 he wrote, "There is no one among all my coworkers of whom I feel the need so keenly just at present as I do of her. May I ask you to present this matter to General MacArthur." There was even a Congress that met in order to petition her return, signed by ten members and put forth by Dr. Kagawa and Dr. Kozaki.
Topping was always busy promoting Kagawa in newspaper articles and publications during her years with him. In a letter written to Mr. Bowen at the National Security Cooperative League of the U.S., she mentioned one of her contacts at the Chicago Daily News, a Mrs. Carroll Binder. Carroll was a Quaker that had visited Japan and met Helen Topping. She assures Mr. Bowen that Carroll "will write articles of the cooperatives as a way to world peace." Robert E. Park, her colleague from the University of Chicago, was also instrumental in getting her in contact with various magazines, such as the Christian Century.

Topping was especially passionate about his books being translated and published and worked toward this goal tirelessly. Kagawa gave her specific responsibility for this, writing, "I am very grateful for your willingness to help in the raising of funds ... or literary evangelism in both Japanese and English. ... Please understand that you are my accredited representative." She was an intermediary between the Western world and the Kagawa Cooperators in Japan, who were helping in the endeavor. She was also a consultant between different publishers, including Harper & Brothers Publishers and Abingdon Press. Harper & Brothers deferred to Helen Topping on matters of publication. When writing to the secretary of the Kagawa Cooperators with advice on an unwise decision, Eugene Exman (Harper & Brothers Publishers) wrote, "I will be seeing Miss Topping within a short time and talk the whole matter over with her, then write to you again as to possible arrangements." She was in the United States during that time in order to have better contact with the publishers.

She was also involved in developing a committee that was based in Chicago in order to organize a textbook and study groups that would train students in the cooperative movements. She understood that the textbook had to be more than just a biography about Kagawa in order to motivate adolescents beyond the classroom. "He is, of course, inspiring as a hero ... but such inspiration will stop short of application in actual living and be merely another religious emotion aroused and then dissipated." She visited Bennett College (an African American school) after
World War II in order to organize study groups. She felt strongly that Kagawa's principles for world peace based on the redemptive mercy of Jesus would be especially powerful among African Americans. She had a very favorable response at Bennett, "In contrast to the attitudes of the white folks, these good friends are wide awake, keen, perceptive, and eager, for the Kagawa message of Emancipation." Her parents had both worked with African Americans during the 1880's and 1890's in the South. Topping's heart was inclined towards oppressed peoples of all nations.

Helen Topping and Kagawa were more than just co-workers. They were kindreds--their mission and their goals were the same. In a personal letter to Topping, Kagawa wrote, "Your earnest and incessant prayers for us and for our work here in Japan have always most wonderfully sustained me." Topping's admiration for Kagawa was clear. She was devoted to him and his economic crusades and worked her whole life to see them succeed. She likened him to Gandhi because of his great love and selfless service to the people. She also knew the value of her work for him. Her personality and heart are plain in this prayer: "Enable me to write letters as a doctor should--clear, concise, convincing, sufficiently personal ... also sending off promptly what should be sent, describing vividly what should be described. Enable me to write Willard frequently, regularly, and interestingly, telling the things he will want to hear, such as the tale of the monkeys eating my stocking supporters ... enable me to find Thy way for translating and publishing all of Kagawa's books...make the road of my life from now on as full of friends as this road from Laoag to San Fernando ... give what is according to Thy will, and Thy will alone, of recognition of my thirty years of work with Dr. Kagawa and thirty-seven years of discipleship."

Helen Topping was an extremely important example to women inside and outside of the church. She was active, involved, and worked with dedication for something that she believed in wholeheartedly. She transcended gender roles at the time, far surpassing other organizations' efforts at women's liberation. The Japanese YWCA did not take a stand for women's rights until
after the 1940's. Helen Topping was way ahead of them. She was a great leader because of her capacity to serve people. She knew what they wanted and needed, and she suffered with them. Her passion was inexhaustible and she never lost her sense of purpose. She was a part of something that took great confidence. She opened doors for more women to be respected and trusted with leadership roles within the church, government, and public life. Men did not have to display as much courage as she did at the time, because they were already expected to lead. Topping did something bold and unexpected.

It is clear from these articles, letters, and various archival documents that Helen Topping was extremely useful to Kagawa during their decades together, both as his personal representative to other countries and as someone who could successfully promote him in times of conflict. Even her diary was used toward that purpose. It is more of a date book and a catch-all for addresses, names, greetings, and farewells written by many different hands. However, there are a few entries that stand out, including her father's death and her mother's illness. There is one other death, that of Toyohiko Kagawa on April 23, 1960. She wrote, "Dr. Kagawa died, 9:13 p.m. ... prayed for world peace, the revival of the church, the ... salvation of Japan, smiled, and took my hand in parting." Helen thought that it was a beautiful prayer, one that encapsulated everything they had worked for.
HELEN FAVILLE TOPPING, 1934
HELEN FAVILLE TOPPING ADDRESSES THE HOUSEWIVES’ COOPERATIVES IN MANILLA (above). HELEN FAVILLE TOPPING WITH MRS. JARA MARTINEZ OF THE YWCA, 1940 (below).
TOYOHIKO KAGAWA (SECOND FROM LEFT, WITH HAT ON KNEES) AND HELEN FAVILLE TOPPING (SECOND FROM RIGHT, IN WHITE DRESS) POSE TOGETHER WITH OTHER MEMBERS AT THE FRIENDS OF JESUS ANNUAL CONFERENCE. 1953.79

HELEN FAVILLE TOPPING, A TRUSTED KAGAWA DELEGATE IN INTERNATIONAL MATTERS. 80
HELEN FAVILLE TOPPING GIVES A PUBLIC SPEECH ADVOCATING PEACE ACROSS BORDERS THROUGH CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD GOVERNMENT.\textsuperscript{81}

HELEN FAVILLE TOPPING REPRESENTS TOYOHIKO KAGAWA'S LITERATURE.\textsuperscript{82}
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73 “The Whole Family Works for Kagawa,” 3. Willard was Helen's brother. He was also a missionary in Japan, but in a different region. Her parents both worked for Kagawa in their retirement. It truly was a family affair.
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