

Book notes

EDITED BY MARTIN STONE

Christoph Jäger (ed.) *Analytische Religionsphilosophie*. (Paderborn-Munich-Vienna-Zurich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998). Pp iv + 375. DM 18 Pbk.

In this welcome volume Christoph Jäger makes accessible to German readers the fruits of recent anglophone philosophy of religion. With few exceptions, he has assembled examples from the work of philosophers whose arguments and ideas have dominated the subject for the last thirty years. Thus we meet the work of Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, William Alston, Nelson Pike, Anthony Kenny, and Norman Kretzmann, along with more recent writers who have come to influence the subject like Robert Adams, George Schlesinger, Philip Quinn, Eleonore Stump, and William Rowe. A contribution by David Lewis is also included. Perhaps the most important aspect of the volume is Jäger's 'Introductory Essay', (*Analytische Religionsphilosophie – eine Einführung*, 11–52.) There, he provides his readers with a very helpful survey of the current state of English-speaking philosophy of religion. This survey includes detailed discussion of the philosophical proofs for the existence of God, philosophical theology (the divine attributes – omniscience (*allwissenheit*); eternity (*ewigkeit*) and omnipotence (*allmacht*)), theodicy, and religious epistemology. Jäger is certainly well informed about the current state of these debates, for his essay does not merely summarize the respective contributions of the philosophers whose work he includes in the anthology, but it also makes a number of suggestions as to how these debates might be developed. The essays and chapters he includes are rendered into a clear and intelligent German, which is no small undertaking, given the difficulty and inaccessibility of some of the contributions contained in the volume. Jäger's efforts will be rewarded if his volume helps to promote 'analytic philosophy of religion' in German-speaking countries. One hopes it will.

[M.W.F.S.]

Peter Harrison *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Pp. xi + 313. £35.00 Hbk.

Peter Harrison's book examines the role played by Biblical interpretation in the emergence of natural science. The central argument of the book aims to show how both the contents of the Bible, and more particularly the manner in which it was interpreted, had a profound influence on conceptions of nature and the natural world from the third to the seventeenth centuries. Further, the book argues that the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century can be linked to a distinctively 'Protestant' approach to biblical texts. This approach not only brought to an end the symbolic biblical exegesis of the Middle Ages, but also established the conditions for scientific investigation and the technological exploitation of nature. While certain elements of this thesis have been abroad in scholarly circles for some time, the single

merit of Harrison's book is that makes a coherent and systematic case for the importance of the Bible in the rise of modern science, by assembling arguments which avoid the suggestiveness of earlier approaches. Thus, the argument begins by way of a sketch of early Christian interpretations of the biblical account of creation and ends with a series of thoughts that aim to put into perspective the contemporary debate about science and religion. Given the broad sweep of Harrison's narrative his conclusions may fail to convince those who look for more detailed exposition of important events in intellectual history. Thus, the absence of a full discussion of the impact of Humanism upon both Protestant and Catholic interpreters of the Bible in the early modern period, may strike some as important omissions. The general relations between Humanism and modern science also receive scant attention, and there is an over emphasis on English sources. The full gamut of works in Latin is not highlighted in the detail it deserves. That said, Harrison's work does invite thought and provoke reflection, and his conclusions will be of interest to historians of religion and science. His book is clearly written and attractively produced by Cambridge University Press.

[M.W.F.S.]

James E. Crimmins (ed.) *Utilitarians and Religion*. (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1998). Pp. iii + 502. £29.95 Pbk.

James Crimmins is already known to the world of utilitarian studies for his widely acclaimed study, *Secular Utilitarianism: Social Science and the Critique of Religion in the Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). His publishers present his most recent anthology to the world of letters as the most complete collection of original writings on religion by philosophers and thinkers in the utilitarian tradition to date. For once the publisher's statement is accurate. Crimmins's anthology is indeed the most comprehensive work of reference on this subject. Divided into two parts, the volume includes examples of the work of utilitarian thinkers sympathetic to theism and religion such as John Gay, John Brown, Soames Jenyns, Abraham Tucker, Edmund Law, and William Paley, as well as selections from the work of better known utilitarian thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill, who were less than sympathetic to the claims to traditional theism and organized religion. What emerges from the volume is a very full picture of just how one of the most influential intellectual movements of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain assessed and evaluated not only the philosophical basis of traditional theism but also the moral, political and social effects of religious practice. The diversity of views on religion and theism that one meets in the texts – for example, when one compares the thoughts of Gay and Paley, with those of Bentham and J. S. Mill – testifies to the intellectual vitality of the utilitarian tradition, a feature that is so often lost sight of in modern day polemics about utilitarianism. Crimmins is to be congratulated on making available to students of British moral, political and religious thought a number of rare and previously inaccessible texts. The anthology will surely serve to stimulate further study on the religious dimension of utilitarian moral and political philosophy. It will also prove extremely useful in a variety of undergraduate courses.

[M.W.F.S.]

Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall S.J., and Gerald O'Collins S.J. *The Resurrection*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Pp. xviii + 368. £30.00 Hbk.

This collection of papers had its origins in an international, ecumenical, and interdisciplinary seminar on the Resurrection that was held in New York at Easter 1996. The seminar brought together biblical exegetes, theologians of all disciplines, and philosophers of religion, who sought either to defend or else to illuminate traditional teaching about the Resurrection narratives from a perspective informed, with one exception (i.e. the contribution of the Jewish philosopher, Alan Segal), by a confessional allegiance to orthodox Christianity. Indeed, a concern to uphold doctrinal orthodoxy runs throughout the volume, and it is clear, at least implicitly, that many of the contributors are strongly opposed to more recent developments in New Testament criticism such as the arguments put forward by members of the infamous 'Jesus Seminar'. After a contextualizing introduction by the editors, the volume opens with an intelligent survey of the seminar's proceedings by John Watkins, editor of the religious weekly, *The Tablet*. The essays that follow are mainly preoccupied with the place and pertinence of the Resurrection narratives within current Christian teaching. This is addressed from the perspectives of a wide variety of disciplines. What emerges from this interdisciplinary contact is not without interest. For the most part, the philosophers, here represented by William Alston, Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig and Alan Padgett, display a general theological conservatism that aims to preserve the efficacy of 'traditional' Christian teaching about the Resurrection. This contrasts with the contributions by the Biblical exegetes and theologians, who tend to direct their attention to more nuanced themes and directions, which seek to develop traditional teaching in ways the philosophers appear unable to countenance. A good example of this is the reply by Sarah Coakley to Alston's essay. While the volume contains some interesting material, it is unlikely to recommend itself to readers who do not share its very overt confessional outlook.

[M.W.F.S.]

Leon Chai *Jonathan Edwards and the Limits of Enlightenment Philosophy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Pp. xvi + 164. £30.00 Hbk.

It is a common theme in the study of Jonathan Edwards that he employed arguments and ideas drawn from the Enlightenment against itself. Professor Chai documents and solidifies this claim in an unusual way, by interspersing chapters of a relevant Enlightenment thinker with expositions of a corresponding theme in Edwards. Comparisons are drawn between Locke on ideas and Edwards on new simple ideas, Malebranche on sensation with Edwards's youthful idealism, and Leibniz on causation with Edwards on determinism and free will. The expositions are painstaking, though not always clear or convincing. This applies particularly to Edwards on free will. It is a pity that the author did not also address questions of internal consistency in Edwards, for a Leibnizian understanding of causation may hold the key to the apparent incompatibility between Edwards's causal determinism and his view that anything created lasts only for a moment. Nevertheless, these chapters, with their appeal to recent secondary literature as well as to the primary texts, are a useful addition to the scholarly corpus on the New England divine and philosopher.

[P.H.]