

# **Johan H. Bavinck’s Missiology and Its Implications for the Term Question in Korean Bible Translation**

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It can be argued that September 11, 2001, provoked a growing negative bias against Islam among Western Christians. Conversely, the subsequent Afghanistan and Iraq Wars aggravated the antagonism of Muslims against Western Christians. As a result, the tension between two religions has become a general obstacle to the modern Christian mission in Islamic countries and other non-Christian areas. However, Johan H. Bavinck’s missiological understanding of non-Christian religions, including Islam, suggests that Christians should stand “between Temple and Mosque” in order to attempt a dialogue with other religions on the basis of what they share in common.<sup>1</sup>

In this essay, I explore the implication of Bavinck’s missiological understanding of non-Christian religions for the resolution of the Term Question debate in Korean Bible translations. The Term Question was a theological controversy among Western missionaries about how to translate the name of God in the Korean Bible. Specifically, I will argue that, in harmony with Bavinck’s missiology, the Scottish and American Reformed (Presbyterian) missionaries showed a respectful attitude towards Korean religions and that this led them to translate the name of the Christian God as *Hananim*, the Supreme God of the Korean religion. In addition, I will show how using the name *Hananim* in the Korean Bible provided a cross-cultural point of contact with the

1. R. Pierce Beaver, “Preface” to Johan H. Bavinck, *The Church between Temple and Mosque* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 6.

Christian God and contributed to the remarkable growth of Korean Protestant Church.

## **Bavinck's Missiological Understanding of Non-Christian Religions**

### ***A Sympathetic Attitude***

The eminent Dutch Reformed missiologist Hendrik Kraemer, under the influence of Barthian theology, asserted in his *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (1938) that there should be a sharp discontinuity between Christianity and other faiths.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, he criticized the idea of general revelation as a “misleading term,” saying that it is “tainted by all kinds of notions, which are contrary to the way in which the Bible speaks of revelation.”<sup>3</sup> Following Kraemer's theological position, many of his contemporary missiologists generally underscored the clear distinction between Christianity and other religions, especially after the Tambram Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1938.<sup>4</sup>

Kraemer's contemporary, J. H. Bavinck, also a prominent Dutch missiologist, published a summary of Kraemer's *Christian Message* in which he pointed out that Kraemer had made “too sharp a distinction” between Christianity and other religions.<sup>5</sup> Instead, Bavinck suggested that Christians should have a

2. Hendrik Kraemer, *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1963)

3. Hendrik Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 341.

4. Johannes van den Berg, “Johan Herman Bavinck 1895–1964: Understanding Religion in light of God's Revelation,” in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson et al., American Society of Missiology Series 19 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 171–75.

5. Van den Berg, 174; the reference is to J. H. Bavinck, *De Boodschap van Christus en de Niet-Christelijke Religies* (Kampen: Kok, 1940).

sympathetic attitude to other religions “because of the common sharing in the universal religious consciousness among men and because of the reality of general revelation or the work of God among all peoples and all religions.”<sup>6</sup>

### ***Primitive Monotheism***

Starting in the eighteenth century, a controversy between two competing theories of the history of religion arose among missiologists. On the one hand, the degeneration theory (or primitive monotheism theory) argued that the original religion of humankind was monotheism and that it had degenerated into polytheism, pantheism, or idolatry. On the other, the evolutionary theory argued that religion had evolved from a lower polytheistic form to a higher monotheistic form.<sup>7</sup>

Bavinck appears to hold the degeneration theory. Specifically, on the basis of his sympathetic attitude towards other religions, he argued that “the vestiges of God’s presence” (i.e., primitive monotheism) can be found in the world of religions.<sup>8</sup> That is to say, he asserted that “belief in a Supreme Power or High God who ordered the world and maintains this order” is found in various primitive religions.<sup>9</sup> However, he thought that this primitive monotheism had degenerated into polytheism, pantheism, or a form of idolatry. Thus, he supported several prominent religious

6. Beaver, “Preface,” 6; cf., J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960).

7. See Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories* (London: Methuen, 1931); Ninian Smart, *The World Religions*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 34; Helmer Ringgren and Ake V. Ström, *Religions of Mankind Today & Yesterday*, ed. J. C. G. Greig, trans. Niels L. Jenson (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1967), xxiii–xxiv; Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 64; cf. William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 189–207; Norman L. Geisler, “Primitive Monotheism,” *Christian Apologetics Journal* 1 (1998): 1–2.

8. Van den Berg, 174.

9. *The Church*, 56.

scholars such as Andrew Lang and Nathan Soederblom who asserted that primitive monotheistic belief in a Supreme Being had existed among aboriginals in southeast Australia and China.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Bavinck opposed the evolutionary theory. In particular, he criticized Sir Edward B. Tylor's (1832–1903) animistic theory of religion which held that animism, an original form of religions in ancient time, gradually evolved into a form of monotheism.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, he argues that the Bible needs to be translated into every language and, in particular, that, on the grounds that the Supreme Being can be a vestige of the Christian God, the name of the Christian God can be translated by the name of a local Supreme Being.<sup>12</sup>

## The Term Question in China

It would not be an exaggeration to say that, in most mission fields, including China and Korea, no issue has been more controversial in the history of Christian missions than how to translate the name of God into vernacular languages. This issue is known as the Term Question because the progress of Christian missions has essentially depended on the ability of indigenous people to acknowledge the Christian God in terms that made sense within their traditional worldview.<sup>13</sup>

10. *The Church*, 99–100.

11. *The Church*, 39. In fact, this theory originated from the ghost theory initiated by Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and was elaborated by Edward B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1903). Cf. Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 34; Ugo Bianchi, *The History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 71; Walter H. Capps, *Religious Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 84–87; Ninian Smart, *The World Religions*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 34; Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of Mankind Today & Yesterday* (Edinburgh; London: Oliver & Boyd, 1967), xxiv.

12. *The Church*, 13–14.

13. Bong-Rin Ro, "Communicating the Biblical Concept of God to Koreans," in *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, eds. William David

Before we will delve into the Term Question in Korea, we will survey the same issue in China; for, there is a historical and theological connection between the two.

### ***Roman Catholics in China***

The Term Question in China first emerged among Roman Catholic missionaries from 1637 to 1742 as one of the two major issues of the famous Chinese Rites Controversy.<sup>14</sup> The first issue was to decide which term was suitable for the name of God: either the name of the Chinese Confucian deity, *Shangti* (上帝: the Supreme Lord of the Confucianism), initiated by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) of the Jesuits in 1603; or a neologism, *T'ienzhu* (天主: the Lord of Heaven), coined by the Spanish Dominicans and Franciscans.<sup>15</sup>

The Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1553–1610) translated the name of God (*Deus*) as *Shangti* in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (天主實意; hereafter *TMLH*).<sup>16</sup> Because of the analogy between the monotheistic attributes of *Shangti* and those of the Christian God, *TMLH* was one of the most influential books for Chinese Confucian literati.<sup>17</sup> Ricci's adoption of *Shangti* from the Confucian Classics<sup>18</sup>

Spencer and Aida Besançon Spencer (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 214–15; Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 192.

14. See George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); David E. Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).

15. Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1985), 10; hereafter referenced as *TMLH*.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Sangeun Kim, *Strange Names of God* (New York, Peter Lang, 2004); Paulos Huang, *Confronting Confucian Understandings of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation* (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2006), 88–130, <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/21564>.

18. The Chinese Confucian Classics refer to the Four Books and Five Canonical Books: *The Four Books* (Sishu 四書) refers to the canon of Confucian

as the name of God in the *TMLH* can be attributed to his sympathetic attitude towards Chinese Confucianism and his conviction that the ancient Chinese people had a monotheistic belief in the Confucian Supreme Deity (i.e., “Confucian monotheism”) which was compatible with Christian monotheism.<sup>19</sup> In other words, he believed that a concept of God that was compatible with Christian doctrine had existed among the ancient Chinese people before the arrival of foreign missionaries in China. In contrast, the neologism *T'ienzhu* was an attempt by the Spanish orders to establish a form of orthodox Christianity that would avoid being tainted by Chinese paganism.<sup>20</sup>

The second issue of the controversy was whether Chinese believers' practice of ancestor rites should be permitted as a cultural and moral veneration to their sages and forefathers (the Jesuits' position) or forbidden as idolatrous worship (the Dominicans' and Franciscans' position).<sup>21</sup> The Dominicans and Franciscans

Classics finally established under the philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹(1130–1200) that includes *Great Learning* (Da-xue 大學), *Doctrine of Mean* (Zhong-yong 中庸), *Analects* (Lun-yu 論語), and *The Book of Mencius* (Mengzi 孟子); *The Five Canonical [Sacred] Books* (Wu-jing 五經) refers to the canon established during the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 8) consisting of *Book of History* (Shu-jing 書經), *Book of Songs/Poetry* (Shi-jing 詩經), *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun-qiu 春秋), *Book of Changes* (Yi-jing 易經), and *Book of Rites* (Li-ji 禮記). All of these books were written during the Zhou 趙 Dynasty (1027–256 B.C.); cf. Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XLV, 1999), 20.; Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2001).

19. Erik Zürcher, “Jesuit Accommodation,” in Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 50; Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B. C. Oh, *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582–1773* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988), xx; Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542–1742* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 147.

20. Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 26.

21. See Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy* and Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*.

complained to the Vatican that the Jesuits were encouraging heterodoxy.

Several papal decrees issued by the Vatican finally brought the Chinese Rites Controversy to an end: Pope Clement XI (1704, 1710), the bull *Ex illa die* issued by Pope Clement XI (1715), and the bull *Ex quo singulari* issued by Pope Benedict XIV (1742).<sup>22</sup> Ruling in favor of Dominicans and Franciscans, the decrees prohibited all Roman Catholics in China from using *Shangti* or *T'ien*, prohibited the practice of ancestral rites, and prescribed the use of *T'ienzhu*.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the Roman Catholic faith in China has been called *Tienzhu Jiao* (天主教) ever since.

However, the term *T'ienzhu* did not attract the Chinese people because it was foreign to their religious traditions.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the papal decrees provoked hostility from the Q'ing Emperors—Kang-Xi (康熙: r. 1661–1722), Yung-Cheng (雍正: r. 1722–35) and Ch'ien-Lung (乾隆: r. 1736–96)—against Roman Catholicism. In reaction to the decrees, these emperors issued mandates that prohibited Christian missions in China (though a few Jesuits remained in Beijing). Furthermore, the imperial mandates were followed by the great persecution of Roman Catholic missionaries from 1746 to 1748.<sup>25</sup>

22. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2003), 3:515. Mianmiki explains that the making of these decisions involved “a half seven popes and two apostolic delegates; two Chinese emperors and their courts; the kings of Portugal, Spain, France; the Jesuit confessor of Louis XIV; the Holy Office and the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, the theology faculty of the Sorbonne; the Jansenists; preachers like Fenelon and Bossuet; writers like Voltaire and Leibnitz; the missionaries, their congregations and superiors.” *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, ix–x.

23. Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 43–76; *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3:515.

24. David E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 13.

25. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 166.

In contrast, the Jesuits' use of *Shangti* based on the accommodation method (along with their attractive intellectualism and scientific technology) facilitated the effective transition of the Confucian scholars from their impersonal theistic notions to a form of theism congruent with Christian belief. As a result, the Jesuits gained a large number of Chinese believers, mainly from the upper classes of Confucian literati, including the Three Pillars.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Jesuits eventually attained an Edict of Toleration from the Emperor of the Q'ing Dynasty, Kang-xi, who is considered one of the greatest emperors in all of China's history. On 22 March 1692, an edict permitted the legality of the Roman Catholic missions in China.<sup>27</sup> This edict of 1692 is often regarded as the climax of Roman Catholic (actually Jesuit) missions in China, and it can be validly compared with the Edict of Milan (AD 313) issued by Emperor Constantine.<sup>28</sup>

Pope Clement XIV ordered the dissolution of the Jesuit society in 1773.<sup>29</sup> The dissolution provoked confusion and a vacuum of authority among the Roman Catholic community in China. Only a few Jesuits were allowed to remain in the imperial government in Beijing for communication with Vatican. Furthermore, additional persecutions followed in 1781, 1784, 1805, and 1811. As a result, the door of China was actually closed to foreign missionaries until Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society arrived in Canton in 1807. Nevertheless Christian literature produced by the Jesuits and other Roman Catholic missionaries circulated among Chinese believers.<sup>30</sup>

26. *Ibid.*, 37, n. 32; cf. 78–127.

27. Ricci, *TLMH*, 39.

28. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 176.

29. *Ibid.*, 198.

30. Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 2, 1500 to 1900 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 132–33.



## ***Protestants in China***

As a result of an argument between the *Shangti* party, consisting of a majority of British missionaries, notably James Legge (1815–1897) of the London Missionary Society, and the *Shen* ( 神 : a generic term for god) party, consisting of a majority of American missionaries, the Term Question in China resurfaced among Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Legge, a monumental missionary scholar who produced an English translation of the Confucian Classics and was appointed Professor of Chinese Languages and Literature in Oxford University, argued as the spokesman of the *Shangti* party that the name of the God of the Bible should be translated as *Shangti*; for, he believed that the Chinese had held a primitive monotheistic belief in *Shangti* within the framework of Confucianism from the twenty-fourth century BC. He thought that this ancient monotheism had degenerated into an atheistic Neo-Confucianism or idolatry as it had been increasingly influenced by Buddhism and Taoism. In contrast, the *Shen* party claimed that *Shen*, a generic term for god, should be used; for, they believed that such a monotheistic belief had never existed among the ancient Chinese.

Despite protracted missionary endeavors to produce an agreeable Chinese term for the God of the Bible, the Protestant version of the Term Question lasted for one hundred years (1807–1890) with the result that two Protestant versions of the Bible came to co-exist in China: the *Shangti* edition published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1854 and the *Shen* edition published by the American Bible Society in 1863.<sup>32</sup>

As indicated in the following usage statistics, it is important to note that the *Shangti* edition was dominantly favored by the Chinese Christians in the early twentieth century, whereas usage of the *Shen* edition declined.

31. Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999), 81–2.

32. Thor Strandenaes, *Principles of Chinese Bible Translation* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 48–50.

*Usage of the Shangti edition vs. the Shen edition*<sup>33</sup>

	1894	1908	1913
Shangti 上帝	38,500 (11.6%)	299,000 (78.9%)	1,708,000 (99.7%)
Shen 神	229,500 (68.9%)	80,000 (21.1%)	5,000 (0.3%)
T'ienzhu 天主	65,000 (19.5%)	-	-

Based upon the history of the Term Question among both Roman Catholic and Protestant missions in China, we come to the important conclusion that the term *Shangti* that was used by the Jesuits and the British Protestants according to their belief in a primitive monotheism among the Chinese played a significant role in building a bridge between the Chinese people and the Christian God.

## The Term Question in Korea

American Protestant missionaries—mainly Presbyterians and Methodists—began to arrive in Korea from 1884 onwards, and they became the dominant Protestant missionary groups on the Korean mission field.<sup>34</sup> After their arrival, a minority of Canadian Presbyterian, Australian Presbyterian, Anglican (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) and other missionaries commenced their mission work in Korea. One of the primary and urgent tasks in early Korean missions was to translate the Bible into Korean for the common people, including women, who could only read the Korean alphabet. Additionally, in cooperation with the Bible societies, missionaries distributed Chinese Bibles for benefit of Korean men

33. John Hykes's (the China secretary of the American Bible Society) letter to American Bible Society on May 12, 1914; cited from Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XLV, 1999), 88.

34. Dae Young Ryu, *Early American Missionaries in Korea 1884–1910* (Seoul: Institute for Korean Church History, 2001), 91–93.

in the upper Confucian classes whose education was based on the Confucian Classics.<sup>35</sup>

The Korean missionaries found that the Korean Bible had already been translated by John Ross of the United Presbyterian Church in Manchuria from 1877 to 1887 (i.e., the UPC version).<sup>36</sup> In particular, they observed that Ross used *Hananim*—the Supreme Being of Korean indigenous religion that corresponds with *Shangti*—as the term for God. Moreover, they found that another version of the Korean Bible was translated by Su-Jung Lee in Tokyo from 1883 to 1885 with support of the American Bible Society (i.e., the Su-Jung Lee version). Lee translated the Bible's God as *Shin*, a generic term for god (Chinese *Shen* 神).<sup>37</sup> However, since the missionaries found many translating errors in these Bibles, they stopped using them and decided to translate their own version instead. Hence, in cooperation with the British, Scottish and American Bible societies, the missionaries formed a series of translation committees—the Permanent Bible Committee of Korea in 1887, the Permanent Executive Bible Committee of Korea in 1893, and the Bible Committee of Korea in 1904—and appointed a board of Bible translators who produced a number of translations with a variety of terms for God. As a result, the chief dispute which arose among the

35. Charles A. Clark, *The Nevius Plan for Mission Work* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1937); Man-Yol Yi, “한국교회의 성장과 그 요인 (The Korean Church Growth and Its Factors),” in 한국기독교와 민족통일운동 (*The Korean Christianity and the National Unification Movement*), ed., Man-Yol Yi (Seoul: IKCH, 2001), 207; Yi, 한국기독교문화운동사 (*The History of the Korean Christianity Cultural Movement*) 3rd ed. (Seoul: Korean Christianity Publisher, 1992), 87; Sung-Deuk Oak, *The Indigenization of Christianity in Korea* (ThD diss., Boston University, 2002), 190.

36. See Sungil Choi, *John Ross and the Korean Protestant Church* (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1992); Mahn-Yol Yi and Sung-Deuk Oak eds., *The History of the Korean Bible Society*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Korean Bible Society, 1994), 32; James H. Grayson, ‘A Spark in North East Asia: A Personal Hagiography of a Scottish Missionary to Manchuria: John Ross (1842–1915)’, in *Sainthood Revisioned*, ed. Clyde Binfield (Sheffield: Sheffield Academy Press, 1995) 96.

37. Yi and Oak, *History*, 125–34; cf. Sung-Deuk Oak, 초기한글성경번역에 나타난 주요논쟁연구 (*Studies on the Major Disputes*) (ThM thesis, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Korea, 1993), 27–28.

Bible translators was over which term is most suitable for the name of the God of the Bible. Hence the so-called Korean chapter of the Term Question arose.

The translators could choose to translate it using *Hananim* as Ross had done in his UPC Version. Alternatively, they could simply transliterate the biblical name *Jehovah* as *Yohowa*, or they could coin a new word compounded from biblical sources, or they could use other names that were compatible with the biblical meaning. The attraction of *Hananim* was that it would enable Koreans to understand “God” within their pre-existing religious framework; however, this translation also ran the risk of syncretism. The other options had the virtue of distinguishing “God” from one who was merely the highest of local deities, but they ran the risk of being wholly alien to Koreans. Hence, the question of whether *Hananim* could be adopted as the name for the God of the Bible became the crux of the Term Question in Korea.

In order to find a solution, the young Korean missionaries referred to the precedent of the Term Question in China. They made use of comparative studies of Sino-Korean ancient history and religions, and they became influenced by the awareness that China and Korea were contiguous countries that had shared religious and cultural traditions since 1122 BC.<sup>38</sup> Subsequently, the Korean missionaries noted that the common central issue underlying the Term Question in both China and Korea was the question of whether Chinese and Koreans in the pre-historic period (ca. 2332 BC) were originally monotheists who worshipped a Supreme Being who was the same God as that proclaimed by the foreign missionaries. The answer to this question then dictated whether the name of the local highest being—*Shangti* in China and *Hananim* in Korea—could be adopted as the term for God in the vernacular

38. James S. Gale, “A History of the Korean People, Chapter I,” *Korea Mission Field* (July 1924): 136; Horace G. Underwood, *Religions of Eastern Asia* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1910), 96; Clarence N. Weems ed., *Hulbert's History of Korea*, vol. I, 2nd ed., (1905; repr. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 1–15; Daniel L. Gifford, *Every Day Life in Korea* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 88–89.

Bible translations or whether these names should be rejected on account of the risk of syncretism. For this reason, the missionaries sought to illuminate the Term Question in Korea in the light of the experience gained in China.

In referring to the precedent of the Term Question in China, the majority of the Korean missionaries followed the pioneering use of *Hananim* in John Ross's UPC Version. He argued that *Hananim* was an analogous theological term to *Shangti*. Yet, a handful of missionaries, notably Horace G. Underwood of the PCUSA, opposed it and argued instead for the use *Ch'onzhu* (천주: the Lord of Heaven: Chinese *T'ienzhu* 天主),<sup>39</sup> *Shangje* (上帝: the Sovereign on High)<sup>40</sup>, *Shangzhu* (上主: the Lord on High), *Yahweh* (or *Jehovah*) and so on. This was because Underwood firmly regarded *Hananim* as a name of heathen deity in East Asia.<sup>41</sup>

However, the research of early Scottish and North American Reformed (Presbyterian) missionaries into ancient Korean history led them to discover a remarkably close analogy between local primitive monotheistic belief in *Hananim* and Christian monotheism.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the missionaries observed a much closer similarity between the so-called Korean Trinity and Incarnation seen in the attributes of *Hananim* in the Korean ancient myth (i.e., Dan-Gun) and Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, than was the case with *Shangti*.<sup>43</sup> The Korean

39. 천주, the Korean transliteration of the Chinese word *T'ienzhu* 天主, can be *Ch'onju* or *Ch'onzhu*. However, I will use *Ch'onzhu* as it is closer to the Chinese pronunciation *T'ienzhu* than the case of *Ch'onju*; for, my aim is to show how the Term Question in Korea was theologically and historically related to that in China.

40. *Shangje* is the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character *Shangti* (上帝).

41. Lillias H. Underwood, *Underwood of Korea* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1918), 123.

42. Gale, "A History," 136; Underwood, *Religions*, 96; Weems, *History*, 1–15.

43. For the further study on this issue, see the following two articles to which this section is indebted: Sung-Deuk Oak, "Shamanistic Tangun and Christian

missionaries assumed that this phenomenal similarity was attributed to a migration to East Asia by Noah's descendant after the Deluge (Gen. 10–11) that brought the revelation of Yahweh to Korea. Thus, the missionaries held that *Hananim* was a vestige of the Christian God and that this God had already been revealed as *Hananim* before the arrival of foreign missionaries to Korea. As a result, the Korean missionaries eventually affirmed *Hananim* as the official name of God in the first authorized version of the Korean New Testament in 1906 and in the entire Korean Bible in 1911, thus resolving the Korean Term Question.

### ***The Rapid Growth of the Korean Church***

It should be noted that the early twentieth-century Korean missionaries, particularly those of the Bible Translation Committees, argued that one of the significant reasons for the remarkable growth of the Korean church could be the term *Hananim*; that is, this term prepared the Koreans' mind to be more ready to receive the God of the Bible within their existing religious framework than was the case with *Shangti* in China.<sup>44</sup>

*Hananim*," *Studies in World Christianity*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2001): 42–57; Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding of the Tangun and Kija myths of Korea, 1884–1934," *Acta Korea* 4 (2002): 1–16. See also Homer B. Hulbert, "Korean Survivals," *Transaction of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1 (1900): 1–24, cited in Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding," 5; "Editor's Forward" in Weems, *History*, 10–11; James S. Gale, "Korean History," *Korea Repository* (Sept. 1895): 321, cited in Oak, "Shamanistic Tangun and Christian Hananim," 44; Gale, "Tan-goon," *The Korean Magazine* (Sept. 1917): 404, cited in Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding," 11; George H. Jones, "The Spirit Worship of the Koreans," *Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2, no. 1 (1901): 35–41; W. D. Reynolds, "Here and There," *The Bible in the World* (Oct. 1911): 318, cited in Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding," 9; Charles Allen Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1961), 143; Spencer J. Palmer, *Korea and Christianity: The Problem of Identification with Tradition* (Seoul: Hollym Corp., 1967), 6, 14–15.

44. See Horace G. Underwood, "Address," *Report of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the AISMA* (Pittsburgh: Murdoch, Kerr & Co., 1892), 53–4; Underwood, "The Golden Opportunity in Korea," *Missionary Review of the*

In line with the early twentieth-century Korea missionaries, a number of modern foreign and Korean Christian scholars conventionally argue that the adoption in a Christian form of the native term for the Supreme Being, *Hananim*, facilitated the Koreans' smooth acceptance of the God of Christianity with the result that it prompted more rapid and massive influx of converts into Protestantism than was seen in China.<sup>45</sup>

*World* (Sept. 1902): 665–66 in *Horace G. Underwood Papers*, vol. 3, 516–17; Underwood, "The Need for Workers in Korea," *World-Wide Evangelization* (New York: SVM, 1902), 403–06 in *HGUP*, vol. III, 649–50; Underwood, "Twenty Years of Missionary Work in Korea," *Korea Field* (Nov. 1904): 205–10, cited in *HGUP*, vol. III, 655–66. See also World Missionary Conference, *World Missionary Conference, 1910* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), 80; John H. Ritson, *Abroad for the Bible Society* (London: Robert Culley, 1911), 164; William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1884–1904* (London: John Murray, 1910), 219; James Moulton Roe, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905–1954* (London: British and Foreign Society, 1965), 150; William C. Somerville, *From Iona to Dunblane: The Story of the National Bible Society of Scotland to 1948* (Edinburgh: National Bible Society of Scotland, 1948), 91; James C. F. Robertson, *The Bible in Korea* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1954), 32–3, 35; John Fox, "Report of Korea Mission Field on 24 December 1907," in *HGUP*, vol. III, 488.

45. Man-Yol Yi, "한국교회의 성장과 그 요인 (The Korean Church Growth and Its Factors)," in *한국기독교와 민족통일운동 (The Korean Christianity and the National Unification Movement)*, Man-Yol Yi, ed. (Seoul: IKCH, 2001), 173–217; Yi lists recent Korean research into this issue at 173, nn. 1–2. See also Bong-Rin Ro, "Communicating the Biblical Concept of God to Koreans," in A. B. Spencer and W. D. Spencer, *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 229–30; Bong-Rin Ro & Marlin L. Nelson, eds., *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, rev. ed. (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995); Sebastian C. H. Kim ed., *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130–34; Arthur J. Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 515–23; Mark A. Noll, "Evangelical Identity, Power, and Culture in the 'Great' Nineteenth Century," in *Christianity Reborn*, ed., Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 49; Daniel H. Bays and James H. Grayson, "Christianity in China, Korea and Japan," in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 8, *World Christianities c.1815–c.1914*, eds., Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 508; A. W. Wasson, *Church Growth in Korea* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1934); R. E. Shearer, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea*

## Conclusion

We have seen that the mission strategy of the early Scottish and American Reformed (Presbyterian) missionaries in Korea was in harmony with Bavinck's missiology. In the first place, these missionaries rarely underscored the sharp distinction between Christianity and the Korean indigenous religions, as Kraemer did. Instead, they displayed a sympathetic attitude towards Korean indigenous religions, as Bavinck did. In the second place, the missionaries' respectful attitude led them to settle the Term Question by translating the name of the God of the Bible as *Hananim*, the Supreme Being of the Korean religion. They chose this translation because they held that monotheistic belief had already existed among the Korean people under the name of *Hananim*. Thus they determined that the Koreans were being preparing to accept the God of Christianity long before the arrival of foreign missionaries in Korea.

The adoption of *Hananim* in the Bible enabled the Koreans to make a smooth transition from their indigenous idea of the Supreme Being to the Christian idea of God. Further, the translation contributed to the higher rate of growth of the Korean churches compared to that of Chinese churches even though fewer Protestant missionaries worked in Korea for a much shorter period than in China. In the Korean missionaries' view, the term *Hananim* constructed an effective point of contact between the Korean religious culture and the imported Christian faith. The Korean

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966); Kenneth M. Wells, *New God, New Nation: Protestants and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896–1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 1–9, 19–20. On the relation of Protestantism with Korean nationalism, see Wells, "Yun Chi-ho and the Quest for National Integrity," *Korea Journal* 22, no. 1 (Jan. 1982); Wells, "The Rationale of Korean Economic Nationalism under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1922–1932: The Case of Cho Man-Sik's Products Promotion Society," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 4 (Nov. 1985); Wells, "Civic Morality in the Nationalist Thought of Yun Chi-Ho, 1881–1911," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 28 (Sept. 1983), cited in Jung-Shin Park, 한국기독교사인식 (*A New Understanding of Korean Church History*) (Seoul: Hye-Ahn Publish, 2004), 17–37.



missionaries understood that the resonance of this term was uniquely suited to pave the way for an understanding of the monotheistic, incarnational, and trinitarian God of Christianity as being both the God of traditional Korean belief and the God of the universe. As a result, Koreans responded more positively to Christianity than did the Chinese.

These findings suggest that Bavinck's missiology is consistent with using the name of an indigenous supreme deity to translate the term for the biblical God in order to contextualize Christianity within a local religious framework. Moreover, Bavinck's missiological understanding of other religions, including Islam, may help the modern global missiological enterprise to situate itself "between Temple and Mosque" and to thus embrace a respectful posture toward other religions while it pursues its mission.