

alternative approaches. At the same time, of course, one can recognize the futility of stupidly trying to do moral philosophy while ignoring the obvious importance of the ways in which human beings function. Again we have a case for Aristotle and Aquinas. For if one's ethics are to be different from one's taste in clothes, if they are to be more than the systematic expression of one's varying or unvarying wishes, and if they are not to resort to a dubious, gnostic intuitionism, it seems, in fact, that they will inevitably have to be Aristotelian in character. Either that or unrecognizable as ethics or better regarded as a chapter in the history of ideas.

Having made these points, however, it also seems to me that many of Mrs Foot's statements can be questioned in various ways. A book review is not really the place for a detailed critique, and attacks on such papers as *Moral Beliefs* and *Goodness and Choice* are already available from writers like Hare, Phillips, Mounce and Beardsworth. But at least one difficulty can be mentioned here. It concerns the matter of abortion.

Mrs Foot suggests (paper II) that the doctrine of the double effect has more to be said for it than is sometimes allowed. For this conclusion she makes out a good and balanced case. But in concluding her discussion of the doctrine of the double effect she also declares that abortion is morally justifiable on certain occasions. And for this view she provides no good argument. She considers the alternative of either killing the foetus (age unspecified) or letting the mother and foetus die. With reference to this alternative she then observes that "it is reasonable that the action that will save someone should be done" and that "The Catholic doctrine

on abortion must here conflict with that of most reasonable men" (p. 30). But why should we accept that what Mrs Foot recommends is actually reasonable? Is it ever reasonable to take an innocent life? Suppose I suggested that if one acted as Mrs Foot allows one would then unreasonably be endorsing the principle that one can take an innocent life precisely in order practically to defend the principle that innocent life should be protected? Suppose I suggested that if one feels justified in killing a foetus then one has no moral reason for protecting anybody, including the mother on whose behalf the foetus is killed? Such questions are certainly relevant in response to Mrs Foot's views on abortion, but Mrs Foot herself does not deal with them. And here the critic can seriously ask whether moral considerations might not lead us to conclude that certain kinds of action are strictly to be ruled out. The view that the right answer to this question is affirmative is, of course, one hotly defended by writers who are recognizably in the same moral tradition as Mrs Foot herself. And Mrs Foot would have improved the present book by somewhere tackling it head on. She is obviously aware of it, but I do not see that she really attempts to answer it with the philosophical rigour it evidently requires.

Points of detail aside, however, *Virtues and Vices* is an important work. It is definitely one of the best available collections of modern ethical essays. A pity that the book is so expensive. Hopefully a paperback version will soon be offered.

BRIAN DAVIES O. P.

**EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY** by Robert M. Grant. *Collins*, 1978  
pp. xii + 221 £4.50

As Dr Grant says, this book "could rightly be viewed as an extreme answer to the extreme 'churchiness' of Eusebius". It is not meant to be another history of the early church; its aim is to explore, for the benefit of readers who are not professional church historians, some of the ways in which Christians in the early centuries were related to the civic and political world around them. He deals with such topics as their attitude to different kinds

of profession, their views on private property, their tax situation. His treatment is sometimes rather too meandering; a more rigorously chronological exposition, for instance, and a sharper differentiation between different Christian attitudes, would have made for greater clarity. But his conclusions seem to be, on the whole and with one important reservation, to be fair. The early Christians were not, in general, socially or politically all that different

from anyone else. They were largely middle class, in all probability, with little interest in overthrowing the state or in very drastic reformation of society.

My major regret is that Dr Grant makes only occasional passing references to the more world-renouncing versions of Christianity and, in particular, to encratism. There is, after all, reason to believe that in some places, at least, encratite tendencies were widespread; and they evidently represent something far more radically opposed to the existing social order than most of the material used by Dr Grant. Think of the Acts of Thomas, for example.

It is unfortunate that a book on early Christianity and society should contain no discussion of celibacy. In spite of the natural modern instinct to approach celibacy from the point of view of sexuality and psychology, it is actually more helpful to see it, in at least some of its manifestations, as being primarily due to a view of the socio-economic implications of the gospel. People embraced celibacy in order to avoid getting imprisoned in the social and economic responsibilities inherent in marriage, so that they would be unimpeded in their service of God. Their renunciation of marriage goes hand in hand with their repudiation of property. And I should want to argue that this constitutes at least part of the context for their repudiation of work, too. Dr Grant does touch on this; but he does not do justice to the people who were not happy with the Pauline "no work, no food". It was not an invention of the Messalians to suggest that there could be a kind of service of the Lord which

made any other kind of work inappropriate. St Paul himself knows of this as part of the current theory of apostolate. The itinerant preachers mentioned in the *Didache* seem to be an early evidence of a way of life which later comes into focus more sharply and controversially in monasticism, especially in Syria, and in Messalianism. (It re-appears in the medieval controversy over the Mendicants and within Waldensianism). The anti-work position of some gnostics probably needs to be taken more seriously than Dr Grant does as evidence of something to be found in early Christianity as a whole. It belongs with the anti-property attitude found, for instance, in the Gospel of Thomas, where it is expounded in terms closely akin to those used in the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

If this side of the picture had been brought in, Dr Grant's account would look less like a Christian bourgeois manifesto. And that would, I think, make much more telling his rejection of the revolutionary reading of primitive Christianity which is current in some circles. There was, in my opinion, a revolutionary kind of Christianity, even if not really of a kind to appeal to modern revolutionaries; if it had prevailed, it would have resulted in a serious disruption of society. Monasticism did in fact, on occasion, prove riotous and disruptive. But by and large, as Dr Grant shows us, the church does seem to have settled down fairly comfortably in the existing social and political order.

SIMON TUGWELL O. P.

**THE PEOPLE'S POPE** by James Oram. *Bay Books, Sydney and London, 1979 pp. 224 £2.95.*

This is the fourth pope-book that has fallen into my hands, and there will be many more. Some outstanding quality must be present if a book is not to be jostled aside in the great publishing scramble. James Oram has clearly worked hard. He has a good selection of photographs, some interesting letters written from France in 1948, the penetrating remarks of a Polish writer on Wojtyła's poetry, and the fullest account so far of the wartime activities of the Rhapsodic Theatre. Those are the new features. Otherwise the outline of the story is the now familiar tramp through those brilliant

schooldays in Wadowice, work in the stone quarry and the Solvay chemical works, ordination and philosophical studies and a portrait of a friendly, hard-working pastor who knew his people and stood up to the communists.

There is hardly any attempt at assessment or interpretation, no suggestions on how his 'Polishness' affects his thinking or whether his studies or phenomenology have marked him and how. It is very much a journalist's book, written on the principle that any reporter worth his salt can get up a topic at speed and cover the gaps in his knowledge with stylistic devices. To