as such better equips readers to navigate the sensory and mental overload that often accompanies a reading of the Apocalypse.

In sum, Ureña's proposals are convincing and her commentary is insightful. Her reading strategy facilitates a deeper understanding of Revelation as a whole, and her meticulous analysis yields insight into a multitude of intricacies found in the Apocalypse. Ureña exhumes aspects of John's visions that are often buried beneath overwhelming layers of visual and auditory data. She helps readers perceive John's vivid descriptions as vital elements of the narrative rather than disruptions of the visionary account. Such awareness should encourage modern exegetes to slow down and read the Apocalypse as a visceral experience. On a similar note, understanding John's role as both narrator, observer, and participant should deepen the immersion for readers as they seek to experience the visions alongside the seer.

Narrative and Drama is directed toward the academy, as the analysis is dense and based in the original Greek language. Nonetheless, Ureña's insights are beneficial for the church as well. Academic research sometimes bears no ready application for the layperson, but Ureña's reading strategy has the capacity to empower any student of scripture to read Revelation more perceptively if presented in a distilled, accessible manner.

Although Ureña is insightful, the structure of her monograph is often repetitive and monotonous. Much of the book is comprised of literary categories followed by examples from Revelation. However, the repetitive organization gives Ureña's work lasting value as a reference work. Even after appropriating her primary arguments, exegetes will want to refer back to specific examples. Indices are provided to facilitate such research. Ureña also provides a wealth of supplementary information in the footnotes. The notes alone are worth the price of the monograph. In short, *Narrative and Drama* is an insightful work that belongs in the library of every serious Revelation scholar.

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The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution. By Carl R. Trueman. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020, 425 pp., $35.00.

Carl R. Trueman has written what some call the most important book of the decade. That assessment may indeed end up being true.

Trueman is clear about his thesis, repeated or summarized several times in the introduction: "The so-called sexual revolution of the last sixty years, culminating in its latest triumph—the normalization of transgenderism—cannot be properly understood until it is set within the context of a much broader transformation in how society understands the nature of human selfhood" (p. 20). Similarly, "the sexual revolution is a manifestation of a much deeper and wider revolution in what it means to be a self. … [T]he changes we have witnessed in the content and signifi-

cance of sexual codes since the 1960s are symptomatic of deeper changes in how we think of the purpose of life, the meaning of happiness, and what actually constitutes people's sense of who they are and what they are for" (p. 23). Trueman's book is "a history that reveals the intellectual background of the modern revolution in selfhood with a view to showing *that* the ideas of key figures stretching back centuries have come to permeate our culture at all levels, from the halls of academe to the intuitions of ordinary men and women; it is not an exhaustive account of *how* those ideas came to do so" (p. 29). As he summarizes this purpose: "My aim is to explain how and why a certain notion of the self has come to dominate the culture of the West, why this self finds its most obvious manifestation in the transformation of sexual mores, and what the wider implications of this transformation are and may well be in the future" (p. 31).

The book is well-organized into four parts: Part 1, "Architecture of the Revolution," featuring Charles Taylor, Philip Rieff, and Alasdair MacIntyre, has two chapters: "Reimagining the Self" and "Reimagining Our Culture." Part 2, "Foundations of the Revolution," offers chapters on Jean-Jacques Rousseau (chapter 3); the Romantics Wordsworth, Shelley, and Blake (chapter 4); and the three familiar figures of Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin (chapter 5). Part 3, "Sexualization of the Revolution," contains chapters on Sigmund Freud (chapter 6) and "The New Left" (chapter 7). Part 4, "Triumphs of the Revolution," has three chapters titled "The Triumph of the Erotic" (chapter 8), "The Triumph of the Therapeutic" (chapter 9), and "The Triumph of the T" (T = transgenderism; chapter 10). The book ends with a "Concluding Unscientific Prologue."

In "Architecture of the Revolution," Trueman explores the "self" (chapter 1) and culture (chapter 2). Charles Taylor, Philip Rieff, and Alasdair MacIntyre are his key interlocutors. In chapter 1, "Reimagining the Self," Trueman offers something of a preview of the argument that will be explicated in detail throughout the book, that with the advent of "psychological man" (Rieff), the self is seen as inextricably bound up with the individual and with the inner psychological individual. There is a shift from *mimesis* (where there is an external order to which I must conform) to *poesis* (where I construct or even assert what reality is). There is *some* sort of line—albeit complicated and circuitous—from Descartes and Rousseau to transgenderism, but in this chapter, we get an overall sense of where Trueman is going.

In chapter 2, "Reimagining the Culture," Taylor, Rieff, and MacIntyre continue to serve as interlocutors, with the first two as especially helpful conversation partners. Where many (all?) traditional cultures have a sort of transcendent, even divine, order that informs the social order of a particular culture, Trueman maintains that Taylor's "immanent frame" and Rieff's "third world" are terms that describe social orders that seek to govern themselves *without* reference to any sort of sacred or divine order. This is an attempt to provide order simply from within (hence Taylor's term "immanent") a given culture, without reference to any sort of divine or transcendent order or reality. This approach leads to significant social strife, as any given political entity (in American terms, a city, county, state, or country) can have persons within them who *will* appeal to some transcendent order (e.g.,

a traditional Christian order) and other persons more in line with "the immanent frame" or "third world" thinking. Persons in different "camps" will face true "incommensurability" (MacIntyre's terminology); they work from such radically different frames of reference that communication and understanding is virtually impossible. Trueman offers a fascinating summary and discussion of Rieff's notion of "deathworks," cultural artifacts that are designed to challenge, mock, or dismiss the moral claims and values held by first and second worlds. For Trueman, what lies behind Rieff's notion of "deathworks" is "a basic repudiation of history as a source of authority and wisdom" (p. 100).

With the "architecture" of the revolution (key notions of the self and of culture) in view, Trueman turns in part 2, "Foundations of the Revolution," over the course of three chapters, to three persons or groups. The first of these (chapter 3, "The Other Genevan") is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who, according to Trueman, puts the inner psychological self front and center. Whereas Augustine, in his *Confessions*, saw man as inherently sinful, Rousseau, in his own *Confessions*, sees the natural man as fundamentally good, with conflict and problems entering the scene only due to various social relations in which one finds oneself. For Rousseau, it is the inner life that matters, and the expression of this inner life is fundamental for truly being free and truly being human. Rousseau is a foundational figure in the move toward our contemporary moment, where many see "the inner life of each person as the most important or distinctive thing about him or her" (p. 125).

In chapter 4, "Unacknowledged Legislators," Trueman focuses on key figures of Romanticism: William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and William Blake. Trueman contends that, in order to understand how heady notions seen in Rousseau eventually became somewhat commonplace in our own era, "we need to see how ideas akin to those of Rousseau served to reshape culture more generally. And that brings us to the artistic movement known as Romanticism" (p. 130). For Trueman, Shelley in particular viewed Christianity and its affirmation of traditional marriage and monogamy as fundamentally *immoral* and something that hampered, even destroyed, true human freedom and liberty; indeed, for persons to be truly human, traditional marriage must be abolished. As Trueman's narrative unfolds, he demonstrates that there is a real link between the fundamental tenets of Romanticism and the sexual revolution consuming our culture in the present.

In chapter 5, "The Emergence of Plastic People," Trueman links Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Charles Darwin to some of the sexual pathologies we see today. In short, all three thinkers "provided conceptual justification for rejecting the notion of human nature and thus paved the way for the plausibility of the idea that human beings are plastic creatures with no fixed identity founded on an intrinsic and ineradicable essence" (p. 166). In all three thinkers, both persons and the world in general are stripped of any inherent, stable, and created meaning.

Chapter 6, "Sigmund Freud, Civilization, and Sex," continues the narrative, with Freud both continuing key emphases (the turn inward, expressive individualism, an emphasis on sexual freedom, and the way in which civilization or society hampers one's true freedom and identity) and offering his own unique contribution to the general narrative—an even more heightened conviction that sexual desire

and freedom are essential to one's identity. Trueman offers a helpful summary of his narrative: "The self must first be psychologized [as seen in Rousseau, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Blake, and Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin—albeit in variegated ways], psychology must then be sexualized [as seen in Freud], and sex must be politicized" (p. 221) as seen in the New Left—the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter, 7, "The New Left and the Politicization of Sex," focuses on critical theory and persons either directly or more indirectly associated with the Frankfurt School: Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Simone de Beauvoir, and, to a lesser degree, Shulamith Firestone. Marcuse is particularly important for Trueman: "the issue of sexuality and the issue of politics fused in Marcuse's thought to form a potent revolutionary mix that has come to exert significant influence over today's political discourse and behavior. The notions that political freedom is sexual freedom and that shattering heterosexual norms is a vital part of transforming society for the better are now intuitive cultural orthodoxies" (pp. 249–50).

Part 4 is titled "Triumphs of the Revolution" and begins with chapter 8, "The Triumph of the Erotic." This chapter focuses on two key elements: surrealism and pornography. Surrealism was not "art for art's sake" but a tool of revolution: "In other words, surrealism attempted to achieve through art what Reich attempted to do in his writings: promote social revolution through the application of aspects of Freudian theory to life" (p. 279). Equally significant, surrealism helped make pornography not only something acceptable but actually "good and healthy" (p. 280) and was explicitly anti-Christian. The normalization of pornography is a particularly striking example of the "triumph of the erotic," which in turn is a key expression of the expressive individualism being chronicled in this volume.

In chapter 9, Trueman explores how Rieff's notion of "The Triumph of the Therapeutic" can be seen in three key areas: (1) the US Supreme Court and the question of gay marriage, (2) what Trueman calls "Ivy League Ethics," and (3) the "anticulture" seen on many college campuses. First, on the Supreme Court and gay marriage, Trueman argues that the Obergefell decision was simply the consistent working out of the currents discussed in this volume: "The sexual revolution [including Obergefell] is … simply one manifestation of the wider revolution in selfhood that has taken place over the last four hundred years" (p. 315). Second, Trueman offers a fascinating sketch of the ethics of Peter Singer—especially on the question of abortion—arguing that Singer's particular way of thinking about abortion is "the ethics of the therapeutic" (p. 324). Third, the "anticulture" seen on many college campuses (seen in the outworking of the thought of Herbert Marcuse, where tolerance must be abandoned when it serves to further alienate and bring psychological harm to certain persons or groups) is one more function "of a notion of selfhood that places self-expression and individual psychological well-being at the heart of what it means to be human" (p. 336).

In chapter 10, "The Triumph of the T" (the T in LGBTQ+), Trueman explores the question of transgenderism, continuing to advance his general argument: "The issues we face today in terms of sexual politics are a symptom or manifestation of the deeper revolution in selfhood that the rise and triumph of expressive

individualism represents" (p. 355). He contends that certain elements of the LGBTQ+ coalition are not necessarily in fundamental philosophical agreement but, rather, are banded together for political expediency. Trueman also argues the following: "Transgenderism is a symptom, not a cause. It is the not the reason why gender categories are now so confused; it is rather a function of a world in which the collapse of metaphysics and a stable discourse has created such chaos that not even the most basic of binaries, that between male and female, can any longer lay claim to meaningful objective status. And the roots of this pathology lie deep within the intellectual traditions of the West" (p. 376).

In the final chapter, "Concluding Unscientific Prologue," Trueman offers "some reflections on possible futures and possible responses to the cultural condition in which we find ourselves and in which we are all to some extent complicit" (p. 382). While having constantly decried the reality of expressive individualism, Trueman concludes that the real problem is not individualism as such but "the fact that expressive individualism has detached these concepts of individual dignity and value from any kind of grounding in a sacred order" (p. 387). He also counsels his readers to grasp the way in which the Rieffian anticulture is ubiquitous. He likewise encourages Christians to understand and come to terms with the debate about LGBTQ+ issues, and in particular to "engage in a thoroughgoing critique of such [category mistakes, like 'sex is identity'] and refuse to define themselves within [such a] framework" (p. 391).

In a section titled, "Possible Future," Trueman offers thoughts on four areas: sexual morality, gay marriage, transgenderism, and religious freedom. Regarding sexual morality, he concludes that "the sexual revolution is in some difficulty at the moment, but there is little evidence that its contradictions will be resolved by a return to traditional moral codes" (p. 395). He believes that gay marriage is likely here to stay, but whether other options (e.g., polygamy) will come to be viewed as normal is yet to be seen. Trueman suggests that the instability of the LGBTQ+ alliance will not hold and that there will be financial repercussions in the decades ahead—as persons encouraged to undergo gender reassignment procedures when younger will eventually sue their parents, doctors, and insurance companies. While religious freedom in the West was encouraged by the Protestant Reformation, which also has its own kind of "expressive individualism," Trueman opines that in our own day, religious freedom may be seen more and more as in conflict with expressive individualism, especially since in the modern West unhindered sexual expression is central to being a self or to the expression of personal identity. He is pessimistic whether a culture (here, the US) can affirm both religious liberty and the vision of those advancing the various components of the sexual agenda.

Finally, Trueman offers three suggestions for the Christian church. First, "the church should reflect long and hard on *the connection between aesthetics and her core beliefs and practices*" (p. 402). Second, the church "*must also be a community*" (p. 404). Third, "*Protestants need to recover both natural law and a high view of the physical body*" (p. 405).

This is an excellent book with many strengths. First, Trueman is clear about his thesis from the opening pages and continues to explicate it throughout the volume. Through three epilogues (after parts 2, 3, and 4), he draws together the key

themes of that part, underscores the key architectural elements of the revolution (the self and culture), relates the key themes of Rieff, Taylor, and MacIntyre to what he has just discussed, and intertwines the key players in the narrative—which by the end are Jean-Jacques Rousseau; the Romantics Wordsworth, Shelley, and Blake; the key moderns Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin; Freud; and finally the New Left, especially Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, Simone de Beauvoir, and Shulamith Firestone. The final epilogue draws the narrative together in light of the three triumphs of the revolution: the erotic, the therapeutic, and transgenderism.

Second, Trueman is a very clear communicator, and what a gift it would be if more academics wrote this clearly and effectively. While the material can be turgid, many readers will be able to work through and understand his thesis.

Third, Trueman has written a narrative covering and exploring some of the most thorny and complicated issues of the day. He has immersed himself in the relevant scholarship yet does not get bogged down in refereeing the scholarly literature or in grandstanding. In short, this is a significant work of cultural analysis, rooted in good scholarship, without being overly technical or pedantic.

It is somewhat difficult to offer negative criticism without drifting into the territory of criticizing a book for what it does *not* do. But a few thoughts. While this is an excellent work of historical and critical analysis, I found myself looking for a bit more explicit or thorough theological analysis of the issues. I suspect Trueman would quite happily say that is not the book he was writing. Fair enough. Trueman does offer brief words about the importance of the created order and of the importance of natural law. But I would like to have seen him linger on the theological roots of current problems as well as offer theological insights that might help Christians walk faithfully among current challenges. In fairness to Trueman, the last words of his volume express his hope that what he has written "might form a helpful prolegomenon" (p. 407).

As one example, I raise the question of ethics and social order. As seen in chapter 2, "Reimagining our Culture," but resurfacing throughout the book, Trueman seems happy to posit actual cultures that try to structure their culture without reference to any sort of a divine or sacred order. I wonder. As he has argued, both Charles Taylor and Philip Rieff have analogous ways of speaking of such societies. Taylor speaks of "the immanent frame" and Rieff speaks of "third world" social orders. If we think about these things like Christians, we will likely recognize or conclude that there is a good reason why even "immanent frame" cultures or "third world" cultures will develop various moral, legal frameworks with their own behaviors that are either encouraged/rewarded or discouraged/punished. This is the world of image bearers that God has created and against which they have rebelled. Given this reality, it makes sense that such creatures—even if they reject the biblical God—will nonetheless create societies in which their own idols or gods are honored in and through how society is governed and structured. Such unbelieving cultures—whether we use the nomenclature of Taylor's "immanent frame" or Rieff's "third world" is really beside the point—will develop societies, systems of law, and systems of rewards and punishments that accord with whatever god or

gods are being served in those cultures. Hence, I wonder if Trueman misses this point when he seems to suggest that "third world" cultures really *can* "build their moral codes" without reference to a sacred order (p. 71).

To illustrate my point: Trueman rehearses Rieff's contrast between "first world"/"second world" cultures—both of which in different ways appeal to some kind of transcendent order—and "third world" cultures, which are actually anti-cultures: "Anti-cultures translate no sacred order into social. Recycling fantasy firsts, thirds [i.e., "third world" cultures] exist only as negations of sacred orders in seconds [i.e., in "second world" cultures]" (p. 89). To the extent that "third world" cultures refute sacred orders, might Christians see this negation as a kind of hostility to a *particular* sacred order, a kind of hostility that is rooted in its own set of gods, in its own idolatrous "sacred order?"

Carl Trueman is to be commended for writing a book that should be read far and wide as it offers help in navigating choppy cultural, ideological, and indeed theological waters.

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