

principles, he chooses to broadly follow Hegel's understanding of God and metaphysics. Consequently, Pannenberg adopts a neoclassical perspective that determines the broad profile of his metaphysical position. Within neoclassicism, Pannenberg's position represents an alternative to Whitehead's atomistic version of process philosophy (chap. 6). Pannenberg's idea of God as the Absolute-Infinite seems to allow for some kind of pantheism (p. 36) which is possible within the metaphysical horizon he develops in close dialogue with Plotinus (Being and Time), Hegel (Infinite Absolute), Dilthey (historicity of human experience), and Schleiermacher (structure and role of religious experience). *Metaphysics and the Idea of God* represents a clear effort towards a technical clarification of the philosophical ideas that stand at the foundation of Pannenberg's theological project and may be considered helpful to clear "the ground sufficiently" for his "three-volume *Systematic Theology*" (p. viii). A serious systematic treatment of the issues hinted at in this study, however, is still needed if Pannenberg envisions providing his theological thinking with solid philosophical foundations.

Andrews University

FERNANDO CANALE

Thompson, Alden. *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1991). 332 pages. \$15.95.

Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers grows out of Alden Thompson's spiritual (p. 15), intellectual (p. 249), and professional (p. 253) experiences. It is written in order to encourage students and intellectually-oriented believers to develop a firm sense of confidence in the authority of the Bible (p. 243), by overcoming the fear created by the so-called "domino effect." The "domino effect" is the negative experience of discovering the existence of even a minor imperfection in the Bible while, at the same time, holding to an inerrant view of inspiration. The "domino effect" or "slippery slope" may lead to a total loss of confidence in the Bible and even to atheism. If there is even one "error" in the Bible, why should we have confidence in it at all? The author's experience testifies to the possibility of overcoming the "domino effect" and living in the joy of "still believing" after seeing the human side of the Bible. This very well-organized study is written by an Adventist professor of biblical studies, addressing an Adventist, North American audience.

The book is divided into four parts. After a general introduction, the first part consists of a presentation of two documents penned by Ellen White and introduced as "Adventism's classic statements on Inspiration" (p. 21). The author wants the reader to have a taste of the same ideas he found helpful in solving the problems presented by the human side of Scripture. The second part deals with the theoretical understandings that made his experience possible. Notable among them are inspiration and God's Law. This part of the book also deals with the canon, manuscripts, translations, and the way the Bible as a book should be considered—that is, not as a codebook, but as a casebook. The third part constitutes a systematic introduction to the problematic and less-known phenomena of Scripture, as perceived by a biblical exe-

gete. This section discusses issues such as wisdom literature, historical narrative, analysis of parallel passages, the function of scribes and secretaries, ways of interpreting prophetic discourse, prophets quoting prophets. It also deals with the interpretation of numbers, genealogies, and dates in the Bible. The fourth part deals with the practical results of a correct understanding of inspiration in both the experience of the Christian and the life of the church.

The book provides a practical and positive affirmation of confidence in the Bible. Beyond this, Thompson contributes to the ongoing search for a theological understanding of inspiration in the third part, where, revealing his familiarity with biblical scholarship, he is able to identify the most relevant, and possibly disturbing, characteristics of the phenomena of Scripture which must be integrated into any doctrine of revelation and inspiration.

The weak side of the book becomes apparent when Thompson undertakes the task of drawing a theoretical model of revelation and inspiration which properly accounts for the human side of Scripture and replaces verbal and thought inspiration models, thus eliminating the "domino effect." Even though Thompson's call for an honest integration of the human side of Scripture into our understanding of inspiration is correct, the way he articulates his theoretical model becomes problematic. The model suggested is said to be an "incarnational model," inspired by Ellen White's ideas on inspiration. The proposed "incarnational model" sees inspiration as extending to the whole Bible, while revelation extends only to its prophetic sections. Research and personal experience are also considered as true sources of biblical content. Moreover, thought inspiration is rejected because it becomes "almost synonymous with Revelation," making the human recipient simply passive (pp. 50-51). Inspiration is to be understood rather as a "fire in the bones" (p. 53), that is, as "the Spirit's special urging" (p. 57) to write for God. Inspiration is also the Spirit's provision of "guidance and direction" in the preparation (p. 167) of the written work to assure "that the point comes through clear enough" (p. 53). Thus, because of the minimal attention given to the theological understanding of revelation and inspiration, the "incarnational model" seems to allow for entire sections of the Bible to be mainly human, both in content and form (language, logic).

Thompson should give proper attention to Ellen White's affirmation of thought inspiration. She states that "the divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will, thus the utterances of the man are the word of God" (p. 28).

Another weak point in the theoretical section is the hierarchically conceived "Law Pyramid," together with its suggested hermeneutical function. In short, it seems that Thompson's own private quest for answers in the area of Inspiration has confronted him with a problem, the very structure and possible solutions of which lie outside the domain of biblical scholarship. Regarding inspiration, biblical scholarship can only describe the phenomena of Scripture. Solutions, on the other hand, can only be reached when the structure of both revelation and inspiration are clearly perceived and technically analyzed. That is a task that properly belongs to systematic and epistemological theology.