

BOOKS

INSPIRATION: HARD QUESTIONS, HONEST ANSWERS

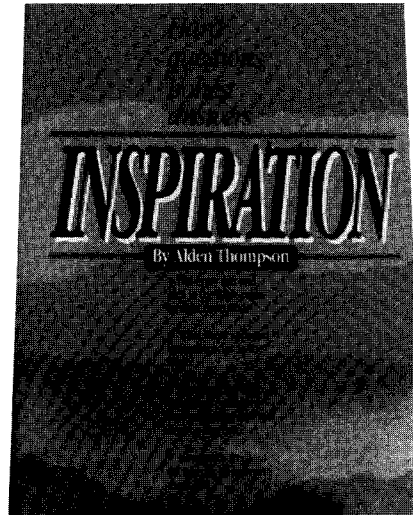
Alden Thompson
Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald
Publishing Association, 1991.
Hardbound, 332 pages, \$15.95.

Here's a book for the Adventist teacher's short required reading list. The dust jacket blurb calls it a "Bombshell," and "Provocative," and says it "could be the most significant book published by an Adventist press in this decade." *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* may yet live up to its dust jacket—at the time of this review it was already in its second printing. But I put this book on the teacher's required reading list for reasons beyond simply keeping abreast of the controversial. The book grew directly out of Thompson's years of classroom teaching about the inspiration and authority of the Bible and the sociology of knowledge.

When we teach our students about the inspiration of the Bible, we typically focus on central assertions like 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and 2 Peter 1:20, 21. There's a lot to be said for this selective approach. It reminds me of a golfer who hits the ball down the center of the fairway. The ball rolls easily over the closely mowed grass, skillfully avoiding the sand traps and water hazards. But our declarations about the Bible often conveniently ignore the areas that don't fit neatly into our concept of what an inspired book should say.

Reading the Bible is *not* like playing 18 holes on a manicured green. Anyone who reads Scripture carefully runs into a lot of rough going. I still remember the shock when I discovered Psalm 137:9 on my own in high school: "Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" When I asked my Bible teacher about it, he dodged the issue. Thompson doesn't.

Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers takes us beyond the edges of the fairway to where the golfer runs the risk of losing the ball. Thompson is convinced that Adventists and other conservative Christians have pretended too long that there are no tall grass and sand traps in the Bible. That's a dangerous strategy. Some of us avoid reading whole



sections of the Bible out of a genuine fear that the encounter will destroy our faith in its inspiration. Even worse, we fail to prepare our students to cope with what they will find when they read the Bible for themselves.

On balance, it must be said that Thompson's approach isn't the only one. It's important to keep the ball on the fairway. Beginners may still need to be steered away from the imprecatory Psalms, the mayhem in Samuel, and the confusion over the denials of Peter. Many high school students wouldn't be ready to read Thompson's book straight through, though individual chapters could serve as the basis for classroom discussion as early as the junior high level.

However, Thompson makes a strong case for looking at the loose ends that don't fit into a tidy theory of inspiration. A basic sense of confidence pervades his book. He believes that the difficulties in the Bible can actually enhance our appreciation of God. To quote the author, "The problems are the solutions."

Thompson exudes an unabashed admiration for Ellen White, whom he claims as his spiritual and intellectual foremother. He is interested in her Christian experience as much as her writings on the subject of inspiration. He believes Ellen White's emphasis on the practical nature of the Bible offers Adventist teachers an overlooked resource as they deal with the diffi-

culties in the Bible. Two long selections from her pen on the inspiration and practical authority of the Bible serve as the foundation and first section of the book.

In the second section Thompson makes his case for a "practical" approach to inspiration. Chapter 7 ("God's Word: Casebook or Codebook?") and Chapter 8 ("God's Law: The One, the Two, the Ten, the Many") contain the most original and controversial material. These two chapters deserve to be read and reread and widely discussed. Thompson views the Scriptures as a casebook with various possibilities laid out for consideration, rather than as a codebook of clear-cut commands. All biblical laws are contextualized applications of the one fundamental principle of self-sacrificing love, which is further defined in the two great commandments issued by Jesus and in the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses.

In subsequent chapters Thompson applies his casebook/codebook approach to a dozen issues in the Bible. Why did New Testament Christians set aside circumcision when God commanded it in the Old Testament? If the Bible writers were inspired, then why did they rely on the archives of kings? Each chapter in this section ends with questions for reflection and discussion that will be useful to the classroom teacher. The final summary manages to condense the main points of 250 pages into five readable pages.

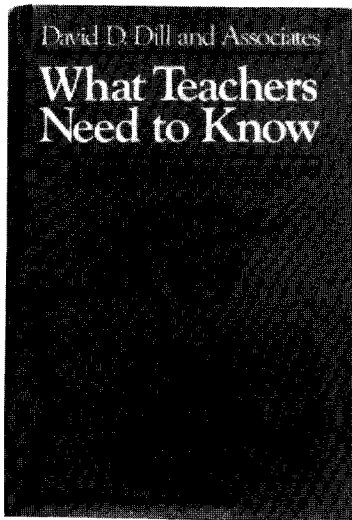
Thompson argues against a rationalistic approach to the topic of inspiration. That includes attempts to prove that the Bible is inspired because it is historically accurate, as well as attempts to prove that the Bible is *not* inspired because it contains mistakes. Instead, Thompson calls for a wholistic, post-Enlightenment approach. Private prayer and meditation are essential for anyone who would use the Bible as a casebook. Sociologists remind us that we must be in a circle of like-minded believers if we are to keep our own beliefs intact.

Part of the appeal of this book is the author's interjection of his own intense experience into the subject matter. We eavesdrop on a teacher's candid conversations with his colleagues and students. The book uses an expansive style characteristic of the author's class-

room manner. Students in his classes have been known to speak of "drinking from a fire hydrant." In addition to its 21 chapters, the book swells to include a six-page preface, two introductions, two excurses, and seven appendices. It finally ends with a nine-page "autobiographical bibliographical note"!

Debate continues over whether Thompson has correctly appropriated Ellen White, though his genuine embrace of her tends to disarm the reader. The book may be faulted here and there in certain details of biblical scholarship. The author has not sufficiently integrated his attention to law with the narrative character of the Bible, nor is the story of Jesus given due prominence. But Thompson has put his finger on crucial issues that beg for our collective attention. Those who care deeply about the Bible will find him to be a soulmate, if not an infallible guide.—Ernest Bursey.

Dr. Ernest Bursey is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.



WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW

David D. Dill, et al

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1990. Hardbound, 276 pages, \$24.95.

Have you ever wondered what is absolutely essential for teachers to know and be able to do? If so, this book is for you. The book's greatest contribution, which makes it especially significant reading for Adventists, is its emphasis on the moral dimension of teaching. In addition, the authors show that the revitalization of teaching depends on developing a clearly defined knowledge base that influences the way teachers are

selected, trained, and advanced in their careers.

What Teachers Need to Know features chapters by leading researchers, scholars, and commentators on the teaching profession, including some names that are familiar to many; for example, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers; Mortimer Adler, a frequent author and educational critic who is chairman of the Editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; and Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

If you have followed the literature on the state of teaching, you will recognize the litany of critics decrying the current state of affairs. Ernest Boyer says that "The harsh fact is that teaching in this nation is imperiled. There are poor teachers to be sure, and one bad teacher is more dangerous than one bad surgeon because a surgeon can only hurt one person at a time. But good teachers outnumber the bad." This raises the question, "What do we want all our teachers to know and be able to do?"

The authors present a plan for the professional preparation of teachers—in subject matter and pedagogical knowledge, but also in terms of the knowledge most worth having—moral principles. The book would be worth reading just for Warren Nord's chapter on teaching and morality. He presents a compelling case for all teacher-training institutions to knowingly and intrusively include moral education. He believes that all education is a moral enterprise.

Nord outlines what makes life meaningful: (1) love; (2) having a place in and being a member of various communities (a family, church, local community, a cultural tradition, etc.); (3) moral purpose in life (caring, minimizing suffering and correcting injustice, living according to conscience, etc.); (4) religion; (5) work that draws on one's abilities and contributes to the good of others; (6) art; and (7) the life of the mind. The purpose of education, the charge of teachers, is to "initiate students into an appreciation for, and a critical understanding of, what is most meaningful in life." Nord believes this mission should pervade the education of teachers. His assertions should resonate deeply within Adventist educators.

What Teachers Need to Know does not ignore the more technical aspects of teaching. Carolyn Evertson, for example, presents an excellent overview of current research on clinical practices in education and suggests what should be done to utilize the current knowledge. This chapter is worthwhile reading for those interested in teacher preparation.

The book is a thoughtful, yet concise treatment of an important topic by eminent scholars. It will entice you because of its

timeliness and its insightful commentary from some of America's best thinkers in the educational arena.—Bill Green.

Dr. Bill Green is Chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning in the School of Education at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

EDUCATING THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Donald A. Schön

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990, Paper, 374 pages, \$14.95.

The concept of the reflective practitioner is not new to this book. In reality, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* is a continuation of Schön's 1983 work, *The Reflective Practitioner*. The author uses chapters one, two, and part of three to review his previous book and to clarify the concept of reflection as "thinking about what we are doing while we are doing it." Rather than relying exclusively on knowledge learned from university professors, he maintains that there should be opportunities for teachers in training to reflect about the types of responsibility that the practitioner is expected to assume.

University-based professional schools such as medicine, law, business, and education are challenged from without and within regarding the fundamental assumptions upon which their programs have been established. One major concern about research is voiced by Schön:

They have assumed that academic research yields useful professional knowledge and that the professional knowledge taught in the schools prepares students for the demands of real-world practice. Both assumptions are coming increasingly into question. In recent years there

Continued on page 40

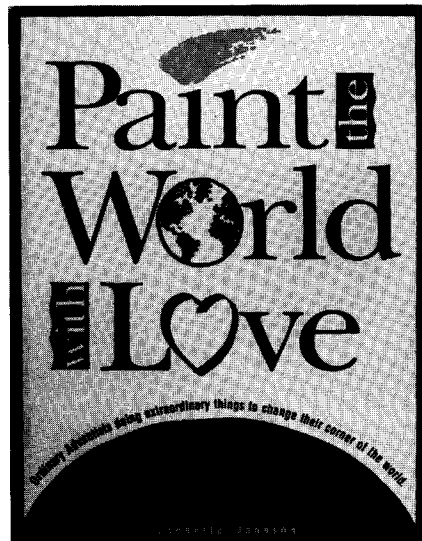
Separate Article
Removed

tensively the use of reflective practicum in three areas: master classes in music performance, psychoanalytic supervision, and a seminar in counseling and consulting skills. In these areas skills must be learned through reflection-in-action, rather than through direct instruction.

The final chapters challenge higher education to bridge the worlds of university and practice through a reflective practicum. Schön advocates a restudy of the core curriculum as well as input and feedback from the students in the program.

The audience for the book is practitioners, teachers, students, and educational administrators. For Seventh-day Adventist educators who want to keep abreast of the times and are willing to implement change, this book will be a source of inspiration and challenge in dealing with a topic of current concern.—Ervin Bigham.

Dr. Ervin Bigham is a Professor of Curriculum in the School of Education, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.



BOOKS

Continued from page 21

has been a growing perception that researchers, who are supposed to feed the professional schools with useful knowledge, have less and less to say that practitioners find useful (p. 10).

At the same time, there seems to be an increasing gap between what professional schools teach as necessary to expertise in the field and the competencies required in actual practice. "What aspiring practitioners need most to learn, professional schools seem least able to teach" (p. 8).

After raising serious questions about the preparation of practitioners, Schön explores ex-

PAINT THE WORLD WITH LOVE
Jeannette Johnson
Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and
Herald Publishing Association, 1991.
Hardbound, 160 pages, \$9.95.

Jeannette Johnson's thoroughly delightful book is filled with inspiring stories of faith in action. Each of the book's 32 chapters tells a story of ordinary Christians doing an extraordinary job of the tasks God has placed in their paths.

Some of the chapter titles include "Miss Clown," "The Children Nobody Wanted," "Swap Meet Pastor," "Throwaway Babies," "Master

Teacher," and "God's Will Ambassador."

"The Underwear Lady of Wake County" tells the story of Donna Frith Bearden. While a student at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland, Donna volunteered to work with Metro Ministries, which places students with community-outreach programs.

In 1985 Metro Ministries was trying to inspire students to become involved. Their approach was, to say the least, unconventional. Drop boxes at various locations around the campus implored, "Drop your drawers here!" The idea caught on. In the following two years CUC's students donated more than 2,000 new underclothes to be distributed to the homeless.

Donna graduated and accepted a position with Family Services of Wake County, North Carolina. She proposed to her colleagues that they ask the community to provide underwear for the homeless. As she expected, they laughed. The laughing stopped, however, when the underwear started coming in. In 1989, the community furnished 2,700 pieces of underwear for the homeless, and in 1991 more than 4,000 pieces had come in by mid-January. The author says, "A small idea. Looking beyond the obvious need to provide that small necessity. It was Christ's touch." This statement typifies the theme of the book—common people doing ordinary things in uncommon ways.

Another chapter focuses on Marge and Arnold Ringering. After retiring in 1988, they decided to spend the winter in Arizona working in a nursing home, she as a nurse and he as a nurse's aide. Marge's mother, then 80 years old, had always wanted to go to Alaska, so in the summer of 1989 the Ringerings embarked on a three-month vacation. While they were in Alaska, they were impressed with the urgent need for geriatric nursing care.

The next spring, at age 70, Arnold received his nurse's aide's certificate. Instead of going to sunny Arizona for the winter, the couple headed to Kotzebue, Alaska. Kotzebue, with a population of 4,000 people, lies 30 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Both Marge and Arnold are actively working at the nursing home and helping the Community Services program of the little Adventist mission in Kotzebue.

Johnson's book is both inspirational and practical. It might even be useful as the springboard for ideas to be used in classroom outreach. At the end of the book, the author invites the reader to participate in her next book by sending her stories of other ordinary people doing extraordinary things for the Lord.—David Waller. ✍

David Waller is Vice-Principal of John Nevins Andrews School in Takoma Park, Maryland.