

it means to die a good death is scarcely addressed. There is an apparent tension which runs throughout the book between understanding love (including compassion, the perception of beauty, and the experience of joy) as a duty on the one hand and as an ecstatic event on the other, into which one gets swept up. To be fair to the author, this tension is apparent throughout both the philosophical and Christian theological traditions. How this tension is to be negotiated from de Lange's perspective is not entirely clear, although the concept of disposition reflected in such phrases as openness and posture implies that it might have some type of mediating role.

While the current work addresses the question of why we must love our aging neighbor as our aging selves and offers suggestions for how to do so, there is perhaps a lacuna with respect to the question of how we can become the type of people who love our aging neighbors as our aging selves. While the absence of thick description of the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the church may be a necessary consequence of the author's explicit decision to write a book intended to be persuasive to believers and unbelievers alike, a fuller discussion of this theme could perhaps help to address the concern highlighted a moment ago. While these reflections could elicit a diversity of responses, what does seem apparent is that in *Loving Later Life*, Frits de Lange has made a timely and necessary theologically informed contribution to our understanding of the ethics of aging.

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THE CIRCLE by Dave Eggers. New York: Vintage Books, 2014. 497 pages. Paperback; \$15.95. ISBN: 9780345807298.

How much privacy are we willing to give up in order to reach other desirable goals? *The Circle* is a novel that explores this question, presenting a dystopian near-future that is disturbing due to its plausibility.

The Circle is a high-tech company that is aggregating internet accounts and searches into a single account. The company is expanding into almost every sphere, often with social justice or enhancement of society as goals. It is working to eliminate all crime, preserve the environment, and make daily life more convenient. The novel follows Mae, a new hire at the company. She was recommended by her college roommate, Annie, who is fairly high up in the company's hierarchy.

The Circle seems to be a dream company to work for. The campus has everything you need, including free dorm rooms. There are nightly social events

and extensive use of social media to link the circleers together into a community. But the social media is not just a bonus available for employees; it is an expectation. If your activity rating is too low, you will get a visit from your supervisor asking why you are not satisfied with the company.

As time progresses, Mae's work area starts sprouting multiple video screens, close to ten by the end of the book, each demanding that she monitor and respond immediately. All this while she is working as a customer experience representative. And there are expectations for that work as well. After each customer case, there is a survey. If she does not get a score of 100, she has been taught to do a follow-up with the customer to try to raise her score. If her daily average is below the high nineties, she will need to redouble her efforts. This reminds me of the email surveys I receive that list the options "excellent/exceeded expectations" and "not excellent" — there is no option for "met my expectations." If it does not exceed expectations, it is a failure, even if I just ask a question that gets answered, as I knew it would.

Mae's early days in the company made me think about how cults acclimate their new members. My other early comparisons were with two of C.S. Lewis's writings. The first is a transcription of a lecture entitled "The Inner Ring" (<http://www.lewissociety.org/innerring.php>). It discusses our desire to be part of the elite inner ring in a group, to be part of the power circle. The other work is his novel *That Hideous Strength*, which addresses the ideas in "The Inner Ring" and in *The Abolition of Man* in story form. It details how a person can be lured into an organization that appears to have beneficial goals, but may actually cause great harm.

Mae is excited to work for this progressive company and is willing to change in order to fit in and become important.

The comments that follow divulge plot points that are best left unseen if you plan to read the book. There is one other comment I should make before I discuss these plot spoilers. Throughout the book, Mae has a number of casual sexual encounters, some described in detail. I am not sure whether they are there to assist the exposition of her character or just to sell more books. Perhaps it is a mixture of the two.

I will let the interested reader explore for themselves the motivations of the three founders of the Circle. Instead, I will discuss two related values that are core tenets of the Circle.

The first is that nothing should ever be deleted. *All* of human history should be available to everyone.

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The second is that we should be completely transparent. After the Circle convinces most politicians and public servants to start wearing body cameras for their entire waking day, three-minute bathroom breaks excepted, Mae becomes a Circle early adopter, broadcasting all her interactions with the world and her millions of rabid followers. Mae's parents are collateral damage to her desire to make the entire world transparent. In a related project, the Circle uses embedded chips to enable parents to monitor their children all the time, including a constant stream of medical data—all the better to catch problems early.

Mae's commitment to transparency is tested when one of her sexual encounters appears on an uploaded video made without her permission by her partner. And the Circle will never delete anything.

The logical conclusion to all this occurs when the Circle volunteers to help raise the voting percentages by having the government hire them to make voter registration mandatory and, at the same time, tie the voters to the Circle account. Now voting becomes mandatory—all one's electronic feeds stop until one votes. This saves billions of dollars a year in costs for the government, and as a likely consequence will reduce important decisions to popularity polls among the uninformed. This mandate also helps to "close the circle," making the corporation essentially the sole source of all information and power. Those who try to escape are easily found using the worldwide system of surveillance cameras and real-time crowd sourcing as people all over the world are told to help track down a dissenter.

At one point Mae has a short encounter with one of her followers, a former divinity student. He says,

You and yours at the Circle—you're gonna save all the souls. You're gonna get everyone in one place, you're gonna teach them all the same things. There can be one morality, one set of rules. Imagine! Now all humans will have the eye of God. You know the passage? "All things are naked and open to the eyes of God." Something like that. You know your Bible? Now we're all God. Every one of us will soon be able to see, and cast judgment upon, every other. We'll see what He sees. We'll articulate His judgment. We'll channel His wrath and deliver His forgiveness. On a constant and global level. All religion has been waiting for this, when every human is a direct and immediate messenger of God's will. (p. 398)

This set of values is a perversion of ideas found in scripture. First John 1:7 tells us that if we "walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." This seems to encourage

us to live lives for which we would not be ashamed if others see what we do or think. It does not say that forced transparency is the means by which we achieve inner goodness, as the Circle asserts.

The Circle's view of community seems to be heading toward uniformity in the sense that everyone's individual interests and connections are mediated by the Circle's technology. This seems a poor replacement for the promise in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

If the author's intention was to make the reader question how easily we give up privacy (read the permissions you are giving the Apps you install on your smart phone if you are skeptical) in order to gain some other desirable result, he succeeds admirably. There are some nice literary touches involving side stories that work well. The book as a whole presents a future that is both believable and scary. However, despite the engaging story and the important issues of privacy that are raised, I found the underlying worldview portrayed in the story to be quite sinister.

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HISTORY OF SCIENCE

IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENCE: Our Ancient Quest for Knowledge and the Measure of Modern Physics by Demetris Nicolaides. Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2014. 266 pages. Paperback; \$19.00. ISBN: 9781615922253.

At first look *In the Light of Science* is a book with a somewhat intriguing title. Its scope ranges from a discussion of early *Homo sapiens* hunter-gathers to the standard model for particle physics, and then on to string theory—all in the context of seeking linkages to an array of ancient Greek philosophers. Nicolaides maps out three landmarks for humanity: (1) the culturally explosive event of urbanization (about 10,000 years ago), (2) the Greek intellectual revolution and the birth of science (some 2,600 years ago), and (3) the scientifically extraordinary modern era of quantum physics, relativity, and the standard model for particle physics.

The book comprises two parts, including a prologue and epilogue: Part I (78 pages) seeks to provide a brief history of the development of humankind,