Personal witness is the secret of Korean church growth. Korea's Protestant church is the strongest in Asia. It hosted Billy Graham in 1973 when the evangelist held the largest public Christian meeting in history.

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KOREA

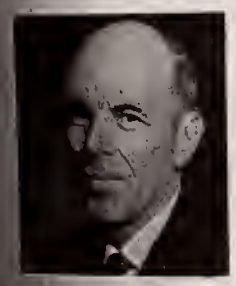
by Samuel Hugh Moffett

The Church Today

Christianity came late to the ancient country of Korea, but it has found in the Korean heart an openness and receptivity almost unmatched in the history of modern missions. The country has become famous for rapid church growth, indigenization, and faithfulness during persecution.

Evidences of the impact of the gospel are visible everywhere in South Korea, even to the casual tourist. The capital, Seoul (fifth-largest city in the world) is a city of churches. There are said to be more than sixteen hundred Christian congregations in the capital city alone. Steeples and crosses are prominent on the skyline in all directions. At four or five every morning church bells all over town call the faithful to daybreak prayers. Even the national assembly, the Korean Parliament, has an early prayer-breakfast once a month for the sixty-eight Christian assemblymen who comprise one-third of the total membership of the Assembly.

A climactic display of Christian strength in Korea was the outpouring



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of support for the Billy Graham Crusade in the summer of 1973. More than 4.5 million people attended the meetings in six cities, and on the last day alone, in Seoul, more than a million Koreans packed the Yoido Plaza in a tide of humanity which was perhaps the largest crowd ever gathered at one time and in one place to hear an evangelistic message. More than eighty thousand decisions were recorded, and Christian unity in factiontorn Protestant circles was visibly reinforced by the nationwide cooperative effort.

The Christian church is growing at the rate of nearly 10 percent a year, more than four times as fast as the general Korean population (see the church growth table in Appendix 2). Protestant and Roman Catholic total adherents now number 3,037,047 in a total South Korean population of 31,000,000. If the marginal sects are included, the number of Christians is over 4 million, or about 13 percent of the population, which is one of the highest percentages in Asia.[1]

In the armed services the proportion is even higher. A continuing revival spearheaded by Korean chaplains has brought thousands of ROK troopers to Christ. At one mass service in April 1972 some 3,478 officers and men were baptized in a single afternoon. Since January 1971 a total of more than 20,000 Protestant and 2,000 Catholic military have been baptized, and it is reported that the percentage of Christians in the armed services has risen from about 16 percent in 1965 to 25 percent in 1972.

An impressive network of Christian schools undergirds this growing church and feeds Korea's youth. Half of South Korea is under twenty-five. Open doors welcome them to 11 Protestant colleges and universities (out of a national total of 173), 85 Protestant high schools, 79 Protestant middle schools, and innumerable Christian primary schools—not to mention the sixty thousand boys and girls from underprivileged families who are enrolled in the church day-schools called Bible clubs.

The rapid growth of the church has also sparked an explosion in theological education. Korea now has eighty listed theological schools, of which three are Roman Catholic. Most of these are at the high school level, though there are twelve major seminaries accredited as colleges and at least three designed primarily for college graduates, as in the American system. Two denominational and one interdenominational graduate school of theology offer Th.M. degrees, and an international, evangelical center for advanced theological studies is projected for Seoul in 1973 or 1974.

The Korean church has been among the first of the younger churches to shoulder its own responsibility for foreign missions and world outreach. Presbyterians organized a mission to China as early as 1912, at the same time they formed their first Korean general assembly, because, they insisted, a true church must have its own missionaries. Today there are at least forty Korean foreign missionaries supported by Korean denominations with their own funds and working in nine foreign countries—Thailand, Brazil, Mexico, Taiwan, Ethiopia, Sarawak, Hong Kong, and Japan. There is also one Korean missionary in the United States.[2]

Christianity has penetrated the life of the nation at all levels. Protestant hospitals are scattered across the peninsula. The impressively growing Presbyterian medical complexes in Taegu and Chonju lead the way in successfully linking medicine to evangelism and in taking medicine out to where it is most needed, the rural countryside. It is estimated that only 6.5 percent of the rural population ever gets modern medical attention. Chonju's Presbyterian medical center has developed a vigorous rural health program, and Taegu Presbyterian Hospital, where converted patients have started more than a hundred new churches, has pioneered a satellite system of subsidiary Christian country hospitals.* Yonsei University's huge Severance Hospital and medical school, and its counterpart, the Catholic medical center in Seoul, continue to inject a significantly large percentage of Christians among Korea's physicians. And there is a significant Christian experiment in low-cost health care at Koje Island Community Health and Development Project.

Korea's mushrooming cities are another of the many focuses of special Christian concern. Christians have not only performed some of the best research on urban social problems but have also provided direct leadership in slum clearance, resettlement, family planning, and industrial relationships. Sogang (Jesuit) University has what has been called in a recent report "the best labor-management school in Korea."

The same report notes other recent evidences of the Christian presence throughout Korea. The church has already transformed the role of women in Korea, led by Christian heroines like the late Dr. Helen Kim of Ewha University. Thus prominent Christians were among the twenty-eight women honored for contributions to Korean society at the tenth anniversary of the National Federation of Women's Association. Christian power was made evident when church protest forced the withdrawal of a banknote bearing a portrait of Buddha. Korea's first Christian opera, *Esther* (composed and directed by the leader of a famous church choir) packed the country's largest auditorium in Seoul for three nights running.

The mass media in Korea are wide open to Christianity. The first Christian broadcasting network in the world is HLKY, operating under the Korean NCC and blanketing the country with the gospel from five substations. TEAM Radio's HLKX from its base in Korea beams the uncon-

*Ed. note. The Taegu hospital and its outreach is one of the most effective medical evangelistic projects in modern mission history. It has been prayerfully engineered by the author's brother, Dr. Howard Moffett, also born and educated in Korea.

quered good news through bamboo and iron curtains into Red China and Russia. Christians also have a strong foothold in Korean television.

But perhaps in the long run the most significant manifestation of the Christian presence in Korea will prove to be the fact that four of the seven South Korean delegates, including the chairman, in the crucial North-South Red Cross talks in late '72 were Christians (two Presbyterian, one Methodist, and one Roman Catholic).[3] For in the midst of all the rejoicing over church growth and influence in South Korea, it must not be forgotten that in North Korea there is apparently not a single organized church left.

When in August 1972 the tightest border barrier in the world opened briefly to permit a cavalcade of South Korean Red Cross negotiators and reporters into the north to discuss the problem of the 10 million Koreans whose families have been separated by the division of the country, for the first time in twenty-two years reporters were able to interview a professing Christian in North Korea. Kang Ryang-uk, now a high communist official and uncle of Premier Kim Il-sung, is probably the last Christian minister left alive in communist Korea. He was asked about the state of the church. Rather defensively he asserted that North Korea has freedom of religion and that he was still a Christian, but he knew of no churches left standing or of any Christian meetings. "The churches," he said, "were all destroyed by United States bombers during the war." Asked about Bible distribution, he said there was none because "not many people want them."

But South Korea's Christians look at the churchless north and wonder. If there is really freedom of religion in North Korea, why does Seoul, which was also destroyed in the war, today have sixteen hundred Christian churches, while P'yongyang, once known as "the city of churches," has none?

Before surveying in more detail the Christian situation in Korea, let us glance briefly at the nation, its historical and religious background, and the history of Christianity in "the land of high mountains and clear water."

Nation and People

Surrounded by three giant neighbors—China, Russia, and Japan—the ancient nation of Korea juts like a thumb from the eastern rim of the Asian mainland. Its mountain-studded peninsula covers only 84,579 square miles—about the size of Minnesota—but holds a combined population, north and south, of 44,839,000. In mission history its church is famed for rapid growth, indigenization, and faithfulness in persecution.

Racially homogeneous and united politically for more than thirteen hundred years, Korea has been badly used by the twentieth century. First it lost its freedom to Japan for forty years (1905-45). Then, when World War II restored Korea's independence, it lost its unity to the Communists. Since 1948 the peninsula has been cut in two politically at about the thirty-eighth parallel: North Korea is communist; South Korea is free. The two republics are about the same in area (each roughly the size of Indiana), but South Korea has two and a half times the population of its communist sibling in the north: the Republic of Korea (South Korea) has a population of 31,139,000 while the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) has a 13,700,000 population. Seoul, the capital in the south, has a population of well over 6 million while P'yongyang, the northern capital, has less than a million.

National History

Korea's legendary past stretches back more than four thousand years to a mythical founder, Tan'gun, miraculously born to the earth-descended son of the heavenly father and a bear-woman. The traditional date is 2333 B.C. Archeological evidence more matter-of-factly suggests even earlier paleolithic inhabitants and important tribal migrations from Siberia and Mongolian central Asia beginning about 3000 B.C. Recorded history begins much later, in the first century B.C., with the rise of three kingdoms competing for power in the peninsula and driving Chinese colonists from its northwest corner. Under one of these kingdoms, gold-rich Silla, the whole country was unified in the seventh century. For a while the Silla capital of Kyŏngju was perhaps the fourth-largest city in the world, after Constantinople, Baghdad, and T'ang China's Changan.

From the seventh century to the twentieth Korea was ruled by three dynasties: *Silla* (A.D. 668-935), famous for gold and chivalry; *Koryo* (935-1392), renowned for its blue-green celadon pottery; and *Yi* (1392-1910), which gave the world movable metal type, armored battleships, and the most scientific phonetic alphabet ever used. The Korean throne was sovereign and independent, but it stood in a typically Confucian associate relationship to the mighty Chinese Empire, much like that of a younger to an older brother.

Late in the nineteenth century the old order in east Asia was broken by the meteoric rise of Japan and the collapse of China. As a national proverb puts it, Korea was caught "like a shrimp among whales" in the clash of her huge neighbors. After Japan defeated China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, she stayed on in Korea, finally annexing the country as a colony in 1910. When in 1882 the western powers entered Korea, it was too late to secure an open-door policy, which might have saved her.

Japanese colonialism ended in 1945, but Korea's troubles were not over. The war ended with Russian troops in North Korea and United States occupation in the south. The country never regained its unity, for the

Russians claimed the thirty-eighth parallel as a new international boundary. In 1948 Russia installed Kim Il-sung as premier of a communist dictatorship north of the parallel, while the people of South Korea elected a famed freedom-fighter and Christian, Syngman Rhee, as their first president. Two years later, in June 1950, the north attacked, and for three years the peninsula was ravaged by the Korean War. Its end at P'anmunjŏm in July 1953 was an armistice, not a peace, and the armistice line was one of the tightest-sealed borders in the world until the summer of 1972, when South Korea's President Park made a surprising move to open negotiations with the North Koreans. At this writing diplomatic talks have begun, but their future is uncertain.

The artificial division has been economically crippling, separating the country's industrial resources in the north from its agricultural assets in the south. This unbalance at first gave the industrial north an economic edge; but the remarkable economic boom in the south since 1960, combined with the comparative failure of North Korea's doctrinaire communist economy, has now closed the gap.

South Korea's gross national product (GNP) has been rising at one of the highest rates in the world: 8.9 percent in 1967, 13.1 percent in 1968, and a record 15.9 percent in 1969, the world's highest. The average per capita GNP has jumped in ten years from about $80 (1960) to $195 in 1969 (compared with $48 in Malawi, $495 in Hong Kong, and $4,255 in the U.S.) and to $252 in 1971. Perhaps the best overall indication of the striking improvement in South Korea's living standards is the lengthening life span of its citizens. In ten years, six years have been added to the average Korean's life expectancy. Twenty years ago he could expect to live only to fifty-two, and ten years ago to fifty-eight, but today he can expect to live to sixty-four.[4]

National Religions

The old religions are not, at least on the surface, a significant factor in Korea today. Historically, the country is Buddhist and Confucian. Buddhism came into the country from China in the fourth century and has dominated the country's art and folk literature. Confucianism came in the seventh century and has molded its ethics and academic disciplines. Both have been politically powerful, Buddhism in the Koryo dynasty up to the fourteenth century and Confucianism in the Yi dynasty up to the twentieth. But today they are largely ignored by all but the old and the sick—and foreign tourists. Most of modern Korea professes no religious faith, and the largest organized religion in the country, according to actual spot surveys if not by official report, may well be Christianity.

Beneath the surface, however, the unorganized, felt religion of the masses is still animistic shamanism, with all its related superstitions—fortune-telling, geomancy, and folk healing. There are said to be over twenty-seven thousand practicing shamanist sorceresses registered in the country. This primitive tribal religion was probably brought by the Korean people into the peninsula from their place of origin in the Siberian or Mongolian steppes millenniums before Christ.

In the cities, however, shamanist rites are giving way to a brash import from the West, modern materialism. The religion of the people as a whole might best be described as an uneasy tension between the old animistic-shamanist superstitions touched by Buddhist-Confucianism and a new, secularized, self-centered preoccupation with material progress. But neither the old fears nor the new obsessions are organized religions, and the country is virtually wide open to the evangelistic presentation of the gospel.

Statistics on religious membership as reported by the Ministry of Culture and Information are somewhat misleading. Its *Handbook of Religions* simply repeats the membership claims of the country's religious bodies and is not a critical assessment of actual membership. As the chart indicates, Buddhists and Confucianists claim more members than the Christian churches, but recent survey samplings suggest that in organized membership as well as in popular preference Christianity has now overtaken both of these older, traditional religions. Chondokyo, the "Heavenly Way Religion" (shown in fourth place) is a late nineteenth-century "new religion" combining Korean nationalism wth elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Despite its listing in some encyclopedias as a major Korean religion, it has been virtually moribund since the 1920s. Shamanism is not charted at all, for despite its underground vigor it is neither organized nor publicly admired.

KOREA'S RELICIONS

	Believers	*Places of Worship*	*Clergy*	*Property Value*
Buddhism	5,562,278	2,266	15,420	$20,200,000
Confucianism	4,423,000	231	11,831	2,800,000
Christianity	3,943,838	13,235	17,026	41,000,000
Chondokyo	636,067	119	977	2,460,000
Others	1,136,853	629	3,149	

SOURCE: *Chongkyo P'yonlam* (*Handbook of Religions*, in Korean only) (Seoul: Ministry of Culture and Information, 1969, p. 15). "Others" includes such sects as Taechongkyo, Chonrikyo, Bahai, etc.

Christian History

Compared with Buddhism and Confucianism, Christianity in Korea is

very young—a handicap in a land where age and tradition mean much. It has therefore been very tempting to try to trace Korean connections with seventh- and eighth-century Nestorianism in China, but so far the evidence is disputable. Not until the sixteenth century did a Roman Catholic reach Korea, and the first Protestants were shipwrecked Dutch sailors (and one Scot) in the seventeenth century. Though Catholicism entered Korea in earnest in 1784, the Protestant church is such a recent arrival that the first infant to receive Protestant baptism is still alive. Yet despite its youth, Christianity in its vigor, influence, and perhaps numbers has already decisively overtaken its older rivals. One great secret of Christianity's success in Korea has been the indigenous nature of its expansion.

THE CATHOLIC CENTURY (1784-1884)

Father Gregorio de Cespedes may have been the first Roman Catholic in Korea, but he was not the father of Catholicism in that land. He came more as a chaplain to invading Japanese troops in 1593 than as a missionary to Korea. It was another two hundred years before the church in Korea was founded, and then it was planted not by a foreigner but by a Korean.

At the request of a small circle of Korean scholars a young man, Lee Seung-run, went to Peking in search of missionaries to ask them more about the strange Catholic doctrines which had been filtering across the border since 1631 in smuggled Christian literature. He returned, was baptized, and a few months later, in 1784, began to spread the faith. When the first priest and foreign missionary arrived ten years later, a Chinese named Chou Wen-mo (baptized James or Chu Mun-mo in Korean), he found to his surprise that there were already 4,000 Catholics in Korea. Not for another forty years, until 1835, was a western missionary able to enter the country successfully for residence—Father Pierre Maubant of the Societe des Missions Etrangeres.

But the price of success for those early Catholic missionaries was martyrdom. Four great persecutions decimated the church in 1810, 1839, 1846, and 1866. Father Chou died in the first persecution and Father Maubant in the second. More than 8,000 Christians are said to have perished in the greatest persecution of all, that of 1866. But though driven underground and scattered, Catholics could still count some 17,500 believers in Korea at the end of their first century.[5]

PROTESTANT BEGINNINGS (1884-95)

As the Catholics ended their first century in Korea, in 1884, the first resident Protestant missionary arrived, a physician, Dr. Horace N. Allen, who was transferred from China by the Presbyterian Church USA (Northern). However, as with the Catholics before, it was not a missionary but a Korean convert who gathered together the first group of Protestant believers in the land.

The earliest Protestant missionary contacts, beginning fifty years before Allen, had been either impermanent and exploratory or else conducted from across the Manchurian border. In 1832 Carl Gutzlaff, a German who had begun evangelism in Thailand, distributed Scriptures along the eastern coast; and in 1866 a Welshman, Robert J. Thomas, lost his life in a similar attempt. He was killed at P'yongyang in the act of offering a Bible to the man who beheaded him and is revered as Korea's first Protestant martyr. Two Scots, John Ross and John McIntyre, baptized the first Korean Protestant in Manchuria in 1876 and produced the first Korean translation of the New Testament between 1882 and 1887.

It was thus one of the Koreans baptized in Manchuria who established the first worshiping Korean Protestant congregation. So Sang Yun, who helped Ross in Manchuria translate the New Testament, returned to Korea in 1883 and won over a hundred believers to Christ before Dr. Allen ever set foot in the country.

Six months after Allen's arrival, on Easter Sunday of 1885, the first ordained Protestant ministers reached Korea together. They were Horace G. Underwood, a Presbyterian, and Henry G. Appenzeller, a Methodist. Within fifteen months, in 1886, Underwood had baptized a convert (the first Korean baptized in Korea) and Appenzeller had opened a school, Pai Chai. This was symbolic, in a way, of the subsequent emphases of Korea's two largest denominations: the Methodists tended to stress education, the Presbyterians evangelism. The first two missions were soon joined by others: Australian Presbyterians and Independent Baptists in 1889, Anglicans in 1890, Southern Presbyterians in 1892, Southern Methodists in 1896, Canadian Presbyterians in 1898, Seventh-Day Adventists in 1903, the Oriental Missionary Society in 1907, and the Salvation Army in 1908. These remained the major Protestant bodies in Korea until World War II.

FIRST EXPLOSION OF CHURCH GROWTH (1895-1910)

Beginning in 1895 and continuing about fifteen years, a dramatic explosion of Protestant church growth in Korea startled the Christian world. It was spearheaded by the evangelistic work of Samuel A. Moffett and his colleagues in Presbyterian churches in northwest Korea,[6] and it was spread and reinvigorated nationally by the Great Revival of 1907.[7] Early emphasis on lay witness and Bible study began the expansion, which reached its climax in the large evangelistic meetings of the revival. Denominational barriers were broken and Christians were moved to join together in witness. "Some of you go back to John Calvin," said one

Korean leader to the missionaries, "and some to John Wesley, but we can go back no further than 1907, when we first really knew the Lord Jesus Christ."[8]

In those important fifteen years the Protestant community in Korea (total adherents) grew from only 802 in 1895 to an astonishing 167,352 in 1910. Comparative Roman Catholic figures for the whole period are unavailable, but from 1900 to 1910, while Protestants reported a phenomenal 900 percent increase in adherents (from 18,081 in 1900 to 167,352 in 1910), the number of Catholics rose only 25 percent, from 60,000 to 75,000.[9,10]

Many reasons have been given for the amazing Protestant growth, which was particularly notable in the Presbyterian church. The most important reasons seem to have been a stress on people-to-people evangelism, Bible training for the entire church membership, the adaptation of the Nevius method (which promoted self-support, self-government and self-propagation), and the unique outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival. Presbyterians also strategically deployed their missionaries to take advantage of and to follow up areas of growth, whereas the Methodists for a time were forced to reduce the number of their missionaries.

The development of Christian institutions in this same period not only contributed to the spread of the faith but also helped to conserve and train new believers. Methodists pioneered in education for women with Korea's first school for women, Ewha, as early as 1886. By the beginning of the twentieth century Christian schools were the most popular and crowded schools in the country. In 1906 Presbyterians and Methodists cooperated in opening the country's first Christian college, Soongsil, in P'yongyang, and four years later Ewha Girls' School shocked the old-fashioned by introducing college grade education for women. Medical work also, which under Dr. Allen had been the opening wedge for all Protestant missions in Korea, continued to contribute not only to Korea's evangelization but also to her modernization. In 1908 the nation's first Korea-trained doctors graduated from Severance Medical College, which had begun as Allen's Royal Hospital. By 1910 it seemed to many thoughtful Koreans that the wave of the future was with the Christian faith.

HARASSMENT AND PRESSURE (1910-45)

But in 1910 the tide turned not only against the church but against the country itself. Two thousand years of Korean independence ended when Japan, victor over China and Russia, formally annexed the peninsula as a Japanese colony. The church soon felt the pressure of the new government's distrust, and growth slowed perceptibly. Christians, not without reason, were accused of independent nationalist sentiments. In the Independence Movement of 1919 fifteen of the thirty-three signers of the

Korean Declaration of Independence were Christians. Economic depression in the 1920s was a further blow to Korea's self-supporting churches.

Finally, in the 1930s the revival of Japanese militarism brought violent persecution upon the church for its resistance to Shinto shrine ceremonies demanded by the Japanese. The number of Christians who suffered imprisonment for their faith is estimated at about 3,000, of whom some 50 were martyred. The crushing climax came between 1943 and 1945, when Korea's great independent Protestant churches were ordered abolished and melted down into one government-controlled organization, "The Korean Christian Church of Japanese Christianity." The Christian community on the eve of World War II (1940) numbered 372,000 Protestants and 150,000 Roman Catholics.[11]

PRESENT SITUATION (1945-70)

The restoration of Korean independence at the end of World War II did not end the church's time of troubles, but it did, by the grace of God, usher in a new period of church growth. Yet troubles began at once. North Korea, where the church had once been the strongest and largest, was held by the Communists, who lost no time in destroying the church as an organized body. They first tried to control the church through a puppet "Christian League." When that failed, they moved to exterminate it by ruthless, direct persecution. By the summer of 1950, when the Communists attacked South Korea, the organized church in the North had almost ceased to exist. So when United Nations' armies advanced to the Yalu River, then reeled back south under Chinese onslaught, 4.5 million North Koreans fled south to freedom. With them came all the Christians in North Korea who were able to leave.

Today some of the largest congregations in South Korea are refugee congregations from the north. The most famous is the great seven thousand member Yong-nak Presbyterian Church in Seoul, where attendance on a regular Sunday morning passes nine thousand. The pastor, Dr. Han Kyung-chik (now retired), was a featured speaker at the Berlin World Congress on Evangelism and chairman of the Asian South Pacific Congress on Evangelism in Singapore in 1968. But back in the north, so far as we know, there are no organized congregations left. It is estimated that more than four hundred Protestant ministers were murdered by the Communists, and Roman Catholic sources give the names of over a hundred martyred priests.[12]

CHURCH DIVISION

In the south the greater enemy proved to be weakness and division inside the church rather than communist persecution from without, and

this weakness lost the church its greatest opportunity. During the years of Japanese occupation, it was only in the Christian church that Korea could produce free and vigorous leadership. It was no accident, therefore, that, when the country regained its independence, it turned to Christians for its first three presidents: Syngman Rhee, a Methodist (1948-60); ~~Chang Myon, a Catholic (1960-61~~); and Yun Po-son, a Presbyterian (1961-62). Most of Rhee's first cabinet and 25 percent of the early National Assembly were Christians. It was a time for decisive, united spiritual leadership by the Korean church. But the church failed. The years from 1950 to 1960 were not years of leadership; they were a decade of division. Controversies and schisms split all the major denominations, and the reputation of the Christian churches was critically tarnished throughout the nation.

Before World War II, in 1940, there were only six nationally recognized Korean Protestant denominations: Presbyterian, with 173,738 communicants and catechumens; Methodist, with 25,661; Anglican, 10,120; Holiness (Oriental Missionary Society), 7,332; Salvation Army (no figures); and Seventh-Day Adventist, 7,370 (Federal Council Prayer Calendar, 1940). Today, however, there are fifty-seven denominations in Korea. Until 1940, 90 percent of the Protestants were cooperatively organized in a Federal Council, and the two largest bodies, Presbyterian and Methodist, had divided their areas of work in a comity agreement in order to avoid undue competition and the appearance of disunity. Today less than half the Protestants and only six of the fifty-seven denominations belong to the National Council of Churches. All semblance of organized unity is gone. Presbyterians, who make up two-thirds of the country's Protestants, are divided into four major and eight splinter denominations. Only the Roman Catholics and the Salvation Army seem to have escaped schism or duplication, as a 1969 table of the larger groups in Korea today shows:

MAJOR RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN KOREA

Confessional Bodies		*Total Adherents*	*Churches*
Presbyterian	(12 groups)	1,415,436	5,814
Roman Catholic	(1)	751,217	369
Methodist	(4)	300,107	1,517
Holiness	(2)	217,289	727
Baptist	(4)	64,191	434
Salvation Army	(1)	40,604	102
Seventh-Day Adventist	(2)	35,091	656
Pentecostal	(6)	30,790	143

SOURCE: Compiled from *Chongkyo P'yonlam*, pp. 16-19.

Actually, since 1950 an entirely new dimension of Christian division has been added to the picture with the emergence of what may be called

"marginal sects." It could be said, therefore, that for all practical purposes Korean Christianity is grouped into three or four categories, depending on how deep is judged to be the current division between ecumenical and nonecumenical Protestants. Each of the four groups described below has roughly a million adherents.

Roman Catholics (839,711 members in 1970). After the century of persecution, Catholics emerged from hiding in 1890 and reorganized. Membership increased, though more slowly than for the Protestants. In 1830 the Societe des Missions Etrangeres de Paris had been given exclusive jurisdiction in Korea, but in 1909 the French missioners were joined first by German Benedictines, then in 1923 by American Maryknoll Fathers, and in 1933 by Irish Columbans. The Korean priesthood grew even more slowly than the membership and the foreign missioners. In 1941 there were 102 foreign missioners and only 103 Korean priests.[13]

But after World War II membership began to rise with increasing rapidity, more than matching the rate of growth (though not the actual numbers) of the Protestants. In 1969, 185 years after the baptism of Lee Sung-hun in Peking, Korea received its first cardinal when Stephen Suhwan Kim, archbishop of Seoul, was elevated to the rank of prince of the church.

Ecumenical Protestants (1,013,035 adherents). Six Korean denominations comprise the Korean National Council of Churches, and through that body they are related directly or indirectly to the World Council of Churches. The bulk of the membership is old-line Presbyterian and Methodist of evangelical and conservative persuasion, as well as the Salvation Army, but also included are the Anglicans of Korea and a moderately liberal Presbyterian denomination (ROK), together with a tiny indigenous body, the Korean Gospel church.

Non-Ecumenical Protestants (1,184,035). For both theological and ecclesiastical reasons an equal number of Korean Protestants do not choose to belong to the Korean National Council of Churches. To them, that ecumenical body seems too liberal theologically and too inclusivist ecclesiastically. Three main groupings are discernible in this important segment of Korean Protestantism. One consists of independent but cooperative evangelical bodies, like the Christian Korean Holiness church (Oriental Missionary Society), the Korea Baptist Conference (Southern Baptist), the Missouri Synod Lutherans, and the Evangelical Alliance Mission. Another is the small but growing group of Pentecostal denominations. The third and largest part is more outspokenly antiecumenical and independent. It includes two of the largest and most influential Presbyterian bodies (the Haptong and Koryo Presbyterian churches) as well as smaller Holiness and Methodist schisms.

The Presbyterian divisions are important enough to deserve separate notice (see Appendix 1, "The Presbyterian Church Controversy in Korea"). These divisions trace back to a decade of division, 1950-60, when Korean Presbyterianism splintered into its present four main churches. The parent Korean Presbyterian church (Tonghap) was founded in 1907 and is related to the American United Presbyterians, the US Southern Presbyterians, and the Australian Presbyterian church. Since the schisms, the church is popularly known in Korea as the Ecumenical or Tonghap (i.e. United) Presbyterian Church. The first division occurred in 1951. It began as a protest against what were considered to be compromises in Korean Presbyterianism on the shrine issue, combined with charges of theological liberalism, and it culminated in the formation of the Koryo Presbyterian church. Three years later the parent body was accused again, this time of fundamentalism, in a controversy over Bible interpretation and seminary control, and its liberal critics separated in 1954 to form the Presbyterian Church in the ROK, which is related to the United Church of Canada. The most violent schism of all occurred in 1959, the division between what is now known as the Tonghap Presbyterian church and the Hapdong Presbyterian church. Hapdong Presbyterians are antiecumenical but have now largely discarded their connections with the Reverend Carl McIntyre and the ICCC. They are sometimes called "NAE" Presbyterians, but their relationship is not so much with the American National Association of Evangelicals as with the US Orthodox Presbyterian church and the Reformed Presbyterian church (Evangelical Synod).

It is encouraging to be able to add to this sad record of discord a hopeful note. By 1972 the tide was beginning to turn away from division and, if not to reunion, at least to cooperation. In September, for the first time since the beginning of the schisms in 1950, the moderators and general secretaries of the four leading Presbyterian denominations met together, representing a constituency of about 1.5 million Korean Presbyterians, and made plans for a Presbyterian Federation in Korea.

Marginal Sects (1,014,275 estimated, probably exaggerated). Though classified by the government as Protestant, these semi-Christian sects are unacceptable to most Korean churches. The largest is the "Olive Tree church," founded in 1955 by a former Presbyterian elder turned faith healer, Pak Tae-son. An industrialist as well as an evangelist, Pak has established two heavy industrial complexes near Seoul as "heavens" or "Christian towns" for his followers, who must surrender all their capital to him. The second-largest sect is the bizarre "Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity," popularly known as "Ong' il-kyo or "Unity." This was started in 1954 by Moon Sun-myong, who claims to

be a Korean Jesus Christ. The Jewish Christ failed, he says![14] (This sect is also rapidly growing, oddly enough, among university students in Japan.)

Something of the comparative size and denominational complexity of all these Protestant and semi-Protestant bodies can be seen from the listing in Appendix 2 of the thirty largest Korean denominations.

Conclusion

What the new foment on the political scene will mean to Korea in days to come is as yet unknown. Some normalization of relations with North Korea might mean an opportunity for the churches to be reestablished and evangelism to begin again there aboveground, though the churches in other Asian communist nations have not taken this direction. The new prosperity of Korea also may affect church growth, as it has in nearby nations like Japan.

Whatever the political and economic conditions, Korea presents a great challenge to its strong churches to increase their evangelism and to the world church to continue its prayer and wise missionary assistance.

APPENDIX 1

The Presbyterian Church Controversy in Korea

by Harrie M. Conn

Ed. note. In view of the worldwide publicity given to the controversy in the Korean Presbyterian church since the war, I asked a representative of another large body of Presbyterians there to share his view of the difficulties. Dr. Conn, presently professor of missions at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., was for many years a missionary under the Orthodox Presbyterian Mission in Korea. Dr. Moffett, author of this chapter, has graciously consented to the addition of this appendix to the chapter.

The years 1910-45 were ones of harrassment and pressure for the Korean church as both church and nation adjusted to the harsh Japanese military dictatorship. Liberal spokesmen in the church gained ascendancy in leadership roles. The long, vigorous domination of liberalism and neoorthodoxy in Japan now made itself felt among those Korean students who had to turn to Japan for theological training. Liberation in 1945 found a church that, for some years, had been controlled by liberal hands.

It is this background that forms the sad years of church division in Korea (1945-60), as the church turned its strength to the question of renewal and reformation. What steps were to be taken about Shinto shrine collaborationists? What about the theological liberalism that had taken control? Within the Methodist church, the conflict was not so acute. But

within the Presbyterian church, the struggle produced at least four major church divisions.

Almost the first program to be initiated centered in the far southwest around a newly established school (1946), the Koryo Theological Seminary. Calling for the church to exercise discipline against the Shinto shrine collaborationists and against the liberal leadership of the church, the Koryo Seminary circle commended itself to many for the consistency of its demands, the tested piety of its leadership, and the politicking of its opponents. But without the support of the church's liberal element or of those conservatives who felt their demands to be too "purist," the circle was rebuffed time and again by the church as a whole. In May 1951 the General Assembly cut off the presbytery from which the circle gathered its main strength.[15] Those presbyterial commissioners continued to attempt to be seated at the Assembly until 1954, when the Assembly reiterated its action of 1951 and the delegate from the presbytery "formally withdrew from the General Assembly."[16]

Unwilling to support the Koryo Seminary, the Assembly also found itself increasingly uncomfortable in its official support of the Chosun Seminary, erected in 1940 as a neoorthodox reversal of the prewar seminary policy and tradition.[17] The institution had been made the official General Assembly seminary of the rebuilding church when the southern part of the country had nowhere to turn for leadership training. But student protests concerning the theological liberalism of the school in 1947 forced the issue before the Assembly, and mediating conservatives then sought to avoid a showdown by erecting a third school, obtaining recognition for it as well in 1949. Then they proposed a merger with the liberal Chosun seminary; when this failed, in 1951, the Assembly withdrew their recognition of both schools and proceeded to erect still another new institution. The conservatives demanded the suspension of Chosun Seminary's neoorthodox president and barred its graduates from ministry without further study in the Assembly's now recognized seminary. In 1953-54 the Chosun Seminary (now called Hankuk Seminary) circle withdrew, taking with it approximately one-fourth of the original Assembly.

In 1959 the most violent eruption occurred within the mediating group, now the largest of the three. Increasingly the question of continuing membership in the World Council of Churches had come to the fore. The Koryo Seminary circle had expressed their concern for the theological latitudinarianism of the council when the church had first joined in 1948. And conservatives were not reassured by the strong support of the liberal-oriented Chosun Seminary faction toward the WCC. This concern grew with the report of the two delegates to the 1954 Evanston Assembly

enough so to erect an "Ecumenical Study Committee." Its 1957 report noted two streams of thought within the WCC—those said to be seeking a united world church and those interested merely in wider fellowship. The report urged continued cooperation as long as it intended merely the latter.[18]

By the time of the 1958 Assembly, however, the question exploded again, this time coupled with charges of unethical use of funds against the conservative president of the General Assembly seminary. Attitudes toward the WCC became inextricably linked with attitudes toward the president's continuing in office. "The assembly seemed to be deadlocked over the Korean church's relationship to the ecumenical movement. Finally a compromise position was adopted which left the Korean church in the WCC but qualified its participation in it to matters where faith might not be compromised."[19] The formula did not resolve the issue.

During the year, tension continued to mount; the conservative group began a systematic campaign to discredit the WCC on three grounds—liberalism, superchurch ambitions, and pro-Communism. The 1959 Assembly met with this unsettled question, as well as many internal ones now linked to it rightly or wrongly. The result was violence, politicking on both sides, and strong paternal and financial pressures from western groups both for and (later) against the WCC. In an atmosphere of pandemonium, with obstructionist tactics used by both groups, the Assembly was adjourned by its anti-WCC moderator to meet again in a few weeks. Immediately after, the pro-WCC "former stated clerk rushed to the platform, made a motion that a vote of nonconfidence be declared in the moderator, . . . put his own motion, which he announced as being passed."[20] The room was cleared out by anti-WCC and pro-seminary president forces, and weeks later two adjourned Assemblies declared themselves in session.

Both groups withdrew their membership from the WCC, one in strong opposition to the liberal leadership of the movement, the other in hopes that withdrawal would bring unity to the national church. The strongly anti-WCC body (the Haptong group) has continued to maintain a firm stance, supported by missionaries of the Orthodox Presbyterian church and the Reformed Presbyterian church, Evangelical Synod. The other body (Tonghap group), supported by the major boards mentioned by Dr. Moffett, at their 1969 Assembly voted to join the WCC again. Conservatives now predict that union is inevitable between this group and the 1953 division.

APPENDIX 2

Korean Protestant Denominations and Marginal Sects

Denomination	*Adherents*	*Ministers and Evangelists*	*Churches*
(Olive Tree) Evangelistic Society#	700,520	1,515	1,768
Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapton, NAE)	550,790	2,096	1,991
Presbyterian Church of Korea (Tonghap, Ecum.)°	504,728	2,580	2,281
Holy Spirit Assn. for Unification of World Christianity (Tong'ilkyo)#	304,750	1,013	936
Korean Methodist Church°	289,024	1,507	1,350
Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea°	194,188	788	689
Christian Korean Holiness Church (OMS)	145,773	639	581
Korean Presbyterian Church (Koryo)	102,125	702	513
Jesus Korean Holiness Church	71,516	185	146
Korean Baptist Conference (Southern Baptist)	51,613	353	378
Salvation Army°	49,635	236	206
Seventh-Day Adventists	33,596	748	627
Christian Korean Assemblies of Cod	27,348	150	117
Korean Bible Presbyterian Church (Non-ICCC)	21,190	62	58
Jesus Korean Methodist Church	19,960	70	41
Korean Church of Christ (instruments)	19,813	87	97
Korean Bible Presbyterian Church (ICCC)	13,951	91	89
Korean Bible Baptist Church	12,108	61	49
Nazarene Church	10,880	59	60
Anglican Church in Korea°	9,826	38	64
Jehovah's Witnesses#	8,911	657	219
Christian Korean Reformed Church	8,225	58	51
Korean Jesus Reformed Presbyterian Church	7,260	187	139
Jesus Free Methodist Church	6,788	48	45
Korean Gospel Church°	5,900	19	12
Korean Jesus Presbyterian Church (Head Presbytery)	5,016	17	14
Church of Christ Evangelical	4,490	107	87
Church of Cod	3,637	24	17

#Marginal Sect
°Member of N.C.C. of Korea

Reconstructed Church	3,449	35	53
Choson Christian Church	3,030	20	13
Others (24 bodies)	24,414	..	285
Total	3,214,454	14,152	12,976

NOTE: The Roman Catholic Church in Korea reports 839,711 members, 3,042 priests and church workers, and 368 churches.

SOURCE: *Kidokyo Yonkam, 1970* (Korean Christian Yearbook, pp. 511-521, with exception of number of adherents of Presby. Ch. of Korea (Tonghap) taken from *Report of the 1971 General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea.*

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2. Ibid., pp. 537-40.
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4. Statistics from *Pick's Currency Yearbook, 1969;* Korea Herald, July 17, 1970, and Jan. 29, 1970; *Korea Times,* Dec. 2, 1969.
5. Joseph Chang-mun Kim and John Jae-sun Chung, *Catholic Korea Yesterday and Now.*
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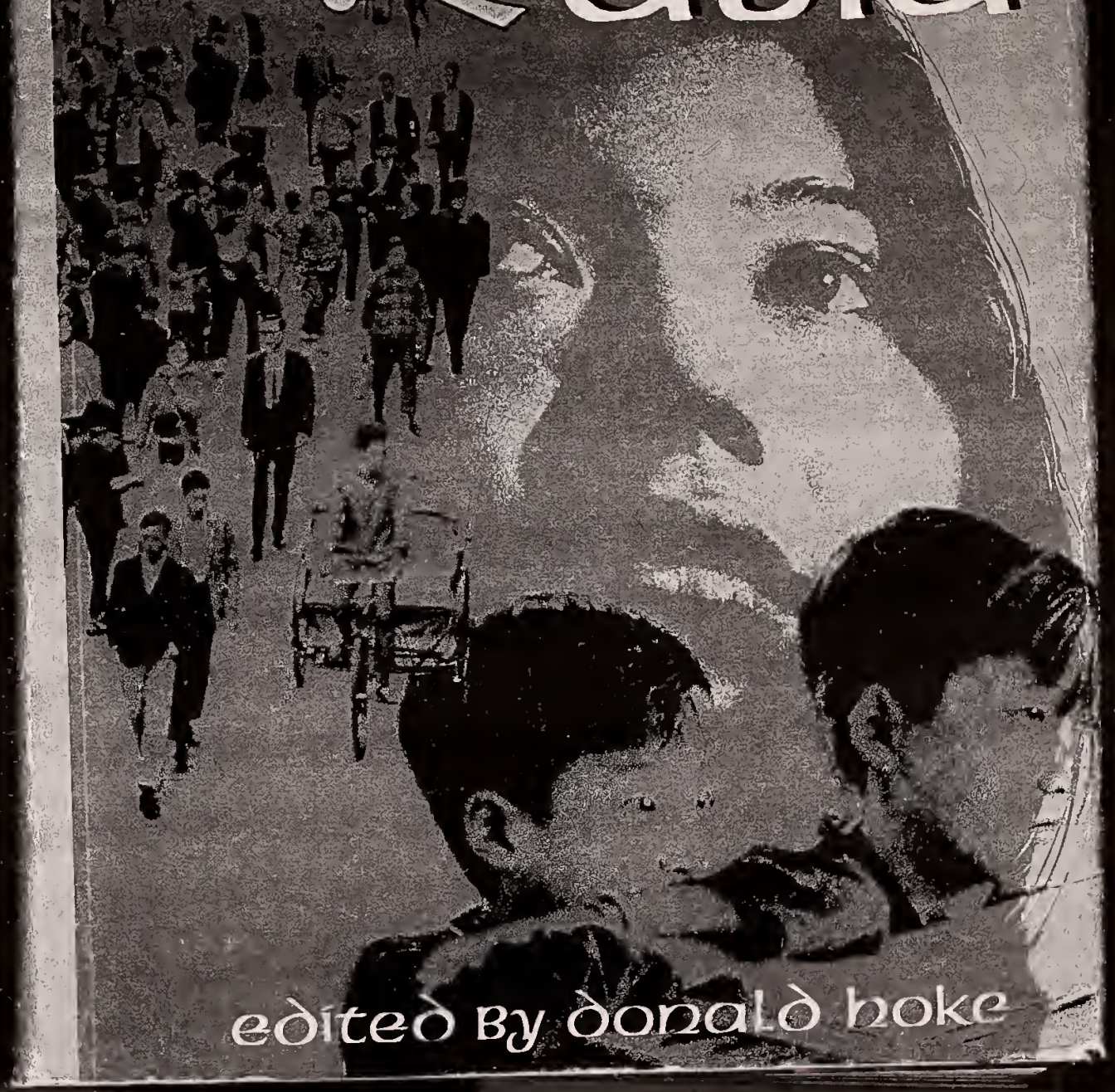

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