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Old America - The Mastodon and the Horse

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Abstract: Series of articles dealing with archaeological, anthropological, geographical, societal, religious, and historical aspects of ancient America and their connections to the Book of Mormon, which is the key to understanding “old American” studies.

has been restored to the earth in our day, and carry the "glad tidings" to "the land of the rising sun."

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

THE MASTODON AND THE HORSE.

"AND it came to pass that we did find upon the land of a promise (America) as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox and the ass and the horse, and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals which were for the use of man" (Book of Mormon, v. 45, page 44).

This and many similar passages in the Book of Mormon has been ridiculed and scouted at by the learned world time and again, as a preposterous and improbable assertion, totally disagreeing with all geological and scientific research. We say it has been, for fortunately for the cause of truth during the last few years, the keen and searching inquiry of geologists and explorers have brought to light astonishing results of their labors, particularly as relating to the fossil remains of animals long considered unknown to the pre-historic inhabitants of America. In a former chapter we referred to the remains of the mastodon found in Mexico by excavators, mingled with the works of man; also to Mr. Southall's notable instances that the mammoth or mastodon had been delineated by races who had lived at no very remote date; first by the builders of the ancient Central American cities; second, by the mound builders (whom he shows to have lived not more than fifteen hundred years ago). A descriptive pamphlet of the "Leviathan Missouriensis" Missouri Leviathan published in London in 1842, by Albert Koch, gives the Indian traditions relating to the mastodon. The Shawnee tradition was that ten thousand moons ago, when nothing but gloomy forests covered the land, a race of animals was in being, so huge in bulk they crushed the pine beneath their feet, and demolished the waters of the lakes in slaking their thirst. The javelins and arrows hurled at them fell harmless from their sides. So ravenous and destructive these animals became, that a cry of universal distress was raised by the inhabitants of the land, when the Good Spirit interposed to save the unhappy people, and destroyed the destroyers. The Osage Indians relate that there was a time when the red men durst not venture into the forest to hunt on account of these animals, and the people consequently were reduced to great distress. Numerous battles were fought by the natives with the animals, in which many on both sides were killed. One of the greatest of these battles was fought on the Big Bone river, Missouri, and there the natives offered up the slaughtered animals as a burnt sacrifice to the Great Spirit. The Creeks allege that these animals were of frightful magnitude, and formerly lived on the eastern plains but were gradually driven by the inhabitants westward. They destroyed all the smaller animals, and if their agility had been equal to their size, the people would also have been destroyed.

Mr. K. disinterred the remains of two animals the size of the elephant, one in Gasconade County, Missouri, and one in Benton County, in the same State. With the skeletons he found arrow heads and other indisputable evidences that the animals had been destroyed by man.

In the *American Naturalist* for May, 1874, Professor O. C. Marsh has an article on "Fossil Horses in America." He says the remains of equine mammals found in the deposits of this country, represent more than double the number of genera and species found in the strata of the eastern hemisphere. The fossils are found chiefly in the ancient lake basins of Wyoming and Utah. These lake fossils are of the miocene and pliocene periods. Here the Professor discovered in 1870 many new species of animals, among which was a gigantic pachyderm, nearly as large as the elephant; also the genus anchitherium, one of the ancestors of the horse. One of the peculiarities of this animal was that it had three toes, all of which touch the ground.

Above the miocene, in the pliocene beds, being of more recent age, the horse family reached its greatest development. Here was discovered no less than six different kinds of fossil horses, most of them of the "hipparion" type, which has two small posterior toes, in addition to the usual one in the recent horse.

In 1871 a pliocene basin was explored by the same gentleman in Idaho, containing fossils of mammals, principally of the elephant and horse kinds. During the same year the party explored a miocene deposit containing many fossils, in eastern Oregon. Besides the rhinoceros, animals related to the swine family and quadrupeds allied to the horse were most abundant. In the pliocene beds which overlie the above stratum in the same region, fossil horses were especially abundant, no less than six species being found, as well as two extinct camels, a large rhinoceros, and the remains of many carnivorous animals.

At Antelope Station, U. P. R. R., the fossil remains of a horse were found, which, although a full grown animal, was not larger than a fox. At the same place the remains of an animal like a hog were found. Altogether, twenty-seven species of fossil horses have been discovered in this country. Writers of natural history in days gone by stated that "the horse was a gift from the Old World to the New," but whole races of horses lived and perished in America previous to the discovery by Columbus. Twenty-one species belonging to the horse family now are in the Yale Museum. These animals varied in size from the delicate creature, no larger than a fox to those larger than any now existing, and show a marked gradation of form among them, especially in the change from several toes to one, as in the modern horse. The earliest form in the eocene period had four toes (hoofs); in the miocene they had three toes, all of which reached the ground; in the pliocene period they still had three toes, but two of the three were smaller than the front one, somewhat like the posterior hoofs of the deer and ox, and did not touch the ground; the most recent forms had but a single toe or hoof, like the modern horse.

During the year 1873 Dr. Hayden made a survey of the territories. In a review by the professor he publishes the results of the various discoveries by the different expeditions in the "bad lands" covering a greater part of Nebraska, Dakota and Colorado, an area of 100,000 to 150,000 square miles embracing the great ancient lake basin which contain the far famed bone deposits. The fossil deposits found in this territory are very numerous, of which at least seventy specimens are new to science. On the White Earth river, associated with the remains of turtles are these of a number of ruminants all extinct, but possessing peculiar characters which ally them to the deer and the hog. On the Niobrara River is another remarkable animal grave yard. Several species of extinct camels and a great variety of the horse family characterize the fauna. One of the horses

was about the size of the common domestic animal, while another allied form is about the size of a Newfoundland dog; this species was provided with three hoofs to each foot. Dr. Leidy has identified twenty-seven species of the horse family, known to have lived on this continent. Besides foxes and wolves, five varieties of the cat family and three of the hyena existed. In Kansas and Wyoming, Professor Cope spent considerable time under the auspices of the survey in exploring another of these wonderful bone deposits of cloven footed quadrupeds. A great many species were found; some were nearly intermediate between the deer and the hog in structure; several species of horses were living during the same period. The carnivorous species were not rare. Included in the fourteen, are tiger cats and dogs as large as the black bear.

We refer the readers to Prof. Hayden's report (U. S. Geological Survey of the territories) for a more minute and interesting description of these wonderful discoveries sufficient in themselves to establish the facts beyond all controversy that the animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon existed on this continent, and were known to and made useful aids by the early inhabitants.

Respecting the origin of animals, we find many theoretic opinions, which may be classified as, those who advance the theory of successive developments, or the gradual advancement during a long series of ages of animal life from monads, zoophytes and fishes; those who suppose that animals were created in their present forms in the various localities where we now find them; and a third class who form their opinion from the Scripture, and consider them to have been created in one spot, from whence they were dispersed over the world.

The first of these opinions universal experience has long ago set aside; with the second, natural history fails to solve the problem, and our only safe reliance therefore is the Pentateuch of Moses, which gives us very precise authority, relating the history of the universal deluge, which destroyed men and all the animals on the surface of the land except a certain number preserved in the ark. This narrative cannot be doubted. Nearly every nation of the globe, now in existence or of a previous existence, entertains the same traditionary belief. With this fact before us, and the final stranding of the ark on Ararat we can easily see how natural it would be for the released animals to disperse and scatter over the land: in fact, so long a time elapsed between the stranding of the ark and the division of the earth in the days of Peleg (See our chapter on Peleg) that there was sufficient time for animals to reach the most distant parts of the habitable globe. McCulloch estimates that the time allowed for the emigration of animals to all parts of the earth was abundantly sufficient to have enabled the slow-moving animal called the sloth to reach America. With this reasonable view of the post-diluvian history we can consistently see the natural manner by which the world was re-stocked with land animals, wild and domestic.

IDLENESS.—It is no more possible for an idle man to keep together a certain stock of knowledge, than it is possible to keep together a stock of ice exposed to the meridian sun. Every day destroys a fact, a relation, or an influence; and the only method of preserving the bulk and value of the pile is by constantly adding to it.

Eschew the idle life!
Flee, flee from doing nought!
For never was there idle brain
But bred an idle thought.

Questions and Answers ON THE BOOK OF MORMON

LESSON CVIII

Q.—When Nephi saw the wickedness of the people, what did he do?

A.—He went and bowed himself to the Lord.

Q.—After he had prayed all day what did he hear?

A.—The voice of the Lord, telling him that the time of the coming of Jesus was close at hand.

Q.—When was the sign to be seen, which Samuel had promised?

A.—That very night.

Q.—When the sun went down and there was no darkness, what effect did it have upon the people?

A.—They were astonished, and many of the unbelievers in Samuel's prophecy, fell to the earth as if dead.

Q.—When this sign had been given, and the people knew that Christ had come, what did they do?

A.—They were converted unto the Lord, and were baptized.

Q.—What can you say of the Gadianton robbers in the fourteen years following the coming of Christ?

A.—They were very numerous and threatened destruction to the Nephites.

Q.—In the sixteenth year from the coming of Jesus Christ, what message was received from these robbers?

A.—Their leader, Giddianhi, sent a letter to Lachoneus, asking him to give up the lands of the Nephites to the robbers.

Q.—What did Giddianhi threaten to do unless his demands were complied with?

A.—To avenge the wrongs of his people and to destroy the Nephites.

Q.—Did Lachoneus do as Giddianhi demanded?

A.—No; he warned the Nephites of their iniquity, and exhorted them to pray to the Lord for forgiveness and deliverance.

ON THE BIBLE.

Q.—What was Jonathan to say to his father if he met David at the feast?

A.—That he had earnestly asked leave of him that he might run to Bethlehem, his city.

Q.—For what purpose?

A.—To attend a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

Q.—What did David tell Jonathan concerning what Saul should then say?

A.—“If he say thus, it is well; thy servant shall have peace; but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him.”

Q.—What else did David say to Jonathan?

A.—“Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee; notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?”

Q.—What did Jonathan do?

A.—He made a covenant with David.

Q.—What was the nature of the covenant?

A.—That he should show kindness to David and his house for ever.

Q.—What did Jonathan require of David?

A.—To swear again his covenant of friendship.

Q.—Why did Jonathan do this?

A.—Because he loved David as he loved his own soul.

Q.—What answer did they make?

A.—That David should stay hid three days, and after that Jonathan was to let him know how Saul felt towards him.

Q.—How did Saul act when he missed David from his table the second day?

A.—His anger was kindled against Jonathan and he required him to bring David that he might be slain.