Following is my review of Dr. Richard Barcellos' book, *Better than the Beginning: Creation in Biblical Perspective* (2013, Reformed Baptist Academic Press). The review was first published in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* journal (volume 54(1), pages 80—81). Subsequent to the publication of this review in *CRSQ*, the books mentioned in the last paragraph have since become available. Links to those resources are provided.

Back when I first started following the creation/evolution debate and had immersed myself in an array of Henry Morris books, a particular statement he made in passing stuck with me. Dr. Morris wrote, "Somehow, [God] is bringing even greater glory to His Name, and greater blessing to His children, through the work of redemption and salvation than through His work of creation" (1991; p. 70). The inference is that the Fall in the Garden of Eden was not a disconnected, random or haphazard intrusion into an otherwise perfect universe but a necessary component of a broader picture of history and theology.

The inherent compartmental nature of Morris' dispensationalism aside, the above statement spoke to the importance of an integrated theology that finds the doctrine of creation set properly within the context of a broader narrative, speaking to the *purpose* of creation as well as the *new creation* in Christ. Though the cosmos was pronounced "very good" at the completion of creation week, Day Seven was not the fulfillment of God's ultimate purpose in creating the physical universe. As evidenced by the presence of the Serpent, The Garden of Eden would be unlike the final consummation.

Better than the Beginning develops that sidebar from Dr. Morris and fills an eschatological gap (definitely no pun intended) in creationist literature. Barcellos is careful to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the doctrine of creation with other key doctrines by surveying the broader metanarrative of Scripture; It is a reminder that the doctrine of creation is ultimately theological, not scientific, and must not be treated as an isolated, specialized field of study.

While biblical creationists have been enthusiastic to defend the historicity and authenticity of the creation account as recorded in Genesis, such should not be divorced from a comprehensive theological framework. For this reason, Barcellos' work will be of little interest to the apologist hoping to simply add more evidence to his arsenal for the dismemberment of evolutionary mythology. Barcellos' approach is unashamedly presuppositional, asserting that "…we should not argue about evidences. We should simply proclaim them, but within a biblical worldview. The penetrating Christian apologist will

attempt to get behind the facts and arguments to the philosophy of fact which their opponent brings to the facts" (p. 59). Barcellos explains why the truthfulness of Scripture must be our starting axiom and not a conclusion expected to be produced via the accumulation of data.

Noteworthy is his discussion of general and special revelation and the epistemological ramifications of the Fall on man's mind. He writes, "Man's ability to receive and acknowledge the revelation of God's glory in creation is like trying to listen to AM radio at night. It is all distorted" (p. 48); "…Man's ability to receive and properly acknowledge the revelation of God's glory in creation is not what it was in the beginning" (p. 50). This section reminded me of W.R. Downing's fine treatise on the epistemological futility of the natural man (Sabato, 2016).

While his focus is primarily theological, the author also takes the time to defend a literal six-day creation, noting the ramifications of various compromise efforts. He accomplishes this by utilizing a simple and consistent hermeneutical method (the "analogy of faith" and "the analogy of Scripture"). He rightly notes that

> *"When asking a question about any text of Scripture, the safest place to go for answers is the Scripture itself. In the case of the days of creation, God speaks. He interprets them for us through the words of Moses in Exodus 20:11 (and in other places). This is the divine interpretation and therefore it is infallible—it cannot be wrong" [emphasis mine] (p. 85). He concludes that "the triune God created the Son-tilted heavens and the earth for His own glory in the space of six, ordinary, twenty-four hour days" (p. 84).*

There are many fine insights in this short book and readers are likely to benefit from Barcellos' unique approach to the study of creation. He contends that "creation and new creation are vitally related in the biblical drama of revelation. Redemption by Christ is connected to creation in the space of six days" (p. 88). Certainly, no book that I have read thus far has more adequately dealt with the eschatology of creation while maintaining a literal, biblical, "young-earth" perspective on the creation week and the age of the earth.

For those interested in pursuing this subject in greater depth, planned for release in the near future is Barcellos' work tentatively titled, *Getting the Garden Right* (Founders Press), a preview of which can be found in, *The Covenant of Works* (2016). Also, scheduled for

publication this year is Lita Cosner's, *From Creation to Salvation* (Cosner, 2017). I look forward to these contributions to the study of biblical creation.

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