

created” (p. 112), and we learn things by “observations and experiments” (p. 113). She points out that “the empirical is but one aspect of a richer, multi-dimensional reality created by God” (p. 117), affirming that Christian empiricism recognizes “the value of the sensory world without reducing reality to what the human eye sees” (p. 140). In addition, Pearcey points out that Hume himself questioned the validity of empiricism since it cannot empirically establish the vital concept of cause and effect. Nonetheless, how it is that Christian empiricism escapes the logical problem of induction, and the precise relationship between fallible sense-experience and infallible biblical revelation, were not particularly manifest to me.

### Conclusions

Despite the above caveats, *Saving Leonardo* is a must-read masterwork of outstanding Christian cultural analysis. Pearcey writes with eloquent ease, interweaving anecdotes and pop-culture discernment with profound historical, philosophical and theological insight. I particularly appreciate her commitment to an all-encompassing Christian worldview throughout. The volume itself is beautifully produced, featuring full-color reproductions of the artwork and book-covers under scrutiny. *Saving Leonardo* will both challenge the secular reader and assist the Christian reader to understand culture, to love God and neighbor, to be salt and light in a dark and decaying world, and to take captive every thought to obedience to Christ.

## An overly cautious exposition

A review of  
*Beginnings: The early chapters of Genesis*  
by Gregory Goswell  
PTC Media, Box Hill North,  
VIC., 2010

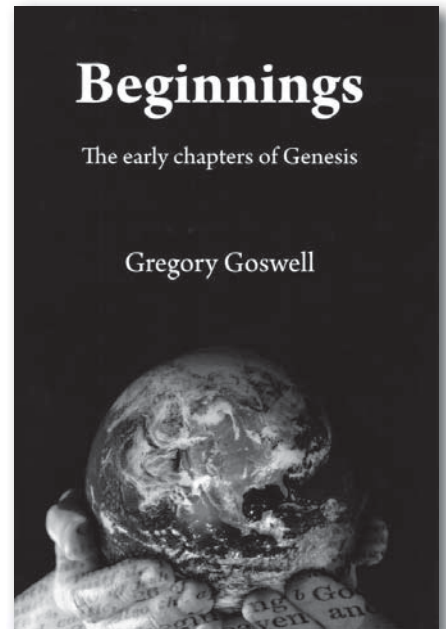
Andrew S. Kulikovsky

Gregory Goswell is an ordained minister and a lecturer in biblical studies at Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne. This book is more of a series of Bible studies than an in-depth treatment of the creation account. It has eight chapters: (1) In Six Days; (2) Problems With Parents; (3) Where did Cain Get His Wife? (4) The Extent of the Flood; (5) God’s Covenant With Noah; (6) The Babble at Babel; (7) Looking Ahead; and (8) Questions for Discussion and Individual Reflection (a series of 24 studies).

Drawing from the higher critical JEDP (Documentary) hypothesis, the author views the first chapter as a priestly account which describes the building of the cosmic sanctuary where human beings can dwell in the presence of God. The JEDP hypothesis is complete fiction<sup>1</sup> but the author, fortunately, does not labour the point.

Like most commentators, Goswell sees the days of creation as being paralleled as follows:

- Day 1 Creation of light
- Day 2 Creation of the sea and the sky
- Day 3 Creation of the earth/plants
- Day 4 Creation of the luminaries
- Day 5 Creation of the fish and the fowl
- Day 6 Creation of land creatures and man



The first three days describe the making of three regions while the second three days describe the creation of their inhabitants. The problem with this common view is that the correspondences are non-existent! Light is not a ‘region’ and the luminaries created on Day 4 inhabit the ‘expanse of the sky’, which was created on Day 2! And the fish created on Day 5 inhabit the seas created on Day 3! However, Goswell affirms that Genesis 1 is clearly narrative and has all the usual grammatical features of prose. There is “no evidence at all that it is merely literary and not a narrative of what really happened” (p. 4). Instead, Goswell claims that the account is ‘heightened prose’.

### The first day and the first creative act

Goswell rightly rejects the notion that Genesis 1:1 is heading, but rather, concludes that Genesis 1:1 describes the first creative act of God and tells us what He did in the beginning. It describes the absolute beginning of space and time. He also rejects the

Gap Theory, and affirms that the first verse refers to creation *ex nihilo*, and that “the heavens and the earth” is a merism, denoting “the universe”. This is a common view, but seems unlikely for two reasons: firstly, the Israelites regarded the heavens and the earth as two separate entities and did not have a concept of a unified world until much later. Secondly, *eretz* (‘the earth’) is specifically referred to as a separate entity in a circumstantial clause in the very next sentence. This singling out of ‘the earth’ distinguishes it from the other element of the supposed merism that is meant to refer to the universe as a whole. E.W. Bullinger, on the other hand, identifies this as an instance of ‘anadiplosis’ and the very first figure of speech used in the Bible:

“[I]t is used to call our attention to, and emphasize, the fact that, while the first statement refers to two things, ‘the heavens and the earth’; the following statement proceeds to speak of only one of them, leaving the other entirely out of consideration.”<sup>2</sup>

### Plural form of Hebrew word for God

Goswell plays down the plural form of the Hebrew word for God (*elohim*) in Genesis 1:26, suggesting, along with many other commentators, that it is merely a plural of intensification or majesty, and not theologically significant, at least with respect to the Trinity. However, he later contradicts himself by rejecting the idea of a plural of majesty, given that there is no such instance of this usage in the Old Testament!

### Spiritualisation

The author makes the surprising claim that references to the earth/land in Genesis 1 should be read in the context of God’s gift of the land of Canaan to Israel:

“Genesis 1 establishes God’s kingly prerogative to give land as he sees fit, so that in the larger context of the Pentateuch it shows that the land of Canaan rightly belongs to Israel as a divine gift” (p. 5).

**Table 1.** Some contradictions between the order of creation in the bible and evolution/long ages.

Bible account of Creation	Evolution/long-age speculation
· Earth before the sun and stars	· Stars and sun before the Earth
· Earth covered in water initially	· Earth a molten blob initially
· Oceans first, then dry land	· Dry land, then oceans
· Life first created on the land	· Life started in the oceans
· Plants created before the sun	· Plants created long after the sun
· Fish and birds created together	· Fish formed long before birds
· Land animals created after birds	· Land animals before whales
· Man and dinosaurs lived together	· Dinosaurs died out long before man appeared

But how can it establish a ‘kingly’ prerogative, when this was meant to be a priestly account? In any case, neither Israel nor the patriarchs existed at this point, so how could the account refer to the gift of the land of Canaan to Israel?

In fact, the author has a tendency to spiritualise the narrative. For example, he views the reference to separation in Genesis 1:4 as the priestly role of separating clean from unclean animals. The language of evening and morning refers to the fact that these later become the times for the regular sacrifices, and therefore the author of the creation account is thinking in terms of holy time.

### Genesis 1–2 and the days of creation

Goswell rightly points out that Genesis 1 and 2 are complementary accounts, not separate and alternate contradictory creation accounts. The focus of Genesis 1 is the cosmic plan of creation with the Sabbath as its high point. In Genesis 2, the focus is on humans as cultivators of the land and as moral agents.

Goswell’s interpretation of the days of creation is somewhat equivocal. He states:

“There is indeed a time emphasis in 1:1–2:3, however, the major theological issue with regard to time in Genesis 1 is not the length of the days, but at different times are full worship and service of God” (p. 10).

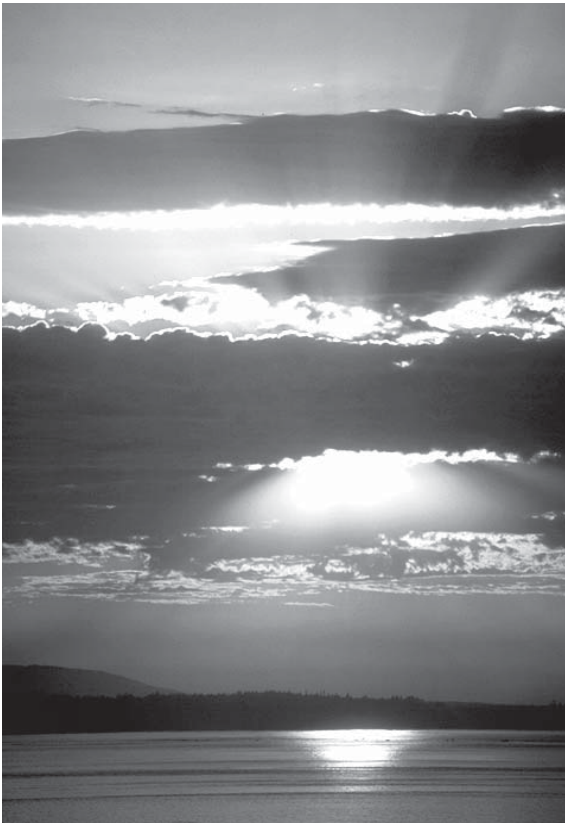
He acknowledges that the 24-hour-day view is the natural reading, but claims that interpreting the days as something other than 24-hour days is not just a result of a reaction to recent scientific theories and therefore “does not need to be viewed as capitulating to unbelieving science” (p. 14). He cites Origen and Augustine as holding to non-literal day views. However, he admits that until recent times, the days were routinely viewed as literal days. He writes:

“Here and elsewhere in Scripture, normal days are suggested by the everyday language used ... but it cannot be proved absolutely that the reference is to literal days” (p. 15).

I disagree! It is abundantly clear that the reference is to normal literal days, and it is also abundantly clear that the overwhelming majority of Jews and Christians have read it this way throughout history.<sup>3</sup>

In answer to the objection of having normal solar days before the creation of the sun, Goswell rightly argues for a directional light source emanating from God Himself, citing Psalm 104:2 and Revelation 21:23 for support. He adds: “God’s Spirit will be the source of light and life” (p. 6).

Goswell claims the Westminster Confession of Faith is simply replicating the language used in Genesis when it says “in the space of six days”, rather than mandating



**Figure 1.** In Exodus 20:10–11, God himself equates the days of creation with the periods of time we now experience. If ‘day’ in Genesis 1 means anything other than a normal solar day, this commandment becomes nonsense.

a particular interpretation of the days. He adds: “this means that a theistic evolutionary view is not outside the proper bounds of reformed orthodoxy” (p. 16). However, David Hall has convincingly shown that the Confession writers who discussed the days all held to 24-hour days.<sup>4</sup>

### Cain’s wife and the Flood

In answering the question: “Where did Cain get his wife?” Goswell rightly answers: “presumably, she was one of his sisters” (p. 40) and notes that incest at this early stage was not outlawed nor was it considered unnatural. He also rejects the notion that Cain’s wife may have been some pre-Adamic female.

Goswell affirms the universality of the Noahic Flood and offers a brief but persuasive justification for it. He concludes: “The Bible does not have a local flood in mind” (p. 60). He adds that the

“... modern science of geology does not include a universal flood in its explanation of the present state of the earth, so that those who hold to a worldwide flood must either accept an alternate flood geology or patiently wait until scientists reformulate their theories” (p. 61).

Either way, the current uniformitarian geology that predominates must be rejected in favour of an alternative one or one that is yet to be proposed.

### Evolution and Intelligent Design movement

The author rightly rejects evolution and describes it as a religious viewpoint. He also notes that the appeal of evolution for most people is not scientific but synthetic

and emotional because of the appeal of the myth of progress. He claims that Genesis 1 was not written to refute the theory of evolution: “The main purpose of the biblical account is not to combat either ancient or modern alternative views of origins” (p. 7). This is true, of course, to the extent that the modern theory of evolution did not exist when the account was written. Nevertheless, given that it is a true historical account of what actually occurred, it does function as a refutation of “either ancient or modern alternative views of origins”.

The author mentions the Intelligent Design (ID) movement and notes that its members are not committed to a young-earth literalist reading of Genesis, and therefore they promote the idea of progressive creation. This confuses two concepts. The ID movement is not concerned at all about the interpretation of Genesis or the age of the earth. It is purely concerned with

finding scientific evidence for design and the origin of life. The movement contains mostly those who hold to a ‘progressive’ creation or theistic evolutionary view and therefore do not hold to a young earth, but does include a number of young-earth creationists.

### Conclusion

The book is written for the layman so it uses straightforward, non-technical language. Thus, there is little direct reference to, or exegesis of, the underlying Hebrew. Unfortunately, it also contains no table of contents, footnotes, bibliography, or any indices. This makes it somewhat difficult to find discussions of particular topics, or do any further reading or study.

As noted above, Goswell’s view of the creation days is somewhat equivocal. I get the impression that he holds to (or at least prefers) the literal day view but does not want to lay it on the line, presumably because he believes it is too divisive an issue. I could only recommend it as a Bible study resource/guide for a small group with a strong leader who is familiar with the strong biblical evidence and arguments for literal days and against other interpretations.<sup>5</sup>

### References

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2. Bullinger, E.W., *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 251, 1968.
3. See chapter 3 of my book *Creation, Fall, Restoration: A Biblical Theology of Creation*, Mentor, Fearn, Ross-shire, 2009.
4. Hall, D.W., What was the view of the Westminster Assembly Divines on Creation Days?; in: Pipa, J.A. and Hall, D.W. (Eds.), *Did God Create in Six Days?* Southern Presbyterian Press, Taylors, SC, pp. 41–52, 1999.
5. For a detailed exegetical discussion of the days of creation, see chapters 6 and 7 of my book *Creation, Fall, Restoration: A Biblical Theology of Creation*, Mentor, Fearn, Ross-shire, 2009.