Truman, Carl R. Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution, Foreword by Ryan T. Anderson. Wheaton, Illinois, USA: Crossway, 2022. 204 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4335-7930-1.

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Carl Trueman has distinguished himself as an erudite intellectual scholar through his writings. He has written over twelve significant works, particularly his recent book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*. It is a four-hundred-page book whose contents he simplified to the current 204-page book, *Strange New World*, for the average reader. Trueman is an esteemed church historian and a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Centre. He is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and holds a PhD from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. In this book, Trueman uses his intellectual scalpel of historical insight to dissect the ethical miasma of the moral maze that has engulfed the Western World and is spreading fast like a moral tsunami to the rest of the world, depicting itself in expressive self, sexual revolution and the LGBTQ+ agenda.

His new book is a concise exposition of arguments from his previous book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self.* In the new book, he filters the contents through nine sequential, short chapters, each ending with reflective study questions that are invaluable as they prompt the reader to an evaluative reflection of the contents and personal application. The arguments in each chapter logically flow to the next. In the first chapter, he argues how the readers in the Western world find themselves in a strange new world compared to the world they grew up in and know. He shows how what were once unassailable virtues, doctrinal orthodoxy, and cultural norms have been eroded by expressive self-individualism and gender dysphoria. He traces the LGBTQ+ movement to the sexual revolution that loudly expressed itself in the 1960s. He argues 'that expressive individualism is the default setting for understanding ourselves in the twenty-first century' (26).

In chapter two, he traces all this to the period of Romanticism and the influences of the philosophical premise of Rene Descartes, 'I think; therefore, I am'. Also, the idolisation of feelings ignited by Rousseau's philosophy, 'Feelings for Rousseau are central to who we are' (34). He advocated that individuals should set up moral codes rather than follow social norms. 'Man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains' (41). Personal independence became paramount, and interdependence was frowned upon, leading to cultural and moral relativism.

In chapters three and four, the author explains how Hegel, particularly his pupil Karl Marx's philosophies, continued to shape our current world, making it feel strange. Marx based his views on the philosophy of Feuerbach. 'The divine being is nothing else than the human being, or rather, the human nature purified…. Therefore, all attributes of the divine nature are attributes of the human nature…. God-talk represents wishful thinking on humanity's part' (55-56). Nietzsche's philosophy advocated the onslaught of the existence of God that peaked during the Enlightenment in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. The death of God premise created the caricature of Superman as 'a free spirit who transcended the spirit of his own age, a man of both intellectual brilliance and significant action' (65). These philosophical premises led to and

ushered in our present age, popularised in the writings of Oscar Wilde, who 'sees marriage as an institution that should fall because it imposes external limit on the individual's ability to act on the desire' (68). The author demonstrates how Sigmund Freud took these thoughts a notch further in his psychoanalytic theories and for whom religion was childish nonsense and jettisoned religious sexual moral codes. In these chapters, the author reveals how Wilhelm Reich extrapolated Freud's philosophy and ushered in the current era of the sexual revolution that started in the 1930s. For Reich, 'the existence of moral principles indicates that sexual needs are not being met' (85).

In the following three chapters, five, six, and seven, the author, with razor-sharp historical precision, describes the development of the current unrecognisable sexual revolution by applying the thinking of Rousseau, the Romantics, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Reich. He outlines how their thinking led to the collapse of traditional authority and the loss of sacred order in which 'institutions are no longer authoritative places of formation but of performance' (100). Sexual liberation led to contraception, pornography, and rampant sexual promiscuity. In chapter seven, the author outlines the sexual revolution of the LGBTQ+ and how the sympathies boosted its wide acceptance accorded to gay people during the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the 1980s and explains how the LGBTQ+'s triumphant cultural conquest occurred during Obama's administration in the USA. The author points out how the coalition of the various sexual revolution activists, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender groups came under the same banner, LGBTQ+, through their shared sense of victimhood. He also reveals how this explosive sexual revolution resulted from expressive individualism expressed by earlier philosophers.

In the concluding two chapters, eight and nine, the author analyses and evaluates other revolutionary trends that the thoughts of the named philosophers have unleashed. Most significantly, the pursuit of happiness and modern understanding of life and liberty. He dissects the Western approach to what it means to be human and how it affects modern life, leading to utilitarianism, liberalised abortion, and euthanasia. 'In the world of psychologised selfhood in which we all now live, mental suffering can also be claimed as a criterion for euthanasia' (151). He shows how liberty, the once acclaimed epitome of democracy, has changed, affecting traditional understandings of the sanctity of life, freedom of speech and religion. LGBTQ+ activists have turned the tables on society. They no longer accept tolerance but now demand equality based on identity. Such a stance affects 'religions such as Christianity and Judaism that hold to strict codes concerning sex and sexuality…The old chestnut of "love the sinner, hate the sin" simply does not work in a world where the sin is the identity of the sinner' (157). Free speech has also taken on new meanings with nuanced modern social semantics.

The book lived up to its title, *Strange New World,* by revealing how seven philosophers, Descartes, Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Reich and Kant, have continued to rule the world in their graves and how the seeds their thoughts planted, once extrapolated to their logical conclusions have produced a strange new world. The author, though, unwittingly delineated how the quip from Voltaire in the 18th century, 'If God has made us in his image, we have returned him the favour (complements)' has come true. Modern society, having jettisoned the existence of God, has created a moral vacuum and relativism that is, in effect, creating a 'God' to fit its imagination. God created man and woman for procreation, but as the author put it, 'the world in which we now live is hostile to expression of our beliefs on these matters. To object to same-sex marriage, for example, is in the moral register of the day not substantially different from being a racist' (169). The author further shows how strange our world is in how pursuing happiness dominates our current world. 'Formerly, if men were miserable, they went to church, so to find the rationale of their misery…' On the contrary, today, people look for 'the church that fits with what makes us feel good' (171). Biblical ethics do not make much sense in a world driven by what makes us happy. A gay person would perceive God, who forbids

homosexuality, as a tyrant who does not want people to be happy. Nevertheless, the book ends with a positive encouragement to Christians not to despair but to acknowledge our strange new world as a result of the Fall, continue to believe in biblical promises and sharpen our identity as the people of God, constantly anticipating the new heaven and the new earth.

The author makes a robust, compelling case linking the current, ethical and moral change to the premises of the seven philosophers discussed in this review. Nevertheless, these philosophical premises are not the *summum bonum* of the current ethical and moral transformation. Social change has other contributing factors that the author does not deal with in his book. Religious and pop culture are significant factors in creating what the author calls a *Strange New World*. The author alludes to some of these: 'It is easy to see an adumbration of the kind of outrageous behaviour that our world of reality TV has made virtually normative' (66).

Nevertheless, he does not give details or even attempt to explain the depth of media influence on social change. In passing, the author observes, 'mass transportation, migration, education, social mobility, science, medicine: all of these things and more have served to make the world a much more plastic place than it was 1400' (94). To the author's credit, he points out that 'technology plays a key role' (119) in social changes. However, he does not elaborate as much as he does on the philosophical premises, making his assessment unbalanced. The author does not engage with youth culture, and the impact of IT communication in which youth ideology birthed in New York could simultaneously be trending and influencing other youth in remote villages in Africa, Asia, or South America. Also not featured by the author is the impact of the people's movement and world globalisation and their impact on ethical, moral, and social changes in the *Strange New World*.

Nevertheless, for anyone seeking to understand the contours of permissive ethics, moral relativism and the burgeoning LGBTQ+ agenda, the book *Strange New World* is a must-read. The reviewer highly recommends it.