

associated with Caussade is lamentably incomplete. And surely Post's book on the *Devotio Moderna* deserves a prominent mention.

Aumann is sometimes rather coy in his avoidance of dubious influences on respectable authorities: St Basil is treated with no mention of Eustathian monasticism, Gregory of Nyssa's *De Instituto Christiano* is discussed without a hint of its Macarian background, St Benedict is presented without any reference to the Rule of the Master. There is also a tendency throughout the earlier part of the book to discuss writers in terminology which derives only from later spiritual theology, and this can give a misleading impression. For instance, it is surely not helpful to discuss Eckhart in terms of 'mystical experience'. And I am frankly puzzled by the people allocated to the category of 'Dionysian spirituality' (including Richard Rolle and the ladies of Helfta). But these criticisms illustrate the point that different scholars read the history of spirituality in very different ways, and it is useful to have a variety of different histories available. And Aumann's great asset, especially from the point of view of the student first plunging into the maelstrom of this unusually tangled subject, is that he is able to provide a fairly comprehensive and eminently lucid statement of the 'received wisdom', without being bothered by a great many difficulties and controversies.

SIMON TUGWELL OP

### **WHAT'S RIGHT WITH FEMINISM by Elaine Storkey. SPCK. £3.95.**

One is immediately intrigued by the title of Elaine Storkey's new book, *What's Right with Feminism*; particularly as the publishers, SPCK, and Christians from an evangelical background like Ms. Storkey rarely take an initially positive line on feminism. However, interest soon changes to doubt and eventually to plain irritation. This is in some ways a valuable book, but it manages to strangle itself with its own largely unperceived preconceptions.

The book is organised in four parts. Part One, "The Feminist Case", is scarcely new material, but is well-put-together and phrased in terminology more congenial to practising Christians than is secular feminist polemic. Part Two, "The Feminist Diagnosis", is a neatly analysed study of common feminist approaches—liberal, marxist and radical—though these divisions are in some cases simplistic and artificial. More worrying is Ms. Storkey's constant discussion of feminists in the third person, so that one never quite knows where she stands herself until the very end of the book. Her discussion of the weaknesses of these three feminist approaches, while sometimes cogent, relies heavily on charges of reductionism which are not sufficiently proven, particularly in the case of radical feminism, where her definition of patriarchy is too narrow and simple to do justice to the concept as it is used by feminists, and necessarily makes it appear reductionist.

But the book really becomes problematical in Part Three, "Some Christian Responses". In less than twenty pages Ms. Storkey deals with hostile Christian attitudes to feminism without an adequate attempt to analyse the nature and background of that hostility beyond the misunderstanding of feminist aims, and also dismisses a fine body of scholars such as Rosemary Radford Ruether, Letty Russell, Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza and others as "broadly Christian feminists" who do not "hold tenaciously to the authority of the Scriptures" and who "reserve the right to 'select' from the biblical writings and tradition". (p. 121) Ms. Storkey's abrupt dismissal of these prominent feminist theologians, all of whom are biblical scholars who emphasise Scriptural authority in their writings, is absurd; surely they deserve at least as much of a hearing as the secular feminists whose views she outlines in Part Two (54 pp.).

In Part Four, "The Third Way", Elaine Storkey presents her own view of what a "truly biblical Christian feminism" should be. Essentially, she posits, secular feminism and what she calls "broadly Christian feminism" are prisoners on the 18th century enlightenment, a

period she characterises as being concerned with the total autonomy of the individual, and as fundamentally non-Christian. Biblically inspired feminism on the other hand is traced back to the reformation (it "has roots longer than those derived from the Enlightenment Faith") in a rather dubious historical summary, through the Prostitution, Temperance and Slavery movements up to the present day. Besides the fact that her historical presentations are so facile as to be just wrong, Ms Storkey assumes that biblical feminists unlike anyone else are untouched by enlightenment thinking, while she herself uses its terminology and ideas in her presentation of "truly biblical feminism", most notoriously in her use of rights language. While her encapsulation of the feminist issue in the matter of personal sin is a highly interesting and potentially useful approach, she leaves this idea so undeveloped as to open herself up to the very charge of reductionism which she has aimed at other feminists. Finally, her very cursory treatment of certain biblical problems for feminists hardly replaces the detailed and closely argued work of the feminist biblical scholars she has earlier dismissed.

If Ms. Storkey's book prompts any Christian to take a second look at feminist arguments it will have been worthwhile; but in and of itself it is just not good enough to contribute significantly to Christian and/or feminist literature. Expansion of her notion of personal sin as the root of the feminist approach would have been much more useful; there is a valuable book on that subject struggling to get out of the simplistic approach and unconscious presumptions of *What's Right with Feminism*.

KATE MERTES

**AGAINST JOHN HICK. AN EVALUATION OF HIS PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, by Terry Richard Mathis. University Press of America, 1984. £9.00, HB: £19.75.**

The title of this book is as inelegant as it is inappropriate. Mathis focuses upon *one* aspect of John Hick's philosophy of religion and it is an important aspect. As a latter day critical realist, he examines Hick's empiricist defence of the cognitive status of theistic language arguing that there is a lot more mileage in the evidence for the existence of God in our present experience, without having to take on board the cumbersome baggage of eschatological verification. His special contribution to this much debated issue (and Mathis does not always show an awareness of the extensiveness of the debate) is his argument that on Hick's own premises, eschatological verification is not required as there are insufficient grounds for disqualifying the types of enterprise undertaken by philosophers like Swinburne and Tennant. Furthermore, he questions Hick's basic assumption that religious experience is veridical and, in so doing, attempts to knock yet another nail into the coffin of Hick's eschatological project.

The first three chapters set the scene, outlining Hick's position with fairness and lucidity. There is an odd and illconceived second chapter in which the debate about the status of religious language is examined. Mathis outlines two approaches that reject Hick's supposition that religious assertions must be empirically verified. Although Plantinga and Mavrodes are rightly chosen as representatives of a cognitivist approach which rejects empirical verification, his treatment of Plantinga is both nominal and unsatisfactory. Even more problematic is his discussion of the neo-Wittgensteinian response to the empiricist challenge. He rather quickly dismisses the view of W.T. Jones, when he should have perhaps used a more forceful exponent of this type of stance such as D.Z. Phillips. What Mathis needs to show, and fails to do, is that these options do not present viable objections to Hick's strategy.

The final three chapters contain his critical objections, given that Hick's verification criteria are justified. He launches an interesting three-pronged attack maintaining that there

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