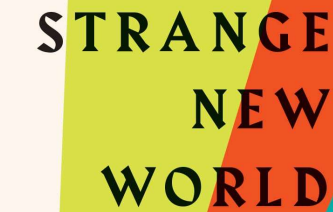


CHAPTER 9

Strangers in This Strange New World

Major Premise:

We now live in a culture in which Christianity is no longer a major influence on our social imaginary. In this new situation—this strange new world—Christians must be deliberate in seeking to understand how we should live and how we can avoid conforming to the culture.



STRANGE NEW WORLD

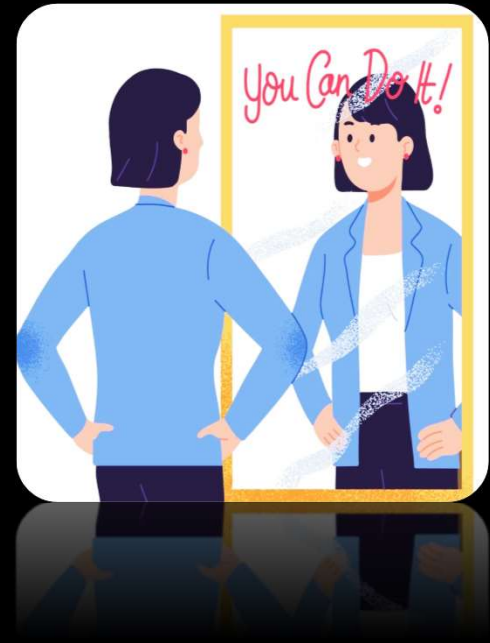
HOW THINKERS
AND ACTIVISTS
REDEFINED IDENTITY
AND SPARKED THE
SEXUAL REVOLUTION

CARL R.
TRUEMAN

FOREWORD BY
RYAN T. ANDERSON

Understanding Our Complicity

Expressive individualism (EI) is not wrong about everything. It does affirm that we are complex persons with real inner lives, stresses the “universal dignity of all human beings” and the “importance of personal faith’ as a response to the gospel (p. 170). Nevertheless, EI has so psychologized our view of the self that Christians & churches now pander “to the felt needs of the psychologized self.” We tend to “choose the church that fits with what makes us personally feel good” (p. 171).



Understanding Our Complicity

The influence of EI and our complicity with it can also be seen in the “cult of personal happiness” (p. 172). Therapeutic culture has influenced Christianity that being well-adjusted and happy is often seen as the point of the gospel, rather than salvation & the forgiveness of sins. Often, we “allow [our] emotions to govern ethics when a ... relative or friend comes out as gay or transgender” (P. 172). In this strange new world, we are all complicit in some way.



Understanding Our Complicity

We can address our complicity in three ways: examining ourselves & repenting, cultivating humility, in the future practice “appropriate self-criticism and self-policing” (p. 173) regarding our attitudes toward church.

Learn From the Ancient Church

The precedent we need to look to in responding to our times is earlier Christianity. Early Christianity was a “little-understood, despised, marginal sect” (p. 174). In this situation the early Church emphasized community and the formation of Christian identity.

How we engage in worship and fellowship is also crucial. The church in worship is the “most powerful witness to the gospel” and the best way to engage the culture is by “presenting it with another culture” (p. 176) rooted in worship and a loving community.



Teach the Whole Counsel of God

It is important that as Christians we understand the Christian faith as a “coherent whole” –a worldview, in fact—and not just a set of isolated beliefs. Our “foundations in God’s truth [must be] broad and deep, and we must ensure that God’s people “are being intentionally grounded in God’s truth ... confession or catechism is a good place to start” (pp. 178-179).

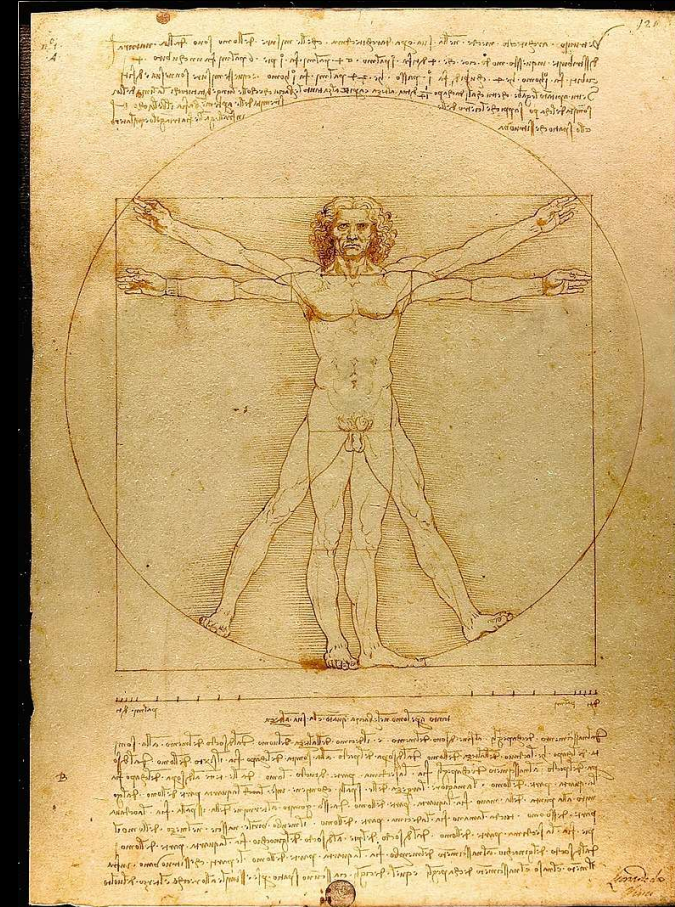
Shape Intuitions through Biblical Worship

Understood properly, as emphasizing human dignity and seeing our inner self, our emotions, and our desires properly as means and not ends in themselves, EI can tell us important truths. But rather than choosing worship forms and songs that emphasize emotions for emotions' sake, we need to focus on choosing forms that will shape our intuitions within and toward "God's great truths."



Natural Law and the Theology of the Body

The Church needs to recover an understanding of natural law and a theology of the body. It is important *for Christians* to understand that biblical morality, including sexual morality, is not a set of arbitrary rules, but the ‘best practices’ for human flourishing in the world that God created. Natural law and a proper biblical theology of human being and bodies can show “that God’s commands make sense, given the way the world is” (p. 185).



Neither Despair nor Optimism

As Dr. Trueman recognizes, “the narrative of this book is inevitably a somewhat depressing one” (p. 169). Nevertheless, we need not despair. Nor should we be optimistic, which is “the belief that everything will be fine if everyone just sits tight and waits.” What we do have is hope: “Christian hope [which] is realistic” (p. 185). We cannot always expect to have comfortable lives. Our calling is to “live faithfully in the time and place” we have been set. “We need to prepare ourselves . . . ” (p. 186).