MASĂ ROTUNDĂ/ ROUND TABLE

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DE CE SĂ ÎNVĂȚĂM LIMBILE BIBLICE?

O discuţie inspirată de cartea profesorului Takamitsu Muraoka:
Why Read the Bible in the Original Languages? (Leiden, 2020)

Moderator: Conf. dr. ALEXANDRU MIHĂILĂ, Universitatea din București
Invitaţi:
Prof. em. dr. TAKAMITSU MURAOKA, University of Leiden
Pr. prof. dr. IOAN CHIRILĂ, Universitatea „Babeș Bolyai", Cluj-Napoca
Prof. dr. FRANCISCA BĂLTĂCEANU, Universitatea din București
Prof. dr. MONICA BROȘTEANU, Universitatea din București
Prof. em. dr. MIHAELA PARASCHIV, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași
Prof. em. dr. EUGEN MUNTEANU, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași
Pr. conf. dr. CĂTĂLIN VATAMANU, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași

Eugen Munteanu: Professor Muraoka, we are together to discuss your book, *Why Read the Bible in the Original Language?*.

The moderator will be Dr. Alexandru Mihăilă, and the guests will include Professor Ioan Chirilă, who will be online; Professor Francisca Băltăceanu; Professor Monica Broșteanu; Professor Mihaela Paraschiv; and Professor Cătălin Vatamanu. I give the floor to Alexandru Mihăilă.

Alexandru Mihăilă: Thank you for having me here. I would like to begin with Professor Takamitsu Muraoka's book. Let's discuss the significance of understanding the original languages of the Scriptures, or the languages in which the Scriptures were translated.

Professor Muraoka, you say that an accomplished biblical scholar should know 9 languages, besides Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and also know other Eastern languages. Of course, I wonder how many of us have reached the level of Professor Muraoka. His Hebrew language manual has remained unbeatable to this day; it is the standard manual, developed after the 1920s grammar by Jesuit Paul Joüon. Professor Muraoka also published a very good introduction to Syriac, not to mention the books on Greek language that have already been presented, and I wonder how many Biblical scholars can reach this performance, to master so many languages. If I were to ask Prof. Muraoka a question, it would be: Which language do you **not** master among the Biblical ones?

I would like to give the floor to the guests to say their opinions, and answer with some specific examples, which will help the audience to understand why it is important to know Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Slavonic. And I will be the

first. I think that a translation into a modern language must have footnotes. I say it is necessary because at some point, there are wordplays or more complex senses, which a simple translation cannot cover. In other words, you need to consult, through explanatory notes, the original language or a translation that can bring light to the matter. And I'll give you an example. In the book 1 Kings, which in the *Septuagint* is 3 Kings (11:4), at Solomon's death, a review of his life is made, and it is said that his heart was no longer wholly dedicated [to God]. Only those who know the Hebrew language understand that the author makes a pun with Solomon's name, *Shelomo* in Hebrew, whose heart was no longer *shalem*, meaning wholly dedicated [to God]. It's a pun lost in a simple translation into Romanian. You need a footnote or an explanation to tell you that the author is actually attacking King Solomon in this case. I would start by giving the floor to...

Eugen Munteanu: I would like to say one more thing. I would like to thank our old friends, Francisca Băltăceanu and Monica Broșteanu. Let's start with them, but before that, I would like to ask an essential question related to the topic of Professor Muraoka's books. What does *original biblical language* mean? Sure, Hebrew first, then Aramaic and Greek are the first languages, but if we extend it a little more, perhaps it's not a bad idea to ask ourselves whether Coptic is not an original language, or Armenian or Georgian, which were also mentioned by Professor Muraoka in his speech, and especially Latin. Therefore, the concept is quite vague and an open concept, as Latin is very close to the Septuagint, considering the translations into Vulgar Latin. Professor Băltăceanu, please.

Francisca Băltăceanu: I would like to leave it to Professor Chirilă to speak first, because I know he doesn't have much time available.

Alexandru Mihăilă: I give the floor to Professor Ioan Chirilă from Cluj.

Ioan Chirilă: First of all, thank you for this opportunity. I'm sorry that I couldn't be physically with you, because I like the atmosphere, the vibe of the symposium in Iași. It is also an extraordinary pleasure to meet Professor Muraoka, because I studied Hebrew syntax after his book at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem, so it is a pleasure to see the author in flesh and blood. As far as the topic of the round table is concerned, I also asked myself this question: how many languages should someone who deals with biblical studies know? I wouldn't say one necessarily needs to know nine languages.

Being a professor of the Old Testament, I narrowed it down to classical Hebrew, Aramaic, and some dialects, but when it comes to the New Testament, you really have to know more. When I started studying in the Hebrew environment, the Hebrew language, and I am referring here to the language of the Tanakh, I really did not begin with the Hebrew language; I began with the

older languages, and I started by studying Sanskrit. Thus, we have to understand that when we talk about these original languages, we are talking about our attempt to rediscover the dynamics of the verbality of these languages. Here is the example given by our distinguished colleague from Bucharest: Solomon did not find the peace of his soul, because this state of inner peace (”or peace in his heart”) is discussed here, and the tearing of the heart. If you want to understand the concept, you really need a footnote or additional explanations, as my colleague said. When I worked, and that's all I want to share with you today, when I worked on these issues, related to traductology, thanks to a fruitful collaboration with my colleagues from Sorbona University, who deal with the study of classical languages, I had the opportunity to discuss with remarkable personalities in the world of traductology and we agreed that there are a few rules that you have to know, if you want to translate something. For example, here is one of the rules, that the proper names should not be translated, because otherwise I can be confused. Confusion with these topographies that no longer have the same meaning, for example, if I translate it from Greek into Hebrew: *Heliopolis – Beth Shemesh* – it's something completely different, and it takes you somewhere else. However, the need for classical languages is given, from my point of view, by the following issue, which I will state from a philocalic and hermeneutic perspective: in the case of the Word, we have three structures: the Body of the Word, the Soul of the Word, and the Spirit of the Word. If we fail to capture all three structural elements, we will hardly be able to translate the Word.

That's why when I saw Professor Muraoka’s book, of course, I was happy, as I always enjoy his approach to the subject. The first part presents some examples, some specific contexts from the Scripture that he brings to your attention, and then he deals with these areas, either morphology or syntax, through which he allows you to set some rules or principles for understanding the mystery of the revealed Word. When we discuss this perspective and this search, I quickly went back to history, and I found some elements.

You mentioned here a lot Jerome, with his *Vulgata*. The first stage of his translation was a stage of learning: you need to learn Hebrew in order to translate. I studied the life and activity of Saint Basil the Great, you know, St. Basil also started by learning and trying to understand. Well, I'll tell you one thing: when I'm challenged to do such work, an important tool for me, besides the manuals that guide us, is also what we call the “Thesaurus of a language”, where we see the development or the senses in which some concepts have developed, and which can be very helpful to us.

I understand that our concern today is a pledge for the return to the study of classical languages, and then I said: let's look in our area, and I found Ion Casian, Gherman, those who interacted with the Greek world, who owned this linguistic background. That's why it was a pleasure for me to hear the remarks

of Prof. Munteanu, and I also liked the exceptional analysis made by Professor Muraoka.

Alexandru Mihăilă: Thank you, Professor Chirilă.

Now I will ask Professor Muraoka to answer one question. He published his book in 2020: *Why Read the Bible in the Original Languages?* And the question from Professor Eugen Munteanu is: which are these original languages? What recommendation do you have for students?

Takamitsu Muraoka: Thank you very much for the questions sent to me. I haven't answered all of them yet. I shall do that in due course.

Now, as the author of this book, *Why Read the Bible in the Original Languages?,* I would like to share my ideas with you. We all know that the biblical languages are quite different from our mother tongues. Not only phonetically or graphically, but also in vocabulary and grammar. Some of the differences are easy to understand. Even if we have understood them reasonably well, it can be quite a challenge to know how they function. In Italian, they say *traduttore traditore*, so if we want to understand the Bible correctly and beneficially, we have no choice but to do our best to learn those languages. Studying them can be hard, but it can also be pleasant. Every language has its own way of expressing things.

Let me give some examples. The first sentence in Psalm 23:1 has only two words in Hebrew: *Adonay – the Lord, ro'i – my shepherd*. But the two words can be put in two different word orders, and then they express two different ideas about your relationship with God. In the original Hebrew text here, we have the sequence "the Lord my shepherd", with which David is answering the question: "Who is your shepherd?" The answer he gives is: "There is nobody else who could function as my shepherd except the Lord". The reverse order would be used to answer the question: "What is the Lord to you?"

One day, Jesus was invited to a dinner at home. When the meal started, a notorious woman walked in. She hadn't been invited, but the moment she spotted Jesus, she stood behind him and began to cry, showering tears on his feet, and she began to dry his feet, his wet feet with her hair, kept kissing them hard, and anointed them with the expensive ointment she had brought. In Luke 7:38, the Greek text uses six verbs and all of them, with one exception, are in the present aspect, either imperfect or present infinitive: κλαίουσα τοῖς δάκρυσιν, ἤρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, καὶ ταῖς θριξὶν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς, ἐξέμασσεν καὶ κατεφίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤλειφεν τῷ μύρῳ. By choosing the present infinitive and imperfect tenses, Luke wants to stress that she kept doing all these things continuously, repeatedly. Jesus told Simon that she wouldn't stop kissing his feet after her arrival, and more of her sins were forgiven than those of other people, because she had shown her love so abundantly. Like every Greek verb, εἶμι can be fully conjugated with hundreds of different forms, but unlike its equivalent in many European languages, you

don't have to add the subject pronoun to those forms. In the Gospel of John, we find as often as 15 times Jesus saying, ἐγώ εἰμι, not just εἰμι, but ἐγώ εἰμι. For instance, Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή · οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ. Evangelist John tells us why he has added ἐγώ. There is no other person about whom we can say, Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή. So this example shows us what we could learn when we read the Bible in the original languages, not just in our modern translation. Thank you.

Alexandru Mihăilă: Thank you. I'm sure there are further examples you read in the book.

I will now ask the question in Romanian to Professors Francisca Baltăceanu and Monica Broșteanu. Not only have they been busy translating and editing the Septuagint in Romanian, but now they are coordinating a major project of translating the Bible into Romanian, according to the Hebrew text. And I would ask them to share with us some experiences related to the importance of knowing the original languages.

Francisca Bălțăceanu: First of all, I would like to say how many languages a translator has to know. Sometimes it is omitted that a translator must know their mother tongue, first of all. There was a very interesting symposium last year, also about translations, in which many interesting and sometimes amusing things were said. After that, if there are young people present who should be encouraged to learn languages, I would ask how they learn them. Don't start with everything at once. Greek and Hebrew. But how to learn them? Of course, there are Biblical Greek manuals and dictionaries. My opinion is that you have to take it as a whole, Greek as it is. I'm not talking about Byzantine Greek, but as a whole, so that you can understand, for example, the verbal form; if you limit yourself, it's like you're at the end of a road and you don't know where you're coming from. And how much do you have to learn? For a beginner, let's say. If you tell them that they have to know everything from the beginning, as if they had to translate everything for the first time in the history of mankind, they get scared and leave. But... to have an idea, at least in the beginning, not as a translator, but as a Bible lover, so that you can compare the texts, to understand what is said there. You read the grammar quickly, like a crime novel, and then you throw yourself into that language and start reading in it. Preferably, for example, John's Gospel, because the words are repeated a lot, and so you can read if you have an idea of grammar, and you can enlighten yourself along the way. A few examples of why it is very important, even as a beginner Bible lover, to be able to look at the original when you have your text, the Romanian text. For example, the impossibility of rendering everything that is in the original. As in Luke 1:28, the angel greets Mary, saying, Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη. Of course, it is usually translated in Romanian *plină de har* (= full of grace). But if you look closer, it is a form of

perfect, passive perfect, and it would be more accurately translated *asupra căreia a fost revărsat harul şi el continuă să existe* (= on which the grace has been bestowed and it continues to exist). This is the value of a passive perfect. You can't translate it like this. Of course, you can translate by *plină de har*, but let's not limit ourselves, because there are discussions: Why is it called like this? Especially in some parts of the culture, where Mariology seems a bit exaggerated. If you can explain exactly what it says, it's a lot. Or sometimes you can translate some special expressions, which are usually lost in Romanian translations. We know that in the Gospel of Luke, from chapter 9 to the end, there is the road to Jerusalem, and everything that happens, happens there, everything that is told. It is in Luke 9:51: Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ἀναλήμψεως αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστήρισεν τοῦ πορεύεσθαι εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ. It is translated in very strange ways. I will give only a few examples in Romanian, without mentioning the sources: *când s-a apropiat vremea în care avea să fie luat în cer, Iisus şi-a îndreptat faţa hotărât să meargă la Ierusalim* – I mean, he knew he was going to be taken to heaven, and he had to get to Jerusalem. Sorry, but it sounds strange. Or: *când s'au apropiat zilele înălţării Sale, El Şi-a întărit gândul de a merge la Ierusalim* (= as the days of His Ascension approached, the thought of going to Jerusalem became stronger). *Înălțare* (= ascension) is better, but it is often translated: *a plecat cu hotărâre*. Well, the thing with the hardening of the face (*când s-au împlinit zilele Înălţării lui, el şi-a întărit faţa sa să meargă în Ierusalim*), ἐστήριξε τὸ πρόσωπον, it sends you to Isaiah. It sends you to what Jesus had in mind when it is said that his face has hardened. It is in Isaiah, in the Third Servant Song, 50:7: *De aceea am şi întărit faţa Mea ca o cremene, căci ştiam că nu voi fi făcut de ocară* (= Therefore, I have set my face like a stone), we must know what is said before. It is said: he knows that he will be tormented. "The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. But the Lord God helps me; therefore, I have not been disgraced". This passage refers to Isaiah, and then you know what Jesus had in mind: he knew what was to follow, and he hardened his face, that is, he took courage. I can tell you a personal experience: it was during communism, a guy was walking in front of my house, and observing who was entering and who was leaving. Those who have experienced those times will understand. And I was walking home and thinking, and suddenly I felt as if the bones in my face were getting harder. I don't know exactly how to describe it. I was thinking about what would happen next, that I would run into that guy and pluck up my courage. If you omit the direct translation, you can make the necessary notes, but if you skip the expression, everything is lost. He left with determination, so what? Determined to do what? – speaking about very

important things, plus the reference to Isaiah, who said what He had in mind, that He knew what was coming.

Another example that I would like to give is the modification of the Septuagint, this time, from theological considerations. From theological considerations, there are also changes in the Masoretic text, but that's another story. But in the Septuagint, Psalm 17:16, it says: *întru dreptate mă voi arăta feței Tale, sătura-mă-voi când se va arăta slava Ta* (= I will appear before You in righteousness, I will be satisfied when Your glory is revealed). But it is not like that in the Masoretic text. There is this fear of saying that one will see God's face, because God tells Moses: "No one can see my face", and at the same time the psalm says: "Seek My face. Your face, O Lord, I will seek", that is, there is a very profound wordplay here. And in the Masoretic text it is: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness". So, the last word in Hebrew can mean several things, also *face* ... It can be understood like this: "when I wake up from my sleep, I am already happy to see the face of God", figuratively, metaphorically speaking; but it can also be about death, personal death: when I die and what is shown to me in front of me, the face of God is shown to me, the face of God; upon awakening, that is, martyrs have an awakening and then you gain courage when you see yourself in the face of death, and realise that God will be shown to you. Of course, it is also about resurrection. Well, all these meanings are here, and if you don't look at the original, you lose these meanings, because you can't say everything in translation.

Three examples, that's all from me, but their number is infinite.

Alexandru Mihăilă: I think it is important to give some edifying examples to sustain the theory, and you have done so. Professor Monica Broșteanu, would like to add something?

Monica Broșteanu: Yes, I will only give examples, without further introduction. For example, Habakkuk 2:4. It is very important to respect the Hebrew topic when translating this verse; not all languages can respect it, but then the meaning is halved. *Cel drept prin credința sa va trăi* (= The righteous shall live by his faith). And there are all kinds of translations: *cel neprihănit va trăi prin credința lui* or "the righteous man is rewarded with life for his fidelity", which are very far from the original meaning. Here, it is very important that faith be at the center, because it also refers to how that man became righteous: "the righteous through faith", and it is about righteousness through faith, which St. Paul so strongly supports in his Epistle to the Romans. Faith also makes him alive, but if you tell him that faith only helps him to live, it is half the point. First of all, faith made him righteous. So, in Romanian, fortunately, we have a flexible language, and we can respect the topic, although we don't sometimes do that in translation.

Here, for example: *dreptul din credință va fi viu*. The synodal translation is the closest of all I found in Bible Works.

Then there are a few interesting things about intertextuality. For example, when we talk about that reed basket in which Moses was placed and sent down the Nile in order to be saved, the word for that basket is *tevah*, which is the same as the one used for Noah's Ark. If you don't know the language, no one can translate by "the reed ark" or "the reed ship". But if you know Hebrew, you will understand. Because in Genesis, God says: "Make for yourself an ark". And the name Moses, *Moshe*, has an etymology in Exodus 2:10: She named him Moses, saying, "because I drew him out of the water". This *Moshe* is a present participle: he is the one who draws out, it is a name that also shows the mission: he will bring out the people of Egypt. If you know a little, you realize that he is a premonitory name that characterizes him.

Then, all these figures are very beautiful, which express an intensive action. For example, *ra'oh ra'iti* "I have seen well", these combinations of absolute infinitive and perfect: "I have seen well the oppression of My people" (Gen. 3:7). Usually, translations just say, "I saw", but they also need to convey this intensity: "I really saw". *Văzut-am bine* (I saw it clearly), we said.

It is the same with *paqod paqadti* "I have observed you well", *negreșit am luat aminte la voi* (= I have certainly paid attention to you), we translated it in Exodus 3:16; not only "I saw you", but "with observation I observed you". You have to find a translation solution to accentuate these actions.

And finally, if you learn these languages, you will enjoy the very concrete images that Hebrew has. In the Septuagint, many are lost, but Hebrew is very rich in such images. For example, how do you say: "to start from a place": "The children of Israel left Rameses", Exodus 12:37. It is a very concrete verb: "they started" is in fact "they pulled up the tent-pegs". Without a footnote, you can only understand that they started. They started, and so what? But in fact, they made an effort to move from one place to another. Or the hail plague, Exodus 9:24, again a very concrete image: there was fire flashing through the hail. It is an image that should not be missed. If I say only that hail and fire were mixed, the image is too weak. I think I will stop here.

Francisca Băltăceanu: In conclusion, to those who intend to learn languages, at least to be able to check the original of a translation: you do not know what you are missing if you don't.

Alexandru Mihăilă: Thank you for these examples. And, in fact, we need to advertise, let's put it this way, for the study of classical languages at the theological faculties.

We will now turn to Professor Mihaela Paraschiv, a distinguished researcher, to tell us a few words about the original languages of the Bible.

Mihaela Paraschiv: First of all, I would like to greet with particular respect Professor Francisca Băltăceanu, who led the Ancient Greek language seminars, during my studies at the University of Bucharest, at the Classical Languages Department of The Faculty of Foreign Languages.

I read a presentation of Professor Muraoka's book, which indicates that the Bible languages recommended abroad for studying are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Also Latin should be studied among these languages. On Google, if someone asks which biblical languages are, the answer is the languages mentioned above. And I also asked myself, just like my colleague Eugen Munteanu, if Latin should not be included among the biblical languages. That is because the Greek, in fact, the koine Greek in which the Bible was translated, is still a translation language, like Latin from the Vulgate. Listening to Professor Muraoka and especially reading some of his examples, I wondered whether a classical philologist, as is my case, who knows Greek and Latin, should also know Hebrew when dealing with biblical texts. I believe the answer is yes. I started from an example in Genesis 37:4 in which there is a discrepancy between the Septuagint and Jerome's translation into Latin. We know that Jerome stated that, in the translation of the biblical text, the order of words is also a mystery (*verborum ordo mysterium est*). I quote the passage from the Septuagint that interests me: ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι αὐτὸν ὁ πατὴρ φιλεῖ ἐκ πάντων τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ, translated by Jerome: "Videntes autem fratres ejus quod a patre plus cunctis filiis amaretur". Jerome translated ἰδόντες by videntes, although in Greek it refers to a previous action (after they saw). Then, Jerome used an imperfect subjunctive passive (*amaretur*), introducing a suggestion of possibility, of doubt. Also, "his brothers after they saw that their father loves this one among all his sons" in Greek becomes in Latin translation "his brothers seeing that (the subject is not mentioned) would be loved by father more than all the children".

Seeing this difference, I wondered which of the translations was closer to the Hebrew original, the Septuagint or Vulgate. It would be interesting to know whether the Hebrew text has this nuance of possibility. Therefore, Hebrew must be among the languages studied by a biblical scholar.

Alexandru Mihăilă: Thank you, Professor Paraschiv. We now turn to Professor Cătălin Vatamanu, who has prepared some insightful examples related to knowledge of biblical languages.

Cătălin Vatamanu: Thank you, Alexandru. First of all, I would like to thank you for this invitation. It is an honour for me to be here with you.

I will not be so scholastic, so to speak, I will not only give examples, but I would like to talk a little about my experience with the Hebrew language, because beyond the fact that I have studied Hebrew for two years with Professor Semen at the Faculty of Theology in Iași, I had the chance to study in Germany at the

University of Halle-Wittenberg with Professor Joachim Waschke. When I began to translate from Hebrew into Romanian, I was surprised by the refusal of some scholars to accept the texts I proposed for translation. I remember, for example, that in my activity as a deacon (and I was a deacon for 10 years), I noticed at Icos 4: *Iisus e prietenul tinereţelor mele* (Jesus is the friend of my youth). And I said, wow, such a powerful liturgical expression, in relation to youth, to life; I should try to find out where the translator of the Akathist of Christ got this expression from. And as I couldn't find it in our Romanian Scriptures, I went to the Hebrew text, and I found it in Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 3, verse 4. So I wrote an article about Jesus, the friend of my youth, for the "Lumina" journal. After I sent the article to Bucharest to be published, I received a phone call: "Father, forgive us, but we can't find the text to which you refer". Because in the synodal edition of the Bible, there is *povăţuitorul tinereţelor mele* (the teacher of my youth). Although I argued in my article that in the Hebrew text this word, *'aluph*, can be translated, as Gesenius explains in his dictionary, by "a close, intimate friend". This was one of the experiences that I solved.

Another experience was related to Haggai, chapter 1, verses 5 and 7, where we read, first in Romanian: *Fiţi cu băgare de seamă la căile voastre!* (Be watchful of your ways!) and I said: it can't be "watchful" in a Hebrew text, or in a Greek text, in a source text; in addition, "băgare de seamă" sounds quite strange in Romanian. And then I checked the Hebrew text, where I found: *śimu levavkhem 'al darkekhem*. So, the Hebrew text uses the noun *levav*, which is not translated in the Romanian. *Levav* is the soul, and a closer translation to the Hebrew text is: *a pune sufletul, a pune inima voastră pe căile voastre* (set your heart to your ways), to get totally involved. In fact, it is the calling of the Prophet Haggai to reconsider the priorities: you consider that it is a time for yourselves; well, it's not a time for yourselves, it is a time for God, and first, do what you planned to do.

I brought only two examples, so as not to clutter the discussion, but I go back to what Professor Bălţăceanu said, namely the importance of studying Hebrew in the theological faculties. In Iaşi, for example, we haven't had the Hebrew in our curriculum for a long time. We make the effort, I mean myself and the students from Iaşi, because we are a team, we try to study Hebrew as an extracurricular activity, we meet every week and we study Hebrew, but I remember that when I was studying in Germany (I was doing research for my doctoral thesis), Prof. Ernst-Joachim Waschke would come in the early morning at 8 a.m. with the bread so that we have the breakfast, and then we would put on the table the Hebrew Bible, and translated for one our – this was *Frühstük mit Hebräisch*, and then there was the *Hebräisch am Mittag*, followed by the Hebrew reading, and of course the Hebrew course that was in the curriculum, 120 hours, after which the students gave the Hebräicum exam, that was

compulsory, as well as the Greek, and maybe Latin, all of them were mandatory in the first year. So, I think we need to make more effort, at the institutional level, so that the Biblical languages have their place in the university curriculum. And, of course, I think that if we inspire our students the love for the Holy Scripture in its original language, then we can reach the joy of discovering in the text of the Scripture these hidden, mysterious meanings. These also lead us to the understanding of the use of the same words in the liturgy of the Church, in the writings of the Holy Fathers. Thank you.

Alexandru Mihăilă: Thank you. So the only time of the day when Hebrew was not being studied there in Halle was during the night.

I would like to conclude by asking Prof. Eugen Munteanu to share his experience.

Eugen Munteanu: I wasn't prepared to say anything, but after listening to my colleagues, I got some ideas.

First, I would like to refer to an idea expressed here by Alexandru Mihăilă, namely that proper names cannot be translated. He is right. However, if we trace proper names in Romanian throughout their history, we discover some extremely interesting things. I have a small dictionary of a German author, in which proper names are given in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German. And this is where I got the idea, which I urge my younger colleagues to put into practice, of compiling a historical dictionary of proper names in the Bible. When we have critical editions, all we have to do is to extract the proper names, give their current form in Romanian (as *Moise* or *David* or *Solomon*), and then indicate all the forms. We will find in the rhotacizing texts, for example, *Moisei*, *Moisi*, etc. It is well known that proper names do not have meaning; they identify. Even if some of them have semantic content, they identify something, a person, a place, but they do not signify. This work would be quite useful.

I have become a kind of biblical translator, first from the perspective of the Romanist philologist and linguist. It all started in 1987, when, during my first visit to Freiburg, Paul Miron invited me to transcribe *Leviticus* from the Bucharest Bible. He had initiated a project, "Monumenta linguae Dacoromanorum", which had to include the Bible and other texts, Dosoftei and so on. So I did what I thought was appropriate for my competencies at that time – I was a Romanist and a classicist, I knew Latin well, also Greek, I was also informed in the Slavonic language. For me, as a Romanian philologist, the biblical languages are these three: Latin, Greek and Slavonic. Unfortunately, in Hebrew, I only have an elementary skill. At that time, and today, I was convinced by Coșeriu's idea that the internal form of a language determines its uniqueness. In other words, each language is a *unicum*, which has something in common with other languages, since people communicate with each other, but there are very large

areas of incommunicability between languages. On this occasion, I also proposed a concept called "semantic anisomorphism between languages". Then, I chose my doctoral thesis topic: "The influence of classical models on the language of Romanian translations in the 17th century. The lexicon", which refers to certain moments of irreducible impact between the Biblical languages. I only mention the well-known ἐπιούσιος, about which I claim to have clarified things definitively, at least in Romanian: ἐπιούσιος is a word invented by translators; it is not in the Greek language. It does not comply with the rules of word formation. And as proof, Jerome translates it in two ways. He finds it twice in the New Testament: in one place is *panis quotidianis*, and in another place is *panis supersubstantialis*; it was the same Greek expression, but he thought on one hand about the daily bread, and on the other, about the bread of life, that is, the Eucharistic bread. And this ambiguity was always transmitted from one translator to another, up to Luther, who nuanced it as "our daily bread".

In Romanian, the first word of this expression is *pâinea cea de toate zilele*, which can be found in the texts of the 16th century. Dosoftei and others also mentioned *pâinea cea de-a pururea*, etc. The things start to settle in the 19th century, when the scholars added some elements: *pâinea cea spre* or *întru ființă.* And the situation today is the same, during prayer we use both expressions. And then, to finish, after I transcribed the texts in the "Monumenta linguae Dacoromanorum" project, namely *Leviticus*, *Wisdom*, *Sirach,* and six of the minor prophets, in addition to the Romanian 17th–century texts, we wanted to include a contemporary translation of the Septuagint.

The ideal framework for the understanding of a language, for the understanding of what a historical language means, is to study the Bible. Practically, there is no other comparative study material similar to the Bible translations. Thank you for your attention.

Alexandru Mihăilă: I also thank each of you for your contribution. The basic idea is that it is good to know the biblical languages, it is good to follow the original text in general, the translation being merely an approximation, an interpretation. And I hope that this method will be put into practice, especially in the academic area, in the fields of theology or history, where it is necessary.