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György Thúri and his Hebrew Translation of Paul's Epistles to the Galatians and the Ephesians

Hebrew Among the Classical Languages in the Sixteenth Century

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Abstract:

In this article, I examine the first Hebrew translation of Pauline epistles published in the Christian world: György Thúri's Hebrew translation of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Ephesians published in Wittenberg in 1598. I focus on the sources used by the author in the production of his translation as well as on the major linguistic and stylistic choices he made, and seek to place this translation in the context of Thúri's life and literary production as a Neo-Latin poet. This case study illustrates the place of Hebrew learning within the Humanist mentality of the sixteenth century.

Résumé:

Dans cet article, j'examine la première traduction hébraïque d'épîtres pauliniennes publiée dans le monde chrétien : la traduction des épîtres aux Galates et aux Éphésiens due à György Thúri et publiée à Wittenberg en 1598. Une attention particulière est accordée aux sources utilisées par l'auteur dans l'élaboration de la traduction, à ses principaux choix linguistiques et stylistiques, ainsi qu'à la place de cette traduction dans le contexte de la vie de Thúri et de son œuvre de poète néo-latin. Le cas examiné éclaire la place de l'étude de l'hébreu dans la mentalité humaniste du XVI^e siècle.

Keywords: Christian Hebraism; Neo-Latin poetry; Biblical Hebrew; Renaissance; Humanism; translation studies; New Testament reception studies.

Translations of the New Testament texts into Hebrew began being produced in the Christian world in the sixteenth century.¹ In 1537, the renowned Hebraist of Basel Sebastian Münster published his translation of the Gospel of Matthew, which he attempted to present as a mysterious Hebrew text that he had found.² In 1555, Münster's Hebrew translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews also appeared. In the 1560s, Münster's student Erasmus Ostwald Schreckenfuchs translated the entire New Testament into Hebrew, but never published his work.³ Three Hebrew lectionaries, that is, collections of passages mainly from the New Testament aimed for liturgical reading, were published by Christian Hebraists in the 1570s and 1580s. And in 1599, a complete Hebrew translation of the New Testament was published for the first time in Elias Hutter's twelve language edition of the New Testament. In general, these translations reflect the increasing interest in the Hebrew language as well as in the original texts of the Bible, both as a material reality and as an ideal, in the sixteenth century.⁴

In this article, I wish to focus on an almost unexplored link in the chain of Hebrew translations of the New Testament: György Thúri's Hebrew translation of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Ephesians from 1598,⁵ the first publication of a Hebrew translation of Pauline Epistles. The main interest of this short book lies, as I will seek to show, in the identity of its author not only as a Hebraist but also as a Neo-Latin poet, in fact, as a true *vir trilinguis*. This work therefore illustrates particularly well, I think, how Christian Hebraism in the sixteenth century was closely connected with the larger phenomenon of the Humanist return to the languages and literatures of Antiquity.

In the first part of the article, I will offer an overview on György Thúri's biography, mostly based on the Latin poetry composed by himself and his circle of friends. Subsequently, I will study Thúri's translation of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Ephesians, focusing on the

¹ A list of translations is provided in J. CARMIGNAC, ed., *The Four Gospels Translated into Hebrew by William Greenfield in 1831*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1982, p. VII-X. More detailed references may be found in E. SHUALI, *Traduire le Nouveau Testament en hébreu: Un miroir des rapports judéo-chrétiens* (Ph.D. Dissertation), University of Strasbourg, 2015: <http://www.theses.fr/2015STRAK021> The seminal study on Hebrew translations of the New Testament is P. E. LAPIDE, *Hebrew in the Church: The Foundations of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1984.

² E. SHUALI, "Les deux versions de l'Évangile de Matthieu en hébreu publiées par Sebastian Münster (1537) et par Jean du Tillet et Jean Mercier (1555): un réexamen des textes et de la question de leurs auteurs", in G. DAHAN, A. NOBLESSE-ROCHER, eds., *Les hébraïsants chrétiens en France au XVI^e siècle*, Geneva, Droz, 2018, p. 217-251.

³ The manuscript of this translation is being studied by Yaacov Deutsch.

⁴ S. G. BURNETT, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500-1660). Authors, Books, and the Transmission of Jewish Learning*, Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2012; E. SHUALI, "Why Was the New Testament Translated into Hebrew? An Introduction to the History of Hebrew Translations of the New Testament", *Open Theology* 2 (2016), p. 511-522.

⁵ The only previous study on this translation known to me is R. DÁN, "Thury's Hebrew Galatians and Ephesians", *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 19 (1968), p. 71-74.

sources he used and on his main choices of language and style. Through this investigation of Thúri's method of work, I will seek to describe his conception of the intellectual activity in which he engaged, that of translating the New Testament into Hebrew.

György Thúri

György Thúri was born in Belgrade in the middle of the sixteenth century.⁶ His father, Pál Thúri Farkas, was a well-known Calvinist preacher.⁷ György Thúri was Hungarian, and according to his poems identified as such.⁸ He studied Theology at the University of Wittenberg until 1597,⁹ and like many students of Calvinist denomination he subsequently moved west to continue his studies at the University of Heidelberg,¹⁰ from which he graduated on July 29, 1600.¹¹ After his studies, he was a school principal in Tolna, Hungary.¹² During his studies abroad, Thúri was supported by his patron Zsigmond Rákóczi, who would later become the prince of Transylvania.¹³ Rákóczi is indeed mentioned several times in Thúri's poems, a fact which receives attention in a congratulatory poem written to Thúri:

Then by your singing of the praise of the supreme hero,
May the Pannonian land grow in devoutness.
And by your mouth, may the virtue of the Rakoczis be celebrated.

⁶ J. SZINNYEI, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, vol. 14, Budapest, Hornyánszky, 1914, s.v. "Thuri, György" – online: <http://mek.oszk.hu/03600/03630/html/>, accessed on 24 April 2018; J. L. FLOOD, *Poets Laureate in the Holy Roman Empire: A Bio-biographical Handbook*, vol. 4, Berlin – New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2006, p. 2095-2096.

⁷ J. DÖTSCH, "Respublica literaria: Zu den humanistischen Beziehungen Ungarns zur Kurpfalz un 1600", *Studia Caroliensia*, 2004.1, p. 10; C. G. JÖCHER, *Algemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon*, vol. 4, Leipzig, Johann Friedrich Gleditschens, 1751, p. 1184-1185; J. SZINNYEI, *Magyar írók*; J. H. ZEDLER, *Grosses vollständiges Universallexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, vol. 43, Halle – Leipzig, Zedler, 1745, p. 1981.

⁸ "The subject matter for me is to put to writing the deeds of the invincible Emperor in poor Pannonian song", he says of Kaiser Rudolf II in one of his poems; J. DÖTSCH, "Respublica literaria", p. 10. *Est mihi materies inuicti Caesaris acta / Paupere condendi carmine Pannonio*. G. THURI, "Elegia X", in J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum nunc primum in hac Germania exhibitae*, Frankfurt am Main, Jacob Fischer, 1619, p. 338.

⁹ F. VILMOS, *A Hazai és külföldi iskolázás a XVI. században: A. M. T. Akadémia által jutalmazott pályamű*, Budapest, Eggenrerger, 1873, p. 319.

¹⁰ A. TARNAI, "Latin Poetry in Hungary in the 16th and 17th Centuries", *Hungarian Studies* 10/2 (1995), p. 279.

¹¹ F. VILMOS, *A Hazai és külföldi iskolázás a XVI. Században*, p. 253; G. TOEPKE, *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg von 1386 bis 1662*, vol. 2, Heidelberg, Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1886, p. 203.

¹² J. SZINNYEI, *Magyar írók*.

¹³ J. DÖTSCH, "Respublica literaria", p. 8.

Among these heroes shines Zsigmond.¹⁴

In 1615, Thúri's friend, the Hungarian poet Johann Philipp Pareus,¹⁵ published a collection of Thúri's poems under the title: *Musa Posthuma* – that is, a Muse born after the death of its father, the poet György Thúri. Thúri must have died then before the date of publication.¹⁶

György Thúri was a part of a group of Hungarian poets who wrote mainly in Latin.¹⁷ As stated above, his poems were published in David Pareus and Johann Philipp Pareus' book *Musae Fugitivae*,¹⁸ and later on in Johann Philipp Pareus' *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum nunc primum in hac Germania exhibitae* – “Delights of Hungarian poets: presented now for the first time here in Germany.”¹⁹ The collection of his published poems is composed of thirteen elegies, several short commemorative poems and epitaphs, and a number of epigrams.²⁰ Stylistically, Thúri's poems are classicizing. They are written in meter, almost all in elegiac couplets. They make frequent mention of Greco-Roman mythology: e.g. of the Muses, Zeus, Apollo, Venus, Minerva, Pallas and Mercury.²¹

What stands out when looking through the corpus of Thúri's poems is the social functionality of a great many of them. Most of his poems seem to have been written either for some specific occasion or to a specific addressee. Thus, one finds in the collection, poems for the occasion of birthdays, marriages, graduations of classmates at University, laureation of fellow Neo-Latin poets, and deceases. The poems are most often addressed to friends, poets, scholars and patrons. Thúri's poems as well as those of other students and teachers around him at the

¹⁴ *Hinc te Heri summi recinente laudes / Pannonis crescat pietate tellus: / Et tuo Virtus celebretur ore Rakocidarum: / Quos Sigismundus micat inter Heros. “Melchioris Adami Silesii Philos. M. ac P. C. Melos in Lauream Poeticam Georgii Thurii Pannonii Viri doctissimi”*, in J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 315.

¹⁵ Pareus clearly speaks of his friendship to Thúri in D. PAREUS, J. P. PAREUS, *Musae Fugitivae in Adoptivis Parei Filij, accepit Georgii Thurii Pannonij, Poëta cultissimi. Musa Posthuma*, Neustadt an der Weinstraße, Heinrich Starck, 1615, p. 232.

¹⁶ John Flood notes Pareus' poem entitled: *In Effigiem Georgii Thurii Poëta Panninij*, in which the poet depicts himself looking at a picture of Thúri; D. PAREUS, J. P. PAREUS, *Musae Fugitivae*, p. 199; J. L. FLOOD, *Poets Laureate in the Holy Roman Empire*, p. 2095.

¹⁷ For a general presentation of this poetical circle, see A. TARNAL, “Latin Poetry in Hungary in the 16th and 17th Centuries”, p. 279-289.

¹⁸ D. PAREUS, J. P. PAREUS, *Musae Fugitivae*, p. 296-350.

¹⁹ J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 311-354.

²⁰ A. TARNAL, “Latin Poetry in Hungary in the 16th and 17th Centuries”, p. 282.

²¹ For example: Amor (J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 341 three times), Apollo (p. 342, 350, 351), Bellerophon (p. 335), Cupid (p. 342), Cytherea (p. 341, 342), Mercury (p. 350), Minerva (p. 341), Muses / Camenae (p. 336, 338, 339 twice, 340 twice, 342 three times, 350), Olympus (p. 335, 336, 339), Pallas (p. 350), Phoebus (p. 336, 340 twice, 342, 349, 350), Saturn (p. 340), Venus (p. 342 twice), Zeus (p. 350).

Universities of Wittenberg and Heidelberg,²² suggest that the writing of Latin poetry was a common part of the social and intellectual life led in Thúri's circle. Thúri received the title of *Poeta Laureatus* together Johann Philipp Pareus, from the German poet Paul Schede Melissus at Heidelberg on December 20, 1600.²³

A last biographical issue that is of importance for this study is Thúri's knowledge of Hebrew. In the title of one of the congratulatory poems addressed to him, Thúri is called: "a man most learned in the science of the three cardinal languages".²⁴ And this would, of course, attest that he was known for his mastery of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. It is reasonable to assume that he acquired his knowledge of Hebrew in the course of his University studies in Theology.²⁵ In addition to what he might have learned in class, his knowledge of the language most probably benefited from his personal acquaintance with Valentin Schindler. Schindler was a renowned Hebraist and philologist of Semitic languages. He was a professor of Hebrew at the University of Wittenberg from 1571 until he was compelled to leave his post in 1592 as he was suspected of Calvinist tendencies.²⁶ Thúri addresses two very short epigrams to Schindler. The first one runs as follows:

You are a true Hebrew, Chaldean, Arab and Syrian.

The homeland and the faith have however made [of you] a German.²⁷

The second epigram is rather more cryptic:

I am sending you a sickle for a sickle, but I demand a cane.

Is this making not rather easy for you?²⁸

²² See for instance the small collection of poems in Latin and Greek written in commemoration of Stephen Szikszai by Thúri himself and professors and comrades of his at Wittenberg; *Iusta doctissimo, ornatissimo, vitae inculpatae, morumque integritate praestanti, & in artibus ac linguis optime versato viro, Dn. Stephano K. Sixovio, Ungaro, in celeberrimam Witebergensium Academiam, augendorum studiorum caussa, Anno D. 1597, die 14 Martii concedenti; Anno vero subsequente 1598, die 6. Octobris, ad horam 11. meridianam, in Domino pie placideque obdormienti, ibidemque in coemeterio Templi, ut vocant, parochialis, juxta tumulos reliquorum quatuor popularum, olim demortuorum, 8. Die Octobr. honeste sepulto: Rectore Academiae M. Antonio Evonymo, Senjore coetus Ungarici, XLIX. Balthasare G. Miscolcino: Persoluta ab Amicis, & clarissimis viris, Wittenberg, Simon Grönberg, 1598.*

²³ J. DÖTSCH, "Respublica literaria", p. 10; J. L. FLOOD, *Poets Laureate in the Holy Roman Empire*, p. 2095.

²⁴ *Bartholomaeus Keckermannus ad Georgium Thurium Vngarum, Virum trium Cardinalium linguarum peritia cultissimum, nuper Laurea coronatum*, in J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 313.

²⁵ Robert Dán presumes that Thúri studied Hebrew at Wittenberg under Lauritius Fabricius who occupied the chair of Hebrew in this University from 1593 to 1629; R. DÁN, "Thury's Hebrew Galatians and Ephesians", p. 72.

²⁶ S. G. BURNETT, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500-1660)*, p. 63, 110, 255.

²⁷ "Verus es Hebraeus, Chaldaeus, Arabsque Syrusque / Patria Germanum sed facit, atque Fides." *Ad Valentinum Schindlerum, V. C.*, in J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 349.

Does this poem suggest that Thúri and Schindler corresponded in poems?

Besides Thúri's translation of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Ephesians into Hebrew which will be examined in detail below, we also possess one original Hebrew composition of his that may enable us to assess his mastery of the language.²⁹ The booklet containing his translation of Galatians and Ephesians ends with an obituary poem to his deceased friend, compatriot and classmate at the University of Wittenberg, Stephen Szikszai.³⁰ A few lines from the poem (lines 13-18) may serve as an example of Thúri's qualities as a writer of Hebrew and as a poet:

וְכֵן עָתָה בְּחַלְיוֹ מֵת יְדִידִי
וְיָמַר נֶפֶשׁ בְּדַבָּר זֶה אֲנֹכִי :
בְּדַרְדָּר הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא מְלַמֵּד :
וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתוֹרָתוֹ בְּמַחְמָד :
בְּבוֹן דָּבָר בְּכָל־חֲכָמַת תְּבוּנָה
וְגַם הָיָה בְּבוֹן לְשׁוֹן קְדוּשָׁה :³¹

And thus, in his illness my friend has now died,
and bitter is my soul in this regard.
In the way of God he is learned.
And he walked in his teaching with desire.
Knowledgeable in every wisdom,
he was also knowledgeable in the Sacred Language.

Thúri's Translation of Paul's Epistles

²⁸ "Mitto tibi falcem pro falce sed exigo iuncum, / An non ista tibi conditio aequa sat est?" *Ad eundem*, in J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 349.

²⁹ One of his poems in Latin suggests that, together with his classmate at Heidelberg, Petrus Aluincius, he wrote an unpublished book in Latin and Hebrew. *Ad eundem* [Petrum Aluincium] *discedentem* in J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 352.

³⁰ Stephen Szikszai (Stephanus Sixai) is listed alongside Thúri among Hungarian students who finished their studies at Wittenberg in 1597; F. VILMOS, *A Hazai és külföldi iskolázás a XVI. században*, 319. As mentioned in note 22, in 1598 appeared a collection of poems written in his memory. This collection includes a poem written by Thúri in Latin. This poem is different in its content from the Hebrew poem mentioned here: "*Sequitur Carmen in Obitum Dn. Stephani Sixai Amici et Contubernali charissimi*", in G. THÚRI, *Epistolae Pauli Apostoli ad Galatas et Ephesios: è Graecâ in purè Hebraeam linguam translatae: gratique animi ac sempiternae memoriae testificandae ergo Spectabili ac Magnifico Domino Domino Sigismundo Rakotzi, Comiti Comitatum Thorna & Munkats, noc non Sacr: Caes: Regiaequae Maiest: Consiliario & c.Mecoenati studiorum suorum benignissimo dicatae à Georgio Thurio Alumno humilimo*, Wittenberg, Iohannes Crato, 1598, [last two pages]. The pages in this book are not numbered.

³¹ The Hebrew text of Thúri's book is quoted as it appears there, including the occasional errors in spelling or pointing.

Thúri's Hebrew translation of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Ephesians was published by Johannes Crato in Wittenberg in 1598, a year after Thúri had finished his university studies there.³² The book contains 23 printed pages, including the title page. Except titles which are in Latin, the book comprises only Hebrew text, attesting that it was intended for rather advanced students of Hebrew. The title page includes a dedication of the book to Thúri's patron (*mecoenatus*) Zsigmond Rákóczi. Before and after the text of the translation itself, there is a poem in Hebrew. The book begins with a poem by the Conrad Neander of Bergen, entitled: *Tetrastichon in duas Paulinas Epistolas à D. Georgio Thurio in Hebraeam linguam translatas*.³³ The poem presents the translation to the reader, hoping he will learn from it how to write in Hebrew by himself:

רֵאֵה קִרְא אֲשֶׁר עֲבַד אֲדָמָה
 לְבוֹנֵה מִלְשׁוֹן יוֹן עֵתְקָה :
 אָמַת כֹּל מִלְשׁוֹן עֵבֶר לְקַחָהּ
 לְמַד מִשָּׁם לְחַבֵּר כֵּן וְאֵתָה :

Behold a reader who is a peasant.
 He has translated incense from the Greek language.
 He has taken the truth about everything from the Hebrew language.
 Learn from it [how] you too [can] compose in this manner.

In this poem, Neander encourages the reader of this translation to learn from the work of György “the peasant”³⁴ Thúri, how to compose similar works. What this poem teaches us most of all is that the readers in view for this translation were advanced Christian students of Hebrew able to read and write in Hebrew.

As stated above, the book ends with Thúri's poem in memory of his friend Stephen Szikszai.

³² Robert Dán supposes the translation was Thúri's doctoral exercise; R. DÁN, “Thury's Hebrew Galatians and Ephesians”, p. 73.

³³ Compare this poem to Conrad Neander's Latin *Tetrastichon* on the first page of his own *Epistolae Anniversariae, quae Dominicis diebus ac Sanctorum festis praecipuis in Ecclesia praeleguntur EBRAEAE iam recens ex Graeco textu ac Syra Paraphrasi factae; breuibisque scholijs, sed tamen haud poenitendis illustratae, à M. Conrado Neandro Bergensi. Et nunc demum τετραγλώττως EBRAICE, GRAECE, LATINE, ac GERMANICE. Editae opera ac cum praefatione clarissimi ac doctissimi viri D. M. Michaelis Neandri Soraviensis, Leipzig, Georg Defner, 1586.*

³⁴ This is a play of words on György Thúri's first name, which comes from the Greek word γεωργός – “peasant” / “husbandman”. Neander renders this using the Biblical expression עֲבַד אֲדָמָה – “worker of the soil”; see notably Gen 4:2, but also Gen 2:5; 3:23; 4:12; Prov 12:11; 28:19. I owe this observation to David Benka, whom I greatly thank for it.

The Hebrew text of the translation is pointed and punctuated using the three following disjunctive accents: *Atnah*, *Silluq* and *Sof Pasuq*. Verse numbers of every fifth verse are marked in Hebrew letters in the margin. The Hebrew text is altogether correctly printed, but certain typographical errors do appear every so often.³⁵

The Sources Used

There is every reason to believe the claim stated in the title of the book that the Epistles were translated from the Greek text and not from that of the Latin Vulgate like some of the first translations of New Testament writings to Hebrew: *Epistolae Pauli Apostoli ad Galatas et Ephesios: è Graecâ in purè Hebraeam linguam translatae*.³⁶ First, Thúri most probably knew Greek, as is stated by the poet who wrote that he was learned in the three cardinal languages.³⁷ This can also be attested by his use of Greek words written in Greek characters in his poems.³⁸ Second, in the few cases where the Greek text of the Epistle to the Galatians clearly differs from that of the Latin Vulgate, Thúri's Hebrew follows the Greek.³⁹

ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον (...) (Gal 1:19)

alium autem apostolorum vidi neminem (...)

וְאֶחָד מִצִּירִים לֹא רָאִיתִיו (...)

The Greek and Hebrew texts say: “I have not seen another (one) of the Apostles”, whereas the Vulgate says: “I have not seen **any** other of the Apostles”.

ἤμην δὲ ἀγνωσούμενος τῷ προσώπῳ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας ταῖς ἐν Χριστῷ (Gal 1:22)

eram autem ignotus facie ecclesiis Iudaeae quae erant in Christo

וְלֹא נִדְעָתִי בְּפָנִים לְמִקְהֵלֵי יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר בְּמִשְׁיַח :

The Greek and Hebrew texts say: “... which **(are)** in Christ”, whereas the Vulgate has: “which **were** in Christ”.

³⁵ See for instance the following cases: אֶחָד מִצִּירִים לֹא רָאִיתִיו בְּלִתִּי וְעַקֵּב אֶחָי חָאָדוֹן (Gal 1:19); אֶחָי שְׂקָר אֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ (2:4); אֶת־אֲשָׁמ (אֲשֶׁר ?) הִרְסָתִי (2:18); בְּלֵט (?).

³⁶ Examples of Christian translations from a Latin original are Sebastian Münster's translation of the Gospel of Matthew; see E. SHUALI, “Les deux versions de l'Évangile de Matthieu en hébreu publiées par Sebastian Münster (1537) et par Jean du Tillet et Jean Mercier (1555)”; and admittedly Giovanni Battista Iona's *Quator Evangelia Novi Testamenti Ex Latino in Hebraicum sermonem versa*, Rome, Propaganda Fide, 1668.

³⁷ See note 24.

³⁸ See several examples in his epigrams; J. P. PAREUS, ed., *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum*, p. 349, 351, 353, 354.

³⁹ The differences between the Greek and Latin texts of Gal are taken from M.-J. LAGRANGE, “La Vulgate latine de l'Épître aux Galates et le text grec”, *Revue biblique* 14 (1917), p. 428-431.

τὸ γὰρ Ἄγαρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ (...) (Gal 4:25)

Sina enim mons est in Arabia (...)

כִּי הַגֵּר הֵיא סִינֵי הַר בְּעֶרְב (…)

Greek and Hebrew: “For **Hagar** is Mount Sinai in Arabia”. Vulgate: “For Mount Sinai is in Arabia.”

Thúri most probably used an edition based on Erasmus’ so-called *Textus Receptus*, which had become the dominant form of the Greek text of the New Testament in the sixteenth century.⁴⁰

A hint about a second source used by Thúri is provided on the very first page of the book, which begins, as we have seen, with a poem by the Lutheran Hebraist Conrad Neander.⁴¹ Indeed, the only Hebrew translation of Pauline writings published prior to Thúri’s, is the fragments of Paul’s Epistles comprised in Neander’s *Epistolae Anniversariae*⁴² – a collection of short biblical passages, mainly from the New Testament Epistles, intended for liturgical use. Among these passages we find several ones from the Epistles to the Galatians and the Ephesians.⁴³ And when comparing Thúri’s translation of these passages with that of Neander, it becomes clear that Thúri has made use of his Lutheran predecessor’s work, without however copying it word for word. Several examples may illustrate Thúri’s practice.

In the following comparative tables significant similarities between the two translations are marked by bold characters, and significant differences by a darker background.

Gal 3:15-17

<u>Textus Receptus</u>	<u>Neander</u>	<u>Thúri</u>
<p>¹⁵ Ἀδελφοί κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω· ὅμως ἀνθρώπου κεκυρωμένην διαθήκην οὐδεὶς ἀθετεῖ ἢ ἐπιδιατάσσεται</p>	<p>אחי הַיְקָרִים בּו עָרַד לִי לְדַבֵּר בְּאָדָם כִּי אֶת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר הִקִּים אִתָּהּ אֲנֹשׁ לֹ אִישׁ לֹא יִפָּר אִישׁ וְלֹא יוֹסִיף עָלֶיהָ וְלֹא יִגְרַע מִמֶּנָּה : וְתִהְיֶה לְאַבְרָהָם הַשְּׁבוּעָה</p>	<p>אחי הַיְקָרִים כְּדָרַד הַאָּדָם מְדַבֵּר אֲנִי כִּי אֶת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר הִקִּים אִתָּהּ אֲנֹשׁ לֹ לֹא יִפָּר אִישׁ וְלֹא יוֹסִיף עָלֶיהָ : וְתִאֲמַר לְאַבְרָהָם הַשְּׁבוּעָה</p>
<p>¹⁶ τῷ δὲ Ἀβραάμ ἐρρήθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι</p>	<p>וְתִהְיֶה לְאַבְרָהָם הַשְּׁבוּעָה</p>	<p>וְתִאֲמַר לְאַבְרָהָם הַשְּׁבוּעָה</p>

⁴⁰ B. M. METZGER, B. D. EHRMAN, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th edition, New York – Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 149.

⁴¹ As a proof of Conrad Neander’s confession, see his citation of Luther in his *Epistolae Anniversariae*, p. [24]. See also S. G. BURNETT, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era*, p. 124, 134.

⁴² For full title, see note 33.

⁴³ The passages of Gal and Eph included in Neander’s book are the following: Gal 3:15-22; 3:23-29; 4:1-7; 4:21-31; 5:16-24; 5:25-6:10; Eph 2:17-22; 3:13-21; 4:1-6; 4:7-13; 4:23-28; 5:1-9; 5:15-20; 6:10-17.

καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ	וְלִירְעוּ	וְלִירְעוּ
οὐ λέγει καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν	לְאֹמַר לֹא וְלִירְעִים	לֹא אֹמַר וְלִירְעִים
ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἀλλ' ὡς ἐφ' ἑνός	כְּמוֹ עַל רַבִּים כִּי אִם כְּמוֹ עַל אֶחָד	כְּמוֹ עַל-רַבִּים כִּי עִם כְּמוֹ עַל-אֶחָד
Καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου	וְלִירְעֵךְ	וְלִירְעֵךְ
ὅς ἐστὶν Χριστός	אֲשֶׁר מְשִׁיחַ הוּא :	אֲשֶׁר מְשִׁיחַ הוּא :
¹⁷ τοῦτο δὲ λέγω·	וְזֹאת אֹמַר אֲנִי כִי	וְזֹאת אֹמַר אֲנִי כִי
διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην	אֶת-הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר לְפָנִים הָיִים אִתָּה	אֶת-הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר לְפָנִים הָיִים אִתָּה
ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ	הָאֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים
εἰς Χριστὸν	אֶל מְשִׁיחַ	אֶל-מְשִׁיחַ
ὁ μετὰ ἔτη τετρακόσια καὶ	לֹא יִפְרָנָה	לֹא יִפְרָנָה
τριάκοντα γεγονώς	הַתּוֹרָה	הַתּוֹרָה
νόμος	לְחַדֵּל הַשְּׂבוּעָה בְּיַד תּוֹרָה	אֲשֶׁר הַחֲלָה אַחֲרַי שְׁלִישִׁים שָׁנָה
οὐκ ἄκυροί	אֲשֶׁר הַחֲלָה לְהִיּוֹת אַחַר שְׁנַיִם אַרְבָּעָה	וְאַרְבַּעַת מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה
εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν	מֵאוֹת וּשְׁלִשִׁים :	לְחַדֵּל הַשְּׂבוּעָה בְּיָדָהּ :
ἐπαγγελίαν		

Although they are similar, the two Hebrew versions are manifestly not identical. One notes that the two translators have made different choices of vocabulary, as in the translation of the Greek verb ἀθετεῖ – “declares invalid”, rendered in verse 15 by Neander as יִמְאַס – “will reject”, and by Thúri as יִפַּר – “will break”. One also remarks that Neander is, in general, less faithful than Thúri to “the letter” of the Greek text. He, for instance, has no problem rendering the Greek verb ἐρρήθησαν – “have been said”, as וְנִתְּהִי – “has been” (vs. 16). He does also not hesitate to add in his translation elements that are completely absent from the Greek text, as in writing “no one adds to it or subtracts from it”, whereas the Greek has only “no one adds to it.” (vs. 15)⁴⁴

Certain similarities between the two versions cannot however be a matter of coincidence. In verse 15, both translators add the adjective הַיְקָרִים to the address אֲחֵי – “My dear brothers”, although this adjective is not in the Greek text. This addition seems to go back to Luther’s common rendering of the address ἀδελφοί – “Brothers”, into “liebe Brüder”.⁴⁵ Both translators render the first occurrence of the noun ἄνθρωπος in verse 15 as אָדָם, and the second as בְּנֵי אָדָם, surely for the sake of *variatio*. In verse 17, both translators make a considerable effort to render the difficult Greek sentence intelligible in Hebrew. They change the passive clause: διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ – “a covenant ratified by God”, to an active one. Both place the verb meaning “to annul” before its subject “the Torah”, and not after it as

⁴⁴ Neander seems to be borrowing the pair יִפַּר / הוֹסִיף from the Hebrew Bible where it is employed in a similar context in Deut 4:2; 13:1. See also Eccl 3:14.

⁴⁵ I thank Stefan Schorch for this observation.

in the Greek. Both add an explicit reference to “the Torah” as the one who would “make the promise void” (Neander – בִּיד תּוֹרָה; Thúri – בִּידָה), in order to make more clear what is implicit in the Greek. It is especially interesting to see that they both translate *ad sensum* the Greek participle γεγονώς. We can however only understand where Thúri’s odd rendering: הִחֵלָה – “has begun” comes from, if we consider it to be a shortening of Neander’s paraphrase of the Greek: הִחֵלָה לְהִיוֹת – “has begun to be/to exist”.

Gal 4:1, 5

<u>Textus Receptus</u>	<u>Neander</u>	<u>Thúri</u>
¹ Λέγω δέ ἐφ ὅσον χρόνον	וְאֲנִי אָמַר בִּי כָּל־עוֹד	וְאֲנִי אָמַר בִּי כָּל־עוֹד
ὁ κληρονόμος νηπιός ἐστιν	הַיּוֹרֵשׁ עוֹלָל	הַיּוֹרֵשׁ עוֹלָל
οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου	אִין מַבְדִּיל בֵּינוּ וּבֵין הָעֶבֶד	אִין מַבְדִּיל בֵּנוּ וּבֵין הָעֶבֶד
κύριος πάντων ὧν	גַּם בְּהִיוֹתוֹ אָדוֹן כָּל־רְכוּשׁ :	גַּם בְּהִיוֹתוֹ אָדוֹן כָּל־רְכוּשׁ :
(...)	(...)	(...)
⁵ ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ	לְמַעַן אֶת־אֲשֶׁר תַּחַת עַל הַתּוֹרָה יִגָּאֵל	לְמַעַן אֶת־אֲשֶׁר תַּחַת עַל־הַתּוֹרָה יִפְדָּה
ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν	לְחַשְׁבָנוּ לְבָנִים לוֹ :	לְחַשְׁבָנוּ לְבָנִים לוֹ :

These two verses have been translated by Neander and Thúri in an extremely similar way. However, several identical renderings are particularly revealing. Both render ὅσον χρόνον – “all the time that...”, very idiomatically by the Hebrew phrase כָּל־עוֹד.⁴⁶ Both interpret πάντων – “all (things)” / “everything”, as כָּל־רְכוּשׁ – “all possession”, probably under the influence of Luther’s rendering: “aller Güter”. Both add the word עַל – “burden” to the phrase: “those under the burden of the Torah”. This word is not in the Greek text. And finally, both render the Greek phrase meaning: “... so that we might receive adoption as sons”, in the exact same way by a Hebrew phrase signifying: “so that he will consider us as his sons”.

Language and Style

In general, Thúri attempts to render the Epistles into Biblical Hebrew broadly defined. Hence, he uses the so-called converted verbal forms Wayyiqtol and Weqatal, which are very frequent in the Hebrew Bible and completely absent in the Hebrew language from the time of the

⁴⁶ See 2 Sam 1:9; Job 27:3.

Mishnah onwards.⁴⁷ He imitates the syntax of Biblical Hebrew, for example, by introducing the apodosis of conditional phrases with the conjunction -וְ, as in the following sentence:

(Gal 1:9) : אִם אִישׁ יְבַשֵּׁר לְכֶם בְּלִתי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר לְקַחְתֶּם וְחָרֵם הוּא :

If anyone announces to you anything except that which you have received, let him be banned.

He does not use any word that is not found in the Hebrew Bible, except for names of people and places. It is noteworthy that he uses biblical vocabulary where other translations tend to use Mishnaic vocabulary that may seem more appropriate. For instance, he renders the Greek word ἀπόστολος – “messenger” (“Apostle”) systematically by the biblical word צִיר,⁴⁸ which has the same meaning as the Greek word but is quite infrequent.⁴⁹ Later translations such as that of Elias Hutter published only a year after Thúri’s,⁵⁰ usually use the Mishnaic word שְׁלִיחַ for rendering ἀπόστολος, surely since it is derived from the root שָׁלַח – “to send” and is thus easily recognizable and understandable. It is also very frequent in ancient rabbinic literature.⁵¹

He uses certain idiomatic biblical expressions that are rather rare and thus attest to Thúri’s good knowledge of the Biblical language, such as בְּפֶתַע פְּתָאם – “suddenly in an instant” for rendering the Greek ταχέως – “at once” (Gal 1:6),⁵² or הִלְיָהּ-הָ(לִי/לָנוּ) – “far be it from (me/us)” for rendering μὴ γένοιτο – “certainly not!” (Gal 2:7; 3:21; 6:14).⁵³

It is interesting to see that in certain cases when the biblical language does not offer adequate parallels to the expressions of Paul, Thúri’s incapacity to use expressions from outside the Hebrew Bible forces him to be unfaithful to the meaning of the Greek text. The next sentence is a good example of this phenomenon:

περισσοτέρως ζηλωτής ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων (Gal 1:14)

I was far more zealous for the **traditions** of my ancestors. (NRSV)

(...) וְקִנְיָתי יוֹתֵר בְּתוֹרַה אֲשֶׁר לְקַחְתִּי מֵאַבּוֹתַי :

⁴⁷ For the Hebrew Bible, see J. JOOSTEN, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew: A New Synthesis Elaborated of the Basis of Classical Prose*, Jerusalem, Simor, 2012, p. 161ff [Wayyiqtol], 288ff [Weqatal]. For Mishnaic Hebrew, M. H. SEGAL, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Gal 1:1, 7, 19; Eph 1:1; 2:20; 3:5; 4:11.

⁴⁹ Isa 18:2; 57:9; Jer 49:14; Obad 1:1; Prov 13:17; 25:13.

⁵⁰ E. HUTTER, *Novum Testamentum Dni. Nri. Iesu Christi. Syriacè, Ebraicè, Graecè, Latinè, Germanicè, Bohemicè, Italicè, Hispanicè, Gallicè, Anglicè, Danicè, Polonicè*, Nürnberg, 1599.

⁵¹ For example: *m. Ber.* 5:5; *Roš Haš.* 4:9; *Giṭ.* 3:6; 4:1; 6:3; *t. Ter.* 2:13; *Roš Haš.* 2:18; *Ḥag.* 1:3; *Giṭ.* 1:1; 2:13; 3:3; 4:2; *Qidd.* 4:1; *B. Qam.* 6:17; 9:1; *Mak.* 2:5, 6; *Me‘il.* 2:7.

⁵² Num 6:9; Isa 29:5.

⁵³ Μὴ γένοιτο is used to translate הִלְיָהּ in a few places in the Septuagint, e.g. Gen 44:7, 17; Josh 22:29; 24:16. Awareness to this could be the source of Thúri’s translation solution.

The rendering of *παράδοσις* as *הַרְוּת* does not enable the reader of the Hebrew text to understand what Paul means to say in this sentence. He is not talking about faithfulness to the *Torah*, but to the oral tradition. A Mishnaic word such as *מִסְרָת* – “tradition” would be a much better choice here.⁵⁴

Although Thúri’s use of Hebrew is in general correct, the translation does present quite a few errors and non-idiomatic expressions.

οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγν, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ. (Gal 3:28)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female (ESV)

לֹא יִשְׁ-יְהוּדִי וְלֹא יוֹנִי לֹא יֵשׁ עֶבֶד וְלֹא חֶפְזִי לֹא יֵשׁ זָכָר וְלֹא נְקֵבָה (Gal 3:28)

The association of *לֹא* and *וְ* is highly unusual.⁵⁵

καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντες ἀδελφοὶ (...) (Gal 1:2)

and all the **brothers** who are with me (...) (ESV)

וְאֵת כָּל־עַמִּי (...))

In Hebrew a word such as “brothers” would be idiomatically used with a possessive pronoun: *יְהִי* – “my brothers”.

τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα (Eph 6:2)

Honor your father and **mother** (NRSV)

כִּבֵּד אֶת-אֲבִיךָ וְאֶת-עַמֶּךָ (...))

Thúri’s confusion between *אֲמִי* – “your mother” and *עִמָּךְ* – “with you” is surprising. He also points the verb *כבד* incorrectly, making it a past tense and not an imperative. The errors in this sentence are odd, mainly since it is a citation from the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁶

Most notable are Thúri’s difficulties in using particles meaning “also”. Thúri does not seem to be sure where in the Hebrew phrase the particle *גַּם* should be placed. In addition, he sometimes uses the conjunction *-וְ* as if it could replace or reinforce *גַּם*.⁵⁷ He is surely influenced in this by the use of *καί* in Greek, and maybe of *et* in Latin. Here are a few examples:

⁵⁴ See Elias Hutter’s translation, *ad locum*.

⁵⁵ But see Job 9:33.

⁵⁶ Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16.

⁵⁷ The same error appears in the last line of Conrad Neander’s poem opening Thúri’s book. See **p. 7**.

ὁ γὰρ ἐνεργήσας Πέτρῳ εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς ἐνήργησεν **καὶ ἐμοὶ** εἰς τὰ ἔθνη (Gal 2:8)
For he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked **also through me** for mine to the Gentiles (ESV)

כִּי אֲשֶׁר הִצְלִיחַ לְכִיפָא בְּפִקְדַת הַמּוֹלֵה גַם הִצְלִיחַ לִי בְּגוֹיִם :

Here, **גַּם** should come right before **לִי**.

εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν **καὶ αὐτοὶ** ἁμαρτωλοὶ (...) (Gal 2:17)

But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, **we too** were found to be sinners (ESV)

וְכִי אֲנַחְנוּ מְבַקְשִׁים לְצַדִּיק בְּיַד מְשִׁיחַ גַּם נִמְצְאָנוּ חַטָּאִים (...)

A personal pronoun such as **וְנַחְנוּ** – “us” is required here after **גַּם**.

ἐν ᾧ **καὶ** ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας (...) (Eph 1:13)

In him you **also** hearing the word of truth (...)

בְּאֲשֶׁר גַּם אָתָּם וְשָׁמְעָתֶם אֶת־דְּבַר הָאֱמוּנָה (...)

Thinking that the Greek **καὶ** applies to both the personal pronoun **ὑμεῖς** and to the participle **ἀκούσαντες**, he renders it twice: once by **גַּם**, and once by **-וְ**.

What stands out most when studying Thúri’s translation choices closely, is his constant effort to render Paul’s Greek into idiomatic Hebrew, even though he does not always succeed in this. The correctness and beauty of the language seem to have been of chief importance for Thúri. In his translation of Paul’s Epistles, we seem to identify the workings of Thúri the poet. A few examples will serve to illustrate his translation technique.

Ἐπειτα ἦλθον εἰς τὰ κλίματα τῆς Συρίας καὶ τῆς Κιλικίας. (Gal 1:21)

Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (NRSV)

אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הִלַּכְתִּי לְמַדְיֵנוֹת אֲרָם וְתַרְשִׁישׁ :

Thúri paraphrases the Greek adverb **ἔπειτα** – “then”, using an idiomatic expression taken from the Hebrew Bible which means “after these things”.⁵⁸ He also prefers here toponyms from the Hebrew Bible over a transcription of the Greek ones.

ἀλλ’ ὅτε εἶδον ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν **πρὸς** τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (...) (Gal 2:14)

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly **according to** the truth of the gospel (KJV)

וְכַאֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי כִּי לֹא בִיּוֹשֶׁר הִלְכוּ בְּדַרְךְ אֱמֶת הַבְּשׂוּרָה (...)

⁵⁸ Gen 15:1; 22:1, 20; 39:7; 40:1; 48:1; Jos 24:29; 1 Kings 17:17; 21:1; Ezra 7:1; Esth 2:1; 3:1.

He renders the Greek preposition *πρὸς* – “towards” / “according to” into the Hebrew *בְּדֶרֶךְ* – “in the way of”. This choice of vocabulary reinforces the vividness of the imagery in this metaphor: *walking in the way* of the truth.

(...) *ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί* (...) (Gal 2:20)

(...) and **what** I now live in the flesh (...)

(...) וְאֵת חַיִּים אֲשֶׁר עָתָה חַי אֲנִי בְּבֶשֶׁר (...))

He renders the Greek relative pronoun *ὃ* – “that which” by the Hebrew common noun *חַיִּים* – “life”. Thus, he forms an expression comprising a verb and a direct object derived from the same root, such as is very common in Hebrew:⁵⁹ “and the **life** that I now **live** in the flesh”.

Often, Thúri uses in the translation pairs of words with similar sounds, thus creating an effect of assonance. In many cases, the Greek words that he renders in this way do not present a similar assonance. And in some cases, we can see that Thúri goes to great lengths to choose words that “sound nice” in Hebrew, since some of them are clearly not the most evident equivalents of the Greek words that they render. Several examples may show this:

ᾧ ἄνόητοι Γαλάται, τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν (...) (Gal 3:1)

You **foolish** Galatians! Who has **bewitched** you? (NRSV)

הוּי גִלְתִּיִּים הַכְּסִלִּים מִי סָבַל אֶתְכֶם (...))

ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελειῖσθε; (Gal 3:3)

Having **started** with the Spirit, are you now **ending** with the flesh? (NRSV)

בְּרוּחַ הַחַלּוּתָם וְעָתָה בְּבֶשֶׁר כְּלִיתֶם :

ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφὴ τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. (Gal 3:22)

But **the Scripture** imprisoned everything under sin, so that **the promise** by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (ESV)

כִּי־אִם סִגַר הַמְּכַתֵּב אֶת־כָּל תַּחַת חַטָּא לְמַעַן הַמְּבַטְחָה מֵאֲמוּנַת יְשׁוּעַ הַמְּשִׁיחַ יִנָּתֵן לְמֵאֲמִינִים בּוֹ :

Conclusion

⁵⁹ P. JOÜON, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and rev. by T. MURAOKA, Rome, Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996, p. 450-451.

The rather particular example of György Thúri, a *vir trilinguis* who mastered Greek, Latin and Hebrew, wrote and published in the last two languages and translated from the first, shows in an especially neat manner, I think, how Hebrew learning was conceived in the late sixteenth century as part and parcel of the interest, which had become widespread, in the classical languages and literatures considered as the foundations of European culture.

Furthermore, the example of Thúri is useful for illustrating at least two features of the way in which these ancient languages were approached: the classicizing tendency and the importance of intellectual networks. Hence, Thúri's writing in both Latin and Hebrew attests to his wish to approximate the classical idiom and style of each of these languages, that of metrical mythologically inspired poetry in Latin and that of the Old Testament in Hebrew. In addition, not at all the work of a solitary poet, Thúri's Latin poetry bears the marks of its production within a circle of Neo-Latin poets who read their poems in social events, corresponded with one another in poems and published together in collective volumes. Similarly, his translation of Paul's Epistles shows his involvement in the network of Christian Hebraists of the time, whose works he read and used for the composition of his own, and with whom he was in personal contact. The existence of these networks is both a proof of the magnitude of the study of Greek, Latin and Hebrew in Thúri's time and an important factor that enabled the growth of Classical and Hebrew scholarship.