

Ellen White calling each other “my crown of rejoicing” (41-42), when in fact it was James who made the statement.

Not to be left out, the new edition of *Life Incidents* is attractively bound and complements Wheeler’s biography with a primary-source account of White’s story in his own words. The pages, enlarged from the original 1868 edition by 25 percent, are much easier to read. Also included is a ten-page critical introduction by Jerry Moon, Associate Professor of Church History at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

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Whidden, Woodrow, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve. *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002. 288 pp. Hardcover, \$19.99.

Seventh-day Adventism changed its basic understanding of the Godhead from an early “anti-Trinitarian dominance” to a later “Trinitarian dominance” (190-203). Such a change was well taken by most Adventists, who perceived it as a significant move toward a more biblical view of God. But since the early 1990s an increasing number of Adventist “restorationists” are accusing that denomination of apostasy from its original anti-Trinitarian belief. Their criticisms, initially circumscribed to private publications, eventually reached a worldwide scope through the Internet. This has challenged mainstream Adventists to define more precisely how they relate to their own history and how they justify their present position on the Trinity.

In response to those challenges, three Andrews University professors—Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve—joined efforts in producing *The Trinity*, the most comprehensive and thorough mainstream Adventist biblical-historical treatment on the Trinity. Due to its relevance to the contemporary debate, the book has been translated into Portuguese and published in Brazil by Casa Publicadora Brasileira (www.cpb.com.br). Intended primarily to help Seventh-day Adventists respond more effectively to contemporary anti-Trinitarianism, the work has a richness of content that goes far beyond the discussions of the problem within Adventism (limited basically to chaps. 13 and 14).

The book is divided into four major sections, each of them introduced by a specific “Glossary” that helps the reader know in advance the meaning of the technical terms and expressions used in the text that follows. Section 1, “The Biblical Evidence for the Full Deity of Christ, the Personality of the Spirit, and the Unity and Oneness of the Godhead,” was written by Woodrow Whidden in a faith-uplifting style, with frequent rhetorical questions to involve the reader in the overall discussion. The content of this section is essentially biblical, with sporadic references to other commentators and theologians. The author not only explores the meaning of the Bible passages that support the Trinitarian view, including the full deity of Christ and the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, but also analyzes the most common texts used by anti-Trinitarians to defend their own views.

John W. Reeve wrote section 2, “The History of the Trinity Doctrine from A.D. 100 to A.D. 1500,” in a more formal historical style. This section unfolds the development of early and medieval Trinitarianism, with special attention to the political-ecclesiastical controversies engendered by different philosophical-theological perspectives. The overall discussion helps the reader to understand the various nuances of the term “Trinity” during that period and the way Roman Catholic Trinitarianism ended up heavily loaded with Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical presuppositions.

Section 3, "Trinity and Anti-Trinitarianism from the Reformation to the Advent Movement," by Jerry Moon, includes four chapters. During the Reformation era the doctrine of the Trinity was understood from a more philosophical-dogmatic perspective by Roman Catholicism, a less philosophical and more biblical outlook by mainline Reformers, and from a solely biblical basis by Restorationist Anabaptists. In the same era, some Rationalists fostered a radical rejection of Trinitarianism. The discussion within this section then moves to nineteenth-century North America, where anti-Trinitarianism was promoted by Rationalists such as the Deists and Unitarians, and some Restorationists such as the Christian Connexionists. In the chapter on Seventh-day Adventism, Moon correctly argues that its pioneers inherited much of the Connexionist anti-Trinitarianism, which between the 1880s and the 1940s was gradually replaced by biblical Trinitarianism. Crucial in that process was the prophetic role of Ellen G. White, to whom the author gives special attention (chap. 14, plus a Supplement to it).

In the final section, Woodrow Whidden deals with "The Doctrine of the Trinity and Its Implications for Christian Thought and Practice." He argues that the biblical concept of the Trinity is the highest expression of "outward-oriented love" (246), which is "mutually self-submissive, self-sacrificing, and overflowing with creative and redemptive consequences to the created beings of the universe" (267). In his perception, anti-Trinitarian and Unitarian religious traditions lean toward "legalistic views of salvation," while Trinitarian movements (with the exception of Roman Catholicism) have "a strong tendency to give a renewed emphasis to forgiveness or justification by grace through faith alone" (252)—so much so that "it was only when Seventh-day Adventism began to emerge out of its non-Trinitarian understandings of Christ's divinity that it began to find clarity on justification by grace through faith alone" (253).

Despite perceivable differences of literary style among its four sections, *The Trinity* is a well-planned book in which each new section tries to build on the foundation laid by the previous section and to prepare the ground for the next one. A specific bibliography appears at the end of each section, allowing the authors to mention in parentheses within the text itself the last name and the page number of each source referred to. Explanatory endnotes appear at the end of some chapters for the sake of clarification. Helpful subject and scriptural indices are provided at the end of the book.

The book is definitely a major contribution to understanding the various discussions about the Trinity. Without overlooking sound traditional concepts proposed by other authors, the work bears an overall taste of freshness due to the new insights and conclusions that spring here and there throughout its whole content. But, evidently, its most important contribution is the way it deals with early Adventist anti-Trinitarianism. Under the assumption that both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have traditionally been much indebted to the Greek dualism between "(1) soul and body; (2) God and man; and (3) time and timelessness" (167-74), Jerry Moon suggests that Adventists' rejection of traditional presuppositions allowed them to develop eventually a truly biblical Trinitarian doctrine, "free from the controlling influence of Greek philosophy" (219, also 201-202).

There are, however, a few technical details that could be corrected and/or improved. For example, on p. 201, an article by Raoul Dederen is misdated 1972, when it actually appeared in print in 1970, as correctly indicated in the "Bibliography for Section Three" (233). Some readers might wonder why one of the authors in the first few pages of the "Introduction" frequently refers to himself as "I," "my," and "me" (7-8) and then changes the treatment to "we" and "our" (9-11), without any reference to who wrote those pages. Yet personal references within the sections themselves are easily

identified by the authorship attributed to each of them (11).

Repetition might be helpful for clarification, but on p. 85 one of the authors states unnecessarily three times the same concept that “the first two hymns of [Revelation] chapter 5 praise the Son (verses 9, 10, 12) and the final hymn glorifies both the Father and the Son (verse 13).”

Some readers might not feel completely at home with the interpretation of the “river of life” in Rev 22:1 as a symbol of the Holy Spirit (88-89). Yet such an interpretation, whether acceptable or not, does not overshadow at all the important role of the Holy Spirit described in several other passages of the Revelation of John (78-91). Other readers could perhaps expect some additional discussion of contemporary theories of the Trinity, but such discussion seems not to be part of the original purpose of the study under consideration.

The Trinity succeeds in presenting relevant theological and historical information, understandable even for readers without formal theological training. Although it was written primarily for the Seventh-day Adventist community, the book should be welcomed also by other Christian theologians and ministers interested in the topic under discussion.

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Williams, Peter W. *America's Religions from Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2002. xi + 601 pp. Paper, \$29.95.

How does one write a comprehensive religious history of a polyglot nation like the United States with such a vast array of religious traditions while achieving balance and coherence? Peter Williams has attempted this monumental task with some degree of success. Williams is perhaps attempting to compensate for the traditional religious-history texts that have focused narrowly on the white, male, Protestant tradition, by producing an incredibly a magisterial study that succeeds in capturing the vast religious plurality of America.

His work seeks to gather in and validate the religious varieties within the mainstream. A task of such magnitude and bold vision runs the risk of simply being an encyclopedic survey of many religious traditions rather than a serious historical analysis of American religious traditions. There are doubts about whether Williams has accomplished this enterprise, but he has definitely produced a credible work and has provided an exhaustive bibliography to fill in the gaps.

Williams's book consists of five major sections with fifty-five chapters. In Part 1, he examines the roots of the major religious traditions of America. He also describes and summarizes the basic religious ideas of Native Americans and African Americans.

In Part 2, he describes the religious traditions during Colonial America, suggesting that the American colonies formed “one of the most elaborate laboratories ever devised for the intermingling of peoples, cultures, and religious and social patterns.”

Part 3 connects the relationship and influence of religious traditions in the formation of the American nation. For Williams, the first major event in American history was a religious event. The Great Awakening helped to prepare the way for the American revolution and nurtured national consciousness. America's birth was seen as a remarkable religious event, in which God unfolded his plan to create a nation that would be his special agent for good in an evil world.

Part 4 deals with the rebirth of the American nation in the aftermath of slavery and the Civil War. America became industrialized and urbanized. The religious hegemony