

EARLY CHURCH PORTRAIT GALLERY. By Maisie Ward. (Sheed and Ward; 25s.)

'This book is not a Church history, but a handful of portraits to illuminate it.' So Miss Ward describes her latest contribution to Catholic scholarship. Her aim is to bring to life the early history of the Church by bringing to life some of the people who made it. Starting with St Ignatius and St Polycarp, who established and witnessed to the idea of martyrdom in the first Christian century, she covers the highly dramatic period of the later Roman Empire in the careers of men such as Clement, Origen, Anthony, Athanasius, Basil, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Patrick and Pope Leo the Great. There is an epilogue dealing with the sixth century in which, through the inspiration of St Benedict and St Gregory the Great, cenobitic monasticism and the papacy replaced imperial institutions as the stabilizing and unifying forces of the west in the early middle ages. Thus there is a lot of history in this book, and in an age inclined to rather narrow specialization in the historical field, one cannot but be impressed by its scope, and by the penetration and vigour of the author in assimilating the details and weaving them into a meaningful whole. Miss Ward writes with ease and a sense of being at home with her subject. She is clearly acquainted with the most important contributions of recent scholarship, and at the same time she reminds us of Newman's fruitful studies in this period with a number of apt and refreshing quotations.

'It is more realistic, as well as more encouraging, to discover the real humanity of the saints.' This is Miss Ward's starting-point, and on the whole she succeeds in her discovery. Even in the very early period, where the biographical detail is thin, she manages to convey the impact of personality at least in outline. If the character of St Athanasius is somewhat obscured by the confusing background of his life, and if we are again left with the feeling that there was something very significant about Origen though we still cannot say precisely what, this is more than countered by the sensitive chapters on St Basil, St John Chrysostom and St Augustine. The portrait of St Jerome is very balanced: 'When he talks (at great length) of fasting he becomes a little tedious, when he abuses marriage he is intolerable'. So, too, is that of Tertullian and his excessive asceticism: 'The need to relax the tight-drawn bow of the intellect while it depends on the easily-wearied body seems never to have occurred to him'.

It might perhaps have been helpful if this book had included a chronological table of some kind to establish the background and inter-connection of events. It does contain an index and bibliography.

Parallels are often drawn between society in the declining Roman Empire and that of today. It is sufficient to emphasize here the relevance

of the struggles and teaching of the early Fathers to our present situation. Miss Ward has succeeded in giving us a most stimulating study of the character and development of the early Church through the lives of these men. In so doing she challenges us, in our passivity, to reflect that, as they were once the Church militant, so we are now.

JOYCE WHALE

MAN, THE SAINT. By J. Urteaga Loidi. (Scepter; 15s.)

Fr Urteaga is a Doctor of Law and a Doctor in Theology. He is also a spiritual director of wide experience. He wrote, *Man, the Saint*, his first book, five years ago, and it was highly praised in such eminent journals as *L'Osservatore Romano* and *Libri D'Oggi*. The original Spanish version is in its seventh edition.

*Man, the Saint* is no ordinary book. It was not written for theologians or moralists, but for the man in the street. Though it bristles with sound doctrine, it is a cry from the heart, an appeal to the 'restless and the rebels, to those who are dissatisfied with their own lives and the lives of others'. The author admits that his pages are written in 'spasmodic outbursts, without any attempt at style or rhetoric, without any external or formal unity'. But a unifying principle is there throughout. It is the concept of holiness. 'What I want to do is to help you to see and understand the enormous importance of the human factor in the Christian and in the saint. So we will speak . . . of what every man has in him, and what he must sanctify.' For nowadays, when everything is examined and criticized, supernatural virtues must be grounded more than ever before on genuine natural virtues, practised supernaturally.

'The Whip', 'You too can be a soldier', 'Into the deep', 'An age on fire', are some of the provocative titles in the page of contents. And every section, based on an appropriate text, is crammed with salutary comment, keen observation, and practical application. Nor is the author afraid to be caustic or uncomfortably personal. Every weapon in his armoury must be used to force home a point.

*Man, the Saint* is a book to be taken in small doses. As a last-thing-at-night book, it could serve as an acute examination of conscience. But not every soul will be able to appreciate the author's downright, often kaleidoscopic, approach to things as they are. He has no use at all for smugness or pietism. He might be described as the iconoclast of sham spirituality.

Fr Urteaga's name has been linked with those of Péguy, Blois, and Papini, presumably because he has had the courage to emphasize the importance of every natural attribute in the plan of human perfection, and to demonstrate that religion and life were never intended to be kept in separate compartments. But his theology and profound, if often