

Suspect and revise the interpretation; make it correct; make it what the Bible authorizes, and there is no contradiction; you need not abandon the book, only abandon a false interpretation.

Geology teaches the great antiquity of our world, that instead of being a few thousand years old, it may have reached millions. Its fossil inductions are irresistible; enlightened candour can no longer gainsay the evidence of antiquity—an antiquity leaving immensely in the distance our wonted chronology; and, what then? shut our eyes on demonstrative phenomena, or conclude the sacred oracles are at fault, and so deny their inspiration?—neither the one nor the other. Let nature tell her own honest tale; she displays the eternal power and god-head of Jehovah; hesitate not for a moment to sing the hymn of praise which she teaches; in the end you will find there is no discord between that hymn and that which revelation dictates; lay it down as a maxim the Bible is true; but does it follow that your interpretation of it is equally true. Your interpretation is that the material world is about six thousand years old; but is that what Moses teaches in Genesis, first and second chapter? Without question he teaches the recent creation of man: nor does geology contradict this. The history of Adam commences on the sixth day, and where, in the statement of Moses, have we an account of the first day? Chapter i. 3, "And God said, let there be light, and there was light." Now this is the commencement of the Adamic system; and six days after he is created. But observe, the operation given in the statement of Moses, prior to the first Adamic day, is contained in verses 1 and 2; and the only chronological data it affords, is "*In the beginning.*" Now, does the Bible any where give us a clue to the meaning of the phrase, "*In the beginning.*" Prov. viii. 22, 23: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." A remark or two on these two verses may show us what "*In the beginning*" means. 1st. It was before his works of old; now, how long before, the record saith not. 2nd. In the 23rd verse it adds the expressions, *from everlasting*, and *from the beginning*. Are they not synonymous, or may be explanatory of one another? Perhaps grammarians would call it a Hendiadys; but, to the common reader, do not the words, "*In the beginning,*" seem the same in import as *from everlasting*. Nor is this the only passage. Examine the following:—John i. 1; Heb. i. 10; Col. i. 18. Now, it was in the beginning, however long or short, (and as we have no line we cannot measure it,) that God made the heavens and the earth. If the geologist prove to our entire satisfaction, that it requires myriads of ages to create the successions of vegetable and animal existences, which have left their impress on the respective strata with which his examinations have made him acquainted, we say our Father made them all, and he prefaces our chronology

in his own book, with a statement which gives ample time for these successive productions, viz.: "*In the beginning*"—"From eternity."

We, however, frankly admit, that the record of revelation confines the history of man within a short chronological compass; not much more, at any rate, than six or seven thousand years; and should the geologist find any human fossil or fossils of any human inventions; implements or instruments of very ancient data in his geological epochs, we should find a difficulty according to our present interpretation. But what is the fact: no such remains are found in any of the three strata; no, not among Lyell's, eocene miocene, pliocene and newer pliocene; we had almost added geology, whose prattle threatened the extinction of revelation, now that it has waxed into manhood, yields its tributary testimony to the unquestionable veracity of the scriptural narrative under proper interpretation. The disciple of revelation has nothing to fear from fresh discoveries. Let their veracity be tested and confirmed; should they then seem to contradict the divine testimony, be assured it is only *apparent*. Truth is one; in all its departments there is agreement. We venture not, however, to add, that the *interpretation* of revelation, however antiquated and numerously sustained, is unquestionably correct. If a screw seems loose, you will find it here; not in the oracles themselves—they are divine, the interpretation is human.

The utmost care, however, should be taken in our attempts to ascertain the meaning of holy writ. It is the stand-point from which we shall survey other portions of this wonderful book. Now, should this be false, it will greatly mislead. It will be to revelation what a vitiated eye is to nature. I suppose this is what is meant by the Redeemer. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." Should we find some interpretation of the word, which we entertain, sort ill with some other portion of revelation, suspect not for a moment the *accordance* of both portions of the word, but at once suspect your interpretation, and submit it to renewed investigation; dare to suspend your judgment, seek the direction of Heaven, and, sooner or later, in God's light, you will see light. Be strong in faith, giving glory to God, for the veracity of his word. But the interpretation of that word by any man, or any number of men, you may question without offence, and in questioning attain the true light—you are authorized to do so by Christ's declaration, "Call no man master." To question a human interpretation is not unbelief, it is often the first step to genuine, enlightened faith. Guard, however, against the sally in the opposite direction. The mind, like the elastic wire, when relieved from one pressure, may spring too far on the other side; to have discovered a false interpretation, does not authorize us to descry all human interpretation. It gives us liberty to question others, but treat all with candour and judgment. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."