

likely that the present caution in time-setting for Christ's return (and that caution is by no means universal) is related to Christ's statement that no one knows the day or hour (Matt. 24:36). And third, dispensationalism/pretribulationism did not emerge as a reaction against Millerism. It was already in the making in Ireland and England before Miller began his public preaching.

This volume, which in spite of its limited perspective and historical lapses is in many respects excellent (and certainly worth reading), concludes with a short "Epilogue" entitled "Waco and Beyond" (225-228), an extensive section of endnotes (229-282), a fairly comprehensive "Bibliography" (283-303), and a useful "Index" (305-314). In view of the amount of attention given in the volume to Millerism and to Hal Lindsey, the bibliography could well have included further titles dealing with pertinent historical backgrounds and settings. Surprising is the fact, for instance, that the basic works on the history of Dispensationalism by Clarence Bass and Norman Krause are omitted.

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KENNETH A. STRAND

Peterson, Eugene H. *Take and Read. Spiritual Reading: An Annotated List*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996. xiii + 122 pp. Paper, \$10.00.

Eugene H. Peterson is professor of spiritual theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He was founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland, where he ministered for twenty-nine years. He is a writer and a poet whose works portray a prayerful man. Among his many books are *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*; *Five Smooth Stones of Pastoral Work*; *Working the Angles*; and *The Contemplative Pastor*. In his volumes written specifically for pastors, Peterson calls pastors to a deepened spirituality that will strengthen their own ministry.

Take and Read is intended both to encourage the activity of spiritual reading, and to introduce some of the author's "friends." In this age when one can choose from many Christian book sources and find a plethora of "good" reading material, it is easy to become engaged in the never-ending search for something new. Peterson offers his list of old "friends" and invites his readers to read devotionally and develop their own lists of "friends" for their spiritual journey. He describes the books that he has returned to over and over again because of their depth and helpfulness in his own seeking God.

Take and Read is exactly as it is subtitled: *Spiritual Reading: An Annotated List*. "Lists like this have a way of expanding unconsciously," says the author, "so I have imposed a limit on myself: twenty categories of not less than ten, and not more than sixteen books in each. . . . What they all have in common is that they have been used by our Lord the Spirit to deepen and nourish my life in Christ, sometimes in ways they almost certainly did not intend" (xii-xiii). Peterson's categories include Basics, Classics, Worship/Liturgy, Spiritual Formation, Poets, and History. He includes a broad spectrum of authors—from Augustine and C. S. Lewis to William Faulkner and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Since for him reading "eventually turns into writing," his concluding category describes some of his own works. Each category is introduced with personal stories that portray the significance of the particular category in Peterson's spiritual growth. The volume

concludes with a five-page list of authors, and a six-page list of books.

As I read through the introductions and annotations, I had a deep sense of listening in as Peterson shared his faith. I was challenged to look at my own faith, to review the written sources of my own spiritual journey, and to begin creating my personal annotated list.

This book would be helpful for any person who is intentional in his or her own spiritual journey. For spiritual leaders at all levels it would provide not only personal insight, but a significant resource for ministry.

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DELCEY KUHLMAN

Rodriguez, Angel Manuel. *Esther: A Theological Approach*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1995. 162 pp. \$16.99.

The book of Esther has always intrigued its readers. From the ancient rabbis who questioned its place in the Holy Scriptures on account of its omission of the name of God to the modern interpreter who stumbles on its ethical problems, the story remains puzzling and disturbing.

Using the "close reading" approach, Rodriguez follows the text through its unexpected turns and surprises. To the vexing problem of the absence of the reference to God, Rodriguez proposes the paradoxical solution of a theological intention. Indeed, this systematic silence about God appears "even when the context demands it" (18). Cultic actions and expressions which are usually associated with God deliberately avoid mentioning His name. Rodriguez explains the intentionality of this "literary device" from the historical setting of the book. As the exilic people had experienced God's silence, both through the catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem and in their subsequent oppression, they began to wonder about and even doubt God's faithful and powerful providence. The writer of the story uses this silence about God to show that in spite of His apparent absence, God is actually still present. Connections with other biblical stories of God's miracles, especially Joseph and the Exodus, and the many coincidences within the story of Esther itself, skillfully brought out through humor and irony, undoubtedly betray God's intelligent control over the events. Thus the book of Esther witnesses both to God's transcendence and immanence. The absence of God hints at His transcendence while His actual presence with His people and within history hints at His immanence. The lesson concerns Jews who may have thought that God is to be found only in religious acts, as well as "atheistic" pagans who ignored God's existence. Rodriguez rightly emphasizes the universal impact of the book. Yet his appeal to the exilic background of the book to justify its silence about God is not totally satisfactory. The Song of Songs is another book of the Old Testament which omits mentioning the name of God, a case which Rodriguez does not seem to recognize. In this instance, Rodriguez' explanation would hardly fit. The same holds with a large portion of wisdom literature with its anthropocentric character and its relatively few references to God, to revelation, or to covenant; and there the omission of God's name stems from different grounds. Rodriguez is aware of the wisdom connection; yet his treatment on this matter is too furtive. Also some attention to biblical texts dealing with the issue of God's silence may have been rewarding. The book of Job and some shouts