

James Scarth Gale as a Translator

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Abstract

Broadly historical and descriptive in approach, this article aims to situate James Scarth Gale, an early Canadian missionary to Korea, as one of the remarkable translators in the early twentieth century. He devoted himself to translating the Bible into vernacular Korean. Unlike other Protestant missionaries, Gale argued not only for indigenous Korean words rather than Sino-Korean words, but also for a free or liberal translation strategy over a literal translation. For example, he translated the name of the God of the Bible as Hananim, which refers to both Oneness and Greatness, thus enabling the Koreans to accept the Christian idea of God within their own religious framework. This article also claims that Gale, with his strong cross-cultural mindset, acted as a cultural ambassador on a more secular level. In order to bridge Korea and the Western world, he not only translated John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress into Korean, but also classical Korean novels like Guunmong and Okjunghwa (Chunhyangjeon) into English.

Keywords: *James Scarth Gale, Bible translation, free or liberal translation, literal translation, domestication, foreignization*

Introduction

One of the most remarkable contributions that James Scarth Gale (1863–1937)—the early Canadian Protestant missionary to Korea—made to Korean society involved, among other achievements, translating not only an impressive corpus of English literature into Korean but also Korean classic literature into English. Most importantly, he translated the Bible into vernacular Korean, thus establishing himself as one of the significant translators among Protestants or Roman Catholics in Bible translation in Korea. This article will explore Gale as one of the most significant translators of secular as well as religious literature in the early twentieth century. Hopefully, this article will shed some light on Gale, who led a truly full and varied life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Inarguably, Gale played a pivotal role in what has been often called a cultural ambassador. In addition to being a forerunner in the field of mission work, he attempted in an important way to build a bridge between the Hermit Kingdom and the Western world. In 1900, for instance, Gale established the YMCA in Seoul, together with Horace G. Underwood, who later became the president of Chosun Christian College—the predecessor of Yonsei University. No other missionary lived such a dynamic life and made such significant contributions to Korean culture. Better known by his Korean name “Gi-il,” Gale was undoubtedly a talented man in a variety of ways—talented in the biblical sense of the word.

Apart from mission work, Gale was a translator, a linguist, an educator, an ethnographer, a cultural historian, and a novelist, among other vocations. As Edward W. Poitras no doubt rightly claimed, “As a missionary pioneer in Korea, [Gale] explored the nation geographically, historically, and culturally and became an important early Korean studies scholar” (1998, 234). Despite his remarkable achievements and influences, however, Gale has not received the full appreciation he deserves for the range of work he did, as well as for the impact he had. Thus, a more detailed investigation of his role as a major interpreter of Korea to the West and of the West to Korea is in order.

A History of Protestant Bible Translation

During the initial stages of evangelism in Korea in the late nineteenth century, Western missionaries—mostly Protestants—depended heavily upon what was often called “trinity mission methods”: that is, evangelical, medical, and educational activities. In addition, the missionaries employed methods as effective as or even far more effective than these three in indigenizing Christianity on Korean soil. They performed their work through literary or publication missions—through printed materials (e.g., newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, hymns, and religious books). Literary or publication missions were designed to impress the hearts of those who read with an earnest desire to know this apparently strange religion. As an integral part of such missions, the translation of the Bible into the vernacular language played a significant role in converting Koreans to Christianity. To say that the dissemination of Christianity in Korea would have been impossible without the production of the Korean Bible would not be an exaggeration.

Accordingly, James Gale took a leading part in producing the Korean Bible. His interest in this work went back to early 1891 when he—together with Samuel A. Moffett, one of his closest friends among Protestant missionaries in Korea—visited the Reverend John Ross of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Mukden (now Shenyang 瀋陽), Manchuria. One of the principal reasons for this visit was that Ross had first translated the Bible into vernacular Korean. As Gale and Moffett saw it, one of the extremely pressing tasks of Protestant missions in Korea at the time was to produce the Korean Bible for common people in particular; it was because ordinary people could only read the Korean alphabet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although Gale had a significant role in producing the Korean Bible, initially the John Ross Version laid the foundation for Bible translation in Korea, certainly a very significant event in the history of Korean Christianity. Ross and his fellow missionary John Macintyre, together with Korean scholar assistants called *josa*, completed the Korean translation of the Gospels of Luke and John in 1877 and the entire New Testaments in 1887.

Early Christians used this Bible in spreading the gospel in northern provinces. Prior to the Ross Version, only a small number of Christians—mostly intellectuals—had used the Chinese Bible.

In this same period, Yi Su-jeong, who was recommended by the Reverend Henry Loomis of the Japan Branch of the American Bible Society, translated the New Testament in Japan. Yi completed the translation of the four Gospels and the Book of Acts by the end of 1883, and the translation of the Gospel of Luke was published in early 1884. In January 1885, Horace G. Underwood and Henry G. Appenzeller were very pleased when they received the Korean Bible by Yi while stopping for a couple of months in Japan prior to travelling to Korea. As William M. Reynolds comments, “This was one of the few cases in the history of Missions where the missionaries reached the country in which they were to labor, carrying with them God’s Word in the language of the people” (1910–1911, 296).

In fact, the history of Korean Protestant Christianity was, in a sense, the history of Bible translation. The work done by Ross and his assistants naturally reminds one of what William Cameron Townsend, the founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, said of the mission work. He insisted that the translation of the Bible in the native tongue is indisputably essential to the indigenization of Christianity. Once the Bible is available to a culture, he argued, the Christians of that culture could become far more autonomous. Townsend’s firm belief in the translation of the Bible can be seen in his often-quoted statement: “The greatest missionary is the Bible in the mother tongue. It needs no furlough and is never considered a foreigner” (Hefley and Hefley 1974, 182). As a fervent missionary, Townsend strove to make God’s Word “accessible to all people in the language of their hearts” (182). The missionaries clearly showed that Christianity, unlike other religions (e.g., Islam and Buddhism), has basically been the religion of Bible translation.

Strongly influenced by John Ross and Yi Su-jeong, the Protestant missionaries in Seoul were in urgent need of the Korean Bible—in the words of Reynolds, “the attempt to give the Koreans the Word of God in their own tongue” (1910–1911, 295). To this purpose, in cooperation with the British, Scottish, and American Bible Societies, the missionaries organized a



Figure 1. The Board of Translators of the New Testament (Pyongyang, 1904).
 Standing left to right: Mun Kyeong-ho, Kim Myeong-jun, Jeong Dong-myeong.
 Seated left to right: William D. Reynolds, Horace G. Underwood, James S. Gale.

Source: Underwood Collection

series of translating committees: the Permanent Bible Committee in 1887, the Permanent Executive Bible Committee in 1893, and the Bible Committee of Korea in 1904. This last committee appointed the Board of Official Translators from various mission organizations. The Board members included Underwood, Appenzeller, and William B. Scranton. In this project, they decided to transcend denominational barriers with ecumenical character. Beginning work in 1887, they and their Korean assistants published the tentative versions of the New Testament in 1900. In 1902, Bible translation gained new momentum as the committee was reorganized with new members and regulations. In 1906, they published the Authorized Version of the New Testament in Korean.

The Bible translation work by these missionaries was, of course, based on the previous Korean Bibles that had been rather discursively translated,

notably those produced by Ross and Yi. However, the members of the Bible Translation Committee found errors, mistakes, and obscure renderings in these Bibles and decided to produce their own versions rather than waste time patching up the older versions. For example, a number of missionaries felt that the Ross Version was often marred not only by mistranslations, but also by strong Pyeongan-do province dialects, stilted style, and archaisms. The same objection could also be applied to the Yi Version.

While disputes over translation accuracy and stylistic and dialectal variation reigned among missionaries, in 1892, James Gale joined Henry Appenzeller's Bible translation team after the sudden death in 1890 of John W. Heron—who was the first appointed medical missionary to Korea by the Presbyterian Church in the United States and since 1887 had worked as a member of the Bible translation committee. Gale served as a member of the Board of Official Translators for 31 years. The Board consisted of such missionaries as Appenzeller (Methodist), Underwood (Presbyterian), Scranton (Methodist), Reynolds (Presbyterian), and Mark Napier Trollope (Anglican Church). According to Richard Rutt, they worked “under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which had taken over the work begun by Ross and continued by the locally-organized committee of 1887” (1972, 26). The Board made a few ground rules that underlay the translation work: (1) one Western missionary teams up with one or two native Korean assistants; (2) every translator courteously listens to any suggestions and criticisms from other translators; and (3) in the regular meeting, they read and discuss what they produced verse by verse and then decide on the right translation by voting. As Underwood (1911) stated, the translators tried to keep their work simple enough to be understood by the uneducated and yet stylish enough to be accepted by the scholarly. As simple as it looked, the task was a dream almost impossible to realize because the two aims were mutually exclusive.

Regarding these two objectives, Gale's linguistic knowledge and skills were most essential in the work of Bible translation. Unlike other missionaries, he had majored in modern languages at the University of Toronto. In addition, his literary imagination and poetic sensitivity provided his translation with an added charm and grace. Thus, his work had consider-

able influence not only on Board members but also all future Korean translators of the Bible. At least in this respect, Gale could be favorably compared with Martin Luther, one of the theologians he most admired, who in his translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Ancient Greek into vernacular German, showed that “[his] intention was to speak German, not Latin or Greek, when [he] undertook to speak German in the translation” (Luther 1972, vol. 49, 189). Regarding a German translation of the Prophets in the Old Testament, Luther also stated, “They have no desire to give up their native Hebrew in order to imitate our barbaric German. It is as though one were to force a nightingale to imitate a cuckoo, to give up his own glorious melody for a monotonous song he must certainly hate” (1960, vol. 35, 229). Hence, as a translator, Gale—much like Luther—was distinctly reader and target oriented.

In this connection, Gale stated more than once that the Korean script was part of the divine *praeparatio evangelica* (Rutt 1972, 72), a preparation of the gospel among cultures yet to hear of the message of Christ. His keen interest in Korean was based on the firm conviction that any missionary should be well versed in the native language of the country where mission work was done. Upon arrival in Korea, he quickly learned Korean. Gale out-classed Horace Underwood, who had arrived in Korea slightly earlier (King 2012, 242). Soon after he mastered vernacular Korean, Gale began to study not just Chinese characters but also classical Chinese. Without substantial knowledge of Chinese, he firmly believed, a true mastering of Korean was almost impossible. In an essay entitled “Why Read Korean Literature?” published in the *Korea Magazine* in August 1917, Gale lamented how he had been ignorant of Korean thought-worlds (*Gedankenwelt*) because of his ignorance of *hanmun* (classical Chinese): “For example the writer had no idea, though he had lived with the Korean for a score of years, of the part the Taoist genii and the fairies play in his world” (quoted in King 2012, 242). As Gale argues, within the East Asian cultural sphere, commonly called the Sinosphere, Korea was so very much influenced by the culture of China historically that Korean thought-worlds cannot be properly understood without Chinese belief systems and philosophy.

Furthermore, Gale’s deep interest in Korean as well as Chinese could

be found in his compilations of dictionaries and language study aids. In 1890, he worked with Underwood on *A Concise Dictionary of the Korean Language*, a small booklet but the first ambitious work attempted by any foreigner. Gale's own *Korean-English Dictionary* appeared in 1897, and *Korean Grammatical Forms* followed, both of which are still considered standard reference sources for foreigners. In 1904, together with his Korean assistant and co-translator Yi Chang-jik, Gale published *Yumong cheon-ja* (The Thousand Character Series for Children)—a four-volume Chinese textbook for Korean children.

Disputes over How to Translate the Christian God

In the Western hemisphere, the translation of the Bible has been for well over a thousand years the most contested battleground of ideologies. It has been a battleground for controlling the meaning of the sacred text, a struggle that reached its peak during the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Gale might have had these theological conflicts in mind when he said in the preface to his novel *The Vanguard: A Tale of Korea*, “There are other battles than those fought with steel and lead, where generalship is needed, and courage likewise” (1904, 11). Slightly different in degree and form, the Korean Bible translation was a contested battleground, too. As Daniel Sung-Ho Ahn (2012) claims in his discussion of Johan H. Bavinck, the Dutch missiologist, the Term Question was one of the most important theological controversies among Western missionaries in East Asia.

The members of the Board of Official Translators, for example, had a heated dispute over the translation of the name of the Christian God. They were fiercely divided over which term was most suitable for the name of the Godhead. As Richard Rutt points out, “[t]he arguments on this subject were bitter” among the members (1972, 26). How to translate the name of the God of the Bible into vernacular Korean was undoubtedly the most controversial in the history of Western missions in Korea. The success of their missions depended to a great extent upon how indigenous people acknowledged the Judeo-Christian God in terms that might make sense

within their own traditional religious systems.

In this connection, one is reminded of Eugene A. Nida—an American linguist and one of the leading figures of Bible translation. Working for the American Bible Society for many years, he paid much attention to indigenous languages. A linguistic relativist, Nida describes language as an integral part of culture, words being symbols of cultural phenomena. Since these symbols significantly differ between cultures, and hence languages, translation cannot provide exact equivalents of words in the source language. Rather, it reproduces in the target language “the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (Nida and Taber 1969, 12). In this vein, Nida claims that “Lamb of God” (symbolizing Jesus Christ or innocence) should be better translated into “Seal of God” for the Inuit inhabiting Arctic regions that were totally unfamiliar with lambs (24). The same problem regarding translation can be seen in the sentence in the Lord’s Prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). The word “bread” does not have the same meaning to Korean people as to those who live on bread. The term should, therefore, be rendered “steamed rice” in Korean culture since rice rather than bread is the staple food. To most Koreans, bread is more often than not mere snacks, like cookies, not a staple food (Kim 2007, 27–36).

As another illustration, in East Asian countries, the Chinese translated the Christian God as Shangdi 上帝—literally meaning the Supreme Emperor or the King of Heaven—which is ultimately the name of the Confucian deity. The Roman Catholics in China, however, favored Tianzhu 天主—meaning the Heavenly Lord or the Lord of Heaven—which is a neologism coined by the Spanish Dominicans and Franciscans. On the other hand, the Japanese term for God had been Ten 天 (the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word Tian). Either Kami 神 (the spirits or phenomena worshipped in the religion of Shinto) or Shin 神 (the Sino-Japanese reading of God) was also widely used. In particular, the former refers in various ways to mind, spirit, or the Supreme Being, which Yi Su-jeong used when he translated the Gospels into Korean. The only difference is that Yi used the Korean pronunciation of Sin rather than Kami. As a matter of fact, these

three terms—Sin, Tian, or Kami—had for long been the most generic term for the supernatural being or power in East Asian countries.

In the initial stage of the work, the Board attempted a transliteration of the Greek *Deos*, Latin *Deus*, or Hebrew *Yahweh* (Jehovah) or *Elohim*. At one point, Horace Underwood strongly argued for the Sino-Korean word Cheonju 天主 (Tianzhu in Chinese); he then suggested another Sino-Korean word Sangje 上帝 (Shangdi in Chinese) or its variant Shangzhu (the Supreme Lord in Heaven). Furthermore, Underwood's argument for Cheonju was soon supported by Daniel L. Gifford, who had returned from furlough. As Rutt claims, although ostensibly the matter seemed to be whether to use a Sino-Korean or a pure native Korean, a far more ideological problem was involved here. Cheonju had widely been used by Anglican as well as Roman Catholic missions not only in China but also in Korea. On the other hand, Sangje sounded too shamanistic, as illustrated in the word Okhwang Sangje 玉皇上帝 (Jade King Supreme Ruler), which refers to the Supreme Lord of Heaven in Daoism. For these reasons alone, most Protestant missionaries wanted to avoid using both terms.

Gale was strongly adamant, however, about the use of the native Korean word Hananim 하나님 or Haneulnim 하늘님 for the Christian God. Fortunately, he was backed by Samuel Moffett. As noted earlier, Gale—who was a gifted linguist—was well versed not only in the Korean language but also in Korean culture. His argument was based largely on the assumption that either word was the aboriginal Korean word with slightly different connotations, but quite unlike the Sino-Korean Cheonju or Sangje. Keenly aware that Hananim or Haneulnim was ordinary and commonsensical, Gale firmly believed that either would be far more appealing to Koreans.

Accordingly, in *Korea in Transition*, Gale claimed that God as generally referenced by Koreans is “Hananim, the one Great One . . . the Supreme Ruler for whom there is no image or likeness in heaven or earth or under the earth” (1909, 78–79). A few years later, in “Korea's Preparation for the Bible,” written for the *Korea Mission Field*, he also argued that Koreans were well prepared for Christianity precisely because they had long used the term Hananim:

It would seem as though Korea had fallen within the circle of prophetic vision when we consider the marked preparation she has shown for the coming of the Word of God.

I shall mention five points especially noticeable.

First: The Name for God—*Hananim*, meaning The One Great One, the Supreme and Absolute Being, suggesting the mysterious Hebrew appellation “I am that I am.” *Hana* meaning *One* and *Nim*, *Great* (Gale 1912, 4).

In fact, John Ross first used the indigenous Korean term for God rather than the Chinese-derived term in his versions of the Korean Bible in the 1880s. Obviously, Gale owed his use of the term to the Scottish missionary. Other than its special name for God, Gale argued, Korea prepared the way for an excellent reception of the Bible by the attributes ascribed to Him, by the associations of everyday life, by the place accorded to literature, and by its easy and comprehensive form of writing called Hangeul.

Moreover, the Supreme Being of indigenous Korean religion, *Hananim* refers both to Oneness and Greatness: *Hana* means one and great, and *-nim* is the suffix used for expressing respect or esteem. On the other hand, *Haneunim* is the honorific form to refer to *haneul* 하늘 (Heaven). However, Rutt is somewhat mistaken when he claims that the former is “a dialect variant” of the latter (1972, 26). Although they are totally different in regard to linguistics, the two terms have been inseparable in the minds of Koreans for a long time. Well aware that either term would do, Gale proposed that the Board members choose to adopt one of the two—*Hananim* or *Haneunim*—preferably the former. He believed that the vernacular word *Hananim* was in substantial accord with the Western concept of the one and only God in the tradition of Judeo-Christianity. Currently in Korea, *Hananim* is used to refer to the Christian God (as in the Bible), while *Haneunim* refers more generally to any supernatural beings, either Christian or pagan (as in the Korean national anthem). The term *Hanulnim* 한울님, a slight variant of *Haneunim*, is exclusively used in Cheondoism—a direct branch of Donghak (Eastern Learning) established by Choe Je-u.

In addition, the vernacular Korean *Hananim* is surprisingly related to the concept of *Abeoji* (Father). In the Bible, as well as in the hymns, God is

regularly referred to as “Father,” with Christians naturally being His children. Certainly, this happy combination of Hananim and Abeoji added the power of kinship terminology to the Bible and the hymns—with all its overtones in Confucian ethics. In short, the term contributed significantly to the indigenization of alien Christianity on Korean soil, which had long been dominantly Confucian and shamanistic. However, Underwood strongly opposed Hananim. According to his wife, Lillias Horton Underwood, the principal reason for his opposition was that to him the word was the very name of heathen deities in Korea (1918, 123).

Challenged by Gale, Underwood further researched ancient Korean history and traditional religions and found that Hananim or Haneulnim was not only deeply rooted in Koreans’ unconsciousness, but also transcended shamanism and aboriginal religions. In other words, a remarkable similarity existed between the Korean deity name, Hananim, and Judeo-Christian monotheism. Underwood also recognized that the Koreans, like the Israelites, did not have any concrete image of God and that they allowed only the King or his surrogates to have ritual and worship of the heavenly god or gods. He even argued that Hananim was a vestige of the Christian God, who had already been revealed as Hananim before the arrival of foreign missionaries to Korea. As his wife, Lillias Horton, stated in *Underwood of Korea*, Underwood found that “at a time when only one god was worshiped in the Kingdom of Kokurei (part of early Korea), that god was called Hananim” (1918, 126). His claim was supported by later scholars like Donald Baker (1992, 2008), who has consistently argued that Western missionaries *created* the word Hananim, which had nevertheless existed before in Korea. However, he claims no evidence can be found that “Koreans were monotheists before they encountered Christianity in the late eighteenth century” (2002, 120–121). It might be more accurate to say, however, that the traditional term Hananim came to carry strong Christian connotations with the arrival of Western missionaries.

In fact, intense debates have occurred as to the actual historical indigenous nature of the word Hananim and whether it actually existed before the nineteenth century. I am of the opinion that although the word appeared in the nineteenth century, Koreans had long used it and its related words. In

the mid-seventeenth century, the Joseon dynasty literati Bak In-ro used the word Hananim in one of his *gasa* narrative poems. In “Nogyega,” written in 1643, he wrote, “O, Hananim, I pray to you that you protect our King until the mountains become flat lands and the seas run dry” (S. Yi 2001, 27–28). The origin of the word can be traced to the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea and even further back to ancient times. In *The Passing of Korea*, Homer B. Hulbert states that “the purest religious notion which the Korean today possesses is the belief in *Hananim*, a being entirely unconnected with either of the imported cults and as far removed from the crude nature-worship” (1906, 404).

Finally, Underwood accepted Gale’s suggestion of the term Hananim for God in the Korean Bible. Thus, the Board of Official Translators eventually affirmed Hananim as the official name of God in the first authorized version of the Korean New Testament in 1906 and then of the complete Korean Bible in 1911. As it turned out, Gale’s adoption of Hananim for the God of the Bible was extremely fortunate. If in translation the Christian God had been rendered in any other way, the present day would have turned out somewhat differently. The success of mission work in Korea was due in no small measure to the new threads of the Christian God that Gale wove into the fabric constituting Korea’s traditional religious culture. Certainly, the term Hananim helped Koreans to receive more readily the apparently strange God of the Western hemisphere within their existing religious framework.

In point of fact, in Bible translation, the choice between native words and foreign words is crucial as in literary translation. On the denotative level, the native Korean word Hananim or Haneulnim and the Sino-Korean word Sangje may look similar or even almost identical. The former, however, significantly differs from the latter in their connotations and overtones. In general, aboriginal words—or words of native origin—are far more sensual and concrete than words borrowed from foreign languages. For example, the English words *begin* and *brotherly* are far more appealing to the hearts than their respective Latin-derived words *commence* and *fraternal*. On a secular level, George Orwell was one of the writers who advocated the use of what he viewed as plain Saxon words over complex Latin or Greek ones, as exempli-

fied in *Animal Farm*.

The same difficulty can be noted in the translation of the *Word* in the first verse in the Gospel of John (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”). The term “the Word,” needless to say, is a translation of the Greek word “Logos.” Interestingly, Gale and his Korean assistants translated this key term as *do* 道 (*dao* in Chinese) which refers to the Way, a core philosophical concept in Daoism. In the Gale Version of the Korean Bible, the first verse reads somewhat like the following: “In the beginning was *do*, and *do* was with Hananim, and *do* was Hananim.” This passage serves as another excellent example of how Gale tried to make the message of the Bible conform to the Korean way of thinking.

Free Translation or Literal Translation?

A perennial dispute has existed over whether translation should be free or literal, and the Bible was no exception with regard to the dispute. As to strategies and methods, no area of translation has been more ferociously contested than that of the Bible. As mentioned earlier, before the Korean Bible was available, the Chinese Bible was read in Korea by some educated people who understood Chinese, which served as the written *lingua franca* in Korea until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The translators of the Bible into Chinese preferred the free or liberal, sense-for-sense translation. To use the concept Eugene A. Nida developed together with Charles Russell Taber, the translators of the Chinese Bible favored “dynamic equivalence” or “functional equivalence” (1969, 27–31). Certainly, the Chinese Bible is characterized by the “quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors” (200). Rendered in colloquial style, the Chinese Bible was readily understood by most literate Chinese.

On the other hand, the members of the Board of Official Translators of the Korean Bible took the opposite direction from those of the Chinese

Bible. They decided to follow the translation method of what Nida called “formal equivalence”: that is, the kind of translation that “focuses all the attention on the message itself, in both form and content” (159). Their strategy might be broadly termed the word-for-word, or phrase-for-phrase, translation. The majority of the Board members—notably Horace Underwood and William Baird—favored a literal translation. They adhered to the principle of doing a strictly literal translation appropriate to the meaning of the original text. In his “Bible Translating,” written for the *Korea Mission Field*, Underwood argued that the translators should render as closely as possible the wording structure and grammar of the Bible into Korean:

It is, of course, a[t] first essential that a translator shall be well acquainted with the language he is to use as well as with the exact meaning of the original, for with a book like the Bible where the turn of a single phrase, nay the definition of a single word—may affect the eternal destiny of thousands of souls, that the original shall be perfectly conveyed as it possibly can be in the medium used (Underwood 1911, 297).

Mostly likely, Underwood and his colleagues were influenced by the doctrine commonly described as the “verbal inspiration”—or, more accurately, the “verbal plenary inspiration”—of the Bible. They endeavored to extend biblical inspiration to the very words and forms of expression of the divine message. The phrase, “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16–17), has been often cited by many theologians as evidence of this theory. Not only most Western Protestant missionaries but also their Korean scholar assistants defended this doctrine, which naturally had a decisive effect on the translation of the Bible into vernacular Korean. As Gale understood, however, verbal inspiration has a little different meaning: “Verbal inspiration has nothing whatever to do with the Korean or English words. [It] had to do with the giving of the original—not only was the thought given but words” (1922b, 6–8).

Though affected by the biblical inspiration, Gale seemed to strive to free himself from the doctrine, which he rather believed was too rigid. Thus, it may be more accurate to say that he accepted no verbal plenary inspiration other than what is called “dynamic inspiration,” the theory that

although thoughts contained in the Bible are inspired, the words and expressions used were left to the individual writers—or, for that matter, the individual translators. Gale firmly stood for a free or liberal, sense-for-sense, translation rather than a literal, word-for-word translation. With his good ear for words, he laid stress on naturalness and fluency in translation. His principles of Bible translation were simply in the language of the common people. In “Bible Translation,” written for the *Korea Mission Field*, he also claimed that the translation should be a simple and efficient form of writing:

The satisfaction of having made a literal translation may be grateful but the book will lie on the shelf and gather dust, and the great mass of the people who need God’s word will pass it by unacquainted with what. He has to say. This argument pertains to all translations. If they do not speak *the language of the people in a sweet and logical way*, as we know Christ must have spoken His words, men will not read it (Gale 1917, 7; emphasis added).

In the same article, Gale expressed a strong preference for a sense-for-sense translation over a word-for-word translation. Based on the assumption that “the sense alone is of value” (8), he stated that the translator must first arrive at the sense, or some sense, of a word before he can take any step forward. After finding the sense, the translator should render it “according to the idiom of a particular people for whom [one is] translating” (8). According to Gale, the mere words without the sense are of no more account than some meaningless Buddhist chants would be to a Christian. The main reason why he argued strongly for this free or liberal translation strategy derives from his view of the nature of language itself. He fully believed that “there are few if any exact equivalents found in different languages one for another” (1922b, 3). Even so, Gale did not forget that the Bible is Scripture, a sacred text that deserves special attention in translation. As he stated, “The very sacredness makes one fear to step forward freely, lest he take a liberty unwarranted” (1917, 8).

In this emphasis on the sense of the translation over literal rendering, Gale’s translation strategy strongly resembles the methods offered by the

German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher. In an 1813 lecture “On the Different Method of Translating,” Schleiermacher stated that only two translation strategies exist: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” (Lefevere 1992, 149). Admitting that translation can never be completely equivalent to the foreign text, Schleiermacher allowed the translator to choose between what Lawrence Venuti called “domestication” and “foreignization” (1995, 17–37).

In practical application of this mode of translation, Gale, in 1912, was appointed chairman of the committee of fifteen (both Western missionaries and Koreans) for the revision of the Bible. Inevitably, this nomination brought him again into serious conflicts with Board members because the other members did not all agree with his proposal for a free translation. As Richard Rutt (1972) argues, again and again, the pleas Gale and his assistant Yi Chang-jik made for smooth Korean diction were voted down by other members of the committee, who preferred literal adherence to the grammatical structure, sometimes of the Hebrew and Ancient Greek, but all too often of the English Authorized Version.

Furthermore, conflicts arose not only among the members of the Revision Committee, but also among those of the General Advisory Committee with regard to the proper methods of translation, that is, whether to take a free or literal approach. In fact, a dispute broke out in the early 1920s when the Old Testament was about to be published. Although approved by the Revision Committee, Gale’s translation was often criticized by the General Advisory Committee. In response to the criticism that his translation was not literal enough, Gale stated, “My greatest ambition is to have the Book speak the thought, no more and no less, but to speak it in sweet easy-flowing Korean” (quoted in Rutt 1972, 72). In Gale’s translation strategy, a transparent, fluent style was adopted to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for the target language readers.

Nonetheless, the dissension among the members was so deep that finally Gale’s translation of Genesis was printed and circulated to all missionaries for comment. Much to his disappointment, a majority admitted

that Gale had sacrificed content and meaning for style and form. For instance, he refused to repeat the same nouns, among other areas of conflict. As Yoo Young Sik comments, Gale drastically “reduced the use of the word ‘God’ by one-third in comparison to other versions” (1996, 178). For this reason, one missionary asserted that Gale had “shortened the original,” virtually leaving God out of the Bible. To make matters worse, the British and Foreign Bible Society in London issued an authoritative verdict against Gale, stating that “[e]very version shall be as literal as the idiom of the language will permit” (quoted in Rutt 1972, 71).

At the same time, Gale was increasingly dissatisfied with a conservative group led this time by American Presbyterian missionaries Stanley Soltau and Charles A. Clark, who preferred a literal translation over a free translation. In particular, Gale was hurt by the harsh criticism from Soltau, who stated:

I feel that in [Gale’s translation] too much has been sacrificed for the sake of making a smooth Korean translation. And especially in the coming days when the Korean church and ministry will be called on to face Modern Higher Criticism, I feel that it is exceedingly important that the Scriptures in common use should be *in so far as possible a literal translation* of the Hebrew, even at the risk at times, of the Korean itself not being as smooth as it might otherwise be (quoted in Min 1990, 149; emphasis added).

In criticizing Gale’s free translation, Soltau used terms such as modern Higher Criticism. Distinguished from Lower or textual criticism, Higher Criticism sought to apply to the Bible the same principles of science and historical method as those applied to secular works. In this criticism, the important questions concerned the identity and authorial intent of the writers, among other issues. The primary reason for his reference to Higher Criticism was that Soltau favored a literal translation over a liberal translation. For Soltau and his conservative colleagues, Gale’s translation seemed too *smooth* because it heavily emphasized Korean language style at the expense of the original meaning of the text.

Gale argued, however, that the Bible translation—or, for that matter, any sort of translation—should conform to the target language. He vehe-

mently refuted those who opposed his translation as “inexperienced.” Gale reminded them that since the Korean language is different from Hebrew and Ancient Greek, they must first consider what usage is proper under the circumstances they are deciding. In this matter, Gale was quite right. The main reason why he drastically omitted the word for the Godhead was because Korean syntax did not require word repetition as consistently as Hebrew or English did. As he pointed out, “[S]ome languages, like Hebrew, repeat and rerepeat, again and again. In Korean a Hebrew repetition is often impossible” (1922, 5). In Korean, the speaker often even omits the subject of the sentence. As a result, in “Side Glimpses of Bible Revision,” written for the *Korea Mission Field*, he said that “[w]e all want the Bible to speak good Korean; let us have patience and hammer it out” (1922b, 5).

Accordingly, since he had a better command of Korean, Gale did not permit the members of the Revision Board and the Advisory Committee to tamper with his translation. Bitter and frustrated, he gave vent to his feelings in a violent outburst in his own defense:

I have been on the Board of Translators for 31 years[,] having done the greater part of the original of the New Testament and also had a share in the Old [Testament]. I am therefore an old hand at translation but none the less I find myself up against a committee that demands, *almost at the point of a gun*, that I hand over all my thirty years of labor, my life’s work in fact[,] to a raw Board who shall do with it as they please without my having any word whatever as to its final disposal (Gale 1923, 1; emphasis added).

These disputes finally led Gale to resign from the Revision Board in March 1923. Independent of the Board of Official Translators, Gale undertook the Korean translation of the Bible, beginning with the Old Testament. In this project, excellent Korean scholar assistants, such as Yi Won-mo, Yi Gyo-seung, and Yi Chang-jik, aided him. As might be expected, Gale and his company liberally rendered the sense of the source text into the vernacular rather than slavishly dragging source words and expressions into the translation. He believed that any literate Korean could easily understand the messages of the gospel. What is commonly known as “the Gale Korean

Bible” was finally completed and then privately published in 1925. This Bible was important in that it was a unique private translation of both the New and Old Testaments rendered—in Gale’s own words—“in Korean style.”

Gale’s successes, however, must stand in relation to his resignation from the Revision Board, which explains, at least in part, how he was out of the inner circle of Presbyterian missionaries, dominated as it was by the so-called “Pyeng Yang conservatives,” who held that his penchant for *loose* vernacular Korean translation was somehow endangering their own strict constructions of biblical language. Undoubtedly, Gale’s approach to translation was regarded as a threat by more conservative American missionaries; many of whom—unlike Gale—had been educated in denominational colleges and conservative seminaries, which by the 1920s, were raging against Higher Criticism. This conflict in the United States was clearly reflected in disputes in the Korean mission field over Bible translation, the purposes of Christian education (especially at colleges), and, finally, attitudes toward Shinto shrine worship in the 1930s, long after Gale had left Korea.

However, Gale’s translation met the same fate as documents that failed to win political or official support. Regrettably, church bureaucrats prevented it from reaching a wide readership. Unrecognized by the church leaders, it was a landmark in the history of the Korean Bible. This case provides an excellent example of the ideological struggle between open-mindedness and conservative-mindedness. As Thomas Mann once stated in *The Magic Mountain*, “[E]verything is political” (1955, 515). Due to power struggles, Gale was silenced as much as possible in the Korean missionary community. Besides this suppression, he was also unable to publish a considerable portion of what he had written or translated, much of which remains unpublished in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto. Even so, Gale’s contributions to what became the standard Protestant Bible in Korean were still highly important. If the Gale Korean Bible had been authorized and accepted by his colleagues and church leaders, Koreans could have had a far easier Bible, comparable with the Korean Bibles in an easy, contemporary language, including the Korean Common Translation of the Holy Bible (1977), Today’s Korean Version (1991), and Agape Easy Bible

(1994), as well as the Revised New Korean Standard Version (2004) and True Bible (2008) published at the turn of the millennium.

Gale's Translation of *Pilgrim's Progress*

Gale's interest in Bible translation naturally led to the translation of various religious works into Korean, including biographies of religious leaders as well as Jesus Christ himself. These translations included *The Manhood of the Master* by H. E. Fosdick, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, *The Life of Martin Luther*, and *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*. The best known of Gale's translations, however, was John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. While staying in Wonsan, Hamgyeong-do province, Gale began to translate Part I of the novel in 1893 and completed it in 1895. It was published with the Korean title *Cheollo yeokjeong* (A Journey to Heaven). He thus became the translator of the first work of Western literature to be printed in the Korean script.

A Christian allegory that describes the spiritual journey "from This World to That Which Is to Come," as its subtitle clearly indicates, *Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into more than two hundred languages and has never been out of print. The book has been second only to the Bible in the number of copies it has sold worldwide. In East Asian countries, the book was also highly popular. Beginning in the 1850s, illustrated versions of *Pilgrim's Progress* in Chinese were printed in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Fuzhou and widely distributed by Protestant missionaries. Two decades later in the 1870s, the first Japanese translation of the book also appeared. With Gale's translation of the book, Korea joined the other East Asian countries. Immediately after its publication, this book was very popular among Korean readers and, most specifically, Korean Christians. Gale even distributed it to his Korean friends who were in prison. Yi Seong-bong, a famous revival preacher at the time, made use of this book for his sermons and evangelical activities.

Incidentally, Richard Rutt claims that Harriet Gibson Heron initiated the translation of this religious allegory (1972, 27). During her widowhood

between 1890 and 1892, she worked on a translation of the book, and after marrying Gale in 1892, she let her husband complete it. With the help of Yi Chang-jik, Gale completed the work, which was first published in Seoul by Baejae Hakdang. On the title page, the names of the translators are identified as “the Gales,” meaning James and Harriet Gale. Yoo Young Sik argues, however, that it was not Harriet Gibson but Horace Underwood who began this project (1996, 182–183). Yoo provides as evidence *University College Y.M.C.A.: Report of Mission to Korea*, written by Gale. In this document Gale stated, “I may mention that Mr. Underwood, who was given the charge of translating Bunyan’s *Pilgrim* by friends in America, has asked me to undertake it—in my spare hours, as he is short of time” (1922a, 11). In addition, Lillias Horton, Horace Underwood’s wife, also produced a Korean translation of Part Two of the book in 1920. Younghill Kang, who was a leading figure of Korean American literature in the early 1930s, helped her complete it just before leaving Korea to go to Canada via the United States.

Notably, the Korean translation of *Pilgrim’s Progress* was illustrated with delightful line drawings by a Wonsan artist named Kim Jun-geun. Together with Kim Hong-do and Sin Yun-bok, Kim has been recognized as one of the most influential genre painters of the late Joseon dynasty. Kim’s illustrations for the book are very unique in that they are drawn in the Joseon style. Quite surprisingly, Christian, Hope, and other characters in the book appear not only as Koreans, but also in traditional Korean costumes called *hanbok*. Incidentally, the Chinese translation of the book included illustrations of Chinese in their traditional costumes broadly referred to as *hanfu*. The same was true of the Japanese translation of the book, in which Japanese in their traditional *kimono* costumes appear. Presumably suggested by Gale, Kim’s attempt at genre illustrations was highly symbolic of the indigenization of Christianity on Korean soil, which can be compared with Gale’s attempt to translate the Bible into vernacular Korean rather than Sino-Korean vocabulary and phrases.

In fact, the translation of *Pilgrim’s Progress* was very significant in the history of Korean literature. The book was the first to be published solely using Korean with no Chinese characters at all. Gale’s experiment had a

revolutionary impact on the Korean language. Up until this time, missionaries printed literary works using a mixture of both Chinese and Korean. Most importantly, the book was one of the first works of Western literature to be translated into the Korean language. It contributed considerably to the development of modern Korean literature. Choe Nam-seon and Yi Gwang-su, the most influential writers of modern Korean literature in the early twentieth century, were indebted to this translation. Yi (1919) once even confirmed that the translation of the book contributed greatly to Korean literature, particularly to the spread of the Korean language.

What is more, Gale's interest in translation also extended to include non-religious books, widely ranging from adventure tales to novels for young adults. Among these translations were *Polar Exploration* by William Bruce, *Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann David Wyss, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* by Frances Burnett, and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. Presumably, Gale felt sorry for Korean children who—compared to children in Western countries—had limited access to books. He also hoped that books for children might contribute in some way to the spread of religious books, including the Bible.

Gale as a Translator of Secular Literature

Gale's translations were not limited only to religious books and books for children. He also took up various endeavors to translate Korean literary works into English. He was, in fact, as much interested in secular literature as in the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*. As Elspet K. Scott commented, "For more than 30 years Dr. Gale has been clearing and hewing in a virgin forest, the literature of Korea. He is the foremost literary interpreter to the West of the Korean mind" (1922, ix). Gale was also clearly aware of how much importance Koreans attached to literature. In "Korea's Preparation for the Bible," Gale claimed that literature had been everything to Koreans: "Korea is not commercial, not military, not industrial, but is a devotee of letters" (1912, 6). In one of his reports to the Christian Literature Society, he also stated that "[Korea] has lost her literature, and with her literature

have gone her ideals, her history, her religion, her great men, her music, her ceremonies, her social organization, her soul” (quoted in King 2012, 244). The implication is all too obvious: a nation’s entire intellectual as well as spiritual heritage is stored in its literature. For this reason, Gale translated as many Korean literary works into English as possible. As Ross King claims, “[H]is published *oeuvre* is only the tip of a rather large iceberg” (241).

Among many of Gale’s translations of Korean literature, four works deserve special attention. In the first place, Gale translated a number of poems, including *sijo*, traditional Korean three-line lyric poems, publishing them in the monthly magazine *Korean Repository*. He was very interested not only in poems in vernacular Korean, but also in classical Chinese. Yi Gyu-bo of the Goryeo dynasty was one of his favorite poets whose work he translated into English.

Second, in 1918, Gale rendered one of the best-known love stories in all of classical Korean literature, *Chunhyangjeon* (The Tale of Chunhyang), into English. His translation of this work, which had been immensely popular in Korea for centuries, was based not on the original old version, but on Yi Hae-jo’s retelling in prose of the tale, entitled *Okjunghwa* (A Flower in Prison). Gale’s translation was serialized in *Korea Magazine* as “Choon Yang” (Fragrance of Spring) from September 1917 to July 1918. This translation was a very significant literary achievement in that it was one of the first literary works of Korea to be translated into English by a nonnative speaker of Korean. Besides this example, Gale translated classical Korean novels, such as *Sim Cheong jeon*, *Sugyeong jeon*, and *Hong Gil-dong jeon*.

Third, in 1922, Gale translated *Guunmong* by Kim Man-jung into English with the title of *The Cloud Dream of the Nine*. Interestingly, Gale subtitled the translation *A Korean Novel: A Story of the Times of the Tangs of China about 840 A.D.* Part of the reason for Gale’s translation of this popular classic Korean novel was that it reflected the spiritual worlds of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, which had been the three most representative religions of Korea long before Christianity was introduced. Gale was interested in the major theme of the novel, the transience of human existence, the recognition that all man’s glory, as well as fame and

wealth, was nothing but a daydream. In an introduction to the translation of the novel, Scott considers the novel “the most moving romance of polygamy ever written,” and argues that it is “a revelation of what the Oriental thinks and feels not only about the earth but about the hidden things of the Universe” (1922, ix). Gale’s translation of the novel into English is as simple as his translation of the Bible into vernacular Korean. No better example can be found than in the first paragraph of the first chapter:

There are five noted mountains in East Asia. The peak near the Yellow Sea is called Tai-san, Great Mountain; the peak to the west, Wha-san, Flowery Mountain; the peak to the south, Hyong-san, Mountain of the Scales; the peak to the north, Hang-san, Eternal Mountain; while the peak to the center is called Soong-san, Exalted Mountain (Gale 1922a, 3).

In this translation, Gale’s compelling aim was “to contribute towards some more correct knowledge of the Far East” (Scott 1922, xxxix). He definitely strove for the simplest possible renderings, so much so that he even simplified the phrase “five famous mountains” of the source text to just “five noted mountains.” Also, “Under heaven” or “On earth,” instead of “East Asia,” would be a better—or more faithful—translation. In addition, the text has sometimes been criticized for slight bowdlerization.

Finally, Gale’s translation of Korean legends, myths, and folktales that had been handed down was published with the title *Korean Folk Tales* by London-based publisher J. M. Dent in 1913. Subtitled *Imps, Ghosts, and Fairies*, the book was also noteworthy. Gale’s aim in translating these folk tales was not so different from that regarding the two Korean classical novels. In the preface to the book, Gale states:

To anyone who would like to look somewhat into the inner soul of the Oriental, and see the peculiar spiritual existences among which he lives, the following stories will serve as true interpreters, born as they are of the three great religions of the Far East, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Gale 1913, vii).

The title page of the book reads, “Translated from the Korean of Im Bang and Yi Ryuk.” One should not be deceived by the phrase “from the Korean.”

Here, the Korean refers to the Chinese—more accurately, classical Chinese, not Korean. Some scholars have claimed that even works written in classical Chinese should be categorized as Korean literature proper because the classical Chinese in East Asian countries, as stated previously, was a sort of *lingua franca* well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Gale quoted from *Gukjo inmulji* 國朝人物志 (Korea's Record of Famous Men) in his Biographical Note, both Im Bang and Yi Ryuk were men of letters, scholars, and government officials in the early Joseon dynasty. They had written the tales in Chinese, not vernacular Korean; even so, Gale rightly considered these works an integral part of Korean literature.

In short, Gale translated Korean literature written not only in Korean but also in Chinese—in what he liked to call *hanmun*. Some works translated from vernacular Korean are also still unpublished, including *Gimun chonghwa* 記聞叢話, the nineteenth-century collection of *yadam* 野談, unofficial historical stories that are half romance and half history. Moreover, most of his translations from Korean literature in Chinese have not been published. Gale believed that Korean literature written in either Korean or Chinese was crucial for an understanding of Chinese as well as Korean culture. In this regard, Ross King is quite right when he claims that “[f]or Gale, then, Korea was the last repository of ‘true’ Chinese culture and a literary legacy lost in China and Japan” (2012, 245). A huge part of his unpublished translations from classical Chinese sources are now archived at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, waiting to be published as the *Collected Works of James Scarth Gale*.

Conclusion

Truly talented in a variety of ways, James Gale was one of the Western Protestant missionaries—and, for that matter, Catholic counterparts as well—who best understood Korean culture. No other foreigner has made such significant contributions to Korean literary culture. He cut an impressive figure as a literary or publication missionary in Korea. A prolific and versatile writer, he published numerous interesting books on Korea and its peo-

ple, not to mention a number of articles and essays. His significant books include *Korean Sketches*, *Korea in Transition*, and *History of the Korean People*. He even wrote a novel entitled *The Vanguard: A Tale of Korea*. Gale's influence was so great that it could hardly be dismissed. His life of approximately 40 years in Korea touched almost every important development in the country in one of the most turbulent periods in its history. As might be expected, he was sometimes frustrated by the rivalries, jealousies, and personality clashes that often characterized the missionary community in Korea. Even so, he was not shy to acknowledge his intellectual debts to other missionaries, such as John Ross and Horace G. Underwood.

Among many other achievements, Gale's translation of the Bible into vernacular Korean alone deserves scholarly attention. From the viewpoint of translation theory, his strategies and methods were marvelous. His preference for native or aboriginal words over foreign-derived words, as well as for a free or liberal translation rather than a literal translation, was profoundly remarkable for Bible translation. In particular, his adoption of the indigenous supreme deity for the Christian God to contextualize Christianity within a Korean religious framework cannot be overemphasized. That his version of the Korean Bible was not accepted by his colleagues and Korean religious leaders, however, is regrettable. If it had been accepted, the Bible would have been more readily accessible to Koreans. Even so, in his *Korea in Transition*, Gale stated that "[t]he writer counts it among his choicest privileges that he has had a share in its translation" (1909, 138).

In short, Gale was undoubtedly more than a half-century ahead of his time in his principles of translation of the Korean Bible. He paved the way not only for Bible translation, but also for translation theory in general. Gale's translation has had considerable influence on all subsequent Korean versions. The theory and practice he demonstrated were to become key issues among scholars of translation studies or translatology to the present day. Unsurprisingly, in memory of his extraordinary achievements, the Centre for the Study of Korea at the University of Toronto awards the annual James Scarth Gale translation prize for nonfiction pieces of writing on Korea.

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