

Bible Cause shows that even a simple task, such as distributing Bibles, is necessarily tied to larger theological and political idea. How that played out in the ABS makes this book worth reading. How the book connects to larger historical themes is masterful. In Fea's capable hands, *The Bible Cause* is an illuminating walking tour of the last two hundred years of American church history.

Matthew C. Shrader

American Colonial History: Clashing Cultures and Faiths, by Thomas S. Kidd. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. 329 pp. \$20.00.

Astonishing changes took place on the continent of North America between the years 1492 and 1763. Prior to Columbus a state of constant social, religious, and cultural flux existed. European presence was nearly nil and multitudes of Native American tribes were spread from the Pacific to the Atlantic. By the time the Seven Years War ended, Britain had laid claim to the most strategic parts of colonial America. European settlements were spread from California to Connecticut. So much had changed that enough American colonists felt they could liberate themselves from their European rule. How the continent came to this point is the subject of Thomas Kidd's *American Colonial History*. Kidd completed his Ph.D. under George Marsden at Notre Dame and is distinguished professor of history at Baylor University. He is a prolific author whose previous works include *Baptists in America* (with Barry Hankins), *George Whitefield, God of Liberty*, and *The Great Awakening*.

This book primarily serves as a textbook and gives a general history, yet it still makes an argument. Kidd sees the themes of *religion* and *conflict* as pervasive throughout American colonial history. The underlying thesis is that when people came together in the New World conflict was inevitable. And, within the historical era studied, religion dwelt at the center of the conflict. Kidd explains that "many in early America interpreted their interactions with their rivals, including violence and enslavement, through the lens of religion and spiritual beliefs" (xi). Kidd continues by saying he hopes his readers "will come away with a distinct sense of how pervasive religion was in colonial America, and of the varied functions that religion served in the era, functions that were variously inspiring and appalling" (xii).

Kidd spends chapter one describing the pre-1492 North American world. Europeans brought stability (eventually) to the region, but they also brought disease and radically different social, political, and religious ideals. Chapter two discusses the Spanish reach in Mexico, Texas, and across into California. Chapter three chronicles the French work that took place mostly in Canada. Both the Spanish and the French found a foothold in these areas, but it came at great cost to themselves and to Native Americans. Chapters four through seven explain the colonies

from New England to the Colonial South and the Caribbean. Kidd shows in these chapters that though the English were not the only European colonizers in these areas, they were the strongest. Continual conflict existed between Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans and religion again played a central role in making sense of all that was happening.

Chapter eight details the contributions of Africans to this history. African slaves were the major (though not only) work force. The North had them, but their concentration grew the farther South one went. Chapter nine recounts how the Glorious Revolution in England (and a burgeoning consumer culture) brought stability. The colonies became more engrained into English life while also growing more independent. Chapter ten presents the Great Awakening and how it helped create a public stage for democratic notions in religion and culture. Chapters eleven and twelve bring to life the understudied areas of the Anglo-American backcountry and the early American West. Tensions that existed in Europe, both religious and political, were present in these areas and were often exacerbated by complex relations with Native Americans.

Conflict grew until the fulcrum point of the Seven Years' War, which is covered in chapter thirteen. When the British won, they gained control of much of North America. Native Americans had less trust for (and were likewise trusted less by) the British. The Seven Years' War, the Great Awakening, and British political overreach like the 1765 Stamp Act all significantly influenced those colonists who would push for independence. According to Kidd, this shows that in colonial North America the major themes were "the salience of religion, the impulse of empire, and the ubiquity of conflict between different peoples and cultures" (297). In sum, "Colonial American history forms a dizzying kaleidoscope of cultures, faiths, and tragic clashes of incompatible powers" (297).

For those interested in the history of Christianity in America, a great strength of the book is not only that it gives some of the early colonial religious history but also that it lays open various influences that fed the stream of Christianity in the early United States. The Protestant and Roman Catholic rivalry, the Puritans, the Great Awakening, and the democratic impulse are a few of the important religious moments that have had long influence. And there are other important lessons that can be learned from this book. For instance, Kidd amply demonstrates that many of the same people who came for opportunities and fought hard for them, could also deny them to others. The bravery and love of the many missionary martyrs provide yet further lessons for the reader.

The book certainly has the textbook feel but it also contains the readability that is a trademark of Kidd. Each chapter makes broad points about the significance of what is happening but each chapter also includes illustrative anecdotes. Helpfully, each chapter concludes with multiple excerpts from primary source material. These excerpts help to draw the reader into the past and hear how people such as Columbus, de Soto, William Penn, George Whitefield, and numerous Native

Americans all understood what they were living through. If the reader is looking for a textbook to bolster his understanding of the settling and birth of the United States, or for a good historical read, *American Colonial History* is highly recommended. However, those looking for a religious survey should take note that the book does not focus singularly on the religious side of things. But Kidd is correct when he posits the ubiquity of religion—a point that conversely suggests the importance of secular history for American religious history.

Matthew C. Shrader

He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God, by Michael J. Vlach. Silverton, OR: Lampion Press. 638 pp. \$39.95.

If one wishes to really grasp the big picture of the Bible, one has to understand four areas of doctrine: salvation, dispensationalism, the Biblical covenants, and the kingdom of God. Michael Vlach's new book, *He Will Reign Forever*, is an excellent volume to get started in understanding the covenants and the kingdom.

Vlach embraces a holistic view of the kingdom, showing how Scripture from Genesis through Revelation explains God's unified program of restoring and even surpassing the glory of Eden. He argues that Eden's glory was lost after the fall of mankind into sin, resulting in an abridged ability to rule as vice-regent over God's creation. Vlach offers a specific emphasis on the heavenly state as the eternal continuation of the kingdom program that began with Adam and culminates the ages of history in the millennium.

He Will Reign Forever is akin to an expansion and update of Alva J. McClain's *Greatness of the Kingdom* (originally published in 1959). It is somewhat longer than McClain's work, but of substantially the same view on the kingdom. For example, Vlach concurs with McClain on the need for a ruler, a realm (subjects and territory), and an effective regnal function for a kingdom to be a valid kingdom. He also seems to agree with McClain's re-offer of the kingdom in Acts 3.

The outline of the book is clear and straightforward. Vlach introduces God's kingdom program, then walks the reader through every relevant section of the Old Testament in canonical order, then each portion of the New Testament, and then addresses four theological issues as they relate the kingdom program.

Vlach's theological stance is conservative, dispensational, and premillennial. He is quite consistent in interpreting the Scripture according to its plain meaning. Vlach describes his view of the kingdom as a "new creation" model (11–16). This model states that the kingdom will be like our present existence but much improved, and eternal life, in turn, is a completely perfect extension of the kingdom into eternity. The perfection will mean there are no negative qualities associated with the