

with copious quotation, reference and a very helpful bibliography. With respect to the second, he argues that 'the whole point of reading literature ... beyond that of giving pleasure (which is by no means unimportant), is that it says something about life which cannot be said in any other way. Literary devices ... are not just ornamental ... they have the capacity to generate new meaning by stretching language beyond its ordinary uses' (p. 4), while 'these meanings, as I keep insisting, are not paraphrasable' (p. 82). From this basic view of literature he moves on to state that 'poems, stories and plays ... in some respects provide a more acceptable means of talking about God than does systematic theology since they recognize more fully their own limitations as constructs of imagination and ideology' (p. 2). Indeed he believes there to be a 'central tension between systematic theology and literature' for 'in literature meaning is never fixed; any "complete" interpretation would render the literary "work" redundant' (p. 12). Much of the book then proceeds to paraphrase the unparaphrasable, to reveal the theological meaning in great works of literature, discussing St Mark's Gospel, St Augustine's *Confessions*, the Metaphysical Poets, medieval drama, renaissance tragedy, and the work of Samuel Beckett.

But this is not enough as a guide. The author fails to explore the difference between saying that the meaning of a text is given in how it employs form, and saying that there are meanings that can only be expressed in certain forms. If the meaning of a literary text is always ahead of and beyond our ability to paraphrase, how do we understand its meaning at all? Could two people ever come to agree as to just what that extra bit of meaning might be? Between the merely ornamental and the generation of new meaning, whatever that may be, lies apt expression as itself a strength of thought. Between the pleasurable fix and the cognitive parcel lies the work which elicits sympathy, or contrition, teaches respect or circumspection and fulfils particular roles in the community. A great hymn has a meaning. There is the meaning of its words, and the relation of music to those words, the occasions on which it is sung. And we can say what its meaning is, how a hymn of praise differs from a song of lamentation, without it becoming in any sense redundant. For the praise is in the singing of it and not the knowing of the song. Where T.R. Wright insists mistakenly on what only literature can tell us, he might have asked what literature can best *do* for us. There is much that is good in this book, for example its discussion of the 'readability' of Genesis, one that alerts us to just how many different tricks the literary trades can play; but its understanding of literature is finally unconvincing and it peters out as a potted introduction to how a few important works of art portray the Maker of us all.

RICHARD FINN OP

**THE LIBERATION THEOLOGY DEBATE** by Rosino Gibellini, *SCM Press, London, 1987. Pp. 120. £4.95.*

The developing, highly varied body of thought, writing and (especially) praxis that is associated with liberation theology; the history of Latin America and other Third World countries and their Churches; the sometimes stormy relationships between theologians and pastors engaged in this liberation struggle and Church authorities in Rome—all this must be one of the areas of interest most systematically misrepresented in the Western media, by both the friends and the enemies of liberation theology, and so the most consistently misunderstood. How many times have we heard it said: 'Of course, the Pope is opposed to it'? And this can either mean that the Pope is a right-wing goon (though one may excuse this in a Pole) or that liberation theology is not a legitimate option for a devout Catholic. The fact that the Pope himself says he thinks liberation theology is 'opportune and necessary' is forgotten or ignored.

This book, at its price and size, must be a useful antidote to such widespread disinformation. It is an excellent review of the origins and method of liberation theology, gathers together several important writers' work in Christology, ecclesiology and spirituality, and includes some discussion of the kinds of areas in which Latin American liberation

theologians have been sharply criticised, especially the two documents published by the CDF in 1984 and 1986, and the responses they have made ('clarifications', as they are sometimes called) to such criticisms, generally to the effect that the criticisms are seen not to apply. What is made very clear is the *openness* of liberation theology to other theological models, rather than being narrow and exclusive as is sometimes feared. Where there are still problems, such as with the notion of an *iglesia popular*, in spite of the clear denial of liberation theologians that this term signifies an alternative body, this is openly admitted and the need for 'clarifications' is acknowledged. The section on Christology discusses the work of Sobrino, including what looks like his retraction of an apparently Adoptionist view in his *Christology at the Crossroads*. It's a pity that this work was selected as 'the most developed' Christology on the Latin American scene, as Sobrino is in fact a European, did much of this work in Tübingen, and is more influenced in this work by Moltmann's writing than by anything else. However urgent and necessary the praxis from which and about which he writes, his case is not helped by his contemptuous dismissal of metaphysics.

The last chapter discusses other Third World theologies from Africa and Asia which are confirming many of the insights of Latin American theologians, and the book concludes with brief interviews with Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff.

Apart from its usefulness as a study of many of the meatier bones of contention in the debate, the book will serve well as a general introduction to liberation theology, and for those who have already read much of the more readily available SCM/Orbis stuff its end-notes will point towards some harder-to-come-by material from many parts of the world.

GILBERT MÁRKUS OP

**SEXUAL INTEGRITY: THE ANSWER TO AIDS** by Jack Dominian, *Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987, Pp. vii + 149, £4.95.*

In this book Dr Dominian says some important things about christian attitudes to those with Aids:

It is vital to make the patient feel acknowledged and accepted and loved as a person received by both man and God unconditionally. (p.10)

Everyone, but particularly the Christian community, has a duty to show love and compassion to the infected and those with the disease. We need to ensure that the infected person remains our spouse or friend, colleague or employee. (p. 11)

Simple, basic truths like this have been said often before, but need to be said again and again. From that point of view, this book is to be welcomed. But beyond that, Dominian does little to advance our understanding of Aids or our ability to cope with it.

The title is misleading. From it one might expect the book to look closely at some connections between sexual ethics and Aids. In fact beyond the first few pages it is hardly about Aids at all. It is devoted mainly to outlining Dr Dominian's views on the place of sex and human development and human relationships. He says early on:

Prevention remains the best and only 'cure' we have at the present time. Since the infection is most commonly transmitted sexually the best form of prevention is to confine sexual intercourse to one partner within marriage. The whole of this book will examine the implications of such an attitude which is familiar to the Christian and other religions but has become unfashionable in recent times (p. 10).

This amounts to a declaration that the book will be about the promotion of marriage as a hygiene measure: the way to stop deaths from Aids is to have sex only within marriage: this being so, it has to be shown that ordinary human development leads to marriage and that sexual relationships outside marriage are unsatisfactory. The rest of the book is largely devoted to carrying out that programme. There is a chapter on homosexuality and Aids. This is natural, since in our society male homosexuality is particularly closely associated with Aids, and there is much good sense in this chapter. But then it is a little odd, given that association, that the rest of the book is concerned with heterosexual behaviour and marriage. There follows a review of