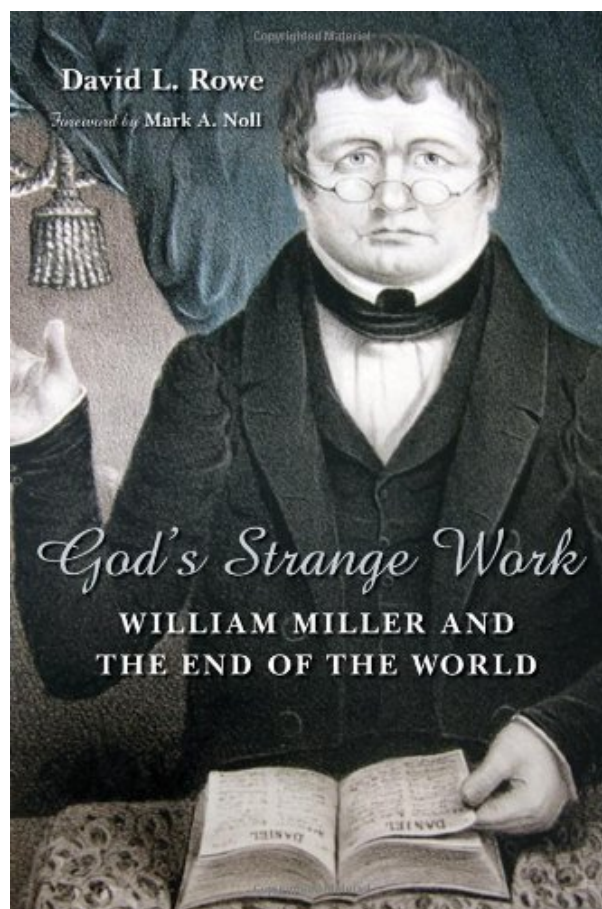
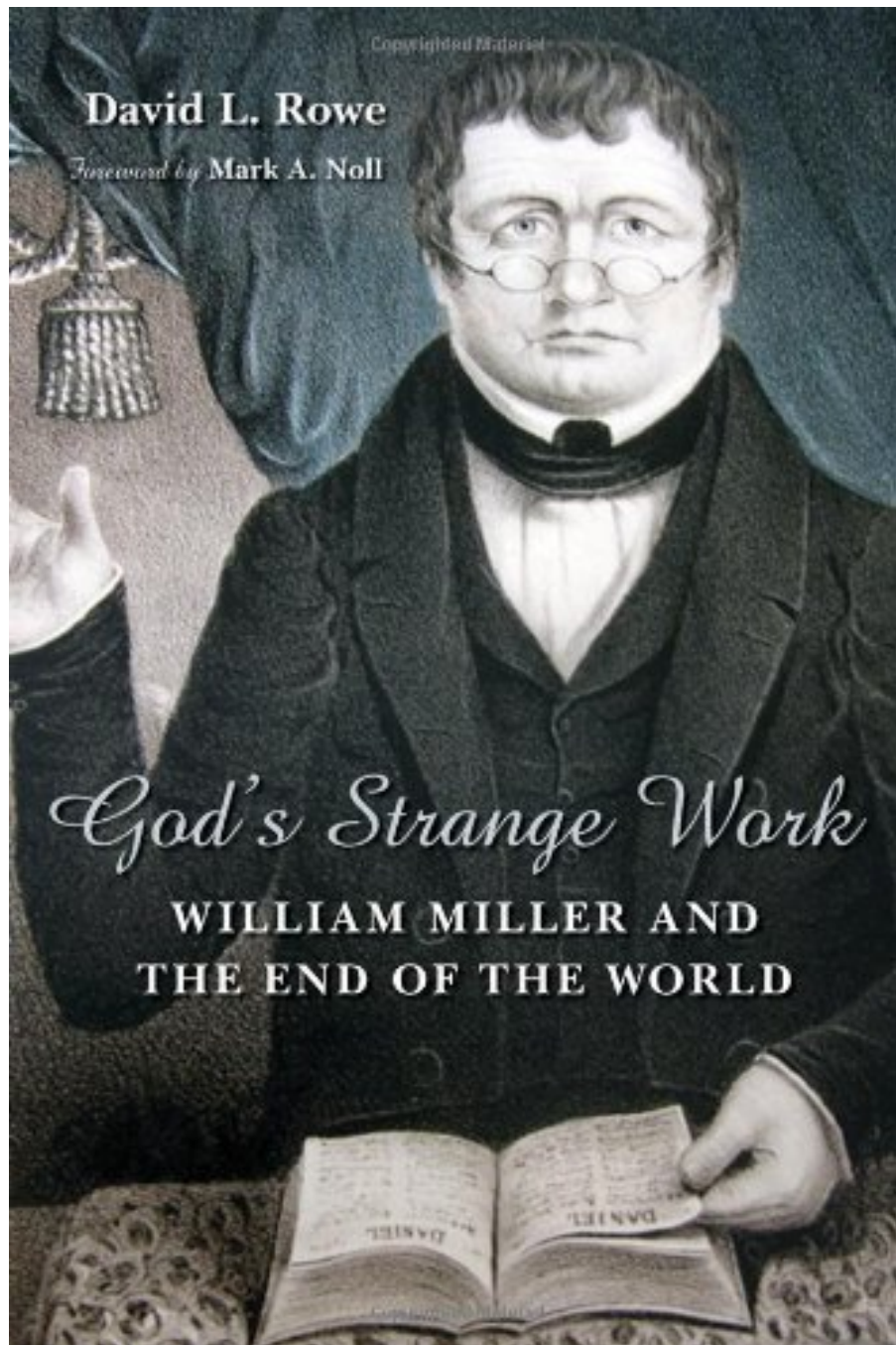


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AND THE END OF THE WORLD (LIBRARY
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ROWE**



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Review

Paul S. Boyer

— author of *When Time Shall Be No More*

"Rejecting the myths and stereotypes of popular lore, David L. Rowe in this astute biography employs psychological insight and a wealth of primary sources to present William Miller as a fully rounded human being. While vividly evoking Miller's distinctive personality, Rowe also convincingly portrays him as a representative product of a post-Revolutionary America caught up in political, social, and religious ferment. I warmly recommend this fine study."

Choice

"This is the definitive study of Miller, one of the key religious figures to emerge in 19th-century America. Essential. (Four Stars)"

About the Author

Rowe teaches at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

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GOD'S STRANGE WORK: WILLIAM MILLER AND THE END OF THE WORLD (LIBRARY OF RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY) BY DAVID L. ROWE PDF

The fascinating story of an intriguing -- and little understood -- religious figure in nineteenth-century America Calvinist Baptist preacher William Miller (1782 - 1849) was the first prominent American popularizer of using biblical prophecy to determine a specific and imminent time for Christ's return to earth. On October 22, 1844 -- a day known as the Great Disappointment - he and his followers gave away their possessions, abandoned their work, donned white robes, and ascended to rooftops and hilltops to await a Second Coming that never actually came. Or so the story goes. The truth -- revealed here -- is far less titillating but just as captivating. In fact, David Rowe argues, Miller was in many ways a mainstream, even typical figure of his time. Reflecting Rowe's meticulous research throughout, *God's Strange Work* does more than tell one man's remarkable story. It encapsulates the broader history of American Christianity in the time period and sets the stage for many significant later developments: the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the tenets of various well-known new religious movements, and even the enduring American fascination with end-times prophecy.

Rowe rescues Miller from the fringes and places him where he rightly belongs -- in the center of American religious history.

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Rowe teaches at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Most helpful customer reviews

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful.

A Benchmark Biography

By Michael W. Campbell

As a historian of American religion and Adventism I am pleased with this new biography of William Miller. Rowe is the first person I am aware of to meticulously go through all of Miller's extant papers--in places as diverse as Aurora University, Colgate Seminary in Rochester, and the papers discovered in the William Miller home now owned by Adventist Heritage Ministry. 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. Some Seventh-day Adventists may be surprised as they read this biography to learn that Miller never became a Sabbatarian, yet I think an adherent of any Adventist tradition will find this a sympathetic yet compelling biography of the founder of a major religious movement. What is surprising is that no historian has written a biography sooner. The good news is that this biography was worth the wait!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

The first scholarly biography of a seminal figure in American religious history

By John in Orlando

Incredibly, this 2008 publication is the first scholarly biography of William Miller, the Deist-turned-Baptist farmer who touched off one of the major religious movements of the Second Great Awakening. David L. Rowe's book, therefore, fills a significant gap in the literature on this period of American history, and on American religion in general. It's good, then, that it also happens to be a work of quality, one that sympathetically portrays its subject without whitewashing his flaws, and one that at the end leaves the reader with the sense of having encountered a fully-rounded human being--of having "gotten to know" Miller. Though it builds on the work of earlier scholars, including Mark Noll, Whitney Cross, and George Knight, the work impresses particularly in its extensive primary research, with much of the narrative propelled by quotations from Miller's own letters and from contemporary sources both sympathetic to and critical of Miller.

At 235 pages, the text is relatively slim. One wonders if a bit more heft in the volume would have allowed Rowe to draw out further some of his interesting insights into Miller's development. As a student of the intellectual history of this period--and as a teacher constantly looking for new approaches to share with my students--I found particularly interesting Rowe's discussion of Miller's thought as representing the transition from the objective, orderly, and systematic worldview of the Enlightenment to the personalism and affective emphases of romanticism. For instance, Rowe quotes two different descriptions by Miller, written three years apart, of his own conversion; the first emphasizes the Bible as rule and light, while the second finds in Jesus a comfort and a friend. Unfortunately, this discussion is fairly brief. Granted that the book is a biography and not an intellectual history, I would still have relished a more thorough reflection on this aspect of Miller's development.

Rowe's treatment of the Great Disappointment of Oct. 22, 1844, at first struck me as too restrained. I had expected, I suppose, that this event would take up more space in a book like this than it actually does. In reality, though, Rowe gives us a very good (if rather brief) picture of the Disappointment itself while also exploring the conflicts within Miller himself and within his movement in the aftermath. The picture of Miller that emerges here--a man whose diffidence and uncertainty helped to create much of the confusion and many of the divisions among his followers--is very compelling. Disciples like Joshua Himes, though sometimes frustrated by these qualities in Miller, remained faithful to the cause, and Rowe's portrayal of this relationship in particular is quite moving.

God's Strange Work is highly recommended for students of American religion and American history. Psychologists and philosophers of religious experience will also find it useful. It contains much that is of

benefit to scholars, but it is clearly meant to be a book suitable for non-specialists as well.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Definitely worth reading more than once!

By Marcus D. Johnson

As a former Seventh-day Adventist, when I decided recently to explore the faith tradition that has had a profound impact on who I am, my first criterion was that I read a work that was not written by an SDA. Not that I despise Adventist writings, but I needed to have my heritage explained by someone who didn't feel compelled to defend the faith.

Enter David Rowe, whose book bores beneath the origin story of Millerism and reveals a man: a war veteran, father, husband, son, brother, constable, farmer, and anti-abolitionist. Thanks to Rowe, Miller becomes a human being whose search for hope in a broken world brought him to the forefront of one of the least understood movements of 19th century American evangelicalism, yet nonetheless profound in the impact it left when it famously fell apart after the Great Disappointment of 1844. I think every person who reads this book will find something in William Miller that will resonate with them as well, regardless of faith tradition. You may not agree with Miller or appreciate the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but you don't have to in order to be floored by the narrative presented in this book.

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