Book Review:
Toshihiro Horikawa, *Buber as Bible Translator*. [in Japanese] (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha) 2018. pp. 325. ¥4100E.

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It is now approaching 80 years since Martin Buber's (1878-1965) work was introduced to Japan by philosophy scholar Seiichi Hatano (1877-1950). Buber's work saw a renewed focus in Japan in the 1960s. This renewed attention to Buber's dialogical thought was particularly prominent within the circles of educational pedagogy and Protestant theology. It is now clear that in recent times, through thinkers such as Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995) who grappled with the question of alterity, Buber's dialogical thought has been critically received. It is within this context that Toshihiro Horikawa's book *Buber as Bible Translator* (Jp. *Seisho Honyaku-sha Būba*) aims to elucidate a novel aspect in Buber Studies.

To be sure, with regard to Buber's understanding of scripture, the Japanese translations of his works, as well as scholarly papers and the many other related essays do touch on this subject; yet not many deal specifically with Buber's translation theory. Against such a backdrop, Horikawa's research focus on Buber's translation theory is groundbreaking. As a matter of fact, Buber's biblical translation has become an increasingly prominent theme within Martin Buber Gesellschaft, particularly since the 50th anniversary of the completion of the Buber—Rosenzweig version of the Hebrew Bible. One could reasonably situate Horikawa's research within this international research trend.

Horikawa's book is comprised of three sections 1) the Preface which looks at the contemporary status of Buber Studies and lays out the methodology, 2) Section Two which is a cursory overview, and 3) Section Three in which the central thesis regarding Buber's biblical translation theory is laid out. The chapters of each section are the following. The **Preface**: Chapter One "Trends within Buber Studies"; Chapter Two "Buber's Personal Research Style"; Chapter Three "A Critical Evaluation of the Trends within Buber

Studies"; Chapter Four "The Perspective, Method, and Originality of this Research". **Section One**: Chapter One "Foundational Ontology/Relational Ontology"; Chapter Two "The Genesis of Thou & Eclipse of God"; Chapter Three "A Reevaluation of Religiosity"; Chapter Four "Ethics & Religiosity"; Conclusion "Buber & Religiosity". **Section Two**: Chapter One, "An Appraisal of Buber's Biblical Translation"; Chapter Two, "Biblical Linguistics"; Chapter Three, "Methodology of Biblical Translation"; Chapter Four, "Situation of Buber's Methodology within Biblical Studies"; Chapter Five, "I-Thou as a Translational Name of God"; Chapter Six, "I-Thou within the Story of Jacob's Encounter with God"; Chapter Seven, "The Characteristics of a Prophet as Seen within the Story of Abraham"; Chapter Eight, "From the Prophet Isaiah to Second Isaiah"; Chapter Nine, "Problems Surrounding the Idea of a Prophet and the Significance of Translation"; Conclusion, "Scripture as Thou: the Utterable and the Uttered". There are subtitles to Sections One and Two, "From I-Thou to Scripture" and "From Scripture to I-Thou" respectively. From the chapter titles it is apparent that by analyzing Buber's biblical understanding through his dialogical thought, and conversely his dialogical thought through his biblical understanding, the author intends to disclose a new aspect of Buber's thought.

The questions which the author attempts to clarify in this book are the following (p 57): 1) In the relationship between biblical translation and the dialogical principle, which precedes the other and why is it that the two are related? 2) What is Buber's hermeneutical methodology? How has Buber been assessed in the field of Old Testament Studies? In particular, while Buber acknowledges certain elemental facets in scripture, his analytical stance toward the structure of the final form of scripture reveals an apparent contradiction. How might these facts be reconciled? 3) Was Buber truly able to realize his intentions regarding the purpose and methodology of translation within his own work? Because Buber translated the entire Hebrew Bible, attention will be given to translated words, and the question of whether or not translation theory is reflected in his translation will be considered. In the brief summaries below, I will attempt to succinctly organize Horikawa's arguments while paying special attention to the three main points listed above.

In Section One, where the argument unfolds through the progression from "philosophy and religion" to "religion and ethics," Buber's I-Thou thought is identified not as philosophy but as ethics. According to the author, "Buber is not a philosopher. Rather, if one must assign a title to him, it would have to be as a religious ethicist." (p. 97) This

assessment is clearly based on the perspective of Morris Friedman who held that traditional approaches to the study of ethics were Hellenistic, but that Buber's approach to the study of ethics was biblical. The "Hellenistic" mentioned here refers to the quest for an exogenous, universal ethical principle or rule. In contradistinction to this search for an abstract universal rule which logically precedes any particular situation, Buber's reference to a "biblical" approach alluded to an individual's contextualized quest to seek God's command on each new occasion through dialogue with the God-within. In other words, Buber's I-Thou thought cannot be divorced from biblical religiosity—the reception of that which is spoken and the encounter with the word.

In Section Two, the author points out Buber's avoidance of utilizing the structure and grammar of the German language in favor of the syntax, rhythm and grammatical structure of Hebrew, reflecting Buber's affinity toward source textualism. (p. 109) Buber wished that the readers will not encounter the Hebrew words as regular daily ones. Even if it meant writing in somewhat unusual German idioms, he translated the Bible in a way that would deliberately be unfamiliar to the reader, which was a direct confrontation with the contemporaneous German School of Religious History which purposed to translate the scripture in a manner which would be easily understood by the average reader.

Three distinct methods are apparent in Buber's translation of the Hebrew Bible:

a) *Leitwort* style b) Transformative dialogue c) three-dimensional structure.

To delve into details:

a) Buber's *Leitwort* style was inspired by the leitmotiv of Hans von Wolzogen (1848-1938) who analyzed Wagner's operas. Leitmotifs were common literary features of 19th century authors and literary critics who used the musical device as interpretive tools. In contrast, Buber's *Leitwort* style which was devised by him, was to focus on connective idioms in the biblical texts. These *Leitwort* are key words which relate to each other. In other words, it is the focusing of attention on the repetition of words sharing a common root. According to Buber, the repetition of words which share a common root in the Bible produces a distinct vocalization; and through the peculiar sensitivity which imposes itself upon the reader through this vocalization, the meaning of the text becomes clear.

b) Transformative dialogue is the conscious method of arousing in the reader a dialogical relationship in the reader's interaction with the Bible. That is to say, in dialogue with the Bible, a revelational experience occurs within the reader which confers life direction, and through this experience, human formation is achieved which culminates in

"the perfect person" and "the humane person." (p. 119) Buber sought to restore the interactive (dialogic) nature of the Bible which had been lost to moderns who were apt to read it perfunctorily as Judaism's recognized canon. Even the name of the Hebrew Bible (Miqra') contains the meaning of loud recitation, lending further credence to the significance of reading it aloud. It is not adequate to merely understand the meanings of the words; rather, it is critical to encounter the divine voice contained in scripture through oral recitation.

c) With regard to the three-dimensional structure, the author utilizes the interpretation of publisher of a French translation of the Bible（André Neher, 1914－1988）, while keeping in mind the Buber/Rosenzweig theory of translation. Based on that interpretation, the author expounds Buber's unique concepts as below: 1) The "horizontal axis" refers to the dialogical effect of the text's speech and its transformative impetus acting upon the "external" reader. 2) The "vertical axis" refers to the *Leitwort* style observable in the text itself. 3) The "perpendicular axis" refers to the 'Tendentious historical analysis' approach occurring in the background which grasps a type of unitive consciousness even amidst varying interpretations. (p. 124) This "R-like" is the name Buber assigned to the act of editing（Ridaktion）which challenges the hypothesized J and E bodies of biblical sources which modern biblical scholars posit constitute the Bible. Rather than theorizing scripture to be a patchwork comprised of separate, unrelated sources, "R" understands the literature as a work based upon a single mind which undergoes editing within the context of the unitive awareness intrinsic to the literature. (p. 181) Incidentally, Buber and Rosenzweig viewed "R" not only as the editor, but the myriad people, who were instrumental in the formation and editing of the oral tradition, and as such refers to them as "our Rabbi." With regard to the 'Tendentious historical analysis' approach, the author quotes the epilogue of the Japanese translator of Buber's *The Kingdom of God,* Keniichi Kida, to explicate it. According to Kida's epilogue, "historiographical analysis" indicates a reinterpretation of the analysis of various oral traditions from within the context of trends in socio-political criticism which natural proceeds from faith in God's direct rule by people who idolize prophetic leaders, beginning with Moses. Buber understands this type of tendency as an apprehension of the intent of the original biblical text, and the editors of the final text as people who had grasped this sacred intent. There is the sense that Buber's biblical hermeneutical methodology was thrust aside and rejected as unacademic by Old Testament scholars such as Gerhard von Rad, Martin Noth, Sigmond Mowinckel, Erich Auerbach. Notwithstanding, the successive generation of Old Testament scholars such as Kraus, Westermann, and Wolff treated Buber's methodology more sanguinely and viewed it as

legitimate extant research, which they appraised—sometimes critically and other times affirmingly.

I have outlined Buber's three methods of biblical translation above. Here, the *Leitwort* style analyzed by the author is confirmed in the story of Hagar's exile recorded in Genesis chapter 16 as an example which was realized among the various examples of translation. This scriptural text focuses on the abuse meted out to Hagar, who bore Abraham a son as a result of Abraham's proper wife Sarah's inability to bear children. In the Hebrew Bible, it is recorded that "as a result of Sarah's abuse of Hagar (vs. 6), Hagar decided to flee into the wilderness where she was met by an angel of God who told her to 'return to her mistress and serve her obediently' (vs. 9). And "because the Lord has heard your distress," (vs. 11) she was instructed to name her child Ishmael (which means 'the Lord hears'). In the underscored parts of these three verses, the root '-n-h is used in the active voice [to impose suffering], the recursive passive voice [to be inflicted with pain], and the nominative case [suffering]. Because Buber and Rosenzweig preserve the unity of this root, they translated the original German word drücken as '-n-h and resolved the three conjugations as follows: drückten (verb: Pi'el form), drücken such (verb: reflexive form), and Druck (noun). From these examples, it is clear that, in contrast to the Japanese translation, Buber's and Rosenzweig's German translation of the Bible reflects their deep concern with preserving the unity of the Hebrew roots, which is clearly reflected in the German.

Above I have attempted an overview of the book; but I must acknowledge that I fail to do justice to some important points made by the author owing to my own lack of expertise in this area. Below I would like to provide some reflective comments.

In the Introduction of this book, after touching on recent international trends in Buberian studies, the author carefully outlines the history of Buberian studies, and it must be remembered that this is itself an important achievement. I recommend a review of the Introduction for those who wish to know the status of Buberian studies. Nonetheless, perhaps due to spatial constraints or to differences in the main topic of this research, there is no mention of the history of Buberian studies with regard to Hassidism and Zionism. Therefore, it remains for other researchers to fill in these gaps; and these topics are ones which need to be addressed by Buber scholars here in Japan.

In this book, the strong connection between Buber's I-Thou thought and the Bible is

addressed, and the reasons for this connection are stated clearly. Yet, the causal relationship of which impacts the other—which is a problem framed by the author—remains unclear. The resolution to this problem has already been broadly accepted, and indeed is in the process being worked out; but I wonder if it would not be helpful to take a step back from the current received view of Buber within academia and trace one layer at a time the development of Buber's translational theory of the Bible and of his I-Thou thought and see where they meet and discern from this exercise where the influences lie.

This book points out the importance within Buber's biblical translation of the oral and audible elements (pp. 132-134). Buber's method of reproducing the verbalized Hebrew into the German translation is a main theme of this book, and in that sense, should probably have been mentioned in questions such as those listed below. In other words, "Which edition of the Hebrew Bible did Buber utilize?", "Which pronunciation did Buber adopt—the Ashkenazi or the Sephardic?", "How did Buber receive the various oral traditions of Judaism as contained in the Masoretic texts? More specifically, how did he understand the operations of punctuation marks (Te'amei HaMiqra) such as vowel diacritics, accents and punctuations which determine a word's meaning?" These are important questions for properly understanding the central theme of the book which explores the problem of Buber's reproduction of Hebrew vocalization in his biblical translation and may well yield important clues in understanding the differences in stances toward the Hebrew Bible of Buber and Rabbinical Judaism.

These criticisms, assuming they are valid, do not detract from the great contribution this book makes to scholarship on Buber's biblical translation. Interestingly, the same month and year that Biblical Translator Buber was printed (December, 2018) was the 31st anniversary of the publication of the Japan Bible Society's Japanese translation of the Bible. I look forward to the contributions this book will make not only to Buberian studies, but also to the larger question of biblical translation which will remain a major topic within biblical studies. Finally, though it will certainly take a great amount of time to realize, I look forward to a Japanese translation of the Bible which follows Buber's translation theory.