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Essay on J.H. Gladstone's *Points of Supposed Collision Between the Scriptures and Natural Science*:

Which has Priority for Gladstone: Scripture or Science?

In his *Points of Supposed Collision*, Gladstone attempts to reconcile the Scriptures with modern science's view of the earth's age. Early in our excerpt, Gladstone says that "Holy Writ and nature are both unchangeable" (Gladstone, 1). However, he shows that of these two, nature (or science) has the priority. For example, while holding that Scripture isn't changeable, Gladstone also says "should [science] prove that they [science and Scripture] are contradictory, we shall have to put aside....that ancient and sublime fragment which forms the first thirty-four verses of [Genesis]" (Gladstone, 3). Gladstone does not say we must change our interpretation of these verses, but to put them aside. Thus, to Gladstone, science can override Scripture.

Gladstone also contradicts the Bible in several places. When belittling the significance of the Noachian deluge, Gladstone says that Scripture does not affirm a universal deluge that wiped out all of life on earth. However, God says "nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done" (Genesis 8:21b). Additionally, Gladstone denies the possibility that the ark could have held all the living creatures. "Again, the improved knowledge of natural history showed that all the species of beasts and birds could not have found room in the ark" (Gladstone, 1). Gladstone ignores several verses in the Bible when he says this, among them being "[God] destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both men and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the

ark remained alive” (Genesis 7:23). Thus, the only creatures that survived were on the ark, so all present-day species were on the ark. The supernatural power (God) that caused the flood could have easily helped Noah find all these animals (even infant ones). Additionally, from what we know about micro-evolution within species (such as the difference between a St. Bernard and a Terrier), which can be observed to have taken place fairly recently, the number of animals Noah would have had to accommodate did not include different types of the same species. In other places, Gladstone makes claims contrary to what the Bible says regarding the greatness of the flood (“no diluvial wave could have swept over the volcanoes...” (Gladstone, 1) versus Genesis 7:19-20).

Gladstone does not only ignore scripture, but he also challenges word definitions without basis. He claims that the Hebrew word *bara* doesn't actually have to mean “create”, even though Hebrew dictionaries and all widely accepted translations of the Bible agree that this word means to “create” or “form out of nothing”. Of the 52 occurrences of this term in the Bible, only 2 are translated “make”. And in every case *bara* is used, it either must, or makes sense to, mean “create”. Never does it necessarily mean to make out of something. Also, when another term is used to refer to the creation, it is frequently used right next to *bara* and refers to the same thing (Genesis 1:21,25, for example). And if Gladstone does not believe that God created the earth out of nothing, where does he believe the original matter came from?

In conclusion, it seems to me that Gladstone places more emphasis and trust in science than in Scripture. And the scientific arguments he uses are not incontestable observations, but theories and beliefs. Gladstone says that “*all* geologists...hold them [two conclusions] as fundamental truths” (Gladstone, 2 – emphasis added) when he

speaks of the earth being vastly older than six thousand years and that the introduction of fresh genera and species must have been gradual. In truth, however, there are many astute and well-educated Christian geologists and scientists who do not hold to these beliefs in any way (Carl Baugh, Don Patton, Henry Morris, Dennis Petersen, etc.). These scientists have much evidence for their “young-earth” beliefs and, like Gladstone, do not see any collision between Scripture and natural science. But, unlike Gladstone, they don’t have to ignore certain Scriptures (and evidence) to not see this collision.