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THE RISE AND TRIUMPH OF THE MODERN SELF
Dr. Carl Trueman Analyzes the Impact of the Sexual Revolution on Modern Human Identity

WHEATON, Ill.—American culture is in the midst of a sexual revolution—the Supreme Court has ruled gay marriage as legal, transgenderism and homosexuality have become normalized, and mainstream TV shows and movies are filled with more overtly sexualized content than ever before.

In his latest book, The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution (Crossway, November 2020), Dr. Carl Trueman analyzes the history and context of the sexual revolution, helping readers understand how culture in the West has reached where it is today. “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,” writes Trueman. “Understanding the times is a precondition of responding appropriately to the times. And understanding the times requires a knowledge of the history that has led up to the present. This book is intended as a small contribution to that vital task.”

Trueman defines the sexual revolution as “the radical and ongoing transformation of sexual attitudes and behaviors that has occurred in the West since the early 1960s.” While things like the normalization of transgenderism are quite new, the foundational ideas that undergird the sexual revolution have been around for much longer. Thus Trueman wants to encourage readers to set these issues in “a much broader and deeper context than we typically acknowledge,” and he does so by analyzing the ideas of Rousseau, the Romantics, Nietzsche, Marx, Darwin, Freud, the New Left, surrealism, Hugh Hefner, and LGBTQ+ activism.

At the heart of the sexual revolution, according to Trueman, is “how society understands the nature of human selfhood.” Trueman uses the term self to describe how someone understands who he or she is. Increasingly, the individual’s inner “feelings” or “intuitions” are the primary sense of his or her identity, and happiness is found by looking inward rather than outward.

As Trueman summarizes: “The changes we have witnessed in the content and significance 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. The sexual revolution did not cause the sexual revolution, nor did technology such as the pill or the internet. Those things may have facilitated it, but its causes lie much deeper, in the changes in what it meant to be an authentic, fulfilled human self.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carl R. Trueman (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is professor of biblical and religious studies at Grove City College. He is an esteemed church historian and previously served as the William E. Simon Fellow in Religion and Public Life at Princeton University. Trueman has authored or edited more than a dozen books, including The Creedal Imperative; Luther on the Christian Life; and Histories and Fallacies. Trueman is a member of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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