

That legalised euthanasia of the aged or the chronic sick would be a disaster at the material as well as the spiritual level is easily demonstrated but the alleged right to destroy the life of a severely handicapped child, such as thalidomide victims, is still the focal point of furious controversy. The admittedly agonising dilemma is not a new one. Like many doctors this reviewer has been confronted with such episodes from time to time and has found them difficult enough but not completely baffling. There is no need to resort to abortion or infanticide to prevent the parents' lives being shattered, or a child being left to linger in agony. It is however essential that proper plans for the care and institutional accommodation of such children (if necessary) should be made *beforehand*, as a part of the routine of a Health service, or doctors and parents may be shocked into panic action as apparently they were at Liège. The father should be brought into the picture at once and the doctor should discuss with him what line to take with the mother, according to the degree of defect and the woman's temperament. It may save immense distress later if she is allowed to take her own time over decisions as to what the family is willing and able (in justice to the other children) to do for the child.

As regards the state's right to kill, Mr Stevas leans heavily towards the modern view which would restrict the exercise of the right to a minimum, whether the 'unjust aggressor' is a murderer or an attacking nation. He holds that capital punishment is no longer justifiable, and he almost gets bogged down in the unilateralist position towards armaments. As a convinced unilateralist I was greatly relieved that *Pacem in Terris* with its magnificently exalted handling of the whole disarmament problem arrived in time to be included in his final chapter.

The fact that the French book on the malformed child is sponsored by the *Centre d'Etudes Laennec* is a guarantee of scholarly discussion on the highest level. It consists of some dozen of papers by Jesuit priests and medical authorities mainly from the Paris teaching schools, on the medical, educational, legal and moral aspects of the now familiar problems of the handicapped. The result is an exhaustive and authoritative survey expressed in simple language, which can challenge comparison with anything one has met in English or American literature. To the large public, clerical, medical and lay, which is deeply concerned in these medico-moral problems, both books may be strongly commended.

LETITIA FAIRFIELD

MONTEVERDI, by Denis Arnold; Dent (Master Musicians Series); 15s.

Monteverdi is one of the least known of the great composers. Like Bach he was all but forgotten after his death: conscientious historians made more or less respectful obeisances towards him, but his music was virtually unknown. Twentieth-century musicologists have recorded no greater triumph than

his rediscovery—or at least the rediscovery of his music, which is more to the point. Even now, of course, he is generally known by only a handful of works; but the situation improves steadily: the *Vespers* have become fairly familiar, the madrigals are being increasingly performed, and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* has been staged at Glyndebourne.

How vigorously musicologists have striven on Monteverdi's behalf can be assessed by the fact that Mr Arnold's new book is the third important work on the composer to appear in English in the last dozen or so years. Is this, perhaps, over-doing it? The author faces this question squarely in his Preface, and submits that a book was needed 'for the English general reader'. This is true, and he has provided such a book; but the modesty of the claim should not be allowed to disguise the fact that it is also the most coherent and balanced book to have appeared. Two features of it are especially valuable: the way in which it relates Monteverdi's music to that of his contemporaries and forerunners, and the stress it lays on the conservative features of Monteverdi's technique.

It is perhaps a pity that Mr Arnold did not deal with the problems of editing and performing this music. One of the first things a 'general reader' may want to know is why two editions of the same work can sound so different—can even, apparently, demand different resources. This is the most serious reservation of the few one might make. The book as a whole will prove most useful and an entirely worthy companion to the other volumes in the admirable Master Musicians series. Like them it is well-documented, well-printed, well-bound and illustrated. And it is one of the few books on music in recent years to be reasonably priced.

ERIC TAYLOR