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Revelation Ante-dating Scientific Discovery—An Instance

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Abstract: This article investigates geological evidence that horses were present on the American Continent during the Book of Mormon period. The second part is a response to and refutation of the editor's note preceding the first part.

REVELATION ANTE-DATING SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY—AN INSTANCE.

BY FRED JAMES PACK, A. M., PH. D.

The February number of the ERA contained a short article by the present writer, entitled, *Revelation Ante-dating Scientific Discovery—An Instance*. The article dealt primarily with the statements in the Book of Mormon concerning the existence of horses on the American continent prior to its discovery by Columbus. It was pointed out that these statements were published to the world at a time when it was generally believed that no horses existed here previous to their introduction by the Spanish. It was further shown that science had come to the support of revelation in this matter, and that it is now known with certainty that prehistoric horses were abundant in both North and South America. This appeared to the writer as good evidence supporting the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

The author feels, however, that the force of the argument was completely destroyed by an attached editorial note, in which it was stated that "the author might have added, further, that more recent investigations have led to the conclusion that America is the original home of the horse." Had this been done it would be erroneous, as the more primitive type has been found in Europe and not in America. Further, nothing is "more recent" than the work of the American Museum of Natural History, to which frequent reference was made.

The writer of the note thinks that we are in an "embarrassing difficulty" because "the fossil remains are held to be of very much greater antiquity than either Jaredite or Nephite times," and then

concludes that "too great antiquity may be claimed for most of the evidence relating to the existence of the horse in the western world." It should here be noted that horses certainly did exist for many ages before the advent of man, but this does not argue that they were not afterward contemporaneous with him.

Accompanying the article was a photograph of the skeletal remains of two ancient American horses. It was not assumed as part of the argument that the horses in question lived during Nephite or even Jaredite times. On the contrary, it is believed with great assurance that they are very much older. No one who is acquainted with the conditions will argue that the Pliocene horses were contemporaneous with the Nephites or Jaredites. This admission does not in any way affect the validity of the argument set forth in the previous article.

When the Book of Mormon was published, in 1830, it was generally believed that the horses introduced by the Spanish were the only ones ever known to America, but it has since been proved that they appeared on the western continent ages ago, and further, that they had disappeared, or nearly so, at the time of the discovery by Columbus. The exact date of their extinction is not known. Their remains are found in the most recent geological formations. They continued here after the introduction of man, and how much longer is problematical. Professor W. D. Matthew of the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, considers it quite probable that they were destroyed by the early hunters. He implies that a few of them may have lived down to the time of Columbus:

All of these horses became extinct both in North and South America. Why, we do not know. It may have been that they were unable to stand the cold of the winters, probably longer continued and much more severe during the Ice Age than now. *It is very probable that man—the early tribes of prehistoric hunters—played a large part in extinguishing the race.** The competition with the bison and the antelope, which had recently migrated to America, may have made it more difficult than formerly for the American horse to get a living. Or, finally, some unknown disease or prolonged season of drought may have exterminated the race. Whatever the cause, the horse had disappeared from the New World when the white man invaded it (*unless a few individuals still lingered on the remote plains*

* The italics are mine.

of south America), and in his place the bison had come and spread over the prairies of the North.' (Supplement to *American Museum Journal*, Second Edition, May, 1905.)

The Book of Mormon announced to the world that horses were known in America many centuries before Christ. Science has subsequently traced their existence still farther back. Neither of these sources discloses the date of their disappearance. One of the Nephite prophets incidentally mentions them as late as the third decade of the Christian era (III Nephi 6: 1), and now one of our foremost scientists thinks it not impossible that some may have lingered on as late as the fifteenth century.

Logan, Utah.

PRAISE THE LORD.

Give thanks to God who dwells in heaven above,
Who manifests to all his tender love;
My brothers, sisters, let us join in praise,
And voice our gratitude in joyous lays.

Sing praise to him who reaches out his hand
To bless, in Christ, the meek in every land.
Sing praise to him: he shields his faithful flock,
And founds their faith on revelation's rock.

Let still your praise in gladsome pæans rise
To him who rules the earth and boundless skies,
And with applauding songs let acts accrue;
As swift in praise, be strong in labor, too.

Sing praise to him, and let your days be spent
In thanks for all his gracious mercies, lent
To cheer his children through the gloom and strife
That leads to glory and eternal life.

Ogden, Utah.

NIELS F. GREEN.