

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

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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

literature by casting her net more widely as regards consideration of what may be considered a political thought text.

Falkeid focuses on six authors: Dante, Marsilius of Padua, William of Ockham, Petrarch, Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena. Clearly, these are authors who were very different in kind. The literature on the political thought of Dante, Marsilius and Ockham is vast, not least on issues concerning papal power. Petrarch tends not to be included in studies of late medieval or early Renaissance political thought but Falkeid does show that there is much relevant material in his writings – she adds to her already distinguished publications on Petrarch. The inclusion of Birgitta and Catherine is more bold. Both were female visionaries and mystics. Neither would conventionally be included within the cast list of writers relevant to medieval political thought. But they did most certainly have things to say about the impact and implications of papal power. Catherine was one of the most famous actors in the history of the drive to bring the papacy back to Rome.

Part of the problem lies in a rather useless argument distinguishing between the history of political thought and intellectual history. The title of Falkeid's book nails her colours to the mast as being a contribution to intellectual history. If one adopts this perspective, there is no problem in including Birgitta and Catherine: in fact inclusion is demanded by the sources. But whether they are to be classed as political thinkers is another question. Neither was in any sense trying to grapple systematically with political questions. I would say that trying to treat Catherine especially as a political thinker would bring most readers up with a jolt. This was my own experience when first confronted with this interpretation. Falkeid is not the first person to take this line – it is a current in very recent and ongoing interpretations of Catherine. I would like to keep an open mind about it because such a radical position opens up entirely new perspectives.

So, Falkeid has done us all a service in adding writers like Birgitta and Catherine to be viewed side-by-side with the usual canon. It goes without saying that she is also widening the scope of the history of medieval political thought in including female writers amongst the serried ranks of male authors. Christine de Pisan will no longer be largely alone. The male authors in the late Middle Ages were the intellectual products of scholastic education increasingly diversified by the beginnings of a humanist approach. Female authors did not on the whole participate in the same education as their male counterparts. This meant that any contribution that they made to political thought would be somewhat different in kind, as Falkeid shows.

As the nature of her enterprise demands, Falkeid is careful to place the authors considered in their historical context. Here her touch is somewhat less sure, a product of the great difficulty involved in condensing highly complex phenomena into a few sentences. I have quibbles to make and will just mention a few. Is it necessary to inform us that William of Ockham was 'a top theologian' (p. 2)? On p. 26 Falkeid, in discussing Boniface VIII's bull *Unam sanctam*, refers to 'the new generation of canon lawyers, the decretalists – also called the hierocrats'. So called by whom? This gives a misleading impression. There was no group identified simply as 'the hierocrats'. Because of the controversies surrounding the modern (and by now not so modern) usage of the term 'hierocratic', and because of the differences of approach of individual canonists, it would be better to adopt a

more nuanced approach. It is extremely tricky to assess the impact of *Unam sanctam* over time. In many respects its importance has been exaggerated by modern historians. Although it was referred to by late medieval writers of various kinds, it was not, for instance, included in the *Corpus iuris canonici* in the Middle Ages, only being incorporated in the *Extravagantes communes* in the sixteenth century. Falkeid's reference to 'the theocratic ideas of *Unam sanctam*, Pope Boniface VIII's bull from 1302, which in many ways initiated the fourteenth-century conflicts and brought the pope and his curia to Avignon' (pp. 12–13) is misleading. The bull did not initiate these conflicts but was an ineffective papal contribution to the ongoing disputes with Philip IV of France, a contribution setting out the papacy's claims in lapidary form; the bull did not contribute to the setting up of the papacy at Avignon – that was the result of a combination of factors, including disorder in the papal states after the debacle of the end of Boniface's reign.

Falkeid's book raises more general questions about the historical significance of the Avignon papacy. Her contention is that there has been a relative deficit as regards modern publications on the subject. She is undoubtedly right in this, although considerable work has been done on the financial and institutional aspects of the Avignon papacy. The long-term significance of the popes' sojourn at Avignon was enormous for the fortunes of the late medieval Church. The clue to the outbreak of the Great Schism lay in the growth in the pretensions of the college of cardinals in this period. The focus of Falkeid's book lies in the period up to Gregory XI's return to Italy in 1377. But the papacy continued at Avignon as one of the rival papal obediences during the Great Schism and was therefore part of the context of conciliarism. Falkeid mentions this later period very briefly at the end.

Falkeid's book deserves to be read by all scholars interested in late medieval political thought and the history of the Avignon papacy. She provides a fresh way of looking at the fourteenth-century treatment of issues of papal claims to power. It has to be that her discussions of Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena are the most informative and challenging. So, she has helped move the study of late medieval political thought and intellectual history on, by widening the net to catch relevant authors. We look out for more on the intellectual ramifications and impact of the Avignon papacy.

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History of global Christianity, I: European and global Christianity, ca. 1500–1789. Edited by Jens Schjørring and Norman A. Hjelm (trans. David Orton). Pp. x + 457 incl. 9 maps. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2017. €180. 978 90 04 34192 0

A companion to early modern Catholic global missions. By Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia. (Companions to the Christian Tradition, 80.) Pp. x + 488 incl. 1 fig. and 1 table. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2018. €190. 978 90 04 34994 0; 1871 6377
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The notion that Christianity is and was a global religion is now well entrenched in academic circles, and as such the *History of global Christianity* series is called for. Three volumes, covering the modern age from 1500, were published by Brill in the winter of 2017–18 under the general editorship of Jens Holger Schjørring