

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

Along with Jürgen Moltmann, Wolphart 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,

problems of burning concern at Corinth, but transferred here by Paul with heavy and rather lifeless borrowings from his letter to the Corinthians. To Dr Minear chapters 14–16 provide the key to the letter, for there he discerns most clearly five groups in the Roman churches (for from chapter 16 it appears that there are at least five or six different house-churches to whom the letter is written). Paul's purpose in writing is to reconcile these five groups, three of which are at loggerheads with each other. Basically it is, as at Corinth, a matter of the weak in faith who feel the need to retain Jewish observances against those who claim that they are so strong in faith that they do not need such observances; some in each of these two groups condemn the opposing view; some are unsure, and are brow-beaten into acting in bad faith; and some of the strong and of the weak have the balance and maturity to let those of the opposite view go their own way unmolested. According to the author it is Paul's aim to secure peace by drawing members of the three former camps into the two latter ones.

Dr Minear makes no claim to investigate the theology of the letter as a whole; indeed (p. 57) he explicitly contradicts that this purpose of reconciling the parties exhausts

Paul's concern; he holds only that in this way we can 'notice how his wide-ranging thought came to a focus upon definite situations'. It is, however, doubtful whether Minear is convincing. Certainly the observers of the Law addressed early in the letter must be Christian rather than non-Christian Jews. Certainly in churches composed of convert Jews, attached to their traditions, and Gentiles such problems must have arisen. But, useful as the analyses of chapters 14 and 15 are, I do not think that it is successfully shown that the same groups are envisaged earlier in the letter. Paul's complaint is that the Jews do not observe their own Law, not that they are too observant; and one cannot really accept that he calls them adulterers because they condemn adultery (p. 50). The attempt to reconstruct the beliefs and positions of those to whom and against whom Paul is writing in his various letters is a fascinating one, but it constantly runs the risk of reading too much into Paul's statement of their positions, assuming that he gives a sober and objective account of the point of view he is rejecting. One of the reasons why Dr Minear's interesting attempt fails is that Paul's mind is too creative, too full and too subtle to be confined by his interlocutors.

HENRY WANSBROUGH

**GROUNDWORK FOR UNITY; Plain Facts about Christian Ministry**, by R. P. C. Hanson. *S.P.C.K.*, London, 1971. 60 pp. 55p.

**PRIEST: PERSON AND MINISTRY; Papers of the Maynooth Union Summer School 1969**, edited by Gerard Meagher. *Gill and Macmillan*, Dublin. xi + 169 pp. £1.25.

Reading through these two books on the ministry out of Ireland (Dr Hanson became Bishop of Clogher last year) one is struck by the lack of contact between them. This is symbolized in the bibliographies and in the Maynooth footnotes: the only books they share are one by Daube and another by Schweizer. It is to be seen above all in that Dr Hanson is really only interested in bishops and the Maynooth men only in priests. This is disconcerting since both do, in fact, spend a fair amount of time discussing the same New Testament texts.

There are reasons which do go some way towards justifying these two very different approaches to the ministry. Dr Hanson is writing against the background of the Anglican-Methodist reunion negotiations, and is concerned above all to commend the 'historic episcopate', though shorn of apostolic succession and of 'the Catholic doctrine of priesthood'. This leads him into a one-sided reading of

history: 'When the monarchical bishop emerges in the second century, he clearly is, and clearly remains, the key-man in the permanent form which the Christian ministry has now taken. He is not significant simply because he is the summit of a pyramid whose base consists of presbyter and deacons. He is the central, representative, essential ministerial figure.'

The Maynooth team, on its side, is speaking against the background of Vatican II, which some priests believe to have exalted bishops and lay-people at the expense of priests. 'Between those two forces, the hierarchy and the people, he is in serious theological and practical danger.' (p. 2, Fr McDonagh's essay.) Anxiety of this kind may possibly account for two serious examples of theological fumble, as it seems to me, in the essays by Frs Meagher and Ratzinger.

Fr Meagher's paper is one of a pair on the biblical tradition of priesthood, one dealing