

contain genealogies which extend through a period of more than 3,500 years, from the creation of Adam to the captivity of Judah, and even after that time. Josephus informs us that he traced his own descent from the tribe of Levi by means of public registers, and that, however dispersed and depressed his nation were, they never neglected to have exact genealogical tables prepared from authentic documents which were kept at Jerusalem. Since, however, their destruction as a nation by the Romans, all their tables of descent seem to have been lost; and even the Levites, who are still distinguished from the rest of the people by the exercise of special honorary religious functions, are known as such only by being acknowledged as descendants of parents who exercised the same.

The inequalities of rank and right which prevailed during the Middle Ages, made genealogical inquiries highly important, and it was then that researches of this kind assumed the form of a science, which became closely connected with heraldry, *q. v.* Very little critical care, however, was usually employed in such cases, the chief object being to trace the origin of families into the remotest antiquity.

Attempts to carry this to an absurd length are frequently manifested in the earlier genealogical works. Critical genealogical studies were not begun before the Seventeenth Century.

Genealogical accounts are not only interesting to persons who feel a more or less natural curiosity about their ancestors, but are also useful to the historian, as elucidating the often complicated relations of dynasties, families, claims and controversies of successions, etc. They are also important in legal cases concerning claims of inheritance, and, indeed, are indispensable in States in which the enjoyment of certain rights is made to depend upon lineage or descent.

A genealogy, or lineage, is frequently represented in the form of a tree, *arbor consanguinitatis*, giving a distinct view of the various branches of the family, and the degrees of descent from the common progenitor, who is generally present in the root or stem.

Genealogical tables are either descending or ascending. The former are chiefly used in historical records, presenting the descendants of a certain person in the order of procreation; the latter in documents of nobility, serving to show the claims of any man or family to the titles of paternal and maternal ancestors.