

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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is sufficient empirical evidence for theistic belief here and now, rendering eschatological verification 'unnecessary in Hick's system of thought, if not impossible'. (p. 45). Mathis never shows why eschatological verification is 'impossible', but he does make an interesting case for the possibility of its redundancy. The first argument suggests that Hick, like Hume, unsatisfactorily dismisses attempts to establish the reality of God through philosophical reasoning from the evidence of nature on the questionable grounds that probability judgments of this sort cannot be made with a unique object such as the universe in its entirety. Although Mathis could have pursued his point further in the light of much contemporary discussion, his main objection is that total interpretations are, in principle, valid for 'there is always the possibility of new input that might confirm one world view and disconfirm another'. (p. 74). Total explanations are not invulnerable. An example of such evidence would have been useful. Nevertheless, given that empirical verification in the form in which Hick uses it requires that doubt is removed from a rational observer's mind, Mathis argues that Tennant and Swinburne may well provide a more probable (in a nonmathematical, allogical sense) theistic interpretation of the universe rather than the naturalist. If so, then Hick's case for the necessity of eschatological verification collapses. Even allowing for the brevity of the book, Mathis should have dealt a little more fully with serious internal objections to Tennant and Swinburne to show whether Hick's thesis is really called into question by these alternative strategies. The possibility of evidence here and now for theistic belief is simply not enough to show the redundancy of Hick's eschatological enterprise, but only its possible redundancy.

Mathis' next step is to take the most serious objection, as Hick sees it, to the immediate verification of theism – the problem of evil. Mathis puts forward the interesting suggestion that a theodicy of martyrdom, exemplified in the cross, can sufficiently explain evil: as producing steadfastness; as demanding total love and trust in God; as a vehicle of judgment and reconciliation. Just over three pages of this theodicy, which is far too scant, provides, according to Mathis, an alternative to eschatological verification as it allows the theist here and now to intelligibly maintain theistic belief. In principle Mathis' argument is correct, in practice it requires far more treatment to bear the weight of his thesis.

In the final section he argues that Hick's assumption about the veracity of religious experience is questioned; both by the often conflicting plurality of religions and religious experiences as well as Hick's epistemological assumption that the world *is* ambiguous. Concerning the latter point, he suggests that Hick finally has no more evidential grounds for an eschaton than for believing in a world full of unicorns and centaurs, however logically possible both may be.

This is an interesting book raising more questions than it answers, but questions which deserve more thorough treatment than they receive.

GAVIN D'COSTA

**THE TRUE CHURCH AND THE POOR** by Jon Sobrino. *SCM Press Ltd.* pp. 374, pb. £9.95

The poor will always be with us; the observation of Jesus (and now government policies) assures us of that, but the attitude of the Church towards the poor is not necessarily that of Jesus himself. The unsettling claim, "Blessed are the poor", was soon translated into the mundane ethical assurance, "Blessed are those who give to the poor". In this his most recent book the Jesuit theologian Jon Sobrino, who teaches in San Salvador, seeks to confront us with the original challenge, saying that "a Church *for* the poor is not yet a Church *of* the poor". The kingdom of God is not about the rich giving to the poor. Why is it that without "idealizing or sacralizing" the poor, *theirs* is the Kingdom of Heaven? The poor are not simply the object of charity, but in some way constitute a criterion of the being of the Church. There would seem to be a profound connection between the Son of Man who