

Book notes

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Religious Studies 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502216200
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Jeffrey A. Trumbower *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Pp. xv + 206. £37.50 (Hbk). ISBN 0 19 5140990.

Christianity is a religion of salvation in which believers hope to enjoy some variety of post-mortem bliss. Traditionally, non-Christians and unbelievers are excluded from the delights of paradise and are thought to suffer eternal torment, alienation from God, or annihilation at some point after death. A reassuring belief that they are among the 'saved' has been a hallmark of Christian communities from ancient times, and the Christian tradition in Western and Eastern cultures has usually drawn a sharp boundary between the 'elect' and the more unfortunate 'reprobates'. Ancient, medieval, and early modern Christians were all inclined to the belief that if an individual did not join numbers of 'the 'saved' during his mortal lifetime, he would never enjoy the benefits of union with God in paradise in any post-mortem existence. In this engaging work, Jeffrey Trumbower examines how and why death came to be perceived as such a firm boundary of salvation. Examining exceptions to this principle from ancient Christianity, he argues that the principle itself was slow to develop and was by no means universally accepted in the first four centuries of the Christian era. Trumbower argues that it was only within occidental Christianity that the principle was first articulated, and this was due in large part to the work and influence of Augustine. Many early Christians were able to retain their sense of having been 'chosen' and their sense of God's justice, while allowing for the possibility of posthumous salvation for non-Christians. This view, however, was vehemently disputed by some, and Trumbower documents with wit and sympathy the development of this conflict and its resolution in Eastern and Western theology. Despite its credentials as a work of intellectual history, this book will inform anybody with an interest in the conceptual issues that attend the concept of Christian salvation, an idea that has recently attracted the attention of many philosophers of religion.

[M.W.F.S.]

Religious Studies 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502226207
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Ivor J. Davidson (ed.) *Ambrose De Officiis: Volume One, Introduction, Text and Translation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Pp. xxv + 437. £120.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 19 9245789.

The *De Officiis* of Ambrose of Milan (c. 339–397) is one of the most important texts and moral works of Latin patristic literature. Modelled on the *De Officiis* of Cicero, it sets down

Ambrose's ethical and pastoral vision for his clergy, synthesizing yet infusing ancient stoic assumptions about virtue and practical conduct with Biblical ideas on humility, charity, and self-denial to present a coherent model of the Christian life. Throughout the work, Ambrose aspires to demonstrate that Christian values have superseded the ideals of the classical age. Hence, his evaluative contrast between the moral teaching of the pagans and the ethical ideals of Christianity. This volume constitutes a new English translation of Ambrose's crisp but prolix Latin. It will be followed by a second tome that will contain a detailed commentary of the work, noting Ambrose's profound debt to Cicero and his attempt to renovate Tully's philosophical inheritance. In the present work, an extensive introduction of some 100 pages analyses the core ideas of *De Officiis* and sets them in their social and theological context. There is much of interest in Davidson's discussion, and his suggestions will provoke much comment among scholars of Ambrose. Perhaps the most important features of this volume, aside from its smooth and highly readable translation, are its plausible yet pertinent corrections of Testard's earlier Budé edition of 1984–1992. Given the debates that surround the manuscript history of *De Officiis*, Davidson's proposals may help to resolve several long-standing dilemmas and anomalies. Points of scholarship aside, students of Christian ethics and casuistry will welcome this new edition as an invaluable and informative guide to one of the great classics of Christian moral thought.

[M.W.F.S.]

Religious Studies 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502236203
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Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe (eds) *Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics: Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Pp. x + 468. £15.00 (Pbk). ISBN 0 19 875271-7.

This highly creditable work of collaboration puts before the reader a new translation and commentary of Aristotle's magisterial work. The book aims to make the treasures of Aristotle's moral thought accessible to a new generation of students, although it is to be expected – given the high standing of Rowe and Broadie in the field of ancient philosophy – that scholars and graduate students will want to take note of their conclusions. The volume is divided into an 'historical' (Rowe) and 'philosophical' (Broadie) introduction (3–80); a translation (Rowe) (95–260); and a commentary (261–452). Rowe's translation meets the highest standards of philological accuracy while also conveying the stylistic peculiarities of Aristotle's less than fluent text. Given the spate of recent English translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Rowe has many competitors for the title of the Stagirite's most convincing English translator. That said, his highly readable version helps to make the text vivid and compelling. Broadie's commentary is full of valuable insights and suggestions, as one would expect of the author of the widely acclaimed *Ethics with Aristotle* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1991). She has much to say on all the central issues of Aristotelian moral philosophy, yet never loses sight of her responsibility to instruct and guide the reader. She writes clearly and with a genuine feeling for her subject matter. While the volume does not belong in the same class as the classic commentaries of Grant, Stewart, Burnet, and Gauthier and Jolif, it succeeds admirably where many of these more illustrious predecessors fail: it offers simple and effective guidance to a text that continues to intrigue and inspire moral philosophers so many centuries after its author Aristotle's death.

[M.W.F.S.]

Religious Studies 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S003441250224620X
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William Lane Craig (ed.) *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Reader*.
 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001). Pp. vi + 634. £17.99 (Pbk).
 ISBN 0 7486 1462 1.

The publication of this volume from Edinburgh University Press sees the appearance of yet another anthology in the philosophy of religion. Given the profusion of such texts and their repeated manifestations in publisher's catalogues, one wonders how and why academic publishers continue to produce such works. Surely the market for such textbooks in Britain or North America must be near saturation point? That said, the present title is put together by William Lane Craig, a philosopher known for his extensive corpus in the philosophy of science and philosophical theology. His book comprises six sections: religious epistemology; the existence of God; the coherence of theism; the problem of evil; the soul and immortality; and Christian theology. Lane Craig is assisted in his work by Timothy O'Connor, Kevin Meeker, J. P. Moreland, and Michael Murray, all of whom provide clear and accessible introductions to their respective sections. The focus in the collection is on contemporary issues in the philosophy of religion and on the Christian tradition, as understood (for the most part) by North-American evangelical protestants. Such emphasis will no doubt commend the collection to certain groups of students rather than others. One could envisage it being adopted as a textbook in a Christian college as opposed to a state-funded secular university. Should one adopt an outlook on the topics and issues of the book that is not in keeping with the views of the editor and his cohorts, then it will be difficult to appreciate the usefulness of the book in courses on the philosophy of religion. Given the availability of numerous anthologies in the subject, however, it would be unfair to judge this title by the standards of others. Those who are less than enamoured by so-called 'Christian philosophy' can look elsewhere. Lane Craig has put together a clear and exacting introduction and guide to contemporary philosophy of religion from a self-confident Christian perspective. Those who uphold such an outlook will welcome the publication of this volume.

[M.W.F.S.]