

the criticism very narrow and subjective. One is left with the impression that Professor Cocking has said a number of interesting things in a manner often irritatingly allusive and inconsequential and that one has not learnt very much more about Proust or his work. For instance, he goes to some length to explain that Proust's work is firmly rooted in the French literary tradition; 'but', he adds, 'it is not merely literary. It is rooted in his personal experience.' Has any writer ever lived of whom this is not true? It would be unfair to say that such statements are typical of Professor Cocking's thought, but at the same time they are not uncharacteristic.

There is also much talk of transcendental aesthetics, emotional patterns and artistic visions, and much of it is vague. Its partial obscurity does not enhance its explicit grandiloquence. Professor Cocking's book is, in fact, rather like the verbal transposition of a complex nerve reaction chart for which the vocabulary, though expensive, is inadequate and imprecise.

J. A. CUDDON

THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN. Edited by Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C. (University of Notre Dame Press; \$2.75.)

LA VIRGINITÉ CHRÉTIENNE. By Joseph-Marie Perrin, O.P. (Desclée de Brouwer; 90 fr.B.)

VIRGINITY. By J. M. Perrin, O.P. Translated by Katherine Gordon. (Blackfriars Publications; 12s.)

In a single review we bring together three publications which in theme are related to each other. The first, with the inelegant title *The Mystery of the Woman*, consists of an introduction followed by five essays on the Mother of God, sponsored by the Department of Theology in the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. Three of the essays present clearly and simply the revealed mysteries of our Blessed Lady, the Divine Motherhood, the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption. These sublime truths are shown to be closely related and complementary to each other. Another essay gives a brief history of devotion to our Lady in the United States from the time of the Norse explorers who settled in Greenland, until the present day. A final chapter tells how, from its inception, Notre Dame University has been a shrine dedicated to the Mother of God, the distinctive symbol of which is the Lady on the Dome, a replica of the statue of the Immaculate Conception erected by Pope Pius IX in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome. I cannot speak with authority of the woodcuts; the one which forms the frontispiece is more pleasing in its colour than in its design.

The two other books, *La Virginité Chrétienne* and its translation into English with the title *Virginity*, are inevitably connected with

thoughts of the Mother of God, who is the outstanding example of the great Christian virtue of virginity. The book is intended for general readers who are interested in spiritual problems. As we learn from the Introduction, 'The vocation of virginity is lived in two principal forms, either by official consecration in community life, or, in the world, by a deliberate choice of conscience that brings new life to the ordinary single life'. Mary, the Mother of God, is the ideal of this life of dedication. The soul becomes the Bride of Christ, closely united to him in his sacrifice, and strengthened and supported by the Holy Eucharist as the Bread of Life.

The translation betrays some un-English words and phrases, and does not include St Augustine's treatise on Holy Virginity. In both the French and the English editions will be found the full text of the Pope's recent encyclical letter on Holy Virginity.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS POLEMIC. By O. S. Rankin. (Edinburgh University Press; 18s.)

The purpose of this book, described by the late author in his preface, is to show from the translation of a number of Hebrew documents what was the type of Jewish biblical exegesis and religious apologetic used in the past, say from the second to the seventeenth century. There are four documents translated with copious introductions and notes: the Chronicle of Moses, a narrative account of the great leader with the addition of legendary and fanciful elements; a poem written by a fifteenth-century rabbi attacking Christian interpretation of Old Testament texts; a series of controversial letters exchanged between a nameless Jew of Amsterdam and a convert Jew named Johan Stephen Rittangel, dating from the seventeenth century; and finally a record of the debate between a rabbi of Gerona and a Spanish Dominican convert Jew held in Barcelona in 1263 in the presence of and under the inspiration of St Raymond of Pennafort, the ex-Master General of the Dominican Order, and his penitent King James I of Aragon. The last is most interesting and is accompanied by some useful historical notes. The book also contains a good account of what may be called rabbinical theological literature, if that is not too flattering a title for the Talmudic writings. For the understanding of rabbinic mentality in the matter of biblical exegesis, a thing of importance for the understanding of St Paul, it is most instructive, though tedious, to follow the meanderings of the rabbis in these translated documents.

R.G.