

that “offering the creation to God in praise in hymnody is both a special task for human beings and a response to the divine call. Humans hence carry a responsibility for the world: they shelter, protect, and shape it” (p. 100). Zizioulas believes that this call “is not heard in the same fashion by other creatures,” making humans unique and set apart from the rest of creation (p. 103). If this is the case, then why do humans, especially Christians with a specific divine calling, exploit nature and destroy God’s creation?

Two of the final essays in the collection give Christians a few pieces of advice for re-entering this relationship with creation, whether or not that was their intention. Edward F. Mooney uses the comparison of a mall and a swamp to show the effect of our culture and society today in his essay entitled, “Reflections from Thoreau’s Concord.” He states that “to sense a swamp’s wonder is being intelligently alert there, finding sympathy for it and its creatures in a way that repays attention as the place brings you alive. The mall, in contrast, deadens the ‘you’ of the wild” (p. 135). Thus, humankind needs to find joy in nature, not in the ever-present materialistic nature of society and culture. This joy will lead to a deeper appreciation and understanding of the intimate relationship humans have with God’s creation.

In a similar fashion, T. Wilson Dickinson’s “Care of the Soil, Care of the Self: Creation and Creativity in the American Suburbs” attempts to revisit the doctrine of creation by going back to biblical passages (as in Isaiah and the Psalms) that contain deep, vibrant phrases about creation. As Christians made in God’s image, it is our duty to preserve this brilliant imagery rather than to destroy the earth. We need to be in an attentive relationship with the world around us rather than thinking “it can be fixed later” or “technology can solve that problem.” Dickinson also uses the example of mowing a lawn in an urban area, which depicts the idea of conformity to a “T.” Everyone’s lawn must be perfectly manicured and ever green; however, “the uniformity of the suburbs also makes those within it blind to the needs that exist outside its borders, as the ‘world of manicured yards conceals the blights of poverty, land degradation, and economic injustice’” (p. 166). As called beings by our Creator, Christians need to start noticing the invisible and stop using Genesis 1:28 as a biblical basis to abuse the gift of God’s creation.

This book is directed toward readers with an interest in philosophy and theology, as well as those concerned about the state of our environment. It requires careful reading with attention to detail and an advanced knowledge of philosophy and theology, or meticulous research to understand the

intricate theories presented. Many of the authors make key points that help summarize their beliefs; Treanor also summarizes each essay in the introduction, helping to give a broad overview if the reader could not understand the depth of theological or philosophical issues at hand. The overall goal is for humans, especially the target audience of Christians, to become more aware of the philosophical and theological basis for creation care. Multiple viewpoints on a single topic are often presented in a single essay, giving a broad Christian perspective that allows the reader to formulate their own opinions or dig deeper into a specific topic. Readers will likely find themselves intrigued by the arguments and will rethink their own opinions on the doctrine of creation as it relates to their lives.

Reviewed by Jordan Reinders, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Entomology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583.



LOVING LATER LIFE: An Ethics of Aging by Frits de Lange. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. 159 pages. Paperback; \$19.00. ISBN: 9780802872166.

Loving Later Life is a book that could potentially be of interest to anyone, because everyone is faced, in theory, with the prospect of living later life. However, if the author’s contentions surrounding our great anxiety toward aging are correct, there is little chance that the book will become a bestseller. That being said, *Loving Later Life* is a significant contribution to the burgeoning conversation surrounding the ethics of aging. De Lange provides an honest and unflinching look at the realities of old age that our culture often ignores or attempts to paper over. He seeks to meet the ethical challenges surrounding aging through the nuanced development of a theologically informed ethics of care emerging from Jesus’s double command to love God and neighbor as oneself (Matt. 22:38-40). Along the way he engages with an intriguing mix of sources, including some that may not be familiar to English-speaking audiences, encompassing the fields of theology, philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, and gerontology. The book also includes a significant bibliography and detailed index.

After a brief introduction, de Lange begins the first chapter by asking why theological ethics should take an active interest in the subject of aging. The unprecedented aging of contemporary societies, the ethical blind spots of gerontology, theology’s unique ability to speak in a pastoral and existential voice, and the inadequacy of the prevailing ethical paradigms for

Book Reviews

addressing the problem of aging all contribute to the need for a robust theological ethics of aging. In his discussion of gerontology, de Lange introduces one of the recurring concerns of the book, namely, that while advances in gerontology have made an important contribution to slowing down the declines of old age, the corresponding emphasis upon “successful aging” often results in the marginalization and silencing of the frail elderly who have succumbed to the burdens of deep old age. De Lange concludes the first chapter by introducing the “ethics of care,” which has been in development since the 1980s by feminist philosophers and demonstrates striking affinities with theological ethics. In its acknowledgment of the dependence of human beings, its valuing of emotions, its questioning of the public-private divide, and its relational anthropology, the “ethics of care” offers a much more promising set of resources for grappling with the experience of the frail elderly than the agent-oriented, individualistic outlooks of the predominant ethical schools of thought.

The second chapter, entitled “The Ethics of Love,” is the conceptual center of the book. At the foreground stands Jesus’s great dual commandment, which demonstrates the inseparability and interrelatedness of the love of God, the love of self, and the love of neighbor. Particularly important for de Lange’s argument is the recovery of a proper understanding of self-love. The love of self emerges from the reception of the gift of life and serves as a stepping stone toward the love of the other. “Christian love,” de Lange insists, “is a communal event” (p. 42). As a result, a care relationship must be understood in dynamic terms, which involve the continuing challenge of seeking the genuine good for both the recipient of care and the caregiver (this may involve a degree of paternalism) while simultaneously respecting the personal autonomy of those receiving care.

The central contention of the third chapter is that because we do not love our own aging selves, we are unable to love the elderly. De Lange explores the cross-cultural phenomenon of “ageism” and the corresponding emotions of fear, hate, and disgust evoked by and directed toward old people. Drawing upon the “terror management theory” (TMT) introduced by social psychologists, de Lange suggests that

ageism may function as an anxiety buffer, keeping the awareness of aging and its inevitable decline and ending at a distance, by constructing a cultural worldview of growing older, in which everything that reminds of deep old age at the threshold of death is kept far away. (p. 77)

While the hypothesis that one’s attitude toward one’s own aging influences how one treats the elderly has attractive explanatory power, de Lange acknowledges that the correlation has not yet been empirically demonstrated.

The fourth chapter is animated by the question of what it means to love our aging selves. As recipients of the gift of life we are called to love the whole of life, even its latter stages. This love takes the form of a hearty affirmation of life which manifests itself in an ongoing posture of openness to joy. In no way does this deny the difficulties which characterize our relationship to our failing bodies; however, it does require acknowledging that health is not a goal in and of itself, but rather is instrumental for the realization of our humanity. Therefore, our bodies must be understood not only as a medical or physical puzzle, but also as a moral problem. Our relationship to our bodies may need to be renegotiated and reimagined if we are to faithfully traverse the territory of old age in a manner that heeds the commandment to love ourselves. Aging also presents challenges for the self-esteem of the elderly. De Lange insists that “helping old people care about themselves is the most fundamental and elementary form of care of the elderly” (p. 96), and he briefly presents several strategies for advancing this end. Old age is the terrain over which the continuing journey of self-realization traverses, which resonates with the reflections which close out the chapter on the motif of life as a pilgrimage in the Christian tradition.

Fittingly, de Lange concludes the book with a chapter entitled “Love for Aging Neighbors.” He explores three dimensions of love for the elderly: love as attraction, love as attachment, and love as compassion. In the first instance, de Lange seeks to advance an argument for the beauty of old age. In the second, he explores the parent-child relationship and posits friendship as perhaps the best model for a relationship that is ultimately *sui generis*. With respect to the third, de Lange draws upon the parable of the Good Samaritan to elucidate the necessity of suffering with the elderly in a way that both respects the dignity and restores the humanity of the recipient of care.

I offer the concluding thoughts and questions out of respect for the author’s contribution and a desire to continue the important conversation he has begun. De Lange has offered an honest and compelling affirmation of life in the midst of old age. However, those looking for extensive discussion surrounding what are commonly framed as end-of-life ethical issues will be disappointed. Furthermore, while the question of what it means to age well is subject to intense scrutiny, the related, but distinct, question of what

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.

Reviewed by Robert Dean, Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, ON M2M 4B3.

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.