are not entitled to claim scientific status for it.

On one point of his criticism of Kuhn, Gellner is, I think, mistaken. Against Popper, Kuhn showed that intellectual consensus, not untrammelled criticism, was a necessary condition for scientific advancement. But consensus alone does not distinguish the scientific world from the non-scientific, as Kuhn claimed. The reason is not, as Gellner claims, that science and non-science are distinguished by *different kinds* of paradigm. This is to distort the notion of 'paradigm' by equating it with any consensus about problem-solving, whatever the problems. It is not freedom, as Popper says, nor consensus, as Kuhn says, but consensus within a mechanist-empiricist framework of explanation that distinguishes science from non-science. It seems to me that Gellner's confusing use of 'paradigm' leads him to ignore Kuhn and consensus in the role he offers finally to a limited relativism. Compared with the relation between communities of scientists and scientific explanation, ironic cultures make few, if any, epistemological demands.

Finally, Gellner's assessment that Weber overestimated disenchantment underestimates Weber. The fact that cultural fantasies are increasingly available does not disprove Weber's thesis but, on the contrary, supports it. He was well aware of ironic cultures in his own day and it is only increasing disenchantment that can account for them. In a sense, it is Gellner rather than Weber who exaggerates disenchantment. Since the only contrast he offers to bureaucratised man in modern society is ironic man, and since irony is made a property of styles of food and personal relations alike, it is difficult not to draw the implication that all contemporary ideologies are ironic and all moral choices are on the same fantasy level as Californian slush. But this is absurd. Is all conviction pseudo? What evidence could possibly establish it? Certainly not the evidence that *some* conviction is ironic, still less that the explanation of human action *ipso facto* eliminates moral choice *from the action.* Gellner seems to be resolving the dilemma of Kant and Weber by simply dissolving morality and values into knowledge and facts and ignoring the empirical fact that people do suffer for their convictions in a way that they are not prepared to suffer for their cooking or hippy life-style. We may not all be fervent Marxists or Jehovah's Witnesses, but we are not all hippies either. What distinguishes Marxists from hippies—the belief-system of the former is linked to their social structure and in that sense taken seriously —is at least as important as the characteristic they hold in common, namely that they both turn to science for the solution of technological problems.

There is no formal solution to the problem of knowledge. Our temptation is either to ignore this impasse or to accept it as a solution. There are many who will be grateful to Gellner for this superb and provocative analysis of the problem in terms that make sense of learning.

BILL MCSWEENEY

THE MOTHER OF JESUS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, by John McHugh. *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1975. 510 pp. £10.

Months later than I should have done, I came to read *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* in December, as Advent reached its climax in the days of the O Antiphons, when the Liturgy fixes our attention on the Incarnation, 'on the coming of Christ, born of the Virgin'. John McHugh's book proved an invaluable companion volume, illuminating the liturgical texts, providing, as it were, scholarly prolegomena to Christmastide *lectio divina.* Such personal details I mention not to excuse my inefficiency as a reviewer (the book would have been just as illuminating in the middle of July) but to illustrate one of the many virtues of this remarkable study: it can be *prayed.* Fr McHugh, in a quiet and unpretentious way, has realised the traditional ideal of the unity of theology and prayer, in this case the integration of modern methods of Biblical study with Catholic faith and practice. He has set out to demonstrate that historico-literary criticism of NT texts does not lead necessarily to the barren reductionism of so much contemporary theology but can and does contribute to the rearticulation of the truths of Catholic Orthodoxy. In that

demonstration, it seems to me, he has been largely successful.

The book has a pleasingly well thought-out structure: the first part concerned with Luke 1-2, the second with the virginity of Our Lady, the third with Mary in the theology of Saint John; in addition, there are thirteen detached notes on, among other things, 'Mary's Vow of Virginity' and 'The Name "James" in the New Testament'. Throughout, Fr McHugh writes lucidly, with scholarly precision and considerable sensitivity to contemporary theological discussion. There are several notable achievements. In the case of the Lucan infancy narratives, for example, it is argued convincingly that their status as midrash does not denote their essential fictitiousness; we have no evidence at all to suggest that the stories are mere fabrications, romances or legends constructed from an amalgam of OT texts. Perhaps, he asks, Luke has stood midrashic exposition on its head. Might it not be that he begins, not with a text, but with a real *event*, the birth of the Saviour, and then uses midrash to expound its significance? (p. 22). The story of the Nativity was not dreamt up in the study of some first century don but derives ultimately from Our Lady herself, mediated to Luke by a Johannine source, McHugh contests. As he says, 'Luke could not have failed to perceive that his account of the infancy of Jesus would be trustworthy if, and only if, the basic factual content (as distinct from the literary and theological presentation) came originally from Mary herself' (p. 149).

The main section of the book, nearly two hundred pages, is devoted to a study of the Virginity of Mary in the NT. McHugh vindicates the historicity and theological indispensability of both the Virginal Conception of Jesus and Mary's perpetual virginity. In a most interesting chapter (in which Karl Barth is quoted at length and with approval), it is argued that 'the doctrine of the virginal conception is *the* outward sign or sacrament in which the mystery of the Incarnation is spoken of in the NT and in the creeds' (p. 340). An original theory to explain the meaning of 'the Lord's brethren' is presented (although McHugh is disappointingly negative in his assessment of the historical contribution of *The Protoevangelium of James*), and in a concluding theological chapter the Fathers are drawn on to show that Mary's perpetual virginity is a sign that she gave Jesus the undivided love of her soul. In fact, the inclusion of Patristic witnesses is one of the most refreshing aspects of this chapter, and indeed of the whole book. The Fathers are quoted not for antiquarian reasons but as authoritative teachers of the faith and exponents of Scripture, doctors from whom we continue to learn because we are in solidarity with them in the Communion of Saints. Fr McHugh himself puts into practice the teaching of *Dei Verbum* quoted in his Introduction: 'Sacred Tradition and Holy Scripture constitute a single deposit of the word of God entrusted to the Church'.

This book is an outstanding achievement. It is written with humility and charity, in a truly ecumenical and eirenical spirit, yet with dogmatic firmness and clarity of vision. It must surely be the definitive work on the subject in English for many years to come and should be read widely by Christians of all traditions.

JOHN SAWARD

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS, by J. C. O'Neill. *Penguin Books*, Harmondsworth, 1975. 315 pp. 75p.

Although it has been typographically designed so that at a superficial glance it looks as if it is part of the useful and quite distinguished series of Pelican New Testament Commentaries edited by Dr Nineham, this markedly independently-spirited volume does not in fact belong to that series. John O'Neill bravely attempts a defence of his method in his introduction:

'The reader for whom this commentary is written might well expect that after nearly 2,000 years the experts would have got Paul's Epistle to the Romans straight, and that in these pages he would find a clear explanation of the great man's idea. If this is what he expects, he will be disappointed' (p. 11).

And indeed in some sense I am. Not that there is any failure to expound every word of the extant text, nor that a weight of scholarship has not gone into this book: it most certainly has. And perhaps it is time