

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

One sometimes wonders whether, if St Thomas Aquinas had been able to obtain Chrysostom on Matthew, which he would have given Paris to possess, he might not have found it rather a disappointment. Is that work not most remarkable for the glimpse it gives of the skill of a great preacher rather than for any hint of deep theological insight, remarkable above all for its occasional brilliant characterizations of contemporary life, which make one feel that it might be more exciting to read *about* Chrysostom than to read him? It seems, however, that we shall still have to wait that for deft recreation of Chrysostom in his setting which ought some day to be possible. Dom Baur's painstaking and monumental study, of which the first volume now appears in an English translation that avoids few of the idioms of German grammar, may well require of the reader something of the ascetic arduous appropriate to the gymnasium in which, according to the translator, the author received his earlier education. The student will be better able to find his way about in a book which will never make easy reading, when the second volume, which will contain an index, becomes available. Meanwhile Mr Attwater's more modest book, which is continuously aware of Baur's work, will be of better service to the general reader. For, although it does not give us the portrait that would bring Antioch in Chrysostom's day to life, it is likely to leave one with a taste to know more about him.

This is presumably the service that an elementary patrology ought also to do, but it can scarcely do so without a more vital and personal contact with the materials than that which Fr Dirksen, with disarming frankness, claims for himself in the preface to his *Elementary Patrology*. It is, he tells us, 'meant to be a relatively inexpensive tool. For these reasons there are no footnotes, there is no bibliography, and quotations from foreign languages have been reduced to a minimum.' It is difficult to appreciate the reasoning that connects these two sentences and anyone who is really beginning to take an interest in the Fathers will be likely to turn with relief and a good deal more profit to Maisie Ward's *Early Church Portrait Gallery*, which may not be a student's tool, but is a workmanlike demonstration of how to use one's reading well, and a generous, personal, appreciative introduction to many great saints and Fathers from St Ignatius of Antioch to St Benedict. The student will even find a bibliography at the end which he will probably reach in a mood to follow up.

ÆLRED SQUIRE, O.P.

J. G. HAMANN. *A Study in Christian Existence. With Selections from His Writings.* By Ronald Gregor Smith. (Collins; 21s.)

The Wizard of the North is certainly not everyone's cup of tea. Nobody would describe him as a systematic thinker. Nor did he ever claim to be one. On the contrary, he declared that he had no aptitude for 'truths, principles, systems', but only for 'crumbs, fragments, fancies, sudden inspirations'. But his style is so allusive that even these fragments and sudden inspirations tend