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## *Table of Contents*

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### **Old Testament Circumcision: Sacramental?**

Lowell S. Sorenson ..... 3

### **The Holy Spirit and Baptism in the Book of Acts**

Mark P. Surburg ..... 27

### **Wives, Husbands, Children, Slaves:**

#### **Forming the Faith among the First Christians**

John G. Nordling ..... 55

#### **Theological Observer ..... 75**

Women's Ordination: Government and Culture Ruling in the Place of  
Christ and His Apostles

Funeral Sermon for Walter Dissen

**Book Reviews ..... 91**

**Books Received ..... 95**

## Book Reviews

***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 pages. Hardcover. \$34.99.**

“I am a woman trapped in a man’s body.” Our grandparents would have no idea what such words could mean. Even a generation ago, it would have been thought the height of lunacy, a mental disorder, or a cry for help. But now hardly anyone blinks an eye. In fact, we are obligated, on pain of societal ostracism, to affirm that which is scientifically impossible. Our nation’s assistant secretary of health is a biological man who claims to be a woman, even though, medically speaking, Rachel Levine should be medically treated as a man.

Carl Trueman attempts to offer an explanation of how we got here. It is necessary but not sufficient to say that we are a fallen race, or to note with Paul in Romans 1 that we are in a full-scale rebellion against our creator. In a certain sense, these things have always been true. But we have gone further than the likes of Nero or Caligula could have ever dreamed. And it is all so normal.

Trueman sets the table by explaining that every culture has a certain set of expectations, ways in which a society sees itself. Here Trueman draws on the work of Philip Rieff, who wrote *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (1966). Rieff contends, for instance, that the ancient Athenians thought of themselves as political men, medieval people were religious people, followed by the “economic man,” who saw his life in terms of trade and the making of money. Most recently, our culture made a shift to the “psychological man,” in which the main thrust of our ambition became personal happiness to be found within us. As Trueman contends, “For such selves in such a world, institutions such as schools and churches are places where one goes to perform, not to be formed—or perhaps better, where one goes to be formed by performing” (49).

In our new world, feelings dominate. The present is always better than the past, as history is nothing but a story of oppression. Sex has no inherent meaning or sacred value, and those who try to limit it in any way are themselves oppressors. Great heroes of the past must be forgotten or despised, especially in an age in which victimhood is the chief social currency in what Charles Taylor calls our “social imaginary”—that is, a worldview held by nearly all, often without even a conscious recognition.

What follows in Trueman’s work is a kind of intellectual history. The 1960s, Trueman shows us, were a long time coming. We are introduced to Rousseau, whose own *Confessions* are contrasted with those of Augustine. While the church father

recognized original sin, Rousseau said that man was born basically good, and was only later corrupted by society and its institutions. Morality became about aesthetics, and ethical discourse centered on personal sentiments. Marriage itself came under attack as society's way of keeping a person from true joy and personal commitment.

Then came the poets, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Blake, who romanticized nature. Shelley, for instance, viewed religion as the manipulation of the powerful. Marriage again was seen as nothing but a way to keep people from true happiness. Following the poets, Trueman takes us to what he calls the "plastic people" enabled by Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin. Nietzsche aided in the killing of God and of the moral order, which was nothing really but the application of power. Marx helped us to see everything in terms of economic struggle. Darwin's theory of evolution made history meaningless, as well as any idea that man was somehow special, created in God's image. There was no designer at creation, and God is not now guiding the process of history. Man was plastic, in charge of his own destiny, shape, and meaning.

From there, Trueman takes this intellectual history one step further, demonstrating Freud's place in psychologizing man, and doing so in a way that put sex at the center, beginning even at childhood. All of this led to what the author calls the triumph of the erotic, and the truly self-made man. Perhaps this is nowhere better encapsulated than in the words of Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life" (*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 1992).

If self-identification is at the heart of our belief, no one can deny our claims, no matter how obviously they seem to defy science or, more simply, reality. If there is no God, if society and marriage are the problem, if we are plastic people who are defined by sexuality and are truly the products of our own creation, then the transgender phenomenon begins to make some sort of sense. Against such an ideological tide, there are no clear or easy answers, but as Christians, we need to know what we are up against. And then, as always, it is back to the Scriptures, a return to the story of creation. And in that, we must return to a gospel that is also a new Genesis that affirms God's good creation. This means we recognize that we are a fallen race, but that we were created in the image of God, now found fully and completely in Christ. The road back to reality will not be an easy one, but we must begin the

journey, and part of that is recognizing how we got here. For that, we owe some thanks to Carl Trueman.

Peter J. Scaer  
Professor of Exegetical Theology  
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana  
peter.scaer@ctsfw.edu

***Nailed! Moral Injury: A Response from the Cross of Christ for the Combat Veteran.***  
**By Mark J. Schreiber. Parker, CO: Outskirts, 2021. 323 pages. Paperback. \$28.76.**

In his published and easy-to-read seminary PhD dissertation, lifelong and now retired Navy chaplain, CTS alumnus Captain Mark J. Schreiber brings together the experiences of wounded veterans from the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Iraq Wars. Christians who serve in the military are faced with the ethical dilemma that with the full knowledge that taking life is disallowed in certain cases by the fifth commandment, yet in defending the national interest and in their oath to the constitution, they are compelled to take life. This is not without physical, psychological, and spiritual consequences. In response to this dilemma Schreiber provides thoroughly informed theological chapters on lawful killing, imaginary forgiveness, the conscience of Christians, and the just war, among other moral and ethical issues (1–136). The remainder of the book is devoted to interviews with veterans, which are analyzed by Schreiber. Advances in medical science have reduced the number of fatalities on the battlefield and thereby increased the number of survivors with incapacitating wounds, some psychological, that can be alleviated but not permanently resolved. For the rest of their lives, combat-veteran sailors live with their physical wounds and memories as constant reminders of their time in military service. As a pastor who has known military combat and worked with the men and women who have endured the combat and suffered the physical and psychological consequences of battle, Schreiber addresses these issues from a Christian perspective, especially in relation to the sufferings of Jesus, which is the author's unique contribution to ministering to veterans. Christ's sufferings have both spiritual and physical aspects in that he is offered to God as a sacrifice for sin, which is at the heart of the Christian faith, and that, like common criminals in the ancient world, he was executed by crucifixion, which is arguably the most extreme and prolonged devised form of being put to death. Those who are still suffering from the effects of combat can, and may more likely, see and compare their own personal experiences to what Christ endured. In ministering to the active military and veterans, pastors have here a valued and accessible book in working with their parishioners who have served in the military and their family members. Schreiber opens the door into a world with

which most are unfamiliar, but to which our pastors minister. The plight of veterans is coming to the surface in homelessness and the potential for suicide. Here is a way in which we can begin to address the issue and do something about it—and it is easy to read.

David P. Scaer

David P. Scaer Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology  
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana  
david.scaer@ctsfw.edu