

(theological seminary and missionary school in Friedensau) who could organize the courses and conferences, which had charitable dimensions, and were concerned in health, diet, and hygiene. Regretfully, disappointed ambitions and too much self confidence led this valuable church worker to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church and join the Seventh Day Baptists.

The author is not criticizing or condemning the decision of this important Adventist. He lets the facts speak for themselves and make important hypotheses. Without doubt, this is one of the major advantages of the dissertation. Finally, a conclusion is drawn from previous data which Polok summarizes: "With all assurance, it is worth pointing out that European Adventism was established by Europeans, such as Michael Belina-Czechowski and Ludwig Richard Conradi. They also inspired and established the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Even the trauma of World War I and the abandonment of the faith by Ludwig R. Conradi could not threaten the well-built and powerful fundamentals of the Church, and prevent its further expansion" (191, my translation). Scholarly research on the beginning of Adventism—its conditions and development—is good but is also a difficult subject to put into scholarly papers. Some obstacles may be the depth of the literature, numerous visits to archives, and the necessity and extensiveness of the bibliography. That is why we should welcome these kinds of publications, one of which is the book *Geneza*. The author himself tells us: "I believe that this paper will not end the topic, but will add to its enrichment; and research should continue and become the subject of further publications" (15, my translation). On the basis of this statement we can, with all assurance, say that the author of the book fulfilled his goals, and his conclusions will establish borders for future research.

University of Wrocław  
Wrocław, Poland

KRZYSZTOF BILINSKI

Rowe, David L. *God's Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 244 pp. + v. Paper, \$24.00.

Every once in a while I pick up a book that is so well written that I just cannot put it down. This was the case for me as I read Rowe's new biography of William Miller. What is amazing to me is that with the recent series of biographies edited by George R. Knight and the resurgence of interest in Adventist studies over the past two decades that no one until Rowe has tackled a biographical treatment of the founder of Adventism since 1910! In many ways, David L. Rowe, who is not an adherent of any of the Adventist traditions, has done Miller and the story of Adventism a great service by demythologizing apologetics and hagiography and presenting Miller within his historical, cultural, and religious milieu.

*God's Strange Work* is neatly organized into eight chapters with a foreword (by Mark Noll) and an epilogue. In chapter 1 Rowe sets the stage for the biography by telling the story of Miller's family. Service in the military and instability in Massachusetts created an opportunity for his family to move

west. It also created new opportunities for Bill, as his family knew him. A quest for knowledge coupled with his family's political interests shaped the young man (10-14). Some of Bill's patrons included James C. Witherill, an active Democrat-Republican who would later serve in Congress, Alexander Cruikshanks, a successful local farmer, and the infamous firebrand, Matthew Lyon (16-17). The books he read beckoned him to a wider world; they also took him away from his family. Internal family conflict, in particular with his father, led him to relocate to Poultney, Vermont, after he married Lucy Smith, a childhood friend, in 1803. Chapter 2 showcases the young couple's upward social path. Poultney also offered more opportunities for such an ambitious couple. Miller was active in the Masonic lodge (27, 91-94), set his political career aflame by writing a patriotic poem, and held a variety of local political offices (27-31).

Rowe's analysis of Miller's journey into Deism is especially insightful. Although Miller rejected his religious upbringing, he was far from a systematic thinker in terms of his acceptance of deism. Miller rejected the optimistic assumptions of human nature, but instead "sought returns—assurance, understanding, predictability, and a measure of control over himself" that showed his rebellion toward revealed religion (39-41). His frustration with human nature and politics led him into the military, a family preoccupation, where the author continues the story in chapter 3. Miller hoped war would "reveal the nobler qualities of men" but he was soon disappointed (49). It is here that we begin to see Miller's inner turmoil. Although he escaped harm, five relatives died within an eighteen-month period. As a boy he had determined he could never please God. Now existential questions haunted him. The returns he required of deism failed him. Miller wrestled with his personal behavior as well as his rebellion from his family and its ensuing guilt that led him back to both his family and God (63).

"A feast of reason," the title of chapter 4, documents Miller's spiritual evolution that "reflected a transformation in the religious culture of the young republic" (69). The capacity of Miller to reconcile reason and revelation marked a rapprochement of republican ideology, commonsense ethical reason, and Christian theology. His homocentric conversion furthermore mirrored the "evangelical tidal wave" spreading across the nation (71). Conversion required personal Bible study. For Miller the Bible became his "chief study." Rowe explores the rich background for apocalypticism that likely contributed to Miller's interest in prophecy (75-81). Ultimately Miller came to the conclusion that Christ would return "on or before 1843."

During his tenure in Low Hampton Miller continued his upward mobility in social status (85-87). Miller continued to imbibe the evangelical revival by participating in missions, revival, and reform. By 1831 Miller began to make his views public, although Rowe's deconstruction of the legendary story of Miller going into the nearby maple grove may challenge some Seventh-day Adventist apologists (97-100). However it happened, Miller felt called to "tell it to the world" (chap. 5). Miller had a democratic appeal that came from his ability to relate to the common person. His simple messages were expository,

apologetic, and homiletic, which produced regional excitement (105-109). His message grew wider as he began to write for the *Vermont Telegraph* and published his first booklet. Miller's messages were commodities in the American religious market and he was learning how to market them (115).

The author's down-to-earth portrait shows how Miller's increasing travel strained relations with his own family, led to his suffering from depression, and often left him ill, lonely, and cranky. As the movement grew, his followers began to ascribe to Miller his most enduring title, "Father Miller." Chapter 6 explores the irony of Miller, who had been a rebellious son, becoming the spiritual father to thousands. Millerism was not out of synch with the sentimentality of American secular and religious romanticism during the 1830s (129). Miller's calculated description of the eschaton was designed to evoke strong emotions that had more to do with the heart than with the mind (131).

Miller became angry with the scorn he met. A persistent premonition that he would meet a violent demise grew to the point of paranoia. Rowe's description of Miller's promulgation and subsequent retreat from the fall of Turkey will help to revise the historical record and shows how "empirical elements of his vision," including chronology, were less significant to him than his "commitment to the *idea* of imminent apocalypse" (138, see 135-139). As Miller engaged other ideas such as universalism he was forced to a new understanding of the Millennium, the church, and its mission (146).

As Miller met a new group of workers, described in chapter 7, the movement transformed from Millerism to Adventism (157). Chief among these was Joshua V. Himes who helped Miller market Adventism as a mass movement. Himes mobilized the press, attracted workers, and systematized financing for Adventism's many ventures (161-162). "Miller himself became a commodity to be peddled to admiring supporters" (163).

As Miller's health deteriorated, he increasingly sought refuge at his Low Hampton farm. Although Rowe acknowledges Miller's congestive heart failure and chronic erysipelas, a painful skin condition (169), he does not explore Miller's tremor that increasingly debilitated him throughout his life (described by some as "palsy"). Recent research of Miller's handwriting by Dr. Daniel Giang at Loma Linda University documents that Miller suffered from essential tremor. This was what most likely accentuated Miller's other health maladies. Miller's retirement had an upside: his personal presence would lead to the conversion of his family to Millerism (172). His distance led Himes to exploit Miller as the founder of the movement as Miller further withdrew from making decisions. The relationship between Himes and Miller was obviously complicated yet still cordial as a spiritual father and son. As Miller tried to refrain from date setting, he was ultimately shoved into accepting the October 22 date (188-189). This set the stage for the Great Disappointment, the focus of chapter 8. As Adventism disintegrated Miller continued to wait patiently for the eschaton.

In the epilogue Rowe concludes that Millerism was about conversion. This "strange work" (hence the title of the book) began with God's transformation of Miller's own heart.

I would recommend this book especially to Seventh-day Adventist scholars because Miller never became a Sabbatarian Adventist. In many denominational texts Seventh-day Adventists begin with Miller and transition quickly to Hiram Edson, O. R. L. Crosier, and F. B. Hahn, and the rise of the Sabbath and Sanctuary Conferences with little if any discussion about the fate of Miller. He died only five years after the Great Disappointment. Ellen White attributes Miller's non-acceptance of the Sabbath to the influence of Himes and his cohorts who closed Miller's eyes to progressive truth. She wrote, however, that angels guard "the precious dust of this servant of God" until the resurrection (White, *Early Writings*, 258). Encouraged by her endorsement, Seventh-day Adventists since that time have adopted Miller as one of their pioneers. This helps to explain why Seventh-day Adventists, under the aegis of Adventist Historic Properties (now Adventist Heritage Ministry), beginning in 1983, have preserved his home as a museum (Rowe states that during Miller's own lifetime his farm had already become a shrine).

Rowe does a great service in that he portrays Miller as the Sunday-keeping preacher, hog-raising farmer, tobacco-using man that he was. This may offend the sensibilities of some Seventh-day Adventists, but ultimately our understanding will be more accurate as a result of Rowe's keen historical and cultural analysis. Finally, this book has a use in the classroom. As a relatively short read, *God's Strange Work* could be assigned as a basic text or supplementary reading for Adventist history courses.

Montrose, Colorado

MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

Skinner, E. Benjamin. *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-day Slavery*. New York: Free Press, 2008. 328 pp. Hardcover, \$26.00.

E. Benjamin Skinner is a graduate of Wesleyan University and a journalist who has reported on important topics from around the globe—Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East—for *Newsweek* International, *Travel + Leisure*, and *Foreign Affairs*. *A Crime So Monstrous* is his first book.

Skinner draws a stark and graphic portrayal of the lingering problem of global slavery. What makes the book so difficult to put down is his ability to weave a pitiful story of the deplorable conditions under which men, women, and children are forced to live in, even in Western nations such as the Netherlands and the United States. Richard Holbrooke, who provides the Foreword to the book notes: "Of course, we all know what slavery is. We've read about it in countless history books, seen it in documentaries and movies. Slavery is awful. Slavery is inhuman. Slavery is dead" (xi). However, the reality is, as Skinner so ably demonstrates, is that "slavery is far from being banished" (xi). Unfortunately, he unabashedly shows that even after the fall of major ideologies that supported slavery (Imperial Great Britain prior to 1807, the United States of America prior to 1863, Imperial Japan prior to World War II, the Hitler regime), "There are more slaves today than at any point in human history" (xv). A conservative figure, Skinner believes, is 27 million slaves, a number pointed out by Kevin Bales in his 1999 book