

doi:[10.1017/S0036930615000514](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930615000514)David Fergusson, *Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), pp. 157. \$18.00/£9.99.

David Fergusson's *Creation* is a volume in Eerdmans' 'Guides to Theology' series, which provide concise and accessible introductions to core Christian doctrines. *Creation* is noteworthy for its clarity and contemporary relevance. Not only does Fergusson clearly articulate classical theological perspectives on the doctrine of creation, he also brings overly anthropocentric theological emphases into conversation with contemporary science, environmental ethics, animal rights and even the possibility of extra-terrestrial life. The result is a holistic approach to the doctrine of creation which fully appreciates not only classical theology and scripture, but also the pressing multidisciplinary challenges raised in a contemporary context.

Key to this volume is Fergusson's recognition that insufficient attention has been paid to the doctrine of creation itself in the theological tradition; the creation story of Genesis 1–2 has too often been portrayed as a mere backdrop against which the human drama of sin and redemption is played out. To that end, Fergusson draws upon scriptural, theological and scientific resources to fully appreciate the doctrine of creation in its own right, without prematurely moving to human soteriology. Fergusson sets the theological stage in his opening chapter with an exploration of scripture which is not limited to the first chapters of Genesis; while the creation 'event' is to be seen as an unconstrained and grace-filled act of God, it is incomplete apart from the wider biblical context. Genesis 1–2 must be brought into conversation with the Hebrew Bible's emphasis on divine wisdom, stewardship of creation and social justice, as well as with the New Testament's christological emphasis depicting creation's fundamental goodness, worth and ultimate integration with eschatology. Fergusson further applies this holistic interpretative lens to key controversies surrounding the theology of creation; these include literalist interpretations of Genesis, the *imago Dei*, and how to interpret the divine command for humans to 'have dominion' over the created world.

A similar holistic tone runs through the rest of *Creation*, as Fergusson unpacks many of the themes touched upon in the first chapter. Chapter 2 explores the doctrine of creation out of nothing (*creation ex nihilo*) and, while highlighting opposing historical views on the doctrine, Fergusson ultimately defends the traditional emphasis that the created world is ontologically distinct from, and wholly dependent on, the Creator. Interestingly, Fergusson argues that one implication of this traditional God/world distinction is that

the natural sciences (not theologians) are given full warrant to describe and explain the natural world. Chapter 3 discusses the difficult issues surrounding the doctrine of the fall, human sin, the nature of evil and the constraints on human freedom; particular emphasis is placed on the continued role of grace in the natural world, culture and human communities. This emphasis is picked up in chapter 4, where Fergusson explores God's continued presence in the providential ordering of the world. Here the author engages the difficulties of understanding God's agency, taking seriously both the classical emphasis on God's providential action and human freedom. By contrast, chapter 5 engages with the philosophically structured and constrained perspectives of deism. Drawing upon modern theology, Fergusson helpfully differentiates between a theology of nature and natural theology; whereas early forms of natural theology may have failed to appreciate the full import of Christian revelation, this need not hinder the development of an explicitly Christian theology of nature. Chapter 6 selectively deals with modern science and its applicability to the theology of creation, with Fergusson arguing that modern cosmology and Darwinian evolution are congruent with Christian theology. Finally – and fascinatingly! – Fergusson uses his final chapter to explore the theological implications of possible extra-terrestrial life, as well as animal rights and environmental ethics. While not wishing to draw any definitive conclusions about extra-terrestrial life, the author is eager to urge intellectual and theological humility in the face of a creation which consists of far more life, creativity and worth than that embodied by humans.

Creation masterfully fills its intended niche. It is a credit to the author's erudition that readers may find themselves wishing for more in-depth engagement with specific challenges to classical theologies of Creation. For example, the book may offer an overly optimistic portrayal of classical theology, particularly as regards its ability appropriately to engage contemporary scientific knowledge. At times, Fergusson may underestimate the significant challenges to classical theology's infrastructure and the God/creation model which are posed by contemporary science. That being said, such an intentionally concise guide necessarily constrains nuanced discussions. To that end, Fergusson includes an immensely helpful annotated bibliography; its extremely diverse authors and perspectives are more than adequate in providing readers with the resources necessary for further research. Highly accessible yet comprehensive in scope, this book covers all the important historical and scriptural themes involved in a theology of creation, while still challenging traditional assumptions in light of contemporary science and ethics.

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Neil Messer, *Flourishing: Health, Disease, and Bioethics in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 256. \$35.00.

Issues of health, including disease, illness and general physical and mental well-being, are among the most pertinent and fundamental issues to the living of any life. Having the ability to impact almost everything about the lives we lead, and our ability to enjoy life's benefits, issues of health are not only of practical importance to individuals, but to the church, and thereby provide important grounds for engagement between life and theological belief and faith. Neil Messer provides a theological examination of disease, illness and disability, alongside surrounding bioethical issues, and attempts to equip Christians for engagement with these issues by establishing the unique contributions of Christian theology to these debates. Messer does this with intelligence and sensitivity, and makes important contributions to Christian engagement with the bioethical issues surrounding health and disease.

Messer's unique contributions to a theological perspective of health, disease and bioethics are primarily contained within the sixteen theses he articulates in chapter 4, but the first three chapters serve as the necessary building blocks for these conclusions. Chapter 1 undertakes a literature review framed by contrasting definitions of health provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Christopher Boorse. The WHO defines health as not simply being free from disease but also asserts the attainment of well-being, while Boorse's biostatistical model states that health is determined by the extent to which it is without disease and illness. Through a highly interdisciplinary approach which examines evolutionary biology, Aristotelian teleology, the capabilities approach, and issues of embodiment, Messer begins to formulate a theological understanding of health primarily concerned with flourishing in light of one's ability to grow as a part of God's creation. Chapter 2 continues this theme by identifying concepts within disability studies which inspire consideration of what it truly means for humanity to flourish. This understanding challenges traditional assumptions about the quality of life of others and compels an enlarged understanding of what it means to live a flourishing life. Chapter 3 represents an important turning point in Messer's overall project by incorporating scripture and Christian theology. Messer examines healing and caring for the sick within scripture and the Christian tradition, while also acknowledging humility in the face