

Wilhelm Tauwinkl

Systematic Theology and the Medieval Reflection on Faith.

The Vulgate, Thomas Aquinas and Indulgences

(“Teologia sistematică și reflecția medievală asupra credinței.

Vulgata, Toma de Aquino și indulgențele”)

Habilitation Thesis

Abstract

The present thesis is prepared according to the Romanian regulations on ‘habilitation’ (i.e. the accreditation to supervise doctoral research). Accordingly, the thesis begins with a description of the scientific and academic achievements after earning the doctoral degree, continues with the skills obtained during the research activity, and finally proposes further possibilities for research and career developments.

A first direction of our work concerns the indulgences, a subject which continues the doctoral research. It emerged again in the context of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis (2016) and of the 500th anniversary celebration of the Protestant Reformation (2017). In several articles published on these occasions, we discussed the tension between the magisterial definition of the indulgences, which remained the same through the centuries, and the proposals of rethinking them. The way Pope Francis speaks about indulgence (*Misericordiae vultus*, no. 22: it ‘reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin’) is similar to that of Karl Rahner, which was not previously accepted in the magisterial documents, but, however, it was closer to the Lutheran view on sin and penance. Therefore, we equally studied which dogmatic consequences this statement could have today, 500 years after the condemnation of indulgences by the Reformation.

Another direction of our work is the contribution to the reception of Thomas Aquinas in Romania, which includes translations (a portion of the *Prima Pars* of *Summa theologiae*), several articles mainly discussing problems related to the possibility of the contemporary Romanian language to translate medieval theological and philosophical terms, and the activity related to the foundation of the Romanian section of the International Society of Thomas Aquinas. We have also been involved in the organisation of the Society’s annual congresses and the editing of its journal, *Studii tomiste* (‘Thomistic Studies’).

The difficulties concerning the rendering of medieval philosophical and theological terms into Romanian led us to search for the roots of the issue, namely the biblical translations. The philosophical and theological medieval texts which nowadays are studied in Romania use the Vulgate for their biblical quotations; in order to contribute to an accurate rendering of the medieval terminology, we understood that an appropriate starting point should be a Romanian edition of the Vulgate, with Latin text, translation, introductions and commentaries. The volume containing the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles is already published, the Pentateuch is ready for publishing and the other volumes will follow in the near future.

The work related to the Romanian edition of the Vulgate opened the way to other developments: the collaboration with the team who prepared the German edition of the Vulgate. Besides a congress organised together, we started a series of 'Jerome workshops' at the Theological Faculty of Chur (Switzerland), where we look at theological, philosophical, and philological themes related to the Vulgate, by reading and discussing texts together with the students and colleagues. Some of the discussions were published in a new online journal, *Vulgata in Dialogue*, which we co-founded and continue to co-edit.

During all this work, we acquired the ability to coordinate research teams (especially during the editing of the Vulgate). The ability to organise and provide teaching is reflected by the administrative tasks we assumed within the faculty in this field, and by the student-centred methods of teaching we use in our classes. We also taught for several years a course in the Methodology of Intellectual Work in the field of theology, which proves the ability to explain and facilitate learning and research.

For the future, we plan to continue the Thomistic studies with new translations and activities related to the Romanian Thomas Aquinas Society. We also continue the interdisciplinary work and research related to the Vulgate, the online journal and the 'Jerome-Workshops', approaching new subjects. A new field of activity will be the integration of actual themes in the research conducted within Thomas Aquinas Society, which could provide a Christian answer inspired by the ancient and medieval sources and aided by systematic positive theology.

The experience acquired in more than 20 years of activity within the field of Theology could be now shared for the benefit of new doctoral students, and their supervision would help them to reach the necessary scientific maturity.