

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,

a sanity which can subordinate personal difficulties to the happiness of the community and can see human pettinesses balanced by his total love. And laugh.

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

CATHOLIC ACTION AND THE LAITY, by Arthur Alonso, O.P.; B. Herder Book Company, 36s.

Since the pontificate of St Pius X until that of Pope John XXIII, ever increasing prominence is being given to the lay apostolate in the life of the Church. The subject of this book is Catholic Action as defined by Pope Pius XI, 'the participation or collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church'. In this country at any rate the term 'apostolate of the laity' seems to have become more current to describe this movement, and might well have been a more appealing title to this book. The author, Fr Alonso O.P., is well qualified to deal with his subject on an academical level, since he is one-time professor of Canon Law at the Angelicum in Rome, and is now professor of Canon Law in the Pontifical Theological Faculty at Salamanca. He divides his study into three parts, under the headings, 'What Catholic Action is not', 'The Nature of Catholic Action', 'Catholic Action in Ecclesiastical Law'. Thus he covers the whole field of his subject, considered from the theological and canonical points of view. Rather too much space has been spent on theoretical questions, and the refutation of other writers. The third part, on the ecclesiastical law in the matter, may be an interesting piece of speculation perhaps acceptable in the class room; but it will be of little interest to the layman deeply engaged in the lay apostolate, to be told that he probably belongs to a society which should be classified as a pious union. The fact of the matter is that the Code of Canon Law has not yet legislated for Catholic Action, just as no place has been found for secular institutes. We may expect that the coming General Council will make some revision in this respect. In this country the lay apostolate is conducted through existing organizations such as the Legion of Mary, the Young Catholic Workers, the Grail, and perhaps through secular institutes, of which the inner circle of the Grail is one. Catholic Action does not exist in the abstract.

This volume would serve better as a manual for the lay apostolate if the reference notes had been placed at the bottom of the pages instead of at the end of the book, though many of the works referred to there, in Latin and Spanish, are inaccessible to English readers. The book would also have been improved for its purpose by being furnished with an alphabetical index.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.