In the time of St. Thomas Aquinas, it was not easy to understand other religions. Especially it is not because the spread of religion was associated with power and war. But exactly St. Thomas has the so-called "Pagan Doctrine" of Aristotle introduced into Christianity. In the eyes of many Orthodox Christians, this was an unforgivable mistake. With this doctrine has been the natural moral law in the Catholic theology introduced. But this reintroduction of Aristotle (if not as a revolution) in the Christian philosophy is still not done without obstacles. Chesterton says that St. Thomas corrected Plato with Aristotle, who has things taken so as he found them. Thomas takes also things so as they are created by God. Whether this theory is correct or not, it is very valuable to think that truth and faith cannot stay in contradiction toward each other, and at all, everything that a science brings to the world’s light, cannot be in contradiction to the faith. In the works of St. Thomas is always the world of positive creation at present. And to this history break was very helpful Aristotle, who was born just before 2400 years ago.

In our work, we want to analyse the conditions of the Time of dialogue with Islam and Judaism as the focus for the summary of the Summa contra Gentiles, with an ideas of M.-D. Chenu, O. H. Pesch, J. Weisheipl, K. G. Chesterton and others who show us a picture of the not easily accessible but still encounter with other religions and also show the danger conceals in an inconsequent philosophy.

Introduction to the historical situation

As 2016 is the 2,400th anniversary of the birth of the thinker Aristotle, who is labelled by the entire philosophical world as the “Philosopher”, we will attempt to describe his influence on another great thinker of the Christian civilization, who has through his heritage significantly influenced European philosophy, as well as theology.

During active and creative life of St. Thomas Aquinas a large part of Hispanic peninsula was occupied by Moors, members of the Arab culture and religion. An Islamic expansion brought Christians to an extraordinary uncertainty in multiple areas: in areas of faith and earthly balance. From the current perspective it would be nothing unusual. Perhaps nowadays from the European civilization perspective we would be able to express little regret over discharge of the Christian area to Arab command, but at the same time many prophets of modern period would at least confirm our decades-lasting worries over secularization of the European continent. At the same time it probably would not come to our mind that the mentioned Arab culture, which has been having difficulties with adaptation to modern

1 See a key study by Chenu M.-D., St Thomas d’Aquin et la theologie, Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1959 (reprinted in 1986), p. 88. Dominican Chenu notes that the assignment to write Summa contra gentiles proves a statute of St. Thomas in the Catholic Church as a global thinker. Professor of Theology is not only a teacher at school, but also a builder of faith, who gives the Gospel of Christ its organic expression and a public architecture in the Christian and secular earthly sphere.
scientific world and is even able to terrorize other cultures rather than developing towards a society that converges science and religion, was in Thomas’ times a leading culture of (not only academic) world (comp. Chenu, Pesch) dedicated to Aristotle, as well as to Jewish philosophy and culture. Introduction of Aristotle to Medieval philosophy, through Islam, has opened a scientific vision of the universe to Christianity that was beyond imagination scope of the Holy Scriptures.2

On the other hand, using and citing Aristotle (especially about the essence and destiny of man e.g. in Averroes’ comments) led St. Thomas to correct and precisely deepen theories attributed to Aristotle penetrating from various Arabic translations to the University of Paris. The Parisian intellectual group of academics has within provoking conservative Catholic circles attempted to use the so-called Aristotelian (perhaps it would be better to call them “pseudo-Aristotelian”) views in philosophy and later also in theology more often.

The Muslim world in the 13th century enjoyed great fascination because of the superiority of their own culture and civilization, as well as because of the openness of their philosophical thinking and transparent image of God. But due to mutual intolerance between Christians and Muslims there were no efforts to establish official and scientific cooperation.3 A large majority of Aristotle’s works arrives to Europe from Arabic translations through Sicily and the court of Frederick II, which are places, where St. Thomas lived and worked. The university environment in Naples as a public school was a place, where it was possible to “breathe slightly more freely” outside the dominant influence of the Church as well as to work on scientific theories of the so-called “pagans“:4

Pesch describes the Dominicans, who already at that time worked among Muslims in the Holy Land. An important note here is also the fact that St. Thomas did not know Islam from his own resources, but only through missionaries, who told him about difficulties in disputes with Muslims. As regards the contact with the Jewish population, they lived in Europe until the crusades, although having limited rights, but also under the protection of rulers. Christian disciples led quite an intense dialogue with the Jewish world, in particular when they were trying to understand some of the more difficult parts of the Old Testament.5 St. Thomas, however, according to Pesch did not lead any dialogue with the Jewish scholarship at the time. On the other hand, he was commenting upon dead Jewish scholars Flavius Josephus and Moses Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon) – Jewish doctor from Egyptian court, author of the Guide to the Misguided from 40’s of the 13th century. In this period and context St. Thomas wrote the work Summa contra gentiles inspired by Aristotelian doctrine.

Structure of Summa contra gentiles inspired by Aristotle

Summa contra gentiles6 is one of the two (according to O.H.Pesch even three) extensive monographs (or manuals7) that were not created as a result of Thomas’ teaching activities. St. Thomas began writing this work when he was thirty, during the third year of his

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2 Ibid., p. 90-91. Chenu adds that it would be a mistake to confront information which came from Christian missionaries in the Islamic world and information originating from the intellectual sphere at the time.


4 Por., U. Horst,OP, Thomas von Aquin. Der Wahrheit verpflichtet, Kath. Kirchenstiftung St. Kajetan, Munich, 1999. The author adds that nowadays we probably do not even understand it, but in medieval times it was a serious problem whether Christian can study and get inspired by pagans.

5 Ibid., p. 77.

6 Some manuscripts state the working title Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores.

professorship in Paris (1259) and finished it probably in Orvieto, in the papal court of Urban IV. in 1264.

Already Weisheipl declares in his work that not all Thomas’ arguments have equal logical power. Many are of dialectical rather than evidentiary nature. Some refer to authorities, others are precisely elaborated and developed disputes. The concerned Dominican biographer of St. Thomas, Eschmann’s student, states that in spite of four books of this Summa this work can be divided into two main parts:

The first one includes books from I to III dealing with such truth about God that is recognizable by human understanding. The second part includes the remaining book IV which discusses the truth about God and divine matters recognizable only through Revelation. However, according to Pesch this division seems incorrect, if we take a closer look at the work itself.

Weisheipl extends the division of Summa contra gentiles as follows: first three books are devoted to the Dionysian theme about God and about everything that can be learned about him through sense with the aid of philosophy (book I), about the origin of all things of God (book II) and about return of all things to God as their objective (book III). The book IV specifies such truths that lay outside the scope of what one can determine through reason. At this point it discusses four elementary truths that one must believe in order to achieve salvation of his/her soul: The Holy Trinity (chapt. 1-26), The Incarnation of Jesus Christ (chapt. 27-55), sacraments as an action of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (chapt. 56-78), The Resurrection of the Body and The Last Judgement (chapt. 79-97).

The first book where St. Thomas discusses the absolute simplicity of God (who is a necessary existence) is characteristic of a significant influence of the Jewish thinker Avicenna, especially in chapters 22, 25 and 26. As Weisheipl believes, the metaphysical peak of natural theology of St. Thomas can be found in Chapter 22 where Thomas proves that the existence and substance are identical in God. This chapter follows almost literally Metaphysics VIII by Avicenna, whose name is here not even mentioned.

In the second book St. Thomas reflects on requests for reporting to Muslims and highlights the main differences between the Christian doctrine and Muslim philosophy: the power of God (chapt. 6-14), free Creation ex nihilo (chapt. 15-38), the difference between created beings (39-45), spiritual substance (46-55), unity of soul and body in man (56-72), passive and active sense of man (73-78), human soul (79-90) and finally separate substances (91-101). As regards to the eternal duration of the world, Torrell states that in contrast to the work De aeternitate mundi, where St. Thomas gets carried away by his emotions, while in the second book Summa contra gentiles in the contrary, he argues very impressively. St. Thomas, who is faithful to the first chapter of Genesis that disserts on the inception, rejects a philosophical idea about the world that had existed eternally, but at the same time is also firmly opposed to Christian scientists, who wanted to rationally prove that the world truly has a beginning. Thomas clearly emphasizes that this can only be claimed in the faith.

In the third book Thomas reserved himself against Muslim and Jewish philosophy. He points out that God is the ultimate objective of all people, because he is the origin of all things. In chapters 111 to 163 he suggests that the Law of Moses and grace are means through which man achieves his ultimate objective. Finally, St. Thomas deals with deep secret of divine providence when analysing the Aristotelian doctrine.

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9 See Pesch, Ibid. p. 124.
10 See Weisheipl, Ibid. p. 128.
Weisheipl sees *Summa contra gentiles* primarily as apologetic work dealing with the most important issues that divide Christians from Muslims, Jews and heretical Christians. Torrell adds that the structure of books *Summa contra gentiles* points at the Aristotelian doctrine dedicated to truths which are achievable by sense (the existence of God and divine perfection; the act of creation itself and in its effects; God’s providence and God’s guidance). This structure does not include St. Trinity and the work of salvation (from incarnation to Parousia through sacrament – this forms the fourth book *Summa contra gentiles*). Torrell also recognizes that a part of the third book *Summa contra gentiles* talking about God’s providence is here much better prepared than in *Summa theologiae*. Also as the death of St. Thomas did not allow him to complete the part about sacraments and the ultimate objective of man in *Summa theologiae*, in *Summa contra gentiles* is this part in the fourth book prepared much more comprehensively.  

**Aristotle’s impetus in the Christian dialogue with "pagans"**  

Chenu presumes that in the dialogue with pagans *Summa contra gentiles* attempts to establish and develop laws that would be at the same time based on the truth of things as well as the truth of spirit and not on some episodic or tactical opportunism:  

"As the Philosopher says, it is a fact of the actual sense discipline to require the consent (truth) only to the extent of examined things. Faith gives us its testimony only within its mental contexts. As natural realities are no longer known to us in several their properties, to what extent is this true for supernatural realities. Very easy or exaggerated evidence would present grounds for ridicule by non-believers."

Chenu adds that these grounds must be measured in compliance with their own rules: in dialogue with renegade believers we can turn to the authority of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but with Muslims and Jews we have to resort to the authority of the Old Testament. Finally, for the dialogue with non-believers we need to argue only on the basis of sense, no matter how much insufficient would this in religious matters be. This nevertheless provides only the law and criterion for possible understanding. Unlike Muslims, we cannot rely on power of the army or the lure of earthly promises. Even miracles are not the first arguments. Much more important here is the gospel, which should far above miracles show the world shine through the testimonies of simple and overlaboured people, in order to be able to believe in difficult truth, hope for the high reality and lead a difficult life. Introduction of ancient sages who worked with an idea of truth while worrying about their own destiny, is a guarantee of our own examination and a sign of our privileged possibility of faith in the Word of God.  

Also Pieper sees here one important feature of *Summa contra gentiles*. As St. Thomas cannot refer to the Revelation and thus nor to the Bible (including the Old Testament like in the dispute with the Jews and the New Testament when arguing against misbelievers), he inevitably turns his attention to natural sense with that all shall agree. But sense in matters related to God fails (*comp. Summa contra gentiles* I, 2). At the same time, Pieper continues, St. Thomas talks about the daring of everybody who is trying to understand and provide evidence (*praesumptio comprehendendi et demonstrandi*). In the end he evaluates St. Thomas as the one who took on this task with the "brave resignation of human sense". The faith and sense cannot be ultimately in opposition but only in harmony. In Pieper’s opinion this is an important message of the Christian West. The author even calls the

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12 See Torrell J.-P. OP, Ibid., p. 162.
16 See Pieper, Ibid., p.119-120.
method of St. Thomas “theologically substantiated secularity“, but this secularity with a positive understanding of scientific evidence in regard to the natural knowledge must inevitably insist on linking them with supernatural truth, so that this knowledge is lived in the union with truth standards.\(^\text{17}\)

St. Thomas, as added by Pieper, already when joining the Dominican Order is led by a "vital desire" to advocate the truth, which he in *Summa contra gentiles* calls *propositum nostrae intentionis* (intention that we are concerned about), *comp. Summa contra gentiles* I, 2. The aim here becomes a proclamation of truth in such a way that it shows to opponent directly by itself.\(^\text{18}\)

Muck notes that philosophical arguments by St. Thomas indicate what is accessible on claims and assumptions of the Revelation. Thus, they serve to eliminate difficulties brought by the Revelation and to systemically uncover the content of faith and at the same time they also serve as an aid in subsequent conclusions. Muck continues with a reflection that St. Thomas comments in fact on the thought processes of Aristotle in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. Aristoteles builds on moved things and proves their dependence on Unmoved Mover. This evidence of getting along with thoughts of other philosophers (the Laws of Plato) and Christian thinkers (i.a. St. Augustine) is incorporated by St. Thomas into his *Summa contra gentiles* that systematically deals with God and relations of man to him, while also showing where the God’s existence can be proved. This is facilitated by Aristotle’s doctrine on science, where questions about properties depend on something assumed by their existence. St. Thomas does not put into foregound a detailed specification of the evidence of God’s existence for people, who would want to deny it. Muck thinks that this is much more a matter of the development of a belief that efforts of the sense enlightened by faith to continue in clarification of the Revelation is based on philosophical conviction of explicit reference that the recognizable world is based on *primeval ground* that can be religiously named *God*.

Torrell reiterates that in short comparison with *Summa theologicae* St. Thomas in *Summa contra gentiles* very subtly psychologically suggests the method of dialogue with opponents. This is not a persuasion of opponent using arguments, but rather addressing the arguments he used against the truth. This method of persuasion of the opponent is based on the Holy Scriptures confirmed divinely through miracles. What exceeds human sense can be trusted ultimately only by virtue of the divine Revelation. In this way St. Thomas expresses his confidence in the sense of a believer ("as the natural sense cannot stand against the truth of faith") - *comp. Summa theologicae* Ia, 1,8).

In the fourth book *Summa contra gentiles* St. Thomas attempts in this way to explain truths of faith that are beyond understanding by sense. He believes there are two types of theological disputes: one which tries to reject mistakes and second which seeks to introduce the truth as comprehensible. We need to add to this the theory of existence as well – act of creation according to Aristotle, which helps to understand creation. As God is the existence itself, creation is his own effect – God is therefore inevitably in all things and in the most inner way, *comp. Summa contra gentiles* II, 22. Pieper adds to this that in fact the entire world is sacred.\(^\text{19}\)

According to Chesterton, by introducing Aristotle to the Christian doctrine the appealing towards sense and the authority of senses began. In this way St. Thomas became

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\(^{17}\) See Pieper, Ibid., p. 122.

\(^{18}\) Comp. Pieper J., Ibid., p.34.

\(^{19}\) See Pieper, Ibid, p. 127-8. As regards to the evil, Pieper adds that we all, as St. Thomas believes, have the freedom to enhance our existence through “yes” to the good, or to reduce it through “no”. However, such denial of existence is not only wrong, but even sacrilegious – it is a rebellion against God, *comp.* Ibid., p. 129.
one of the great liberators of the human intellect. Thomas’ argument for Revelation is not an argument against sense, but an argument for Revelation. People thus need to accept the highest truths miraculously, because otherwise they would not reach them at all. A Christian when compared to a Jew, Muslim, Buddhist or deist is one who believes that deity or sanctity have combined with matter and entered the world of senses. Aristotle’s impetus was needed for Christianity to again become a religion of common sense. Motive and method have equally manifested in the struggle of St. Thomas with the Augustinians.

Byzantium at that time was a kind of Asian theocracy, i.e. something passive. Manichaean I of St. Augustine (under the influence of Plato) understood God exclusively as Spirit, which purifies, or Messiah, who redeems and only very little as Creator, who creates. Aristotle took things as he found them and likewise St. Thomas accepted them as God created them. St. Thomas therefore saved a human element in Christian theology through some elements of pagan philosophy. However, the human element is at the same time the Christian element. Equally the meaning of the Holy Scriptures, according to Thomas, is far from obvious, but it often must be interpreted in the light of other truths. Aristotelianism of St. Thomas, however, also meant that examination of the most modest fact leads to an examination of the highest truth.

The theme of immortality of soul and resurrection of body at the final judgement is an important theme for Christians in a dialogue with other religions. St. Thomas also suggests, with regard to his Christology, also the thesis of unity of soul and body with respect to the immortality of soul (man cannot die completely).

One of the more recent German studies on life and work of St. Thomas is provided by the controversial Catholic theologian David Berger. In this study he discusses Summa contra gentiles as a possibly the most personal (and while citing Pesch also the most mysterious and from the perspective of meaningfulness also the most problematic) his work. Berger understands this work as a very independent synthesis of previously obtained opinions of the young master. He also thinks that Summa contra gentiles represents a certain method of attempting ecumenical dialogue avant lettre. This dialogue is deeply affected by the fact that St. Thomas has a solid base point, strong commitment to extensive preservation of the identity of “Christian understanding of truth, which is in this case truly deeply missionary.”

The Order of Creation as a true measure of human judgement

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21 Comp. Chesterton, Ibid., p. 14. Chesterton calls St. Thomas a great autonomist, as he had always defended the independence of dependent things with the statement that such thing can have own rights in its area. He did not want to separate man from God, but only to distinguish him. In such way he showed his sense for human dignity and freedom and we can also call it a generous humanistic liberality, comp., Ibid., p. 15.
22 Comp. Chesterton, Ibid., p. 16.
23 Comp. Chesterton, Ibid., p. 40.
24 Comp. Chesterton, Ibid., p. 40-42. Chesterton adds that the fear of Aristotle in the 13th century was more a fear of Muhammad.
25 Comp. Chesterton, Ibid., p. 44. St. Thomas argued, as Chesterton says, that a scientist should freely explore and examine until claiming infallibility and definitiveness which are against his own principles, Ibid., p. 46.
28 Ibid., p. 44.
St. Thomas is attributed a revolt against the old Augustinian-Cluny doctrine on inferiority of natural things and disregard of the world influenced by Aristotle and introduced to philosophy and theology. In his work, according to Chenu, not so much of a natural sense but rather nature or natural reality of the world is reflected.\(^{30}\) Therefore, it was taunted to him and to St. Albert the Great that they “arrogate a divine wisdom despite being more acquainted in worldly matters”.\(^{31}\) Thomas responds to it in his *Summa contra gentiles* as follows:

“It is likely a wrong opinion of those saying that with regard to the truth of faith it does not matter how and who thinks about created beings, if he has correct opinion about God; an error in relation to created beings thus leads to incorrect thoughts about God”.\(^{31}\)

Pieper thinks that St. Thomas indicates here the important thing that unites Christianity and Aristotle, i.e. a thought of consent to creation.\(^{32}\) It would also by wrong to assume that *Summa contra gentiles* is written only in order to abate delusions against the truth.

Regarding the dual truth that one thing is what one believes in and the second thing is what one knows (separation of faith and sense); St. Thomas legitimately joined two disciplines while fully acknowledging their diversity and irreducibility of their mutual autonomy. Pieper emphasizes that it is insufficient to say that Thomas “defended” natural reality, because the Creation does not need defence. It could rather be said that the Order of Creation is to the contrary a measure, from which inevitably arises every human judgment about things and about himself.\(^{33}\)

If we continue to observe the Aristotle-influenced Christian thinking of St. Thomas, we can see, according to Pieper, also an effort to introduce to the Christian doctrine what approaches to the truth, also from other religions and philosophies.\(^{34}\) Pieper in assessing the technique of disputes at the time of St. Thomas (according to *Summa contra gentiles* IV, 2) adds that when giving arguments to the opponent it was very important to adopt not only an opponent’s objection, but also the idea. The root of the problem can often manifest in a new form, which cannot be determined in advance. In every serious particular statement there is a room for the specific part of the diverse reality. This means that there is always something correct and truthful in it. We need to build on this when we want to persuade the opponent. Even understanding of a delusion or error can enrich our knowledge. Therefore, the *disputation method* can be enrichment for interreligious dialogue in the way of St. Thomas and *Summa contra gentiles*. According to some sources St. Thomas even considered the spirit of disputes to be a spirit of university. Apart from that recognition of the entire natural reality is inevitably linked with recognition of fruits of natural knowledge, regardless of where these are located: whether also in pre-Christian or even in non-Christian world.\(^{35}\) Neither the Holy Scriptures, nor philosophical knowledge (thus nor faith or sense) may diverge from each other very much.

With respect to the controversy about statements of Sigera of Brabant St. Thomas claims that a positive attitude towards the nature and natural reality in man himself can ultimately be justified and excused *only theologically*.\(^{36}\) Pieper adds Thomas’ arguments:\(^{37}\)

\(^{30}\) *Comp.* Pieper, Ibid., p. 48-49. Thomas in *Summa contra gentiles* II, 4 defines philosophy as a method of looking at things in such a way, how they are themselves (*secundum quod huiusmodi sunt*). Nevertheless Pieper adds that the existential drive of “worldliness” which accompanied this early reception of Aristotelianism in Christianity, aimed against spiritualist symbolism, can be related to the risk of total secularization, Ibid. p. 50.

\(^{31}\) *Comp. Summa contra gentiles* II, 2, see Pieper, Ibid., p. 50.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 111.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 80.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 114.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 117.

\(^{36}\) Ibid. p.117-118.
1) natural things of this world have their genuine own existence, which inheres in themselves due to being created, i.e. that the creative will of God is in the full sense a donor of existence, because God does not limit existence only to himself, but shares it (this and only this means a creation: to share existence). And due to the activity of the Creator there exist individual beings and things, which not only are, but also can be active and act themselves.

2) The fact that things of the world are good as a result of their own existence can be most convincingly explained by that they are created. These things cannot substantially alter their existence or destroy it. Who dispraises the perfection of created things, dispraises also God’s perfection, comp. Summa contra gentiles III, 69.

3) God himself has incarnated into this world (personification of the Word). By visible things – granting of sacraments – a medicine of salvation is administered originating in primeval sacrament of Incarnation, comp. Summa contra gentiles IV, 56.

Pieper according to Summa contra gentiles III, 48 shows how St. Thomas explains and refutes Aristotle’s and Averroes’ idea of the last bliss of man. He indicates how these inevitably had to miss the essence of things even though the starting point was correct. Rational creators, according to St. Thomas, arrive at fulfilling by thinking and looking upon God, comp. Summa contra gentiles III, 50-63. Man does not find happiness in sensual pleasures or in developing skills or moral virtues. Neither does he find bliss by knowing God on the basis of human opinions, traditions or arguments, but rather by looking upon God’s essence through divine enlightenment. In the current life, as St. Thomas believes, philosophical thinking is closest to this type of enlightenment.

In Summa contra gentiles St. Thomas tries to bring theology and philosophy closer. He states that the philosophical act has, by definition, to do with everything that is, and in the extent in which it is possible to address it by a look focused at what exists (comp. Summa contra gentiles II, 4). Pieper reminds that it is not possible to say about theology that it would be devoted only to what lies outside the range of natural knowledge, because Revelation includes many, which is understandable by itself and achievable also for natural human knowledge. St. Thomas thus in this way provided an explicit evidence that this fact has its meaning (comp. Summa contra gentiles I, 4). At the same time we may never reject a dialogue with the world of all other sciences and not use results of their research (comp. Summa contra gentiles II, 4). Devious opinions about the created world often divert from the truth of faith (comp. Summa contra gentiles II, 3). It is also important to understand that theology is not simply the “Word of God” and “divine wisdom”, but is also means human speech, i.e. human effort to interpret the Revelation.  

Pesch adds that theology for St. Thomas is wisdom that is born from light, which God lets shine through faith in the human spirit (comp. Summa theologicae I 1,6 and II, 2). Theology is in fact necessary, because based on philosophical disciplines man can know God the best as an originator of the world and not as its objective, i.e. a salvation. However, without this knowledge even the most intelligent pre-Christian philosophers (such as our honouree Aristotle) remain in the state of constant fear and worry. Theology is an explanation of the primary truth to human sense. Thus, the truth revealed by God and in which he reveals. This occurs in formulations that are modified, because people meet God in time and space (comp. Summa theologicae II-II 1, 1-2 and II 3,6).

Finally, let’s add that just like philosophizing is not real without the ability to marvel at the created world, also theologizing will not remain in the correct sphere without a desire to

38 See Pieper, Ibid., p. 81-82.
39 See Pieper, Ibid., p. 133.
40 See Pieper, Ibid., p. 139.
learn about who is the beginning of everything.42 Despite all difficulties in the use of sense and faith it remains truly important to believe that truth and faith cannot oppose each other and that all that the science brings to the light of this world cannot be in contradiction to faith. Nevertheless, science must also recognize the area of its competence. St. Thomas was willing to admit that one can reach the same truth using dual path because he was sure that there is only one truth. This truth was a faith and no natural discovery could contradict faith. Thus, no deduction from faith could fundamentally contradict reality.45

**Searching for the addressees of Summa contra gentiles**

Finally, in our work we will try to look at the elementary question asked by experts on St. Thomas when assessing the importance of Aristotelian doctrine on pagans for the work *Summa contra gentiles* by St. Thomas. Who are pagans then? (Qui sont les Gentils?) This question is asked also by Chenu, although in different context than in our work. However, at the same time he continues with additional question: Who are addressees of *Summa contra gentiles* who are devoted to pagans?

For a long time it seemed there is no doubt about the answer to this question. According to one tradition, this work was created upon request of one of superiors of the Dominican Order and influential canon law expert St. Raymond from Pennafort for the needs of missionaries working in Arab and Jewish environment with a knowledge of Aristotelian doctrine (“a work, where faith would meet errors of non-believers”).44 In this environment St. Thomas had to argue philosophically and even without a possibility to use the Church doctrine. High Scholastics as medieval thinking elite really managed to lead specialist polemics with both Arab (Averroes, Avicenna) and Jewish world (Avicebron, Moses Maimonides).45 H. Arendt adds with appreciation that even if the reasoning was based mainly on the authority and sovereignty of the Word of God, each of the cited authors of any faith was considered and authority worthy of polemics.46

The tradition about an intention of St. Raymond was however repeatedly doubted. Firstly, the authenticity of the Chronicle of the King James II of Aragon was questioned, as this was allegedly written by the Dominican brother Peter Marsilio in the Monastery of Barcelona on April 2, 1313. Later it was also doubted that his work was donated to missionaries in the form of a certain manual for work in the pagan world. In this respect some commentators diverge and finally evaluate the meaning of this work as intended for non-believers, but written for Christians, who will come into contact with them.47 Conversely Kenny assumes that *Summa contra gentiles* is intended for people who are not Christians (but rather Muslims, Jews or atheists). St. Thomas wants to show these people, according to Kenny, the reasons to believe that God exists, that human soul is immortal etc. Reliability of these grounds can be, as he thinks, examined by every person of good will.48

However, Chenu nevertheless trusts the chronicler of the Chronicle of Aragon and assumes a preparation of this work for missionaries who penetrate into the world of Islam. Ultimately he adds that *Summa contra gentiles* diverts pretty much from the manual written

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43 *Comp.* Chesterton, Ibid., p. 47.
for missionaries (even if it was a dialogue with Muslim elites) both by its scope and reasoning technique. He believes that this work reminds more of Parisian environment and academic sphere. Chenu offers a hypothesis that St. Thomas wanted in the first place to write *Summa contra gentiles* for its using at the University of Paris, where: « errors of “pagans”, in other words Arab philosophers, witnessed an eruption and misguided several spiritual personalities ».

St. Thomas, however, in *Summa contra gentiles* does not scientifically attack Averroes, but rather the entire group of the mistaken: pagans, Muslims, Jews, heretics. *Summa contra gentiles* thus presents itself as a defence of the entire body of the Christian thinking in the face of Greek-Arab scientific conception of the universe that has just occurred in Western Europe.

Pesch also speaks about special courses during Thomas’ first functioning in Paris, where *Summa contra gentiles* itself hypothetically attempts to belong. At the same time he inclines to Chenu’s theory about addressees from among colleagues and partners in Paris, who despite being Christians often too fast cast into arms of Aristotelianism without a critical spirit.

A different opinion is presented by theologian Torrell, who quotes Gauthier’s criticism of the brother Marsil. According to it *Summa contra gentiles* does not focus solely on Muslims at all, not even on heretics and non-believers. Gauthier thinks that it is not about conversion of Averroists, or about apology, but about a theological work which through sense as well as its method points to academic sphere. Torrell at the same time adds that only rarely would any work be less historical than this.

Another view is provided by Patfoort, according to whom it is again a matter of presentation of the Christian faith to non-believers, even of an attempt to ecumenism between Christians and non-believers. Nevertheless, Torrell insists on the theory of Gauthier, that if we want to state that *Summa contra gentiles* has timeless ambitions, it means that this work will be useful in each period and not only in the 13th century. Thus, its intention is not an immediate and limited apostolate, but wisdom for using in the universal apostolate. Torrell assumes here a theory close to St. Thomas himself. Gauthier argues that it is a personal confession of St. Thomas about the truth.

Pieper here concludes that according to his opinion Thomas’ *Summas* provide an overall image of the period knowledge. At the same time he insists that despite its name *Summa contra gentiles* is not a polemical paper! As he believes, this is not a “crusade” but rather a *meeting*. Of course, Thomas’ aim is to give evidence that Christianity is the true religion, i.e. to refute the doctrine of Muslims and pagans, whom he addresses. However, such confutation is performed through a polemical dialogue in which the opponent’s opinion is expressed with the most important arguments.

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49 Chenu M.-D., *St Thomas d’Aquin et la theologie*, Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1959, p. 92. Chenu adds that the disturbance caused by Averroists led in Paris to conviction of Thomas in 1270 and to a long syllabus in 1277, which however, had its roots in 50’s of the 13th century and this served as an objective and led to rejection of Thomas’ doctrine.

50 Pesch finally notes that this Thomas’ activity ultimately proves to be the most beautiful response to subsequent remorse by Martin Luther (*Summa theologicae 1 1.1; II 5, 5b*), See Pesch, Ibid., p. 90.


53 Ibid., p. 156.

54 Pieper, Ibid., p. 93.
Conclusion

In conclusion, let us try to repeat some important ideas of this study: In the Arab cultural academic domination during the 13th century St. Thomas also comes with ideas of the “pagan“ philosopher Aristotle, in order to make the Christian philosophy and theology closer to man who is himself God’s creation. In the work *Summa contra gentiles* that is probably ultimately aimed at Arab-influenced Aristotelians at the University of Paris but at the same time can serve as a guide to meetings and argumentations for interreligious dialogue (by disputation), St. Thomas attempts to show the conformity of sense and faith. Indeed the faith as a gift of God and sense as God’s creation cannot in principle contradict if they originate from the same Mover. Thus, any scientific discovery cannot be in opposition to faith, as both truth and faith are also not in contradiction. Both lead us to believe that recognizable world is based on the primary reason religiously called God. But we must be careful so that the desire for autonomy, liberalization and secularization does not change to secularism, i.e. rejection of God’s help (because God is in all things).

In interreligious dialogue with other religions, while searching for answers important to Christians to questions about the Creation and world order as exposing oneself, immortality of soul, resurrection of body, seeking bliss and unity of soul and body this primeval ground itself aids to reveal and also to show roads leading to it. Otherwise, we will remain in constant fear of the future and own destiny as it was with ancient and pagan wise men or addressees of *Summa contra gentiles*.

When searching for these addressees we can thus ultimately incline to the view that they are Parisian academic intellectuals, who were on the basis of inaccurate translations of Aristotle seeking the so-called “modern” method of interpretation of creation, as well as of the world. At the same time this clearly timeless work indicates a real path of the dual dialogue. Firstly, as a place of meeting the truth of appearing God, who is one able to understand also by sense (i.e. by dialogue of faith and sense) and then exploring the Creator in interreligious dialogue as a challenge also for other major monotheistic religions and cultures of the East as well as the West. And such inheritance of the great Philosopher Aristotle is worthy of following in building the future of our civilization.

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www.bautz.de/bbklt/t/thomas_v_aq.shtml

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