

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

eternal state—like sin, death, disease, corruption, violence, natural disasters, etc. The new creation model also emphasizes that eternal life will be physical, with a material new earth, physical bodies, as well as an international society with nations living at perfect harmony with one another. Weighing against the “new creation” terminology is the fact that Vlach understands the new heavens and earth to be restored, not created-from-scratch. Thus, his view might be better called a “complete restoration model.”

He Will Reign Forever is not written in a polemical style. It is a positive presentation of the doctrine of the kingdom of God throughout Scripture. However, Vlach critiques replacement theology, inaugurated eschatology, amillennialism, and progressive dispensationalism at the appropriate points throughout the work. He brings not just a select few biblical texts to the table to support his case, but many.

Christians who have “spiritualized” the Old Testament promises would do very well to ponder the massive amount of biblical data that Vlach marshals to demonstrate that God’s promises to Israel will be fulfilled literally—including promises regarding Israel and its land, Israel’s national government, and Israel’s relationship with other nations in the coming ages. Vlach’s book impresses the reader with how the New Testament and Old Testament harmonize straightforwardly and perfectly in this regard. He also displays how the Old Testament in itself is tightly unified around the themes of covenant blessing and cursing, and how those work out in the kingdom program.

Vlach also makes a compelling case that there must be an intermediate kingdom between the present age and the eternal state, simply because the Bible describes multiple co-existing conditions that don’t fit either now or eternity. Conditions such as international harmony, a Messianic reign over the world from Jerusalem, a substantial lifting of the curse (but not an elimination of it), the presence of death but with increased lifespans, the Messiah’s settling of disputes between nations, the punishment of nations that don’t come up to Jerusalem to worship, and the effects of aging on the human body all point to a period of time that is quite different from both the church age and from the perfection of eternity. Vlach adds to this a good discussion of the primary millennial texts like Revelation 20 and Isaiah 65, but his case does not rest on just a few texts.

Vlach seems a bit inconsistent with his literal hermeneutical principle when he identifies David as the Messiah (Ezekiel 34:23–24, pp. 198–99) and Zerubbabel the same way (Haggai 2:20–23, p. 237). He does not explain how the alternative view cannot work—that these could be actually resurrected King David and Zerubbabel reigning in the future kingdom alongside of the Messiah. Vlach is spot on when he criticizes “already/not yet” formulations as often being vague (570). He clearly identifies his position, but does not seem willing to drop the already/not yet terminology entirely.

Vlach’s book is thought-provoking, comprehensive, well-organized, and clearly written. With just over 50 pages of bibliography and indices,

this volume will prove to be a valuable reference work for students of the Kingdom. It is a “must read” on the subject.

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