

BYZANTINE PAINTING with an Introduction and Notes. By Gervase Mathew, O.P. (Faber Gallery of Oriental Art; 8s. 6d.)

Until some twenty years ago most 'Westerners' regarded Byzantine art as universally stylised and to such an extent as to leave no room for life or variety. Father Gervase Mathew with a few other scholars has laboured since then to reveal the intense vitality of this art up to the comparatively late period of the seventeenth century. These historians of Byzantine art and music have put into our hands the key to appreciation; hitherto we did not know what to look for, and the similarities of the ikons of the Madonna or the Pantocrator led us to regard them as a white man might look for the first time at a tribe of African natives—all seeming identical until the criterion of black beauty has been discovered.

In this book Father Mathew not only initiates the reader into the nature of Byzantine art, revealing its time setting in the life and history of Constantinople and its relation to Western art, but shows his understanding of these paintings by the accuracy with which he dates them. The ten paintings reproduced in the book are well chosen for their variety and for their being unknown and they are among the finest reproductions of their kind in this country—great care has been given in particular to the gold, which in such books is often overpoweringly heavy and dead.

C.P.

REGINALD POLE, CARDINAL OF ENGLAND. By W. Schenk. (Longmans; 15s.)

'... to unite Europe and England in a renewed Christendom' was the task which faced Pole from the year 1536 when he was made Cardinal, until his death, twelve hours after that of Mary Tudor. Perhaps it was the especial fascination that such a taste has for today which impelled the late Dr Schenk to examine the first half of the sixteenth century not through the life of one of those who, by a more vigorous personality, had influenced decisively the immediate issues of the day, but through the study of a man who failed to solve a task which yet awaits solution.

The resultant biography is one of great merit. The picture of Pole which emerges is sympathetic, faithful to the facts, and entirely convincing. Neither must one be misled by the comparative briefness of this study. The connection between the man and his age is constantly apparent, and his obvious limitations underline Dr Schenk's perspicacity in seeing through him the civilisation which Pole so faithfully desired and which friend and foe seemed always ready, in strange collusion, to deny him.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the book is the last chapter. Here Dr Schenk, with sure touch, brings us back to the questions raised by humanism and its interpreters. 'In Pole's time, Bembo represented a distorted humanism, Caraffa a distorted Christianity; in his best moments Pole realised that a divorce between humanism and Christianity makes both of them lose their true nature.' (p. 166). The final verdict on this problem has not yet been passed; but this book is a reminder of how much insight and wisdom has been lost to the cause of Christian humanism by the death of the author.

C. J. ACHESON.

FATHER STEUART. By Katharine Kendall. (Burns Oates; 15s.)

Father Steuart, whose influence as a spiritual teacher was perhaps unequalled among recent Jesuits of the English Province, died two years ago. It is a remarkable achievement that in so short a time a fitting biography should have appeared, one that does justice to his attractive personality and to his immense gifts of mind and heart. No higher praise could be given it than to say that it is worthy of the author of *Diversity in Holiness*, that book so notable for its gracious and discerning description of sanctity.

Miss Kendall is fortunate to have at her disposal a large correspondence, especially to Father Steuart's Benedictine brother and Carmelite sister, which gives to her book an authentic quality. We follow Father Steuart, from his early years in the Scottish highlands, through his time as a Woolwich cadet, as a Jesuit novice and scholastic, then as a military Chaplain to his final position as an acknowledged master of the spiritual life; it is a wonderful record of fidelity. But this is no stereotyped account of a successful career; rather it is a sympathetic (and that means a candid) portrait of a man in whom grace perfected a nature that was traditional, aristocratic even. Here was a full man, an artist (and his books reveal the exact and distinctive quality of his mind); Farm Street was his appropriate setting. Yet in him the purification of religious life created something far finer, and nothing is more moving in the biography than the emergence of the wide charity that entered into other people's problems, not condescendingly, professionally, but deeply, with the understanding that comes from the habitual life of grace.

This is not the place to estimate the importance of Father Steuart's teaching, nor perhaps is it yet the time. But it is very plain that few priests have done so much to present the Christian life of contemplation as an ideal available to all who are willing to be generous in their response to God. Miss Kendall's book, written with discrimination and sureness of judgment, should do much to perpetuate his work.

I.E.