

The question of the possible reconciliation of the results of scientific inquiry respecting the antiquity of man and the age of the world with the Scripture chronology has been long and earnestly debated. On the one hand, scientists, deeming them irreconcilable, have been led to distrust the divine authority of the Scriptures; and, on the other hand, believers in the divine word have been led to look upon the investigations of science with an unfriendly eye, as though they were antagonistic to religious faith. In my reply to Bishop Colenso in 1863, I had occasion to examine the method and structure of the biblical genealogies, and incidentally ventured the remark that herein lay the solution of the whole matter. I said, 'there is an element of uncertainty in a computation of time which rests upon genealogies, as the sacred chronology so largely does. Who is to certify us that the antediluvian and ante-Abrahamic genealogies have not been condensed in the same manner as the post-Abrahamic? Our current chronology is based upon the prima facie impression of these genealogies But if these recently discovered indications of the antiquity of man, over which scientific circles are now so excited, shall, when carefully inspected and thoroughly weighed, demonstrate all that any have imagined they might demonstrate, what then? They will simply show that the popular chronology is based upon a wrong interpretation, and that a select and partial register of ante-Abrahamic names has been mistaken for a complete one.' Further reflection has confirmed me in the correctness of the opinion then expressed.

. . . the genealogies in Genesis, chapters v, and xi, were not intended to be used, and cannot properly be used, for the construction of a chronology.

It can scarcely be necessary to adduce proof to one who has even a superficial acquaintance with the genealogies of the Bible, that these are frequently abbreviated by the omission of unimportant names. In fact, abridgement is the general rule. . .

The omissions in the genealogy of our Lord as given in Matt.1 are familiar to all. Thus in verse 8 three names are dropped between Joram and Ozias (Uzziah), viz., Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:25), Joash (2 Kings 12:1), and Amaziah (2 Kings 14:1), and in verse 11 Jehoiakim is omitted after Josiah (2 Kings 23:34; 1 Chron. 3:16); and in verse 1 the entire genealogy is summed up in two steps, 'Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.' . .

The genealogy of Ezra is recorded in the book which bears his name; but we learn from another passage, in which the same line of descent is given, that it has been abridged by the omission of six consecutive names. . . .