

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

even stupid. Mr Reynolds has rightly decided that the time is ripe for a modern biography of both these martyrs, incorporating all that is best in Bridgett, omitting outmoded controversy, and utilizing such information as has come to light since Bridgett's time.

There was little about St Thomas More that escaped the tireless scholarship of Bridgett, but the same cannot be said of his life of Fisher. It is strange, for instance, that he made no use of the registers of Rochester diocese. Perhaps they were then less accessible. He also overlooked three of Fisher's sermons. Mr Reynolds has made good these defects, and has given us a solid, calm and eminently fair re-presentation of the original sources. Not everyone will share his enthusiasm for the anonymous writer whom he calls the 'early biographer'. Although this writer based his work on original manuscripts, there is little to suggest that he derived much information from people who had known Fisher personally. If he really got information from John Wilson, who had been Fisher's servant in the Tower, it is extraordinary that his account is so jejune. The long speeches put in the mouth of Fisher are a literary device as old as Thucydides, and surely do not merit to be quoted at length as historical documents. The speech (p. 171) supposed to have been made by Fisher against the suppression of the smaller monasteries (which was first mooted a year after his death) does not increase our confidence in this early biographer.

Mr Reynolds is a writer and not primarily a research student, and he not unreasonably depends on the original research of others. It is no reflection on him to state that he has been less well served for Fisher than he was for More. Except for some fortuitous discovery we are hardly likely to enrich our knowledge of More. But the same cannot be said of Fisher. It seems incredible that, for the life of a bishop, cardinal and saint, nobody has used the most obvious source of all, the Vatican archives. A cursory reference to the various indexes, under such obvious headings as 'Vescovi, Roffensis', and to the index of Briefs issued by Paul III in 1535 gives an indication of how much has been missed. The earlier references may not seem of much importance. There is his 'offering' of first fruits, of 1300 florins on 1 July 1504, and a dispensation of 6 January 1506 from residence, being 'Confessor Reginae Angliae'. This must mean Margaret Beaufort, as there was no queen of England at that date. There are three references to his *ad limina* visits *per procuratorem*, and several similar entries. But the Briefs of Paul III are surely important. There are three on Fisher's promotion to the Cardinalate, and no less than ten *de caede Cardinalis Roffensis*, eloquent testimony to the consternation felt throughout Europe at the first (and last) martyrdom of a prince of the Church. A serious search

would doubtless unearth much more, though there seem to be no letters from Fisher to the Pope or the Cardinal Secretary.

Mr Reynolds' life of More should serve for a generation at least. He has now given us the best life we have of Fisher. But until these papal sources have been incorporated it is not possible to hail this book as the *opus perfectum*.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

SAINT WINEFRIDE AND HER HOLY WELL. By M. and A. Blundell.
(Samuel Walker; 3s.)

This is an interesting and enterprising booklet. Its purpose is implied in its contents and by its method of presentation. The pilgrimage to Saint Winefride's Well occupies, by reason of its antiquity and continuity, a place of its own. English pilgrims have for some centuries come from Lancashire, and it is right and proper that the Catholics of Manchester and Liverpool should wish to have such aspects of the pilgrimage and its history as are likely to appeal to them presented in a compact and readable form. Falling into two sections—first, the story of the saint and, secondly, the history of the pilgrimage—the prevailing impression which it will leave upon the reader is that here is something of vast antiquity which is yet an integrated and natural part of the popular life of urban and industrial England. The authors have performed what they set out to do.

There remain, however, certain criticisms. To begin with, so far as the historian is concerned, the 'facts' of Saint Winefride's life are few. She flourished in the earlier half of the seventh century. It is fairly certain that her cult developed in conjunction with, and subsidiary to, that of Saint Beuno; that her traditional connection with Bodfari and Gwytherin and with Saint Deifr and Saint Eleri is based on a solid foundation; and that her cult, in spite of the impetus which it received from the translation to the Benedictine abbey of Shrewsbury in 1138, remained, in all probability, confined to North Wales and the March until after 1398, when Roger Weldon, Archbishop of Canterbury, ordered her feast to be kept throughout his province. Any story of her life in the seventh century rests on twelfth-century documents. As Dr Barrett Davies pointed out in an article in *BLACKFRIARS* (March, 1948), the *bucheddau* of the saints are not biographies. The task of retelling convincingly and without affectation stories of which much of the underlying feeling, tone and purpose is remote from our own day is a difficult one, and it would seem better in the long run to tell the legend of Saint Winefride in a simple and direct prose narrative, suitable to its antiquity, rather than to modernize it and conversationalize it. It is fatally easy to tell the tale of Saint Winefride in the same