

UNLESS THEY BE SENT. By Augustine Rock, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 11s.)

This is a simple and in some ways instructive analysis of the theology of preaching. Fr Rock bases his treatment on the writings of St Thomas and of St Albert the Great and by so doing makes it quite clear what are the fundamental duties laid on a preacher. The task of a preacher is to witness in the present moment to the eternal word of God. This implies that he must have a commission from the Church, for his preaching is an official work, not an exercise in self-expression. Through the preacher the Church carries out its prophetic task of being the mouth-piece of God; since the pastoral rule of the Bishop covers the prophetic function all preachers must be sent by a Bishop. Fr Rock's book is easy to read and study of it will serve to prevent preachers from regarding the instruction of the faithful as a trivial matter. The *raison d'être* of the sermon is the glory of God and the salvation of souls, so that any departure from the great dogmatic and moral themes involves a lapse into worldly or merely rhetorical language. The book could have been improved by a greater use of patristic teaching and enhanced if the text were not so liberally interlaced with quotations, not always of very great value.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE ARCHBISHOP AND THE LADY. By Michael de la Bedoyere. (Collins; 16s.)

The last time Bossuet was discussed in my presence was about twenty-eight years ago and since that time I had desired to hear nothing more about him. That I read this book, in which he plays so prominent a part, was due, at first, more to my interest in its author than in its characters. I was curious to discover how a busy journalist would treat this passionate, tragic, religious controversy that convulsed the Court of France and the Church of France and even the Court of Rome itself at the end of the seventeenth century.

That I have always considered Bossuet a bore is perhaps the fault of my teachers or is possibly due to my own ignorant prejudice. But, after all, when Bossuet preached he went on for hours; his interminable panegyrics on queens and dukes and princesses were full of erudition, full of unctious and flattery, full of everything, as someone remarked, except religion; when he discoursed on history it had to be universal history. They called him the Eagle of Meaux. It should have been the Elephant. But though I have never liked Bénigne Bossuet, it is only after reading *The Archbishop and the Lady* that I find it difficult not to loathe him.

This is not the fault of Mr de la Bedoyere, who does his admirable

best for Bossuet. It is indeed his great merit that he makes me loathe this great man, for he has set out the facts of the case accurately and lucidly. The facts prove that Bossuet was odious: a betrayer of secrets, an outrageous liar; a persecutor of the weak and a flatterer of the mighty; a false shepherd who, instead of protecting Madame Guyon who had placed herself in his pastoral care, led her persecution and caused her to be imprisoned for years. One reads with satisfaction, mixed with disdain for them both, how Madame de Maintenon, whom he had served so slavishly, prevented his becoming Archbishop of Paris; her shoddy little soul rejoiced to promote Mgr Noailles instead because Noailles, a person of no intellectual eminence, was, after all, an aristocrat whose nephew was engaged to be married to her niece.

Madame Guyon, for years accused of the study and practice of *quiétisme*, was a most irritating person, indiscreet, garrulous and often downright stupid. But she may have been a true mystic. She was certainly a good and very pious lady, and she was heroically courageous. She was persecuted by Bossuet and Madame de Maintenon, but she was defended by Fénelon; and this fact alone is a powerful argument in favour of her orthodoxy.

Fénelon had all the virtues that were lacking in Bossuet: gentleness, tolerance, humility, candour and courage in his dealings with the Court, and another quality that may be described as vision. 'He saw so clearly through the brittleness and falsity of Church and State under Bossuet and Louis XIV . . . (that) timorous, if noisily majestic, clinging to the human in the Church rather than the divine.' When he defended Madame Guyon against the charge of heresy, he was not only fighting for his friend and for truth, he was also fighting, clearly and consciously, for the new order that should have followed the *grand siècle*.

This is a fascinating book. Any book that can so entrance the reader as to make him vehemently indignant about what happened 260 years ago must be remarkable. A reading of *The Archbishop and the Lady* has this profound effect.

HUGH DELARGY, M.P.

ST JOHN FISHER. By E. E. Reynolds. (Burns and Oates; 25s.)

The lives of SS John Fisher and Thomas More are so closely linked that it is not surprising that they should have attracted the same biographers. Nearly seventy years ago Fr T. E. Bridgett wrote full-length and scholarly books on both of them. He established once and for all, in the teeth of the Whig tradition, their greatness and importance as well as their sanctity. Since then no self-respecting historian, however extreme, has dared to sneer at either. Much of the prejudice that Fr Bridgett was at such pains to demolish appears today tiresome and