HOW KOREAN IS THE METHODIST "KOREAN CREED"?

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The confession called "A Statement of Faith of the Korean Methodist Church" appears in The United Methodist Hymnal and is widely known in the English-speaking world.¹ Few United Methodists are aware of its origins or importance in the history of the Korean Methodist Church, however, and many ask whether there is anything distinctively Korean about this creed. United States Methodist missionaries and other American leaders were deeply involved in the formation of the Korean Methodist Church and the writing of its Doctrinal Statement, raising questions about the relationships between United Methodism and Korean Methodism. This article revisits the story of the composition of the Korean Creed, evaluates its Koreanness, and considers its place in the long search for Korean forms of Christian life and thought.²

The Korean Methodist Church was formed in 1930 by uniting the two Methodist bodies produced by the mission efforts of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It became an autonomous church, independent of the General Conferences of the founding bodies in the United States, yet maintaining close ties. The Joint Commission on Methodist Union in Korea gave considerable attention to the writing of a statement of faith for the new church, and the newly formed Korean General Conference affirmed the results.

Both contemporaries and later generations have claimed that this symbol was an important aspect of the creation of the Korean Methodist Church. A

²I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Rev. Sung Baik Gul in finding and ordering some of the sources for this essay. His knowledge of Korean Methodist history has also been valuable in making connections among the people and events referred to here. He is presently publishing in Korea his own interpretation of the Korean Uniting Conference and the Doctrinal Declaration.
South African mission scholar noted, "This break which the Korean church made is thus very significant in the history of the development of confessions in the Asian churches. They wrote their own statements born out of their own convictions, with their own cultural background." Those representatives who wrote the Korean Creed believed that the document reflected the Korean Methodist Church being genuinely Christian, truly Methodist, and really Korean.

The creed itself, however, contains nothing overtly Korean in its concepts or expression, and suggests nothing to identify it as a product of Korean Methodist history. How, then, were its framers so confident that it was "really Korean," and how may this creed be understood in its immediate and wider Korean contexts?

I

Most accounts of the formation of the Korean Methodist Church say little about the single most important aspect of Korean life at that time, the annexation by Japan, in effect since 1910. The search for a truly Korean form of Christianity seems to have lagged among Methodists until Japanese domination inspired renewed nationalistic fervor. It is notable that among the thirty-three signers of the Korean Declaration of Independence in 1919, sixteen were Christians, and of them nine were Methodists. Because the Japanese response to peaceful independence demonstrations had been so severe since 1919, most Koreans were cautious in voicing nationalist sentiments by the time of the forming of the Korean Methodist Church. The Methodist Episcopal resident bishop in Korea prior to the union, James C. Baker, could have been naïve, but may have intended a tongue-in-cheek gesture when he wrote of the service of installation of J. S. Ryang (Yang Ju Sam) the new Korean Methodist General Superintendent, "The visit of His Excellency, Viscount Saito, the governor-general of Korea, was deeply appreciated. This was

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1 Oosthuizen, Gerhardus Cornelis, *Theological Discussions and Confessional Developments in the Churches of Asia and Africa* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1958), 197. The implication here seems to be that Korean Methodism paved the way and set the example.

2 A characteristic expression of these intentions is found in the statement given to the First General Conference of the Korean Methodist Church on December 2, 1930, by Bishop Herbert Welch in behalf of The Joint Commission on Methodist Union in Korea. It is in the *Discipline of the Korean Methodist Church*, Translated by Rev. E. M. Cable (Seoul: General Board of the Korean Methodist Church, 1932), 1–5.


4 In this article I follow the usual Korean custom of giving the surname first, except in such cases as Ryang’s, where the name has become well-known in another form. Where certain spellings have become customary, I will follow them.
the first time he had ever personally visited a church assembly in Korea . . . .

He is a liberal, democratic in spirit and action . . . .”

More revealing of the situation for Koreans was a terse remark in Bishop Sutherland’s personal notes of the Commission meetings, “The first forenoon, November 18, was devoted to organization, discussion of the admission of reporters and taking picture[s]. Reporters were admitted. Police have been in every session.” Many foreigners in Korea expressed appreciation for modernization under Japanese rule, but for Koreans it had meant harsh oppression, made even worse by the enmity resulting when some Koreans collaborated with the Japanese rulers. The missionaries and American resident bishops sometimes favored Japanese policies, either out of genuine support or in the belief that Korean resistance was futile. The missionaries tended to adopt a “neutral” stance, which they saw as appropriate in their position as foreign guests in Korea, but neutrality was often seen by Korean Christians as betrayal. Bishop Herbert Welch had been embroiled in an ugly public confrontation arising from pro-Japanese remarks he had made to reporters, so was under a lingering cloud of suspicion, though he had denied pro-Japanese sentiments and claimed to be neutral. Many Koreans felt that the Japanese annexation was leading to national destruction, prompting a comment which saw the Methodist union as “a decisive moment of regeneration for the dying Korean nation.”

One motive for uniting the two Korean Methodist bodies must surely have been the greater strength a unified body could present in the face of Japanese suppression, but this could only be expressed in indirect ways. Shortly before the final negotiations for union J. S. Ryang (Yang Ju Sam), who would be the first General Superintendent of the new church, said it was natural that the Methodists should unite “in today’s Chosun.” Bishop Sutherland wrote, “It was not independence that primarily started the move for this new church, it was the desire and necessity for union of two small groups in the face of their mountain-like obstacles.”

Historians and missiologists tend to focus upon beliefs and cultures in analyzing religious changes across cultural lines, but the situation of Korean Christianity during the Japanese days suggests that intergroup relationships

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1James C. Baker, “A New Day for Korean Methodism,” Zion’s Herald, Jan. 14, 1931, 49, 61. It was perhaps natural that many, if not most, nationalist Koreans considered the resident American bishops to be pro-Japanese and therefore not to be trusted.
2George F. Sutherland, “Notes on Commission Meeting” (Private notes, Fall, 1930. Lodged in Union Seminary Library, New York), 1. Sutherland was a representative of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the Joint Commission for Union.
5George F. Sutherland, “Creating a New Church,” Zion’s Herald, February 4, 1931, 143.
may have motivated the changes in Methodism. This sociological perspective has been argued by Robert L. Montgomery in a recent study, *The Diffusion of Religions: A Sociological Perspective*. He points out that social identity theorists have shown "how an outside group may be perceived as threatening a valued aspect of social identity, particularly ethnic or religious identity, and how then a perception develops that a change in religion would enhance ethnic or national identity." Under oppressive Japanese rule, Christianity became an asset in protecting Korean identity. Such instances, says Montgomery, "describe receptivity to an outside religion when that religion appears to offset other pressures and contributes to the strength of local identity."

Many Korean Methodists hoped that a united church would respond to the thought of the day and better attract young people, an attitude fueled by concern that Methodist growth rates had slowed. One writer said that after forty years it was time for the Korean church to manage its own affairs; while others said the Korean church should no longer have to "wear Western clothing," but adapt to Korean ways. Unspoken here is the assumption that Korean Christians must enhance resistance to the Japanese. This motive also helps account for the concern for democracy in the new church, for the churches had become one of the few places where Koreans could manage their own affairs. Since the Japanese language was mandatory in public life, Koreans spoke their language at home and in the churches, which became havens for cultivating cultural, even political resistance, often in indirect ways.

Another factor affecting the Korean Creed was the religious situation, both Korean and international. Before the union, J. S. Ryang wrote, "a united front of the entire Christian Church" would be needed for Korea to "be evangelized and be made Christian." Ryang was optimistic enough to say, "The day may not be far off, when all denominations in Korea will be merged into one great Christian church, as we are hoping and praying for." Korean Methodists were well aware of ecumenical activities around the world. The plan to unite the two Korean Methodist churches was stimulated by the nego-

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15 The Japanese authorities monitored Christian worship carefully, eventually barring certain Scriptural passages from public use, such as sections of the Hebrew prophets.
17 J. S. Ryang, "The Type of Church the Koreans Want and Need," *The Missionary Voice*, Vol. 20, No. 3, March 1930, 102. There is a painful irony here, for the Japanese eventually forced Korean Protestants to unite into one body, as the Nazis did in Germany.
18 J. S. Ryang quotes, for example, from the 1928 Jerusalem Conference of the World Missionary Council in his article in *The Missionary Voice* to the effect that while foreign missionaries are still needed, churches need to take responsibility for mission in their local situations. March 1930, p. 141.
tions toward union in United States Methodism. A joint committee was created in Korea in 1926 to explore union. Ryang referred to the United Church of Canada as an example of wider ecumenical union that he envisioned for the churches of Korea. Interdenominational work in Korea had been successful in several areas, such as Bible translation and Christian literature publication. Despite friction and competition, many Korean Christians and missionaries were cooperating effectively across denominational lines. All of this seems to have led the Methodists to shun “fundamentalist” language in their creed and express their openness to closer relationships with others. The Presbyterians, with a background of four mission agencies, had already established an independent Korean church in 1905, and this was seen as an example and challenge by Korean Methodists.

The Methodist tradition also contributed to the forces that shaped the formation of the Korean Creed. There was a sense among Korean Methodists that the Wesleyan tradition did not apply creedal standards for membership, preferring to “impose no doctrinal test. Our main requirement is loyalty to Jesus Christ and a purpose to follow him. With us, as with Mr. Wesley . . . , the conditions of membership are moral and spiritual rather than theological.”

There was a continuing cultural influence from the West through the missionaries, but increasingly also through Koreans receiving education abroad, where even in Japan European influences were powerful. The western theological influences were not uniform, for during this period a robust “evangelical liberalism” continued in America, alongside Barthian developments in Europe and Japan, together with emerging Neo-orthodoxy. Much of this was clearly incompatible with conservative theological opinion in Korea, and the majority of Methodists continued to state their faith in theologically moderate terms.

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19 Negotiations in the United States had broken down in 1924, largely due to the failure to resolve the question of race in the proposed united structure.

20 J. S. Ryang. “The Aims of Methodist Union in Korea.” He wrote, “The union of several denominations into one great United Church of Canada has been a great inspiration to us and we hope and pray that the day of a similar movement in Korea is not far off.” Korean Mission Field, July 1927, 152.

21 A vigorous debate was under way in Korea between conservative and more liberal missionaries and Korean believers. With their ecumenical hopes, the Methodists wanted to remain open toward others, yet they did not wish to associate themselves with those whose conservatism tended toward exclusivism. Charles A. Sauer described the situation in this way: “The Presbyterian Seminary in Pyengyang was staffed with men who strongly emphasized the extreme fundamentalist position of that day and who called for a division of the churches based on doctrinal beliefs. Most Methodists as well as some [P]resbyterians were seeking less controversial views that would permit Christians to work together.” Methodists in Korea (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1973), p. 29.

Although some Korean Methodists had already been working toward an authentically Korean theology, the Christianity of the vast majority was still predominantly western. Yet there was a continuing call for making Methodism truly Korean. J. S. Ryang wrote in early 1930, "the Methodist Church in Korea today has been organized on the rules and regulations which were framed for other people whose needs were very different from those of the Koreans. It should therefore be more of [sic] Korean in spirit and organization, so as to meet the peculiar needs of the Korean people for whose salvation and welfare it has been planted."\textsuperscript{23} In a similar vein J. Earnest Fisher, a Methodist missionary in Korea, wrote, "A church which will truly meet Korea's needs must be a church which fully recognizes the social and spiritual conditions under which her people live. . . . True religion must connect itself with the very heart-blood of a people and be the expression of their deepest spiritual life. . . . I am afraid we still have to admit that Christianity is a foreign religion in Korea."\textsuperscript{24}

The relationships between the Korean Methodists and the missionaries were seldom discussed frankly, but we can see a mixture of cordiality and cooperation, combined with cultural and economic distance, and even some distrust and resentment. The missionaries had retained much control of resources, property and institutions, while the Korean leaders often seemed to show dependence and deference.\textsuperscript{25} Some Koreans lamented a lack of adequate Korean leadership,\textsuperscript{26} yet some missionaries seemed ready to give full responsibility to Koreans.\textsuperscript{27}

Many Korean Methodist leaders were progressive and involved in Korean society and even political life. People like Yun Tchi-ho and J. S. Ryang were greatly influenced by western ideals of democracy and equality. Many Korean Methodist leaders were accustomed to working alongside foreigners.

\textsuperscript{23}J. S. Ryang, "The Type of Church Koreans Want and Need," The Missionary Voice, Vol. 20, No. 3, March 1930, 141.


\textsuperscript{25}In an article, "The Korean Methodist Church" (Korean Mission Field, Vol. 26, No. 12, December, 1930), written on the eve of the Methodist union, J. Earnest Fisher supports the creation of a Korean church, saying that "we may pave the way for the building up of a Church which will be a true expression of Korean spiritual life." 252. In this article Fisher also describes the missionary situation with unusual frankness, saying that missionaries still retain control and authority over Korean church leaders. 255.

\textsuperscript{26}J. S. Ryang stated in 1927, "there is no bishop timber among the Korean preachers" and that "we may elevate one of them [the missionaries] to the Episcopacy." "Remarks by the Rev. J. S. Ryang . . . June 16, 1927," in Southern Methodism in Korea: Thirtieth Anniversary (Seoul: Board of Missions, Korean Annual Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1929), 167f.

\textsuperscript{27}In the article mentioned above (note 23), Fisher not only advocates independence and Korean leadership for the Korean Methodist Church, but laments that some Korean leaders have become so influenced by American culture that they no longer can relate effectively to their own people. See, for example, 252.
They were not only comfortable in those relationships, but were apt to take theological and social stands ahead of the majority of pastors and laity in Korean Methodism. This was evident in their strong advocacy of women’s equality for the new Korean Methodist Church.

Some Korean leaders were moving toward a more distinctively Korean form of Methodism, but this was proving difficult. Lee Yong Do, a popular pastor and evangelist, ventured so far into new theological territory that he was expelled from Methodism; while Chong Kyong Ok, a professor at the Union Seminary in Seoul, died prematurely before developing the “Korean theology” he had begun to explore. Like the context within which the Korean Methodist Church was formed, the leadership represented a complex, often conflicted set of influences. Few of the documents suggest the complexities that surrounded the framing of the Korean Creed.

II

The full doctrinal statement includes more than the usual articles recited in the churches. It reads:

Doctrinal Statement

The fundamental principles of Christianity have been set forth at various times and in various forms in the historic creeds of the Church, and have been interpreted by Mr. Wesley in the Articles of Religion and in his Sermons and Notes on the New Testament. This evangelical faith is our heritage and our glorious possession.

Upon those persons who desire to unite with us as members, we impose no doctrinal test. Our main requirement is loyalty to Jesus Christ and a purpose to follow him. With us, as with Mr. Wesley in the earliest General Rules of the United Societies, the conditions of memberships are moral and spiritual rather than theological. We sanction the fullest liberty of belief for the individual Christian, so long as his character and his works approve themselves as consistent with true godliness.

Although some have the impression that Chong participated in the composition of the Korean Doctrinal Statement, Chong was in the United States at the time of the Methodist union, pursuing graduate work in theology at Garrett Theological Seminary. He did not complete his doctorate, but returned to Korea and began teaching at the Methodist theological school in Seoul in 1932. His thought closely followed that of Harrison Franklin Rall, his Garrett professor, and was compatible with the theological stance of the Korean Creed, yet he expressed interest in creating a more truly Korean theology. For citations see my article, “Chong Jong Ok Kyosu-e Sinhak Sasang-e natanan Mikuk Sinhak Paegyong” (“The American Theological Background in the Theological Thought of Professor Chong Jong Ok”), Sinhak gwa Saige (Seoul: Methodist Theological Seminary, 1980), No. 6, 173–204, especially 203–204. For biographical information and theological analysis see Ryu Tongsik, Hankuk Kamnikyohoe-e Yoksa (A History of the Korean Methodist Church) (Seoul: The Korean Methodist Church, 1994), Vol. I, 553–567.

One of the few documents that reveals some of this complexity is the collection of short articles by Korean Methodists in the Christian Youth magazine of November 1930, mentioned above (see note 12). One of the writers frankly says he thinks Methodist union, while desirable, will not take place. Another advises against making Wesley into an idol. The debate was a lively one, much more so than we are usually led to believe.
It is fitting, however, that we should state the chief doctrines which are most surely believed among us.

1. WE BELIEVE in the one God, Maker and Ruler of all things, Father of all men; the source of all goodness and beauty, all truth and love.
2. WE BELIEVE in Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, our Teacher, Example, and Redeemer, the Savior of the world.
3. WE BELIEVE in the Holy Spirit, God present with us for guidance, for comfort, and for strength.
4. WE BELIEVE in the forgiveness of sins, in the life of love and prayer, and in grace equal to every need.
5. WE BELIEVE in the Word of God contained in the Old and New Testaments as the sufficient rule both of faith and of practice.
6. WE BELIEVE in the Church as the fellowship for worship and for service of all who are united to the living Lord.
7. WE BELIEVE in the kingdom of God as the divine rule in human society; and in the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.
8. WE BELIEVE in the final triumph of righteousness, and in the life everlasting.

Amen.

To the extension of this Gospel of life and freedom and joy and power to all people and to all realms of thought and action, our church is consecrated.30

III

There is considerable irony in the fact that while Bishop Herbert Welch claimed that the new church and its creed were “really Korean,” he took major credit for the writing of the creed.31 In his statement to the first session of the new Korean General Conference, Welch said, “We have wanted also a really Korean Church. . . . we are to strive, in true Methodist fashion, to adjust our forms of worship and government and discipline, our emphasis and our methods, to this century and to this country, with its own culture and customs and habits of thought.”32

Later Welch described the process of framing the creed in the following way:

30This sentence was proposed as Article 8, with the present Article 8 numbered 9, apparently due to an editorial error, but it was voted to separate it from the articles. This text is from the Discipline of the Korean Methodist Church, 1932, 25-26, with typographical corrections, following the form in Welch, “The Story of a Creed.”
31Many have assumed that Bishop Welch was the sole author. Typical is the following: “The Korean Creed was composed by Bishop Herbert Welch for the Methodist church in Korea. It was adopted by the first general conference of the Korean Methodist Church in 1930 for use in worship and as a means of stating the Christian faith in terms comprehensible to non-Christians.” James F. White, “The Order of Worship: The Ordinary Parts,” in William F. Dunkle, Jr., and Joseph D. Quillian, Jr., editors, Companion to The Book of Worship (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 22.
32“Statement by Bishop Herbert Welch on behalf of The Joint Commission on Methodist Union in Korea at the First General Conference of the Korean Methodist Church, Seoul, December 2, 1930,” in Discipline of the Korean Methodist Church, 1932, 4.
In March, 1922, seven of the ten Methodist Episcopal Bishops who had been assigned to residence in Southern and Eastern Asia met at Singapore to consider the special needs of Asia and its churches. One question which arose was that of a creedal statement which might be particularly adapted for use in the Orient with its religious and intellectual history so different from that of the West. I was asked to frame such a statement, and during the following years gave considerable thought to the matter and accumulated much material.

When the Korean Methodist Church was about to be organized in 1930, the same question of a suitable doctrinal statement naturally came up. . . . I discussed the problem with Dr. J. S. Ryang . . . . We agreed that such a creed, intended primarily as a teaching instrument, ought to be brief, . . . simple, . . . not as a condition of membership in the Church but as setting forth the things commonly accepted among us . . . .

Three Koreans\(^{33}\) and myself were appointed as a Committee on Historical and Doctrinal Statement. I then formulated the Doctrinal Statement. It was discussed, slightly changed by suggestions from Bishop Baker and from the Korean members; amended and approved by the Joint Commission, presented to the First General Conference of the Korean Methodist Church, and officially adopted.

A memorandum which I had previously prepared, although having only the same number of Articles (8), was longer and was somewhat different in approach.\(^{34}\)

This account raises a number of intriguing issues. Welch explicitly acknowledges few, if any, substantial contributions from the Korean members of the committee except for J. S. Ryang. We know, however, that there were two proposals made, a longer and a shorter, and that Welch’s longer one was not adopted.\(^{35}\) The other proposal seems to have been a set of six affirmations published in the Christian Youth magazine by Lee Man Kyu, one of the members of the Joint Commission.\(^{36}\) It is surprising to see Welch mention “slight changes” suggested by Bishop Baker, who while the resident Methodist Episcopal Bishop in Korea at the time, is not said to be a member of the relevant committee. Welch would have the reader believe his proposal to be the substance of the creed, while his own record suggests otherwise.

Welch seems oblivious, then, to the irony in his claim that this was a truly Korean document, though he had been the one to prepare its drafts, a task he had pursued since 1922, and which had not been specifically directed

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\(^{33}\)The three Koreans were Kim Chong U, Yang Ju Sam (J. S. Ryang), and Hong Pyong Son. See Lee Dok Ju, “Kyolijok Sonon-e Tansaeng Paekyong” (The Background of the Birth of the Doctrinal Statement), Kidokkyo Saegae (The Christian World) (Seoul: The Korean Methodist Church) Vol. 812, July–August 1996, 15. It seems evident that Welch felt free to approach other Commissioners for their advice.

\(^{34}\)Herbert Welch, The Story of a Creed (Pamphlet, “Reprinted with slight changes from the Christian Advocate”), 2. The original article is “The Story of a Creed,” Christian Advocate (Nashville, August 1, 1946).

\(^{35}\)In reconstructing this story one helpful source has been Myong Gul Son, Korean Churches in Search of Self-Identity, 1974. The relevant material is in Chapter II.

\(^{36}\)This was part of one of the contributions in Christian Youth, December 1930 (see note 12 above).
toward Korea. It would seem that he had full confidence in his ability to
decide for Koreans and other Asians what their own authentic faith expression
should be. That Welch was aware of problems in framing the creed seems evi-
dent in his subtle expression of dissatisfaction with the final product. He felt
that his own statements “might to some appear more satisfactory.” 37 His own
description of his proposal shows that it began with affirmations about Jesus
Christ. He says that these were numbered 1, 4, 5, and 7, showing that his was
a Christocentric structure. Lee’s six articles, however, follow the more tradi-
tional form, with God the Father, Divine Son, and Holy Spirit comprising the
first three, going on to Scripture, sacraments, and church. 38

Indeed, most of the debate about the creed centered on the article about
Jesus Christ in the proposal. There is no reference in the final Doctrinal
Statement to Christ’s birth, death, or resurrection. The article reads, “We
believe in Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, our Teacher, Example, and
Redeemer, the Savior of the world.” There were some who objected to this
truncation, but the debate was closed, ostensibly to make the creed appealing
to educated non-believers, but perhaps also in an effort to avoid compromise
with too-conservative viewpoints. Bishop Baker reported that “The most
effective speech in favor of the ‘Doctrinal Statement’ was made by Baron T.
H. Yun [Yun Tchi-ho], the best-loved layman of the Korean Methodist
Church. His plea was for a statement of belief which would appeal to educated
Korean youth, and help to insure their participation in the new church.” 39

It could also be argued that the decision sought to assure that union would take
place, and that there would not be lingering conflicts that would weaken the
new church in its hostile Japanese setting.

The other points debated were references to the “Kingdom of God as the
divine rule in human society” and the “final triumph of righteousness.” Some
felt this terminology suggested that the kingdom of God could be realized on
humanitarian lines in society, while the final triumph could be possible with-
in human history. The inclusion of these expressions can be seen as a victory

38Christian Youth, 37. This English translation is given in Son, Korean Churches in Search of Self-
Identity, 58n:
   I. We believe in God, the Father of all mankind, and Creator of the universe.
   II. We believe in the Divine Son, who is truly God and truly man, and Savior of all mankind.
   III. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Power to unite God and man together.
   IV. The Holy Scripture is the sole standard for the life of believers.
   V. Baptism and Holy Communion are the only sacraments the Savior himself instituted and
   practiced.
   VI. The church is the unique Divine Fellowship that transcends both nation and race.
important to recall that Communism was making a strong appeal to the young during these years,
and was especially appealing because of its support of Korean nationalism.
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for the more liberal members of the Commission, certainly including Bishop Welch. It has been argued that many of the Korean Methodist leaders were from a Confucian background, making them receptive to a moral and humanistic viewpoint. One could also see this, again, as a way of expressing political hopes for preserving Korean identity and achieving justice in Korean society.

Welch reports that J. S. Ryang agreed that the creed should be primarily a teaching instrument, brief, and simple in its language. It should not be a "wholesale transfer of Western standards of belief and conduct," nor a condition of membership, but set forth "the things commonly accepted among us." In the end Welch undoubtedly welcomed much of the phraseology and theological content of the final Doctrinal Statement, but we can see that he was disappointed in the rejection not only of the traditional creedal affirmations concerning Jesus Christ, but also of the structure which he had prepared.

In his statement from the Joint Commission to the first General Conference of the new Church, Bishop Welch praised the Koreanness of the new church and its creed. Bishop Baker was even more fulsome when he wrote, "The new church is Korean in fact, as well as in name. If ever there was an "indigenous" church, here it is: rooted in Korean life, responsive to Korean environment and needs, expressing Korean aspirations and purposes." The new General Superintendent of the Korean Methodist Church, J. S. Ryang, lauded the new creed as being "a Doctrinal Statement which can easily be understood by believers and which has omitted nothing essential. It is regarded as unique."

IV

There is a great deal to admire and respect in the forward-looking, courageous formation of a united Methodism in Korea in 1930. In a jocular spirit the respected elder statesman of Korean Methodism, Baron T. H. Yun, commented that Korean Methodism would have to apply the brakes to its reforms, since

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40 Such is the view, for example, of Pong Bae Park in his The Encounter of Christianity with Traditional Culture and Ethics in Korea, cited by Son, Korean Churches in Search of Self-Identity, 64n.
42 "He wrote, "These [Welch's] fuller statements might to some appear more satisfactory. Holding, however, to the standard of brevity and simplicity which we in Korea had agreed upon, the final form which we adopted ... follows." "The Story of a Creed," 4.
45 J. S. Ryang, "How Two Methodisms Unite," The Missionary Voice, October 1931, 15. The pointed remark "has omitted nothing essential" is, of course, aimed at those who felt the Doctrinal Statement had omitted important affirmations, especially about Jesus Christ.
it would probably take a hundred years for the American mother churches to catch up.\footnote{Sutherland reports this as "one of the most interesting and original addresses of the General Conference." See his "Creating a New Church in Korea," \textit{Zion's Herald}, February 4, 1931, 143. Yun is quoted as saying, "We have given women the right of ordination, and it will take them a hundred years to get it in the Southern Methodist Church. We have granted laymen equal numbers in the Annual Conference and it will take them a hundred years to gain that privilege in the Northern Church. . . . Let us stop here and give the mother churches a chance to catch up." It is ironic that today the Korean Methodist Church lags well behind the United Methodist Church in the recognition and treatment of women.} The fact that the Korean Methodists decided to write their own Doctrinal Statement was in itself a meaningful departure. What might account for this sudden desire to create a new creed?

The desire for a separate identity, while retaining a close relationship to the American Methodist Churches, lent a vivid sense of moving into uncharted waters to those planning the new Korean Methodist Church. The sense of cultural distance between the traditionally Christian West and the multi-religious East provided a powerful motive for exploring new forms of expression for the Christian faith. The new Church, its structure and its creed, should be different, but not too distant, since the shared tradition would provide both institutional and spiritual strength.\footnote{Mabel Howell stressed the importance of the international connection in her report of the union. She quoted a Korean as saying, "The Koreans are fast becoming an isolated people. . . . If they do not have the international contact that the Church provides, they will be entirely cut off internationally." Howell, "Some Distinctive Characteristics of the New Church in Korea," \textit{The Missionary Voice}, March 1931, 35. The international political isolation had resulted from Japan's annexation of Korea.} There had already been appreciation abroad of the piety, evangelistic spirit, and steady growth of the Korean churches, and it was believed that autonomy would be both a recognition of existing vitality and an encouragement to renewed strength and further progress. A historian of Korean Methodism, Ryu Tongshik, has recently written that this creed, with its presentation of Methodist living religion, progressive theology, and liberal attitudes appropriately reflected the character of the new Korean Methodist Church, seen as a community of faith, mission, and service.\footnote{Ryu Tongshik, \textit{Hankuk Kamnikyohoe-e Yoksa (A History of the Korean Methodist Church)}, Vol. I, 515–521.}

The Doctrinal Statement does not, however, reveal much about the Korean situation of the time, but instead seems like a cautious expression of cosmopolitan liberal, ecumenical-minded faith attempting to appeal to the younger educated leadership of Korea. The accommodations that appear in this creed are more the adjustment of an American form of liberal theological thought to a Korean environment than an attempt to define the essentials of the Christian faith from a Korean perspective. This creed attempts to revive a Christianity that had ridden the wave of Western influence in eastern Asia. Methodist union was also an attempt to consolidate strength for resistance to Japanese political
and cultural pressure. We may never know how important this motive was, however, since it was impossible to express such sentiments at the time, while later evaluations would tend to seek out and glorify such patriotic feelings.

In the light of the Korean situation at the time, it is striking to see what this creed fails to include or express. Most conspicuous, of course, is the omission of references to Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. Even J. S. Ryang stated on the eve of Methodist unification that Koreans most needed deliverance from sin through Jesus Christ, yet the traditional atonement references found in most creedal affirmations were dropped. Possibly the omissions resulted from a concern that mention of Jesus' virgin birth, cross, and resurrection would be unappealing to the modern, scientific mind.

The framers of the Korean Creed seemed more comfortable with affirmations less identifiable with liberal or conservative theological extremes. It is somewhat surprising, however, that more specific mention is not made of those aspects of Jesus' ministry most relevant to the Korean context of that day, especially in view of the practical and moral inclinations of the Methodists of Confucian background. The oppressive situation would suggest an affinity for the concern of Jesus for the poor and oppressed, and a focus upon Jesus' appeals to divine justice. At the same time, Article 3 appropriately referred to the work of the Holy Spirit as giving guidance, comfort, and strength at a time when the Korean people were so acutely conscious of the injustice of their historical situation.

There is nothing specifically Korean in the article about the church. It might be expected at a moment of innovation in a non-Christian setting that there would be a suggestion of the particularity of the Korean church. This is surprising in light of the concern that Korean nationhood be recognized along with the universality of the Christian gospel. While the Doctrinal Statement does reflect a cautious attempt to adapt to the situation without antagonizing the theological extremes or the ruling authorities, it reveals little of the forms of assimilation of the Christian gospel that had been taking place in the lives of the Korean Methodists of the time.

Today Korean Christians face a new and difficult challenge, the hope of national reunification. In that context many are asking how their Christian faith relates to the prospect of a restored nation, and what form their faith should take in the face of reunification with fellow Koreans who have been formed in an anti-Christian Leninist society. The quest for a Korean expres-

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49 Ryang had said, "The supreme need of the sin-stricken and poverty-ridden people of Korea today is repentance and regeneration." "The Type of Church Koreans Want and Need," The Missionary Voice, March 1930, 44.

50 J. S. Ryang spoke to this issue early in 1930, when he said that nationalism and internationalism need not be seen as contradictory, and that the Korean Methodist Church should be truly Korean, yet cosmopolitan in spirit. See "The Type of Church the Koreans Want and Need," The Missionary Voice, March 1930, 7, 44.
cession of Christianity has again become urgent. It may be that Western-oriented conservative theological forces will inhibit, or even prevent the emergence of a truly Korean Christianity within Methodism, or it could be that the task undertaken in 1930 with the framing of the Korean Methodist Doctrinal Statement may perhaps finally be continued in the days ahead, since many Korean Methodists and United Methodists both seem aware of the urgency of creating a truly Korean embodiment of Methodist belief. As Korean Christian thinkers resume their quest for a Korean theology, United Methodists can rejoice that the Wesleyan faith Methodists have proclaimed may yet find new life in a fresh form in Korea.