

Ministerial Authority



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From the Editor

Navigating its way between the Scylla of authoritarianism and the Charybdis of egalitarianism is the uniquely biblical idea of the servant leader—ordained servant. T. David Gordon’s “Reflections on Ministerial Authority” reminds ministers of the important limits of ministerial authority. In turn these limits remind us that we are servants of the Lord by being servants of his Word.

David Noe presents his translation of the second part of “Beza on the Trinity.” This will be published as one piece in the 2018 print edition.

Diane Olinger provides a review article entitled “Roger Williams: Servant of the Public Good.” In it she examines James A. Warren’s *God, War, and Providence*, an illuminating book that shows that Williams’s diplomacy toward the Native Americans was driven by his Christian faith and his view of the proper relationship between church and civil authority.

John Mahaffy reviews Aimee Byrd’s *Why Can’t We Be Friends? Avoidance Is Not Purity*. Byrd reminds us that avoiding sexual temptation does not define the male-female relationship for Christians, rather our union with Christ does. In marriage, servant leadership of the husband sets the tone of the relationship as brother and sister in Christ.

I review Andy Crouch’s *The Tech-wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*. Crouch, the editor of *Christianity Today*, presents a practical guide for families to better navigate the electronic environment.

Our poem this month, William Cowper’s “Ode, Supposed to be Written on the Marriage of a Friend,” is not an easy one. Like much good poetry it takes close reading, reading aloud, mixed with some classical learning (I had to look things up). While distractedness, along with other cultural prejudices unsuits for thoughtful reading, especially the concentrated richness of poetry, it is the discipline of such reading that helps us regain the focus we are losing.

Apart from his hymns Cowper has been largely neglected of late. His corpus is immense, his learning far ranging, and his theology and piety are superb. He is a treasure waiting to be enjoyed.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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Ordained Servant exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

Servant Work

Reflections about Ministerial Authority

by T. David Gordon

This brief essay is entitled “Reflections” about ministerial authority, because that is what it is; nothing more and nothing less. It is not, for instance, a comprehensive study of the doctrine of ministerial authority (though some pertinent authorities are cited), nor is it a biblical theology of rule/authority (though some of that sneaks in also). “Reflections” also conveys something not conveyed by terms such as “research” or “study;” “reflections” includes one’s observations as well as what one has learned from books and from The Book. I was ordained as a ruling elder in 1982, and four years later was ordained as a minister, so I have been in and around church sessions, presbyteries, and general assemblies for a few decades, and my “reflections” are, of course, enlightened (or darkened?) by such experience.

In some sense, the idea of ministerial authority is almost an oxymoron, because we do not ordinarily think of “servants” as exercising authority. Paul most frequently refers to his office as that of “apostle” (ἀπόστολος, *apostolos*, eighteen times), one who is sent or commissioned by someone else to perform some service on his behalf. His next most frequent term is some form of “servant” (διάκονος, *diakonos*, seven times and δοῦλος, *doulos*, five times); more frequently than “herald/preacher” (κῆρυξ, *kerux*, two times) or “steward/manager” (οἰκονόμος, *oikonomos*, one time). Notably, Paul never referred to himself as “head,” although he employed the term (κεφαλῆ, *kephalē*) five times to refer to Christ. Therefore, in some senses, to discuss ministerial authority is to discuss its limits, to discuss how it can be that “servants” exercise rule or authority.

Ministerial Authority Is a Sub-Set of Ecclesiastical Authority

Any conversation about ministerial authority must understand itself as a sub-branch of ecclesiastical authority. Ministers are themselves “servants of Christ” (Rom. 1:1; 2 Cor. 11:23; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:7; 1 Tim. 4:6; Titus 1:1), submissive to Christ’s purposes for them; they are, in their basic office, *under* authority, more so than exercisers *of* authority. They are Christ’s agents for caring for his flock; and have no authority beyond legitimate ecclesiastical authority. Note how our Presbyterian standards restrict the exercise of church authority, with one of them (Form of Government 3.3) referring to another (WCF 20:2) in so restricting church authority:

3. All church power is only ministerial and declarative, for the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. No church judicatory may presume to bind the conscience by making laws on the basis of its own authority; all its decisions should be founded upon the Word of God. “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in

anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship” (WCF 20.2).¹

If “no church judicatory may presume to bind the conscience by making laws on the basis of its own authority,” then surely no individual minister may do so. Ministers *administer* the ordinances of Christ (“only ministerial . . .”) and *declare* (“ . . . and declarative”) what the Holy Scriptures, as the “only infallible rule of faith and practice,” require or permit. They are not authorized to go beyond this. Interestingly, church judicatories ordinarily get this right, though some of their individual ministers get it wrong. An OPC session may deliberate whether parents must home-school their children, private-school their children, or public-school their children; and, ordinarily, it realizes that the Holy Scriptures have nothing to say about compulsory education at all (and Robert Lewis Dabney opposed the practice when the Virginia legislature considered it), and so it rightly takes no position. Ministers of such churches, however, sometimes declare something about the matter from the pulpit, as though the most public and consequential office of the church was free to “declare” things which the church judicatories are *not* free to declare. Such ministers confuse the Christian pulpit with the so-called “bully pulpit” of public policy-makers, and abuse the declarative power given by Christ to the church and its ministers.

The Church’s Power to Enforce Is Spiritual, Not Temporal

In 1 Corinthians 5 the church is commanded to hand the impenitent individual over to Satan, not to the civil authority, even regarding a sin that, under the Mosaic laws, was a serious, possibly capital, crime (1 Cor. 5:1; Lev. 18:8; Deut. 22:30, 27:20). Following this apostolic example, the majority of the Presbyterian churches have refused to employ the civil authority’s power to enforce ecclesiastical laws. One implication of this doctrine of the spiritual nature of church power is this: *Persuasion* is always more consonant with the progress of God’s kingdom than *coercion*. The civil authorities employ coercive power by their very nature; if their citizens disobey their laws, they may fine them, imprison them, and even (in extreme cases) execute them. Ecclesiastical authorities refuse to employ any coercive power; they “declare” the will of God revealed in Holy Scripture, patiently instructing the flock, and equally patiently answering questions that are seriously proposed. Coerced “obedience” is not the same thing as heartfelt obedience; the latter of which only comes through patient instruction and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The Church’s Declarative Power Is Not Inerrant

WCF 31.3 says: “All synods or councils, since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both.” The church, then, has a responsibility to confess the faith in a manner which *recognizes* her own fallibility in so confessing. If even the highest courts of the church (general assembly) “may err; and many have erred,” then surely the individual ministers who jointly compose such assemblies “may err; and many have erred.” Even in the exercise of our proper office; to declare the Word of God, we should do so with entire awareness that our opinions *about* the Word of God are partial and fallible, and therefore not to be made “the rule of faith or practice.”

¹ Form of Government 3.3, *The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, PA: Committee on Christian Education, 2015), 4–5.

Church Power Is Both Joint and Several

The Scottish *Second Book of Discipline* in its very first page made a distinction which continues to appear in Presbyterian books of order and government: the distinction between joint power and several power.² In the OPC, this distinction is articulated at Form of Government 3.2 (emphases added):

Those who join in exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction are the ministers of the Word or teaching elders, and other church governors, commonly called ruling elders. They alone must exercise this authority by delegation from Christ, since according to the New Testament these are the only permanent officers of the church with gifts for such rule. Ruling elders and teaching elders *join* in congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies, for those who share gifts for rule from Christ must exercise these gifts *jointly* not only in the fellowship of the saints in one place but also for the edification of all the saints in larger areas.³

The officers, in whose hand church power is effectively exercised, sometimes exercise that power “severed” from one another, acting as individuals; and sometimes they exercise power joined together in church courts, exercising authority over those under their jurisdiction. Thus, an individual minister teaches and preaches both privately and publicly, exercising the keys of the kingdom (calling people to faith and repentance) *severally*. His words are his. The officers of the church *assembled*, however, frame, modify, and approve the church’s confession, acting *jointly*. Acting jointly, the officers may determine that “lascivious . . . dancings” is sin (WLC 139); while acting severally, a given minister might very well counsel a member of his flock that his (or her) *particular* dancing is indeed lascivious, and should cease, while another member of the same session may declare that the dancing is not lascivious. Such counsel is private counsel; it is church power *severally* administered. If the individual does not heed the counsel, and a trial ensues, only at the end of the trial has the church acted *jointly* to determine the matter.

Misrule occasionally attends confusion about joint and several power. Some Sessions have adopted (in practice if not in law) the practice of what they call “rule by consensus.” What such rule ordinarily turns out to be is brow-beating session members who are in the minority. The entire beauty of our form of government is rule by plurality; and the beauty inherent in plurality is that there is more wisdom (ordinarily?) in a group than in an individual. If individuals are pressured into conforming their opinions to the opinions of others, we sacrifice the most important aspect of our form of government. Sessions need not have unanimity; it is preferable that on occasion they do not have unanimity, because this indicates that our form of plural government is still working, and that people recognize (and respect) the difference between joint and several power.

² “This power is diverslie usit: For sumtyme it is severally exercisit, chiefly by the teachers, sumtyme conjunctly be mutuall consent of them that beir the office and charge, efter the forme of judgment. The former is commonly callit *potestas ordinis*, and the uthter *potestas jurisdictionis*. These two kinds of power have both one authority, one ground, one finall cause, but are different in the manner and forme of execution, as is evident be the speiking of our Master in the 16 and 19 of Matthew.” (Chapter one, sections 7 and 8). From the edition published as an appendix in Stuart Robinson, *The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1858).

³ The Form of Government 3.3, 4.

The Commend/Command Distinction

Sessions and ministers are routinely asked for their counsel on a number of matters; for some of these matters, there is no specific biblical information. This does not mean, however, that sessions and ministers may offer no counsel; they not only may offer counsel, they ought to offer counsel in such circumstances, as long as they indicate clearly that their counsel is informed by natural wisdom, and not from the Holy Scriptures. If parents ask a minister or session for advice regarding a child who is applying to college or university, such advice should be freely given, in accord with the wisdom and light the minister or other elders have. Should the child attend a Christian college or a secular university? To what degree does the amount of debt incurred influence the decision? These are valid, important questions, and ministers and elders should freely offer the best counsel they can provide, as long as they indicate that they are not declaring biblical truth. My elders and I called this the “commend/command distinction.” We attempted to distinguish obedience to divine laws—disclosed in Scripture—from consideration of human wisdom. We developed the habit of answering many requests for our counsel with words to this effect: “To my knowledge, Holy Scripture does not address this specific question. However, here are a few matters you should probably consider in the process of making your decision...”

Ministers May Fail by Over-Exercising or Under-Exercising Their Authority (Timothy?)

According to the biblical witness, the human was made to be a ruled ruler; ruled by God, and exercising rule over the material order. Submissive to God’s rule, the human was entrusted with responsibility to govern other aspects of the created order. Our Reformed heritage ordinarily refers to this rule as the Cultural Mandate or the Creation Mandate.

The Fall constituted a revolt against God’s order: Adam governed neither his wife nor the serpent; Eve yielded neither to God nor to Adam. From that time to the present, the fallen human swings—pendulum-like—from one extreme to the other, under-ruling where God assigned us legitimate responsibility, and over-ruling where he did not. We tend to abdicate our proper responsibilities, while taking upon ourselves responsibilities that belong to others. Consider David: “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. . . . But David remained at Jerusalem” (2 Sam. 11:1). David the giant-slayer had now become David the coward, David the fat cat. He neglected his first and primary duty as Israel’s prince to defend her; but then he abused and transgressed his authority by sending Uriah to the frontlines to be killed and by taking Uriah’s wife to himself. He *failed* to exercise the rule that kings *ought* to exercise, and he *exercised* rule he had no just authority to exercise.

Not surprisingly, ministers (and church courts) are not free from the human tendency to over-rule and under-rule. I’ve seen ministers abdicate to their sessions, without instruction, decisions regarding public worship, for instance. Yet the minister is the only member of the session ordained as a minister of the Word and Sacrament, and ordinarily the only member of the session with graduate level training in Bible. On such matters of the public administration of Word and Sacrament, the minister *under*-rules if he does not provide biblical instruction. On other matters (e.g., real estate), many ministers take an aggressive (even hostile?) approach to matters for which their seminary training makes them no more expert than other members of the session or congregation. On such matters, the minister *over*-rules by assuming responsibility to which he is not specially called.

Ministers are uniquely entrusted with the ministry of Word and Sacrament, for which they are (or ought to be) qualified, and therefore need not defer to their fellow elders on such matters, but rather should instruct them. Ministers share with their other officers a common knowledge of their region, their city, or town, and ministers do not necessarily know more about these matters than their fellow elders. Ministers should “devote themselves” to apostolic doctrine, in pulpit and in lectern. Any competent, seminary-trained pastor can put together an adult education class in a fraction of the time that most other adults in the church—including many elders and deacons—could do the same. A minister who habitually surrenders pulpit or lectern to others, in order to attend to things that require no seminary education, is probably under-ruling in one area and over-ruling in another.

Ministers and the Flock

Most of the exercise of proper ministerial authority with the flock is feeding them with the true gospel of Christ. If Peter loved Christ, he would prove it by feeding Christ’s lambs (John 21:15–17). There are many members of the body of Christ that can perform many acts of Christian service to other parts of the body; there is ordinarily only one part of the body of Christ who can serve the entire body, at the same time, every week, and that is the minister, who exercises his ministerial authority by declaring to otherwise utterly hopeless sinners that there is a competent Redeemer, who can and will save to the uttermost those who come to God through him. One of the lengthiest, profoundest paragraphs in the Form of Government is chapter 8, which appears in its entirety as a single paragraph, profoundly shaped by John 21, and part of which is this:

Christ’s undershepherd in a local congregation of God’s people . . . is called a pastor. It is his charge *to feed and tend the flock* as Christ’s minister and with the other elders to lead them in all the service of Christ. It is his task to conduct the public worship of God; to *pray for and with Christ’s flock* as the mouth of the people unto God; *to feed the flock by the public reading and preaching of the Word of God*, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, comfort, and evangelize, expounding and applying the truth of Scripture with ministerial authority, as a diligent workman approved by God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God. (emphasis added)⁴

Under-ruling ministers neglect parts of this to do other things; over-ruling ministers do other things, neglecting parts of this in the process.

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⁴ Ibid., 11.

ServantClassics

Beza on the Trinity, part 2

by David C. Noe

The following excerpt was translated from Theodore Beza's *The Unity of the Divine Essence and the Three Persons Subsisting in It, Against the Arians' Homoiousios*, published in Geneva, March 19, 1565 (the fourteenth day before the calends of April). It is a five-page introduction to his *Theses or Axioms on the Trinity of the Persons and Unity of the Essence*, with which it was published. The text is from *Tractationes Theologicae Bezae, Volumen I*, Jean Crespin, Geneva 1570, 646–50.

A letter to the most illustrious Prince Nicholas Radzvilas,¹ the supreme Marszałek² of the great Duchy of Lithuania.

Most illustrious Prince, I received two letters from your Excellency at the same time: one addressed to Mr. John Calvin of blessed memory, and the other to myself. Both of them were written beautifully and with refinement. Because I am replying so tardily, I ask your Excellency not to think this is due to any disregard, nor to any other reason than that there was a shortage of couriers traveling from here to Tübingen, the place where your letters to us originated. These are the reasons why my reply is so brief even though this is a quite serious and urgent matter.

I have read, and not without absolute terror, some comments which Gregorius Pauli,³ Casanovius, and several others who have been enchanted by Biandrata and Gentile⁴ wrote in different treatises. They are converting⁵ the three persons or ὑποστάσεις into three numerically distinct⁶ οὐσίας or essences. In their writings I have found so many things that are both opaque and even contradictory that not even at present do I have full clarity as to their doctrinal positions and arguments.

But your letters, although they were written far more lucidly, nevertheless—if I may speak frankly with your Excellency—do not fully make up for my simple mindedness.⁷ This is especially the case in your explanation of that third conciliatory statement which, if I understand it correctly, I think is hardly at all different from the position of either Gentile or Pauli.

¹ Cf. *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence*, by Anatol Lieven (Yale University Press, 1994), 47–8.

² This is the title of a very high-ranking official in the Polish court, a top adviser to the king.

³ d. 1591.

⁴ Giorgio Biandrata (1515–1588) and Giovanni Valentino Gentile (c.1520–1566), two famous, Italian born anti-Trinitarians.

⁵ *transformantes*

⁶ *numero*

⁷ *ruditati*

And so, because there is not yet much agreement between us concerning the substance of these issues, and far less even with respect to the arguments of our opponents, we can't help but be legitimately afraid that we could seem to be working in vain over these much disputed topics.⁸ Or that we are not adequately precise in attacking our opponents' position. This circumstance could inflame these already unfortunate debates rather than extinguish them. And furthermore, even the debate itself shows, with so many written documents flying back and forth, that the controversy is increasing rather than diminishing, while each man does not allow what he has just written to be adequately grasped.

Therefore, before I publish a fitting answer to the individual arguments, I demand⁹ this from you, your Excellency, in the name of Christ: you must compel¹⁰ those who do not agree with this proposition—Father, Son, Holy Spirit¹¹ are one and the same God—to do as follows. They must write out, point by point, clearly and distinctly, their own entire dogma both on the essence and on the hypostases,¹² in definite and clear theses. Then they must provide their own positions as derived both from the Word of God and from the writings of the Greek and Latin fathers. Finally, if you have no objection, they must supply refutations of our arguments, which they know full well.

Part 2

Now I shall finally have the opportunity to answer both more candidly and more concisely. This is something that we would have done voluntarily even if your Excellency, in keeping with your own zeal for your country and even more for the whole church, had not petitioned us. But now, since your Excellency has specifically appealed to us, we have decided without reservation to complete this task much more willingly and carefully, with the small measure of grace granted us by the most great and mighty God.

Yet in the meantime, so that some people do not conclude that we have delayed our response because we have retreated from our position or because of duplicity, we assert openly before your Excellency, most illustrious Prince, that by God's grace we persist in the true and orthodox position. Not only that, we have also been greatly strengthened in our position by reading their falsehoods. We hold that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three truly distinct persons, and nevertheless one and the same God according to essence. For what could be more inappropriate, no, what could be more irreligious than to multiply in number the most simple¹³ infinity? And so we must recoil from the blindness of the Jews, who removed the distinction between persons, and likewise abhor Sabellius's insolence. He recognizes the persons but only distinguishes between them verbally, not in fact. The Arians' blasphemy is also

⁸ The syntax here is deliberately convoluted as Beza seeks to come to the point without offending the Prince. I have broken up a very long and hypotactically beautiful sentence into manageable English portions.

⁹ *flagitamus*, a very strong word.

¹⁰ *adigas*

¹¹ The conjunction here is omitted, a figure of speech called asyndeton, to stress the unity of the persons in the Godhead.

¹² Here Beza uses Latin instead of Greek, which he employs interchangeably.

¹³ *simplicissimam infinitatem*; simple here means "uncompounded," without "parts or passions" as WCF 2.1 states.

reprehensible. Some of them regard Christ as of a different substance, others as of like substance.¹⁴ The Macedonians are similarly detestable for attacking the deity of the Holy Spirit.

But we think that all these, however loathsome they are, have nevertheless said things less absurd than the Severians¹⁵ once did and those with whom we are now dealing. For they retain the fundamental point that God is one as his essence is one, since the Word of God alone declares the real distinction of the essence into three persons without any division. But they have refused to reason soundly from that foundation. Thus it is no wonder that they have not held onto the distinction of persons. But what in the end will they leave intact in the foundation of religion if the divine essence has been torn apart into three gods?

Nevertheless, they would readily persuade us that they avoid a multiplicity of gods if they would only say that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one, i.e., in one divine nature or essence. But even if, for example, Peter, John, and James should be described as one in *species*, they are not for that reason constituted as three men. So what value is there in retreating from their position? Why have they not instead freely and sincerely maintained what directly follows from their dogma, namely that yes, there is one deity but three gods? And that they are not equal to one another, because to exist from a separate origin¹⁶ is greater than to possess one's own existence from another's existence,¹⁷ or to be God transiently?¹⁸

Certainly they must hold that God is either one in number or many. If one, then why are they fighting so fiercely? But if many—and evidently they believe that the Son's essence has been propagated from the Father's essence so that there are in number two essences—how will they so boldly dare to deny that they posit numerically multiple gods? Therefore, if we believe them, then those ancient idolaters¹⁹ should not have been charged with merely worshiping multiple gods, but with worshiping multiple gods in three persons, and indeed false gods. This multiplication of the divine essence into two gods (for we have also heard that some of them erase the Holy Spirit) or into three gods, how is this consistent with their other dogma, that whatever things are predicated in the Scriptures of the one and only God must not be understood of the Son or Holy Spirit? For if the Father is the one and only God, it follows that the Son either is not God, or that he is God by another *genus* of deity than the Father. That is the Arians' error. If when Abel was born Adam was the one and only man, his son Abel either was not man or was endowed with another human nature than his father's, and thereby differed from him in *species*.

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¹⁴ Beza uses Greek here without Latin gloss, ἑτεροοῦσιον and ὁμοιοῦσιον respectively.

¹⁵ This is a second century gnostic sect also known as Encratites.

¹⁶ *esse aliunde*, as the Father on this theory.

¹⁷ *habere suum esse ab alterius esse*, as the Son on this theory derives his existence from the Father.

¹⁸ *precario esse Deum*, as the Holy Spirit, on this theory.

¹⁹ I.e., the Trinitarian orthodox.

ServantReading

Roger Williams: Peacemaking, Soul Liberty, and the Public Good

A Review Article

by Diane L. Olinger

God, War, and Providence, by James A. Warren. New York: Scribner, 2018. xiii + 287 pages, \$30.00.

Many have lauded Rhode Island founder Roger Williams as an early proponent of religious liberty. This book adds a new layer to what we know of Williams, focusing on his role as a peacemaker and as a tireless servant of the public good. *God, War, and Providence* is intended for a general audience (xiii), although its scholarly documentation and thorough bibliography will make it useful to academics as well.

Williams arrived in the New World in 1631, a Cambridge-trained dissenting minister in the Church of England, and was welcomed by New England worthies like John Winthrop and William Bradford. In addition to his reputation as a godly minister, Williams brought with him a strong grounding in English jurisprudence and political philosophy, having clerked for Sir Edward Coke, whose ideas would influence the framers of the American Constitution (40).¹

Williams soon came into conflict with the Puritan establishment of Massachusetts. The first issue was separation. Williams pushed for full separation from the Church of England, rejecting a prestigious position in the Boston church soon after his arrival on the grounds that the church had not fully separated (41). This had political implications, as well as theological; a separated church crossed the line between acceptable religious dissention and political subversion.

The second issue, the one most associated with Williams, was the role of the civil government in religious matters. In striking contrast to his fellow Englishmen, Williams believed that the civil government had no legitimate role in enforcing compliance with the First Table of the Law, those commandments dealing with man's relationship to God (52). Thus Williams objected to the magistrate punishing religious dissension and heresy.

The third issue, the main concern of this book, was the Puritans' treatment of the Native American tribes.² Williams described colonization as "a sin of unjust usurpation upon others' possessions" (49). To have a legitimate claim to land, settlers needed to deal with its rightful owners—the Indians, not the King of England.³ Williams rejected the

¹ Coke's influence is detailed by John M. Barry in *Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul: Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

² In this article I will use both the terms "Native Americans" and "Indians," in addition to particular tribal names.

³ This scruple would not prevent Williams from later returning to England in the 1640s to obtain a Parliamentary patent for Rhode Island. After the English civil war and the restoration of the monarchy,

idea that the King as a Christian ruler had a right to claim for Christ the lands of the New World. Williams saw the modern nation state as a civil, not a religious, entity; the King, therefore, was committing blasphemy when he claimed to act in Christ's name (50). Williams also rejected the application of the legal doctrine *vacuum domicilium* to Indian lands. Pursuant to this doctrine, Indian lands were considered to be unoccupied, since their homes were not fixed nor their lands fenced. Unoccupied lands may be taken. Williams, who spent considerable time trading with the Indians even before his banishment, knew that the Indian sachems were particular about land boundaries and assigned certain lands for planting, hunting, and villages. Ignoring this because it didn't fit English preconceptions was sinful.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts by the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to rein in Williams and his destabilizing ideas, the General Court banished Williams from Massachusetts in 1635. After a fourteen-week winter trek across the New England wilderness, Williams befriended Canonicus and Miantonomi, the sachem-chiefs of the Narragansett tribal confederation, and was deeded land by them, on which he established Providence at the head of Narragansett Bay as a refuge for those "distressed of conscience." As more settlers arrived, Providence became the capital of the colony of Rhode Island. From its start, Rhode Island had a "uniquely symbiotic relationship" with its Narragansett neighbors (248).

The focus of *God, War, and Providence* is what happened next with respect to the relationship between and among the Puritans, Williams, and the Narragansetts.

From the Pilgrims first arrival in Plymouth in 1620 until 1650, the Puritans' relationship with the Native Americans, though not without incident, was marked by "mutual accommodation, peace, and growing prosperity for Indian and Puritan alike" (4). For the Puritans, one of the most important tasks of their Holy Commonwealth was bringing Christ and his blessings to the Indians (36) "In the Puritan mind, Christ's blessings were inextricably tied to the adoption of the institutions, ideas, and patterns of life associated with English civilization. Thus, conversion required that the Indian not only jettison his religion, but his political allegiance and his entire mode of subsistence, and take up the manners and mores of the English" (36). But, the Puritans saw few Indian conversions, and in reality invested little effort in evangelizing them (129–30). As the English population in the New World expanded, they began to see this heathen Indian population as a security threat and as an obstacle to their growth and prosperity.

Like his fellow Puritans, Williams believed that the Indians were in spiritual darkness and needed to be converted to Christianity. But Williams, who immersed himself in Indian culture, was known for treating them as humans worthy of dignity and respect; he shared his Christian faith with them but trusted that God would open their hearts to that message in his time.⁴ Williams rejected state-sponsored missions that were inherently coercive, producing false conversions. In *A Key into the Language of America*, which

Charles II granted Rhode Island a royal charter in 1663, bestowing upon its citizens a degree of religious freedom that was unheard of at the time.

⁴ In *A Key into the Language of America*, Williams wrote that he had told the biblical creation story to Narragansetts "many hundredths of times, [and] great numbers of them have heard [it] with great delight and great convictions" Warren, *God, War, and Providence*, 132, citing *Key* (1643; repr. of 5th ed., 1936, Bedford, MA; Applewood, n.d.), 131). Though Williams reported that the Indians exhibited "a profound curiosity and respect for matters of the spirit (132), there is little evidence that his exchanges with them resulted in many Christian conversions.

was published in London in 1643, Williams shared the fruits of his study of the language, culture, and daily life of the Narragansetts (130). The book's tone is hopeful, reflecting the author's optimism for English-Indian relations and his view that "if the Narragansetts have much to learn from the English, so, too, do the English have much to learn from the Indians" (133).

During the Pequot Wars (1636–38) and King Philip's War (1675–76), Roger Williams was called upon "time and again . . . to mediate disputes between Puritans and Indians" (87). Williams did so, not only to protect the English, but also because he feared for the lives of the Narragansetts, whose sachems were his close allies and personal friends. In addition, he feared that a war between the Puritans and the Narragansetts might destroy Providence or lead to a Puritan army occupying Narragansett country, including Rhode Island (87).

Indian raids on English villages were put down brutally, with disproportionate force. For instance, after a Pequot raid that resulted in nine deaths and three captures, the Puritans retaliated by burning a village of four hundred Pequots to the ground (90). The Puritans justified their actions by referencing Old Testament passages in which Israel was instructed to kill their enemies, even the women and children (91). Williams denounced such reasoning, maintaining that the Massachusetts Bay Colony was not a covenant people akin to Israel, and that no nation could claim such spiritual power in politics after the coming of Christ.⁵ The Narragansetts tried to stay out of these conflicts between the Puritans and other tribes,⁶ though they were eventually drawn into King Philip's War by a preemptive strike against them by the Puritans (248). The outcome of the war was the "complete eradication of Indian political power and cultural autonomy throughout the region" (3).

In sorting through the reasons for these conflicts, Warren digs into a wealth of historical treatments of the colonial period. Warren acknowledges that some of this is guess work. When Warren enters into the realm of conjecture, he alerts the reader, "Now, let the reader beware" (79). Gaping holes in the evidence and problems sorting out exact chronology make it difficult to uncover the intentions of the participants in the conflicts between the colonists and the native tribes. The Indians didn't leave records, so we are left with the Puritans' recorded recollections of these events. Warren, like most modern historians, takes a skeptical view of their justifications of their behavior or their characterization of tribal behavior. For instance, the Puritans faulted the Pequots for not complying with treaty provisions, but, upon examination, those provisions appear unconscionable by English legal standards, let alone those of the Pequots.⁷ Warren suggests that, by making such draconian demands, the Massachusetts' leaders were simply setting up justification for land grabs. Even readers who disagree with Warren's take on the historical record should appreciate his intellectual honesty as he deals with these disputed matters.

Harvard historian Perry Miller's 1953 work *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition* established that Williams's views on religious liberty and the

⁵ Miller, *Roger Williams*, 54.

⁶ However, the Narragansetts sometimes provided intelligence and manpower to the English pursuant to treaty commitments.

⁷ As retribution for the mistaken killing of an Englishman who had captured some Pequots, Massachusetts demanded the surrender of the killers but also the payment of a sum of wampum and other goods equal to about half the total property taxes levied on the whole colony in a year (81).

separation of church and state were firmly grounded in his Christianity.⁸ Warren extends this thesis to Williams's relationship with the Native Americans of the region, concluding that here too Williams's actions should be seen as driven by his Christian beliefs.

And, Roger Williams took his Christian beliefs very seriously. The only difference between a prominent Puritan clergyman like John Cotton and Roger Williams was that Williams "took these doctrines of Calvinism with such utter consistency that rather than settle for rough approximations to the kingdom of God on earth, he demanded the real thing or nothing at all."⁹ In other words, the Puritans' views of the church, the state, and society were not pure enough for Roger Williams. It's understandable that the Puritan establishment looked on his ideas disapprovingly and as a threat to good order in the church and the community. Indeed, Rhode Island, for which Williams served as governor as well as a spiritual leader, was a hotbed of religious schismatics and libertarians, if not libertines.

But Williams's religious eccentricity is intriguing. His view of the spirituality of the church—and non-spirituality of the state—stands in sharp contrast to the Puritans' conflating of the roles of church and state in an effort to transform their world. Convinced of the righteousness of their cause, the Puritans demanded conformity, banished those who disagreed, justified land encroachment and brutal suppression of Indian uprisings, and forced Indian "conversions." In contrast, Williams tolerated proponents of views with which he disagreed, even making a home for them and working to secure their peace, and patiently sought to befriend the Narragansetts as he trusted God to bring about their salvation in his time. Perhaps paradoxically, because Williams abjured any use of the state as a means to enforce Christian beliefs,¹⁰ he was peculiarly fit to be "a tireless servant of the public good—with public being expansively defined to include the Indians" (254).

But, is a focus on the public good, like Williams's, the same as advocacy of public religion? In a lecture delivered at Covenant College on March 3, 1998, OPC historian Charles G. Dennison described a 1991 ceremony in which the stated clerk of the PCUSA presented a Delaware Indian chief with a sacred health-guardian doll.¹¹ Many years before, the doll had been given to a Christian missionary by a Native American convert as an idol that conflicted with his new faith. The ceremony was part of the mainline church and US government's effort to support "Native American communities trying to

⁸ Perry Miller, *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953). See also, Edmund Morgan, *Roger Williams: The Church and the State* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967).

⁹ Miller, *Roger Williams*, 28.

¹⁰ It's important to remember that Roger Williams did not object to the civil magistrate enforcing the Second Table of the Law, commandments five through ten, dealing primarily with man's relationship to man. In other words, Williams would not have raised an objection to morals legislation (no public drunkenness, no adultery). Instead, his concern was "soul liberty." The magistrate should not use his power to control what people thought or believed. To describe him in twenty-first-century terms, Williams would have more in common with Antonin Scalia than with the Libertarian Party. See *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003) (Scalia dissenting, warns that if the court is willing to strike down anti-sodomy laws, then other legislation based on the moral disapprobation of the majority would soon fall, as well). See also the platform of the Libertarian Party, emphasizing personal freedom and opposing most morals legislation (e.g., the party opposes laws either for or against abortion), <https://www.lp.org/platform/>.

¹¹ Charles G. Dennison, "J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis in the Reformed World," in *History for a Pilgrim People: The Historical Writings of Charles G. Dennison*, ed. Danny E. Olinger and David K. Thompson (Willow Grove, PA: Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 2002), 41.

reclaim their cultural heritage and religious identity.”¹² Dennison criticized the actions of the PCUSA as those that dignified “outright paganism by commending in the name of public religion the outrageous religious beliefs, which a courageous convert abandoned at great cost.”¹³ How would Roger Williams have reacted to such a ceremony? He certainly had a greater respect for the Indians’ culture, and even their spirituality, than did the Puritans of his day. But, the key for him was “soul liberty” (125). If the early convert gave up the doll willingly, and not as a result of coercion or inducement, then it seems that Williams would have applauded the convert’s act of Christian faithfulness and would have recognized the PCUSA’s return of the doll, insofar as it was intended to have religious significance, as demeaning to Native Americans, as well as unbiblical.

In writing this review, I hope I have not made Roger Williams into either a proto Orthodox Presbyterian or a modern-day civil libertarian. In fact, he was neither. He dreaded what he saw as emergent presbyterianism among the Puritans. And, Williams and Rhode Island ultimately “treated the Indians only marginally better than the Puritan colonies” (248). But despite this, Williams’s story has implications for Christians living in a pluralistic society. Warren’s *God, War, and Providence* is a well-researched account of this important chapter in American history.

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¹² Dennison, 42 (citing “Department of History Repatriates Delaware Doll,” *Presbyterian Heritage: The Newsletter of the Department of History*, Presbyterian Church (USA) 4:3 (Fall, 1991): 3.

¹³ Dennison, 43.

ServantReading

Why Can't We Be Friends? Avoidance Is Not Purity *by Aimee Byrd*

by John W. Mahaffy

Why Can't We Be Friends? Avoidance Is Not Purity, by Aimee Byrd. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2018, x + 248 pages, \$14.99, paper.

How does the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, living *in* the world but not *of* it, maintain her faithfulness to her Lord and her distinctiveness from the world? Among other things, she emphasizes sexual purity as she lives in the hypersexualized culture of North America.

Ironically, as Aimee Byrd argues, the church can be more influenced by the culture than she realizes:

Unfortunately, as eager as the conservative church is to speak out against the sexual revolution and gender identity theories, she often appears just as reductive as the culture surrounding her when it comes to representing our communion with God in our communion with one another. But Scripture tells us over and over again that Christian men and women are more than friends—we are brothers and sisters in Christ. (14)

In a well-intentioned effort to avoid sin, Christians too frequently fall into a default position of treating members of the opposite sex as an occasion for temptation. That flattens who we are—images of God, redeemed in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the subtitle notes, “avoidance is not purity.” Byrd is critical of an unthinking application of the so-called “Billy Graham (or, more recently, Pence) rule” as the standard for handling relationships between men and women.

It is not only the humanistic culture that defines people in terms of their sexuality. In a strange reaction some Christians do something similar:

A major language shift has taken place, and our thinking is changing with it. Evangelicals in the purity culture have moved from discussing sexual behavior as a fruit and outworking of being made in the image of God and of Christian holiness, to focusing on sexual purity commitments as the core of our identity. (64)

One reason I bought the book was to see for myself whether pre-publication fears aired on social media were correct: that this book would destroy barriers and open the door to immoral behavior. Those concerns are unjustified. Byrd repeatedly warns against temptation and emphasizes the importance of setting boundaries appropriate to our

situations. She upholds the biblical positions that men are called to the office of elder and that husbands are to exercise leadership in marriage. And she is correct in reminding us that in both cases, it is servant leadership.

Although a factor in my purchase was to read for myself rather than depend on secondhand reports, I was blessed with more than I expected. Byrd does not simply decry a sub-Christian manner of treating one another. She describes the way that the Bible treats believers as family, as brothers and sisters in Christ, and traces how that worked out in the early church. She emphasizes scriptural teaching on purity: “If purity is preeminently about our communion with God, then we can pursue holiness in others and ourselves while abhorring sin” (69).

We are not just brothers and sisters, we, Christian men and women alike, are that because we are the Father’s adopted sons in Christ. Byrd makes helpful use of David B. Garner’s *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (2017). She takes us to the heart of what purity means:

Because we are adopted sons in the Son, and our hope lies in full glorification and Christlikeness, we are called to purify ourselves. What does that mean? We cannot do this without Christ, who is our purity. But what does that mean? It means that we don’t purify ourselves through abstinence. We purify ourselves by fixing our hope on Jesus Christ, “for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36). (71)

Byrd has a refreshing emphasis on the importance of public worship and the official ministry of the Word. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions. One won’t agree with every point she makes, but the book could well be used to help groups in the church develop their understanding of who they are in Christ. That theological growth is important for us, helping us to relate to one another in biblical ways. It also helps the church image to the world something of what redemption involves. Byrd’s burden is for the Lord and his church:

Friendship points to our truest friend and advocate, Jesus Christ. And he cannot be cheapened. Furthermore, friendship points to the mission of our triune God: eternal communion with his people. Is your church a picture of this? (232)

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ServantReading

The Tech-Wise Family by *Andy Crouch*

by Gregory E. Reynolds

The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place, by Andy Crouch. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017, 224 pages, \$14.99.

Crouch begins: “Tech-wise parenting isn’t simply intended to eliminate technology but to put better things in its place. . . . I’ve discovered a world out there that is better than anything technology can offer—as close as our front lawn” (11). This is a book about putting technology in its place. As such it offers some excellent, humbly expressed, advice that all parents and adults would be wise to consider. I am always concerned about the theoretical basis of books on technology. When I first began studying and writing on this subject, most Christians were concerned only about media content; they hadn’t considered the ways in which electronics are an environment and not simply tools. Crouch has read several of the right books to undergird his analysis and suggestions.¹

In the preface Crouch gives five descriptions of what it means to put technology in its proper place. The sum of his concerns reminded me of Matthew Crawford’s *The World beyond Your Head*; and *Shop Class as Soulcraft*.² Crouch is concerned with the reality of embodied existence, involving activities that require mental skill and personal presence (29). It is these real life employments that should be promoted and enhanced by technology. This also reminded me of Edith Schaeffer’s *Hidden Art*³ in which she encourages artistic expression in ordinary, everyday life. L’Abri exemplified this in my experience there in 1971–72.

Crouch is very realistic about the peer pressure young people are subjected to when it comes to the use of electronic devices (26). At the end of each chapter he has the “Crouch Family Reality Check” in which he humbly relates his own successes and failures. After the introduction he gives “Ten Tech-wise Commitments” (41–42), which he elaborates in the remainder of the book. Reshaping patterns of living must be rooted in changes of our inner lives. He uses Sabbath-keeping as an example (35–36).

The first three chapters present “The Three Key Decisions of a Tech-Wise Family.” They are: “Choosing Character,” “Shaping Space,” and “Structuring Time.” Crouch is essentially pleading for RL (real life) to take precedence over VR (virtual reality) in terms of developing the virtues of wisdom and courage (53). Christian character is developed in the context of families, natural and spiritual. Technology is good when it

¹ Albert Borgman, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin, 2015); John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

² Matthew Crawford, *The World beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015); *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

³ Edith Schaeffer, *Hidden Art* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1971).

helps us to achieve these noble ends. But it also poses the greatest threat to the development of character ever conceived (62–63).

Proper ordering of space means that our homes and churches must be suited to the development of wise and courageous people. Here Crouch has lots of practical suggestions, such as having technology free zones (79–80).

Ordering time wisely means maintaining a work-life balance, which technology tends to remove by making life all work. He recommends the Sabbath and worship with God's people as a positive commands of God (92–93, 98–101). Using the “off” button on devices assists us in the wise use of time throughout the week.

The chapter on “Learning and Working” is Crouch's best. He focuses on human life as embodied existence expressing ideas and concerns similar to Matthew Crawford, to whom I referred above. Language itself is embedded in the body, the tongue, as the etymology of the word suggests (124–25). Crouch pays attention to the important research of cognitive science⁴ which reinforces the mind-body interaction (125). The use of pen and paper helps memory and creativity in ways that keyboards and screens do not. Electronic devices are “dangerously easy” (126–27). Activities that demand skill, that are difficult and thus rewarding, must be emphasized at an early age. “Computer literacy” is a myth because it does not take great skill as does learning to read—actual literacy (130–35). Neil Postman made this plea in *The End of Education* in 1995.⁵ Crouch ends this chapter with the recognition that we are swimming upstream. Few educators have heeded Postman's advice. Perhaps the plethora of research and writing that points out some of the deleterious effects of the digital will seep into our culture and its institutions.

The remainder of the book deals helpfully with boredom and its antidote: real life activities such as conversation and singing. Crouch's chapter on “Why Singing Matters” comes close to a healthy criticism of much contemporary worship music (which sound to me like an oxymoron) as he laments the “disappearance of shared singing” (185). Missing in his analysis is the fact that the entertainment mode of the “worship band” and microphones is by its very nature the performance of a few. Here Neil Postman's chapter in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, “Shuffle off the Bethlehem”⁶ would be helpful in showing how TV worship programming mutes the presence of God. A corollary to Postman's critique would be that many contemporary worship services unconsciously replicate TV. For all of Crouch's excellent material on the Sabbath, corporate singing, and worship, the absence of discussion for the need of sound biblical preaching is troubling.

My quarrels with this book in no way undermine its great value as a practical guide to electronic navigation, especially in family life.

The Barna visuals, while supportive of some of what Crouch is seeking to deal with, are sometimes difficult to understand and always distracting. But I suppose a hardcover book without a dust cover and dressed in snappy orange and red accessories is meant to communicate PRACTICAL. In this it succeeds.

⁴ Maryanne Wolf, *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Abigail Sellen and Richard Harper, *The Myth of the Paperless Office* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003). Maryanne Wolf's most recent book is well worth reading, *Reader, Come Home* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018). Stephen Migotsky reviewed it in *Ordained Servant Online* (January 2019), http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=729&issue_id=142.

⁵ Neal Postman, *The End of Education* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

⁶ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985).

Crouch could have described the way that the electronic is a total environment and one that alters social space. Mid-twentieth-century sociologist Erving Goffman observed that access to information defines social relations. Thus altering the means of access to information changes these relations and the institutions of a culture.⁷

A final concern is Crouch's use of the word "leisure." His problem is really with amusement or meaningless rest (87, 94). So, his point is a good one, but he inadvertently gives leisure a bad name. Leland Ryken presents a positive view of leisure in his article "Leisure as a Christian Calling."⁸ Leisure is etymologically rooted in the idea of being freed from obligations in order to cultivate one's life. Our word "school" means to set free. This is the idea behind a liberal education. Ryken broadens the idea by defining

what leisure is in its highest reaches: "Leisure is the growing time for the human spirit. Leisure provides the occasion for learning and freedom, for growth and expression, for rest and restoration, for rediscovering life in its entirety."⁹ That raises the bar high, and I think we resonate with that.

That being said, with these few reservations, I highly recommend this book. It is a wonderfully accessible encouragement and guide to developing technological wisdom in the Christian family.

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⁷ Cf. Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (London: Allen, 1983). Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959).

⁸ Leland Ryken, "Leisure as a Christian Calling," *Ordained Servant Online* (November 2018), http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=714&issue_id=140.

⁹ Robert Lee, *Religion and Leisure in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 35.

Servant Poetry

Ode, Supposed to be Written on the Marriage of a Friend

William Cowper (1731-1800)

Thou magic lyre, whose fascinating sound
Seduced the savage monsters from their cave,
Drew rocks and trees, and forms uncouth around,
And bade wild Hebrus hush his listening wave;
No more thy undulating warblings flow
O'er Thracian wilds of everlasting snow!

Awake to sweeter sounds, thou magic lyre,
And paint a lover's bliss—a lover's pain!
Far nobler triumphs now thy notes inspire,
For see, Eurydice attends thy strain;
Her smile, a prize beyond the conjuror's aim,
Superior to the cancelled breath of fame.

From her sweet brow to chase the gloom of care,
To check the tear that dims the beaming eye,
To bid her heart the rising sigh forbear,
And flush her orient cheek with brighter joy,
In that dear breast soft sympathy to move,
And touch the springs of rapture and of love.

Ah me! how long bewildered and astray,
Lost and benighted, did my footsteps rove,
Till sent by heaven to cheer my pathless ray,
A star arose—the radiant star of love.
The God propitious joined our willing hands,
And Hymen wreathed us in his rosy bands.

Yet not the beaming eye, or placid brow,
Or golden tresses, hid the subtle dart;
To charms superior far than those I bow,
And nobler worth enslaves my vanquished heart;
The beauty, elegance, and grace combined,
Which beam transcendent from that angel mind.

While vulgar passions, meteors of a day,
Expire before the chilling blasts of age,
Our holy flame with pure and steady ray,
Its glooms shall brighten, and its pangs assuage;
By virtue (sacred vestal) fed, shall shine,
And warm our fainting souls with energy divine.