

been possible for some chosen people to become united with a posthumous Christ and to participate meritoriously in his suffering and death' (p. 102). No doubt the author, had he lived, would have made many improvements in the arrangement of this matter.

There is a useful appendix on theories about the Redemption.

D. MARK PONTIFEX

A GRIEF OBSERVED, by N. W. Clerk; Faber, 8s. 6d.

AND A TIME TO DIE, by Mark Pelgrin; Routledge, 21s.

One cannot, in the first resort or in the last, disregard the Bomb. For all stand under its shadow—the shadow of the valley of death. The threat is universal: reprieve is unlikely. Death may not come much longer to pluck this one or that among us, selectively. Death now confronts us all, en masse. And this is a new experience.

But there remain, too, the old, unchanging, personal threats. There remains, for example, cancer. Very much as it has always done. The difference is that now our terrible, shared predicament has made us perhaps a little more sensitive to other people's dying; perhaps even a little envious that these have managed to escape the universal cataclysm: that their great and final adventure has remained wholly their own, unsubmerged in numbers: that others have been given time to grieve for them and pray for them; time, too, to learn to live with their absence.

As N. W. Clerk has had to learn to live again without his wife when she died, still young, of a lengthy and heart-breaking cancer. *A Grief Observed* is the record of his grappling with the facts of her death, and of their Sundered selves, and of his new and solitary life. It may be the shadow of the Bomb: or it may be the beauty and power of his writing—very likely it is both. But I cannot remember a document more poignant and more moving—not only about dying, but about married love as well.

What does one do, he asks, how does one live, when she who has been the whole of life is now no longer any part of it? At any rate, one must live with decency and honesty—now more than ever before—and with no breath of self-deception. 'The old life, the jokes, the drinks, the arguments, the love-making, the tiny, heart-breaking commonplace'—all this, he says, and truly says, and says with courage, 'is past, part of the past, gone forever, irrevocably'. Life after death can be no replica of life before, no mere reiteration—this would be meaningless, unscriptural.

Where, then, is she now? And what does 'where' mean, and 'now', in her present life-scheme? She is at peace, some say. But we do not by any means take this for granted. *Requiescat in pace*—May she rest in peace—is how we pray. She is with God—say others. But she was in his hands while she lived

here on earth, while she groaned under the cancer that took so long to kill her. Are his hands gentler now than they were then?

The Christian—whether he be a Catholic like ourselves or, like the author, so very close to being one (if he will allow me to say this without impertinence)—who in a moment of pain and panic asks himself these questions, is faced by a far more profound problem than the non-believer who knows he doesn't yet know all the answers, but narrows his cosmos to such an extent that he excludes all contradictions. The Christian has to learn to come to terms with a God he must believe is Love, yet who can at times look nightmarishly like a cosmic sadist.

Perhaps there is no problem after all, no contradiction. Perhaps these questions are only nonsense questions, meaningless conundrums. Perhaps the answer, when it comes, will be a thing of surprising and glorious simplicity. It is all really a testing of faith—sheer, blind, unequivocal faith.

As one man's reconciliation with grief, one man's path towards consolation, one man's conclusion, this is certainly more sympathetic, more generally comprehensible, than the desperately conscientious striving for self-fulfilment by way of Jungian analysis, interpretation of dream symbolism, and so on, that is described in the posthumously published notes, journals and letters of *And a Time to Die* by the dying Mark Pelgrin, in collaboration with two analysts.

'Her absence', says the author of *A Grief Observed*, 'is like the sky, spread over everything'. The one place it comes *locally* home to him is his own body. 'It had such a different importance', he says, 'when it was the body of her lover. Now it is like an empty house'. He need say no more to gain our understanding and our pity.

In the face of death the author of *And a Time to Die* 'worked assiduously at his general masculine self-confidence', says his analyst. She need say no more to make—at any rate me—feel rather impatient. And unable to be fair to him.

ERIKA FALLAUX

*BAREFOOT JOURNEY*, by Sister Felicity, P.C.C.; Darton, Longman and Todd, 18s. 6d.

This is a very attractive book. Sister Felicity is a Poor Clare and here she tells us the story of her vocation and first years in the convent. Her vocation began to stir, in that odd only half-conclusive way, when she was a WAAF, and she retains and writes with the kind of outspokenness that service life fosters—suitably pruned. As so often happens, she found the physical austerities the least of her trials. It was her own rather exuberant slapdash temperament, clashing with the age-old disciplines and penances, the ancient (and to us niggling) customs, that gave her most trouble, and these clashes she describes with great honesty and humour. There is little anguish in this account, merriment keeps breaking through, but this is the reward God gives to those who are faithful to his grace,