

BASIC QUESTIONS IN THEOLOGY, Volume 1, by Wulfhart Pannenberg, tr. by George H. Kehm. *S.C.M. Press Ltd*, London, 1970. 238 pp. £2.10.

Along with Jürgen Moltmann, Wulfhart Pannenberg has won his place as leading representative of the new generation of German Protestant theologians, and his work is already well known in the English-speaking countries. The present volume contains seven essays, and it is to be followed by another. These essays provide an insight into Pannenberg's manner of understanding theological problems and the methods which he deploys towards their solution.

Readers who know something of Pannenberg's work will not be surprised to find that two of the commonest terms in this volume are 'history' and 'hermeneutic'. Admittedly, these terms have been much in fashion for a long time and were equally prominent in the writings of Bultmann and some of his followers such as Ebeling and Fuchs. Pannenberg, however, is critical both of Bultmann and of those whose work has usually been designated as 'the new hermeneutic'. The older writers did not sufficiently unite the problems of history and hermeneutic, and this is what Pannenberg claims to do. He believes that one cannot finally separate event and interpretation and further that one cannot reduce event simply to word-event, which indeed is the event in its significance for the human existent.

Whereas Bultmann (and some of the others) believed that there were two tasks. Pannenberg thinks that there is fundamentally one. The two tasks were, firstly, to reconstruct the historical reality behind the tradition, and, secondly, to relate that tradition through an hermeneutic exercise to our present situation. I think it may be conceded that these two tasks were in fact left separate by Bultmann—hence we have Bultmann the sceptical historical

critic, and Bultmann the proclaimer with almost evangelical fervour of Christian self-understanding.

Pannenberg's attempt to unite the two tasks is by way of the introduction of the idea of 'universal history'. In this both past event and present person participate. 'Significant individual occurrences and historical figures require for their evaluation a view of the broader continuities that extend beyond their narrower life-setting and epoch. The more significant an occurrence or a figure is, the more comprehensive must be the nexus of events to which one has to relate it in order to do justice to its true significance.'

Does this mean that we require a metaphysics of history, in spite of all the criticisms that have been made of attempts to construct such a metaphysics? It is in fact obvious that Pannenberg feels at many points the attraction of Hegel, yet he also accepts the criticism that Hegel's ambitious philosophy (including his philosophy of history) leapt beyond what is possible for our finite human point of view. Whether, however, an appeal to New Testament eschatology (or to a particular understanding of it) can accomplish what Hegel is said to have failed to do, is, to say the least, very doubtful.

It seems that every theology must develop its jargon. A very questionable expression that keeps recurring in this book is 'the open future'. This is never very clearly defined, but one suspects that it harbours a good deal of *naïveté*.

Perhaps it is inevitable that English translations of German scholarly works are clumsy and verbose. This one is.

JOHN MACQUARRIE

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH, by Paul S. Minear. *Studies in Biblical Theology*, SCM Press, London, 1971. 115 pp. £1.40.

When so many monographs being published are no more than doctoral theses, so clearly characterized by their painstaking and often pedestrian progress, it is a pleasure to have one from so mature a master as Dr Minear. But here the danger is the reverse, that of leaving out steps of which the master is so sure that he simply presupposes them in his reader. When one finds a point less cogently argued one is never quite sure that the author could

not produce more arguments if challenged. The subtitle of this work is 'The purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans'. It is almost normal in discussions of Romans to find that the bulk of the discussion concerns the first eight chapters, where the meat of Paul's teaching is thought to lie, with a passing nod at the problem of the fate of the Jews in chapters 9–11 (a special concern of Paul); then 12–14 are soon dismissed as teaching on matters of observance,