

THE TESTAMENT OF MARY: THE GAELIC VERSION OF THE *Dormitio Mariae*. Edited by C. Donahue, Ph.D. (Fordham University Press; \$1.50.)

While Julia Domna, Syrian wife of Septimus Severus, was inspiring Philostratus to write an edifying account of the life of Apollonius of Tyana, Christians were busy with similar accounts of the wonderful visions and deeds of the saints and apostles. From the second century onwards, there circulated a large number of these Christian novels, written in Syriac, Bohairic, Sahidic, Greek, and Latin, besides many other languages. Among these novels is a group dealing with the death and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. The four main groups of texts are written in Coptic, Greek, Latin, and Syriac, each group being again subdivided into texts which vary considerably.

The Gaelic version published by C. Donahue for the first time is based on Ms Laud Misc. 610 ff. 34-38 of the Bodleian, written about 1450, and therefore slightly later than the text in the *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum*, Vol. II, f. 48 (99), though both are considered by the editor to be variants of a single redaction. St. John Seymour (*J.T.S.*, XXIII, 1921-22, pp. 36-43) gave reasons for supposing that the text of the *Liber Flavus* was directly dependent on the Syriac *Obsequies of the Holy Virgin* (ed. Wright, *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the N.T.*, 1865, pp. 42-51), and the present publication of the Gaelic text together with an Irish Latin version should throw further light on this relationship. C. Donahue has not dealt in detail with the question, but has edited the *Testament of Mary* in the hope that scholars who may be unacquainted with Gaelic will pursue the subject further. The popularity of the legend, and the fact that it may have been introduced into Ireland as early as the eighth century, make this text important for those who are interested in the possibility of direct Syriac influence on the early Christian thought and literature in Ireland.

VALENTINE WOOD, O.P.

OUR LIVING FAITH. By the Rev. S. M. Shaw. (Burns Oates; 7s. 6d.)

It is to be hoped that the depressing dust-wrapper of this book, with its unusually stupid 'blurb,' does not prevent its being read. Father Shaw's point is that there is small danger at the moment of the things that are Caesar's not being rendered to him, but considerable danger that Catholics will in practice lose touch with the reality of their Faith. The remedy is a proper apprehension of dogma. He therefore presents the classical theology of the Church in such a way that its bearing upon practical living may emerge, in essays upon the Trinity, the Church, Our Lady, the Sacraments and other subjects. The work, which is theologically adequate without being recondite, is well done. Long familiarity with Biblical and

scholastic language have caused Fr. Shaw to use a style less simple and direct than it might have been: words like 'dichotomy' and phrases like 'the burden of iniquity' could have been avoided; and proof-reading ought to have eliminated spelling-mistakes and obscurities of loose punctuation. These things are of small moment: as a whole the book is useful and competent.

L.T.

CATHOLICISM AND ENGLISH LITERATURE. By Edward Hutton. (Muller; 8s. 6d.)

From a scholar of Mr. Hutton's standing this book comes as a disappointment. Whether in assessing the merits of Catholic writers or in recording Protestant views of Catholicism, he constantly spoils his case by exaggeration and by clumsy and inopportune polemical sallies. He describes Roger Bacon and Occam as 'scarcely less great scholastic figures' than St. Albert and St. Thomas. He quotes with approval Phillimore's unfortunate question, 'Which of the Elizabethan prose-writers can be proposed as superior to More?' He says of Southwell and Crashaw, 'Together they are the greatest religious poets in the language' (p. 91, though on p. 34 *Piers Plowman* is 'the greatest religious poem in the language'). He drags in Milton's 'God and his Son except,' a peculiarity of idiom, as if it implied a peculiar heresy.

Among topics omitted are Boswell's relations with the Church, some odd notions of Catholic faith and practice in the Catholic Mrs. Inchbald, and an interesting pro-Catholic passage in Miss Austen's *Juvenilia*. However, it is not on such points as these that the book is likely to be judged; its general air—an air of hasty writing in querulous mood—will almost certainly discredit it among Catholic and Protestant readers of critical sense and balanced mind.

WALTER SHEWRING.

A PREFACE TO PARADISE LOST. By C. S. Lewis. (Milford; Oxford University Press; 7s. 6d.)

The modern world finds itself out of sympathy both with the poem and with the thought of Milton, and *Paradise Lost* stands badly in need of this Preface which Mr. Lewis has provided. A certain school of literary critics has made a very powerful attack on Milton's poetry, and against them Mr. Lewis has to defend the epic style, both in its primary form in Homer and Beowulf and in its secondary form in Vergil and Milton. But deeper, though less explicit than this, is the rejection of Milton's philosophy, and here Mr. Lewis has to show that Milton is simply a Christian philosopher and the adverse criticism of him is 'not so much a literary phenomenon as the shadow cast upon literature by revolutionary politics, antinomian ethics and the worship of Man by Man.' This is admirably done, and we are