plates. For example, plate 3 records the miracles associated with the Portiuncula. These two volumes constitute a welcome addition to the world of St Francis of Assisi and the evolution of local feasts.

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*Thomas Aquinas and his predecessors. The philosophers and the Church Fathers in his works.* By Leo J. Elders. Pp. xviii + 381. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018. $75. 978 0 813 23027 6

*JEH* (70) 2019; doi:10.1017/S0022046919000071

This time the blurb-ographers and puff-artists have more or less got it right: 'This book has a place next to Torrell's *Saint Thomas Aquinas* as a basic resource necessary for every student of St. Thomas' (Levering); and '*Thomas Aquinas and his predecessors* is the fullest and most comprehensive volume available using Aquinas's explicit citations' (Macierowski).

Elders offers us what might be roughly described as an annotated source-book for Aquinas's specific use of his pagan, Christian, Islamic and Jewish predecessors, treating the contributions of writers from Plato through Aristotle and the Church Fathers (emphasising Augustine and Ps-Dionysius) down to Averroes and Maimonides as they impact on various themes of Aquinas's own writings (on God, matter and form, morality etc.). In doing so he emphasises the breadth and depth of Aquinas's learning and the 'catholicity' of his various enquiries. And he notices that at times Aquinas is critical not only of the pagans and Muslims but also of the Church Fathers: thus, notably, correcting Chrysostom's less than 'orthodox' attitude towards the Virgin Mary. (Does Aquinas feel freer here because his target was Greek?)

What Elders offers is Aquinas's view of his sources, not necessarily the views of those sources themselves – and the reader should not be misled into thinking that Aquinas was always even able to present his sources accurately; in view of his limited knowledge of ancient thought in particular, it would have been quite impossible for him to have done so.

The problem is revealed as especially acute by Elders's handling of the Platonic tradition, for here more than anywhere else (as Elders recognises) Aquinas was confronted with difficulties which he was in no position to resolve. His reading of Plato being very limited – and he had read no Plotinus – he was compelled to think about Plato and Platonism as almost identical, and with identical philosophical weaknesses. And, of course, Avicenna, one of Aquinas's more contemporary 'interlocutors', though a Platonist, was often far from Plato.

Plato himself developed considerably as a philosopher and was well able to correct some of his early mistakes, but Aquinas, like all his contemporaries, had no notion of such philosophical growth. Indeed, most philosophers (until quite recent times) have tended to suppose both that each of their predecessors, throughout his life, had a single set of theories – and that the meanings of the words in which philosophy was written never changed over time: not even when they were translated from Greek into Latin or Arabic. That said, Aquinas did a remarkable job of at least getting close to some of Plato's final positions.

The problem is compounded by the fact that Aquinas had to rely either on Aristotle's often hostile and sometimes misguided accounts of Plato – and for Aristotle himself on the views of the Greek Commentators who often misread him in a Platonising way, thus giving a conveniently misleading impression. Couple this with his lack of attention (indirectly noted by Elders) to the fact that Plato wrote not treatises but dialogues – with a consequent problem of how to determine which, if any, views in the dialogue entirely represent those of Plato himself – and his problems with the Platonic tradition, whether Christian or pagan, are obvious.

There are radical differences between Plato himself and all those – whether pagans like Plotinus and Proclus or Christians like Augustine – who can be broadly described as Platonists. Of course, pagan Platonists, at least, all claimed to be loyal to Plato's own views, but their attitude to the interpretation of the Master is far from what contemporary historians of philosophy would regard as reliable. In general, one can sum up the attitude of ancient (non-Christian) Platonists to Plato as, 'If it is true, Plato would have said it (and he certainly implied it).'

When Elders moves from Aquinas's use of pagan sources to his Christian predecessors, he is on much safer ground, for Aquinas rarely has in effect to misinterpret his Christian sources to ensure that he agrees with them. Nevertheless, in the case of the more sophisticated Christian writers, especially Augustine, the belief in 'one man, one doctrine', vitiates medieval interpretations of Christian authors – including Aquinas's – as well as pagan. Augustine himself was writing over a period of more than forty years, during which time he came to realise that some of his early beliefs were incompatible with Christianity: in other words he had to choose between some claims of the Platonists and what he took to be Catholic orthodoxy. Furthermore, Aquinas's knowledge of the whole Augustinian corpus was limited.

To summarise: Elders's book is a marvellous hermeneutical tool for those who want to understand Aquinas, but they should not be induced by careless reading of his material – either into supposing that Aquinas's account of his predecessors even in some cases his Christian predecessors (who may be cited out of context, thus made to answer questions they did not ask) – is always historically accurate, or still less that we can assume, for example, that we can uncritically read Aristotle through the eyes of Aquinas, or indeed of any other medieval thinker. Which is not to say that we cannot use Aquinas to understand Aristotle.

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*The Avignon papacy contested. An intellectual history from Dante to Catherine of Siena.* By Unn Falkeid. Pp. x + 269. Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 2017. £39.95. 978 0 674 97184 4

*JEH* (70) 2019; doi:10.1017/S0022046919000095

The aim of this book is to examine the way in which the Avignon papacy in the fourteenth century provoked thought about papal claims to temporal power. Falkeid's argument is that existing treatments of papal power in fourteenth-century political thought have taken insufficient account of the specific role of the Avignon papacy as a precise context. She also takes issue with the existing