

## REVIEWS

**THE GRIEF PROCESS** by Yorick Spiegel, SCM, London, 1978 pp. 384 £6.50  
**THE MANY FACES OF GRIEF** by Edgar N. Jackson, SCM, London, 1978 pp. 174  
£1.95

After a night club fire in Boston, the American psychiatrist Lindemann had the care of a group of survivors many of whom had lost someone dear to them in the disaster. From this and other experiences he wrote an important paper "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief" which was published in 1944 and became a starting point for other workers. Lindemann describes the typical pattern of a 'normal' bereavement process, the ways in which this pattern may be absent, delayed or distorted and he discusses the help needed to restore these dysfunctional reactions to the form of the 'normal' one. The assumption is that, despite many individual variations, coming to terms with a grievous loss has a recognisable shape whereby the bereaved person acknowledges the reality of their misfortune and, after doing the 'work' of mourning, reaches a new level of adjustment.

Lindemann's approach was applied by other workers to a variety of human life crises—e.g. pregnancy and childbirth. The nature and structure of human reaction to the occurrence of crisis as such—whether of a developmental kind (e.g. adolescence, marriage, retirement) or the more accidental variety (e.g. illness, divorce)—was investigated. One of the aims was to establish a theory and practice of crisis intervention—that is, to discover at what points in a human life should therapeutic support be given so as to use the minimum amount of intervention with the maximum efficiency. The goal was not merely to assist people through the current crisis but to do so in such a way that their ability to cope with future crises was enhanced despite the stress of the first upheaval. One of the main workers in this field was Caplan and he advocates a programme of primary pre-

vention aimed at reducing the number of those who break down in some way under strain.

The importance of these investigations to the pastorally minded person and even more to the professional pastor is considerable. They are very relevant to the design of pastoral structures and to the administration of the sacraments—which can be viewed as one of the Church's modes of "crisis intervention". A number of books have been written about bereavement—mostly by pastoral theologians in the USA. Jackson himself was one of these some twenty years ago. In England Bowlby has made an extensive and influential study of how children react to being separated from their parents. Also in this country there is the important, and readily available, book by Parkes: *Bereavement, Studies of Grief in Adult Life*. It is against Parkes' book that Spiegel's and Jackson's may be judged.

Spiegel's book is an edited and shortened version of a German dissertation in practical theology and its plan reveals its origins. Spiegel gives an adequate account of the psycho-analytic views of Freud, Abraham and Klein. After dealing with the symptomatology of grief he outlines his preferred view of the process of bereavement. What are its typical stages and how does it unfold? He distinguishes four stages. The first, lasting a few hours to a day or two, is that of shock. There is then a more controlled stage of grief which generally ends with the funeral and the departure of the relatives. Thirdly there is a regressive stage into which the mourner withdraws in helplessness, disorganisation and self-preoccupation. This usually lasts a few weeks. The fourth stage of adaptation, of picking up the threads and re-mak-

ing a life, albeit of a different kind takes some months. Such an attempt to lay out the typical grief process is an aid to the pastor who has to decide at what stage his client is and what is the best way to help. Spiegel's scheme differs from that of Parkes: it is not necessary to decide between them. Much better to recognise that any such scheme is a generalisation from which individuals diverge greatly. Spiegel continues with a chapter on bereavement as "status transition", viewing it as analogous to a 'rite de passage' and bringing out the way in which sociological factors often have more weight than individual psychological dimensions. A further chapter treats of the doctors, the funeral director and the minister as mediators of this "status transition". Many valuable insights are brought out—the sociological perspective is the best with which to approach a great deal of this field because human reaction in crisis is usually influenced much more by the immediate social context than by individual unconscious factors of the type investigated by the psychoanalyst. The most novel and weightiest part of Spiegel's work is to be found in Part III of the book entitled "The Mechanisms of Coping". Here Spiegel deals successively with the various ways in which the bereaved try both to hold their loss at a tolerable distance and then come to terms with it at their own pace. The "coping mechanisms" are related to what Freud would call "defence mechanisms" but are the way in which present stress is handled rather than character traits originating in past trauma. Spiegel analyses eleven of these from psychological, sociological and theological perspectives in turn. He subdivides them into narcissistic (ego-supporting) mechanisms and object-libidinal ones. The object-seeking mechanisms play a major part in the final, re-adapting stages of the bereavement process. I found this part of the book helpful and thought-provoking though the theological analysis was disappointingly superficial. A background knowledge of psycho-analytic thought is not essential to its understanding—in fact the chapters provide a good way of absorbing some of the psycho-analytic contributions to ego psychology!

Jackson's book is designed for more popular audiences. It is written he says "not so much from the point of view of the psychologist as from that of a person who feels grief or observes at close range the grief of others". Originally published in the USA in 1972 its frequent reprinting shows that it satisfies at least some American tastes and needs. Jackson gives no references or bibliography and I found his style too bland for my taste. Jackson would not be as helpful to the pastor as Parkes though someone bereaved might find it helpful during the later stages of re-adaptation. Spiegel is reasonably priced by modern standards and would repay study by the pastor with some experience already behind him. Parkes remains a good introduction to the subject and sufficient for most needs.

Finally a critical word about the translation of Spiegel by Elsbeth Duke. I quickly noticed that prepositions and word order were sometimes more Germanic than English, occasional off-key words (e.g. 'efficient' for 'sufficient' on p. 37 and 'effective' on p. 42), and technical terms misrendered (e.g. we say 'obsessional neurosis' in English not 'compulsive neurosis' (p. 32) and we say 'ulcerative colitis' certainly not 'ulcerous colitis' (p. 52). A quotation from Abraham provides a test case. (p.38). Elsbeth Duke gives the reference to the German edition: what is presumably her own rendering of this seems to me literal and wooden alongside the one already available in No. 13 of the International Psycho-analytic Library. Quotations from Freud ought surely to be taken from Strachey's Standard Edition in English. Above all it is not good enough to give some of the Freud references in the original German. Finally (p. 56) Elsbeth Duke gives the German reference and what is presumably her own translation of a quote from Klein. A pity she didn't discover that the paper was written in English! I hypothesise that Elsbeth Duke is more at home in German than in English and was working out of reach of an adequate English library.

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