

of the genealogy of Christ in the first chapter of Matthew into three tables of fourteen generations each, may warn us that the reduction of the patriarchal genealogies in Genesis v. and xi. into two tables of ten generations each may equally be due to extraneous considerations; and that there may be represented by each of these ten generations -- adequately for the purposes for which the genealogy is recorded -- a very much longer actual series of links.

It is quite true that, when brought together in sequence, name after name. these notes assume the appearance of a concentrated chronological scheme. But this is pure illusion, due wholly to the nature of the parenthetical insertions which are made The circumstances that the actual items chosen for parenthetical notice are such that when the names are arranged one after the other they produce the illusion of a chronological scheme is a mere accident, arising from the nature of the items chosen, and must not blind us to the fact that we have before us here nothing but ordinary genealogies, accompanied by parenthetical notes which are inserted for other than chronological purposes; and that therefore these genealogies must be treated like other genealogies, and interpreted on the same principles. But if this be so, then these genealogies too not only may be, but probably are, much compressed, and merely record the line of descent of Noah from Adam and of Abraham from Noah. Their symmetrical arrangement in groups of ten is indicative of their compression; and for all that we know instead of twenty generations and some two thousand years measuring the interval between the creation and the birth of Abraham, two hundred generations, and something like twenty thousand years, or even two thousand generations and something like two hundred thousand years may have intervened. In a word, the Scriptural data leave us wholly without guidance in estimating the time which elapsed between the creation of the world and the deluge and between the deluge and the call of Abraham. So far as the Scripture assertions are concerned, we may suppose any length of time to have intervened between these events which may otherwise appear reasonable.

The question of the antiquity of man is accordingly a purely scientific one. . . .

-- Benjamin B. Warfield, "On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race," In *The Princeton Theological Review* ix. (1911), pp. 1-25; reprinted in *Biblical and Theological Studies* edited by Samuel C. Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1952), pp. 238-261.