

together their own religious belief and life-style packages in order to meet individual needs" and that the mass media are playing a significant role in this process.

What should be the Christian response to this? Here we come to the second opinion particularly prominent in this reader. In the words of Professor Duncan Forrester, Christianity is "essentially against the stream, at odds with the *Zeitgeist*" (p.74).

Even Jim McDonnell, who is anxious to emphasise the benefits we receive from the media, says in his article on the values conveyed by the media: "television tends to assimilate every aspect of public communication to its own form — and that form is essentially the form of show business"; furthermore, "the implicit religious values found in the media are strongly individualistic. ... The quest is for personal identity" (p.97). He also admits that television is relativizing, and so inevitably undermines commitment.

But most memorable in this book is Dorothee Sölle's trenchant critique of advertising, that industry inseparable from the media. She attacks it on the grounds that it promotes consumerism, a way of seeing the world and myself which is "an attack on my dignity" (p.234). The most urgent question which reading the book is likely to leave in the mind is: How can Christianity fight consumerism?

Yet, though *Religion and the Media* makes clear that the modern media present a challenge to Christianity, it is important not to exaggerate the challenge. William Biernatzki, in his article on the intercultural communication of religious meanings, reminds us of the stability of fundamental beliefs and values in a culture. Whatever comes through the media cannot wipe these out in a couple of generations (cf p.135). And S.A. Shleifer's article on the differences between the Islamic and Western criteria of what good journalism is (pp.163ff) is a warning against uncritically accepting the Western media's own values as being necessarily universal and definitive. Moreover, it would be a huge mistake to assume that the way of preserving Christianity in this media-made world is withdrawal. Scattered through the reader are suggestions for better preaching of the Gospel in this kind of world: for example, the need to explore further how to translate religious meaning from print sources to people whose understanding of truth is dominated by aural or audio-visual communication, and how to convey ideas through story-telling (as TV does and as Jesus so successfully did). Forrester believes that "if Christian communicators do not lose their nerve or compromise with the false values and untruths so often promoted in our society, they may find that the media can trigger and strongly assist important styles of theological renewal" (p.77).

JOHN ORME MILLS, OP

**BAPTISM AND CHANGE IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES c.200 – c.1150** Peter Cramer Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought CUP 1993 Hdbk £40

This is a very unusual book which engages the reader's attention from beginning to end. The author's primary aim is to examine the genesis and nature of the sacrament of Baptism; but he is also occupied with studying the fundamental nature of liturgy as such. Baptism is a case study, which illustrates the theology and meaning of liturgy. The specific historical

problem around which the book revolves is the difficulties of the theologians of the 11th and 12th centuries concerning the nature of the sacraments. This problem the author defines as, "the difficulty of the reasoning mind in its attempt to understand the myth which it inherits from its own past, the myth that is of sacrament, of liturgy in general and of the whole received content of faith." (Preface p.xv). Thus the work discusses the complexity of the historical development of the liturgy, particularly the sacrament of Baptism, in the form of a narrative account, whilst also attempting a theological study of the nature of the liturgy.

The book is deliberately tentative in intention and the format chosen for laying out the argument is a series of essays, which however are not discrete. They form a book since their framework is that of chronological development, beginning with Hippolytus of Rome and ending with the 12th century. This technique does provide a good method for considering all aspects of the problem. There are in addition two Excursuses, one on the notion of the baptistry and one on the wall-paintings of the baptistry of Concordia Sagittaria in Italy. The title is treated elastically, and so does not give a very clear indication of its contents. The book is really a history of Baptism in the West and, in terms of its range, the Middle Ages are deemed to begin in what is usually considered to be the period of the Early Church. Many large problems such as Gnosticism are discussed, and within each theme or problem a number of sub-themes and problems are dealt with. The result is more a meditative treatment rather than a strictly argument-driven one, though the book is very scholarly in terms of the immense range of the author's knowledge. The sheer amount of information offered to the reader is most impressive, as well as being most helpful, and the use of iconography is particularly interesting. However, the main analysis focuses on texts, which become touchstones for much thoughtful and penetrating insight into the nature of sacramentality.

Even so, the very scope of the enquiry, the fact of ranging round so much evidence, and the richness of such a presentation, is bound almost inevitably to detract from clarity of organisation, and the reader is sometimes left with a sense of confusion. The thread of the analysis can be lost in the encyclopaedic presentation of information. It is disconcerting to be faced with a reference to Henry Moore in a chapter on the Carolingians and to be presented with an extended discussion of the sacramental theories of David Jones in a chapter on the 12th century. Historical method is sometimes coupled with socio-anthropological analysis, so that a study of Augustine and the Council of Orange is followed by a more "cultural" account of childhood. Indeed the author asks himself at one point, "How much has this to do with baptism and its exorcisms?" (p. 147). Since the methodology is really therefore one of association rather than demonstration one finds oneself wishing for further explanation and wanting to challenge the author on certain points. For instance there seems to be an assumed personal definition of a sacrament underlying the discussion, and one would also like to know if there is a difference between sacrament and liturgy. The language of the passage quoted earlier is an indication of the difficulty sometimes encountered in understanding precisely what is meant. Nevertheless, the author always disarms his reader by sometimes anticipating objections and thus keeps one's engagement with his work always full. This makes the book always exciting to read if difficult to review. It is indeed a most unusual book, and

as an attempt at an integrated study its structure must be taken on its own terms. The book is a treasury of studies about Baptism and one's persistence in following the author is well rewarded.

MARY CHARLES MURRAY

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES** by Luke Timothy Johnson, Sacra Pagina, Volume 5. *The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1992. Pages xvi + 568.*

This is a good, solid, useful commentary, in which many students will find the information they need for their work on *Acts*. They will not find bold hypothetical reconstructions of first-century history or an exposition of Lucan theology designed to bring it forcibly into the twentieth century; they will not find the most up-to-date methods of "literary" criticism. The book is no worse for that, even though some may dismiss it as old-fashioned. It contains a relatively short Introduction. There is a page on the text of *Acts* — barely enough to point out that there is a "Western Text Tradition" and an "Alexandrian Tradition". "*Acts as History*" deals with Sources (it is difficult to see beyond Luke's editing) and Reliability (extreme positions should be avoided; Luke's shaping of the narrative is an important pointer to the kind of history he intended to write). "*Acts as Apology*" claims that "Luke's Apology is . . . in the broadest sense a theodicy. His purpose is to defend God's activity in the world" (p. 7). The point is well made, and recurs from time to time in the Commentary. "Literary Dimensions" is confined to Narrative Devices and to Literary Structure (Geography; Prophecy); it is hard to see much advance when we move on to "Prophetic Structure of Luke-Acts". Finally we have "Religious Themes": the Holy Spirit, the Life of the Church; the Discernment of God's Activity; Universality. Professor Johnson insists that Luke emphasises the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles; he seems here to be rather more favourable to the Jews than he is in the commentary on the last chapter, where Luke's point is "God's fidelity to his people and to his own word" (p. 476). It is not God's fault or Paul's that the Jews do not believe.

Each section of the text is provided with Translation, Notes, Interpretation, and Bibliography. The translation is clear and straightforward; renderings that might invite disagreement are usually defended in the notes. These contain a great deal of information, clearly set out, and provide (as one expects) explanation of obscure sentences, literary parallels, and historical and geographical data illustrative of Luke's narrative. The references are well selected and numerous; one hopes that readers will not feel overwhelmed. Discussions of literary, linguistic, and historical questions are well-informed, balanced, and on the whole convincing - no commentator expects every reader to agree with him all the time. One reader, for example, is not convinced that when Luke records that Sapphira fell dead at Peter's feet he wishes us to see the irony of an "unintended obeisance". This is an example of what may be a somewhat exaggerated emphasis on the authority of the apostles. On 13.8 it is correct to say that "the difficulties are impossible to resolve", but it is unconvincing to adduce Barnabas (4.36). "'Son of Consolation' . . . certainly did not 'translate' *bar-Nebo*"; but "Son of Exhortation" might have translated *Bar-Nebuah*, Son of Prophecy. The passages cited on 15.1 (Philo, *Mig. Ab.* 92; *Spec. Leg.* 1.8-11, 304-306; 1 QS 5.5; 5.28 [is a