

HISTORICAL SUPPORT FOR THE COEXISTENCE OF DINOSAURS AND HUMANS [PART I]

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: This two-part article is the fruit of Eric's in-depth analysis of the historical evidence that demonstrates man and dinosaurs lived together on the Earth in the not-too-distant past. Look for Part II next month.]

No animal, extinct or living, captures the attention of people more than dinosaurs. For decades, they have mesmerized children and entertained adults. Dinosaurs are pictured on television, in books, classrooms, movies, magazines, and on all sorts of paraphernalia. Advertisers use them to sell everything from oatmeal to hamburgers and board games to piggy banks. This animal is so popular with children that it often has its own section in bookstores. Unfor-



tunately, dinosaurs also play a major role in teaching evolutionary theory.

We at Apologetics Press feel compelled to write about these extinct reptiles occasionally because **they are the poster children for the theory of evolution.** What the gecko is to Geico®, dinosaurs are to evolution. Consider an example of their “poster child” status. In the widely used, 100-page middle school science textbook titled *Evolution—Change Over Time* (published by Prentice Hall), attempts are made to establish evolution as a fact by using a variety of alleged proofs. One piece of “evidence,” however, that appears on nearly **one out of every three pages**, centers on dinosaurs. The first two chapters in this three-chapter textbook begin with pictures and text about dinosaurs. In several sections of the book (in which the main thrust is not dinosaurs), students are asked to participate in reading or writing activities that focus on dinosaurs. Truly, the authors and editors of this “science” textbook (which recently was used throughout the United States) have attempted to indoctrinate young minds with the “truths” of evolution by using dinosaurs more than anything else. Indeed, these animals are so entwined with evolutionary thinking that in his anti-creationist book titled *Abusing Science: The Case Against Creationism*, evolutionist Philip Kitcher admitted that solid evidence for the co-existence of dinosaurs and humans would “**shake the foundations of evolutionary theory**, because,

of course, the dinosaurs are supposed to have been long extinct by the time the hominids arrived on the scene” (1982, p. 121, emp. added).

What does history have to tell us about these extinct creatures? If dinosaurs and humans once walked the Earth together (as the Bible implies—Exodus 20:11), it is logical to conclude that humans would have left behind at least two different types of evidence. First, similar to how we take pictures of places we visit and wildlife we see in modern times, people living hundreds or thousands of years ago (before the invention of cameras)

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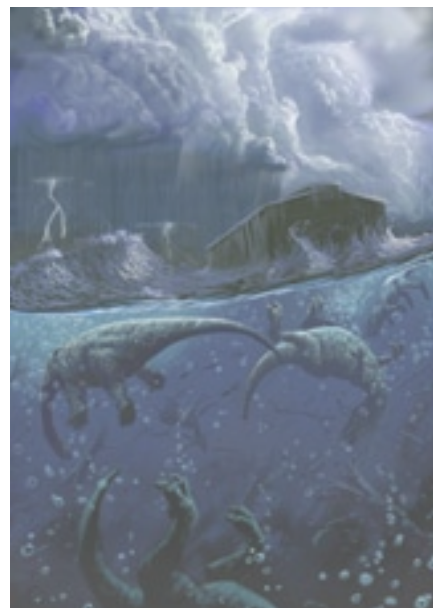
likely would have drawn or carved pictures of dinosaurs, as well as many other animals. As we have noted previously in *Reason & Revelation*, such ancient drawings actually exist (see Butt and Lyons, 2005). Second, just as we tell stories today of interesting things that we have seen and heard, the ancients would have told stories about dinosaurs, if they ever encountered these creatures. Do such stories exist? Is there historical support for the coexistence of dinosaurs and humans? You be the judge.

LEGENDS

Often, people refer to stories of the distant past as legends. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines “legend” as “1a. An unverified story handed down from earlier times, especially one popularly believed to be historical. b. A body or collection of such stories. c. A romanticized or popularized myth of modern times” (2000, p. 1000). Although sometimes told in a believable fashion, many legends, no doubt, are pure fantasy. They are filled with imaginary people and animals performing all sorts of unbelievable, magical, mythical deeds. Santa Claus flying through the air with his reindeer on the eve of December 25 delivering gifts all over the world;

Rip Van Winkle sleeping for 20 years under a shade tree; or Paul Bunyan and his blue ox creating Minnesota’s lakes with their giant footprints—all could be categorized as legendary characters performing imaginary feats. Legends of mermaids, sphinxes, and centaurs also can be safely classified as pure fantasy.

Other legends, however, are not so fanciful. Stories that are ubiquitous, included in reputable, historical writings as factual, and supported by science cannot reasonably be disregarded as “just unbelievable legends.” Take, for example, the legend of a worldwide flood. Stories have surfaced in hundreds of cultures throughout the world that tell of a huge, catastrophic flood which destroyed most of mankind, and that was survived only by a few individuals and animals (Perloff, 1999, p. 167). The Babylonians, Greeks, Chinese, Aztecs, Toltecs, and many others have variations of the flood story. According to evolutionary geologist Robert Schoch, “Noah is but one tale in a worldwide collection of at least 500 flood myths” (2003, p. 249). Canadian geologist Sir William Dawson wrote about how the record of the Flood “is preserved in some of the oldest historical documents of several distinct races of men, and is indirectly corroborated by the whole tenor of the early history of most of the civilized races”



(1895, pp. 4ff.). Even the most well-preserved book of antiquity, the Bible, which Christians believe to be the truthful, inspired Word of God, testifies repeatedly that a worldwide flood engulfed the Earth in the days of the patriarch Noah (Genesis 6-8; Isaiah 54:9; Matthew 24:36-39; Luke 17:26-27; 1 Peter 3:20). What’s more, much scientific evidence exists suggesting the occurrence of a universal flood sometime in the past. In their book *The Genesis Flood*, John Whitcomb and Henry Morris spent nearly 100 pages presenting such data (1961, pp. 116-211). Worldwide stories of a worldwide flood? Preserved in some of the oldest historical documents, including the Bible? Corroborated by an assortment of scientific facts? Though various details in the hundreds of worldwide flood legends have been tainted over time with multiple errors and contradictions (e.g., the Aztecs’ legend that indicates only two people survived the global Flood rather than eight), there are logical reasons to believe that the general outlines of flood legends are true and testify to the Bible’s reliability (see Lyons and Butt, 2003).

DRAGON LEGENDS

But what about dinosaurs? Is there any evidence from history that humans lived with these giant reptiles from the past? Are there stories of humans interacting with large reptilian creatures that pos-

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sessed massive tails, fearsome teeth, hefty legs, horned heads, and spiked backs?

Indeed, a wide variety of stories of large reptiles have been passed down through the ages from cultures all over the world. Many of these creatures sound **very** much like dinosaurs, or dinosaur-like (marine or flying) reptiles (e.g., *plesiosaurus* and *pterodactyl*). However, these animals never are called dinosaurs in the stories. Since the term “dinosaur” (from the Greek words *deinos*, meaning “fearfully great,” and *sauros*, meaning “lizard” or “reptile”) was not coined until the early 1840s (when fossilized dinosaur bones were first discovered and reconstructed in modern times), stories told previously of “fearfully great reptiles” **could not** have included the word “dinosaur.” Instead, the name attached to these creatures was “dragon.” Have some dragon legends been embellished over time? Of course. Just as people today tend to embellish the size of fish they catch or the size of a dog that nips their leg, people in the past said things about dragons that undoubtedly were exaggerations. Such inaccuracies, however, do not negate the overriding truth that “fearfully great reptiles” of many different shapes and sizes once lived with humans—any more than the differences in worldwide flood legends mean we must discount the idea of a universal flood.



The Ubiquity and Antiquity of Dragon Legends

Were legends of large dinosaur-like reptiles only to appear late in the histories of a handful of cultures around the world, one might well argue for their dismissal in legitimate historical discussions. After all, what is a smattering of strange animal descriptions and fairy-tale-like stories interspersed in only a few places on Earth? Such similar stories of unique reptilian creatures in only a handful of places on the globe might reasonably be passed off as just coincidence. The “coincidence card,” however, looks rather weak in light of the vast amount of testimony regarding the longstanding, widespread nature of dragon legends.

Many authors are adamant that dragons were purely mythical creatures. Yet, interestingly, these same writers testify to the ubiquity of dragon legends. Take, for example, Carl Lindall, contributing writer for *World Book Encyclopedia*. He

“Dragons are...found in the myths and legends of cultures all around the world”

believes “[d]ragons did not really exist,” even though “[e]very country had them in its mythology. In Greece dragons were slain by Hercules, Apollo, and Perseus. Sigurd, Siegfried, and Beowulf killed them in Norse, German, and English legend” (1996, 5:265-266, emp. added). In his brief book on *Chinese Dragons*, Roy Bates, like Lindall, suggested that the dragon “was never a real beast” (2002, p. 15). Yet, Bates similarly confessed: “**No other creature in the world** has had such a far-reaching influence on the minds of so many people” (p. vii, emp. added). A 1981 *Science Digest* article, titled “The Spread of Dragon Myths,” informed readers, “as myth they [dragons—EL] are among the most...persistent and widespread in the world. From millennium to millennium and over all the earth’s continents, dragon and serpent lore shows remarkable similarity” (1981, 89:103). Still, *Sci-*

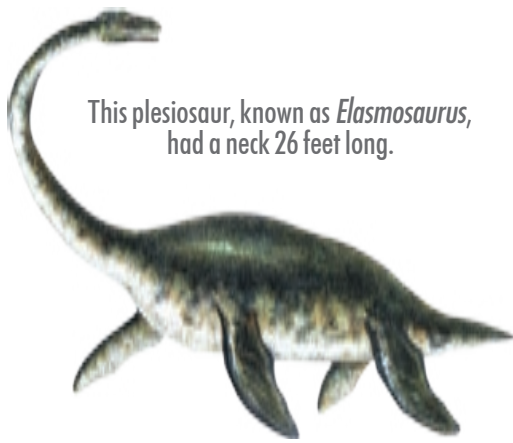
ence Digest was adamant that “[d]ragons, of course, are myth” (89:103).

Several others also have testified to the widespread nature of dragon legends. The famed twentieth-century evolutionist, Carl Sagan, noted: “The implacable mutual hostility between man and dragon, as exemplified in the myth of St. George is strongest in the West.... But it is not a Western anomaly. **It is a worldwide phenomenon**” (1977, p. 150, emp. added). Militant evolutionist and *LiveScience.com* staff writer Ker Than admitted: “Dragons are...found in the myths and legends of cultures all around the world” (2007). James Perloff wrote:

The Flood is not the only common remembrance of the world’s cultures. They also remember “dragons.” From England to China, these were a long part of national “mythologies.” The Indians of North and South America had legends about them. They were written of in Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Persia, Russia, India, and Japan (1999, p. 181).

On the inside front dust jacket of his book, *Dragons: A Natural History*, Dr. Karl Shuker noted that dragons “have been found in an astounding number of places. Dragons and their near relatives have found niches in every ecosystem on the planet—from the mountains of Greece to the forests of northern Europe to the volcanic plain of Mesoamerica to the river valleys of China—and have, as a consequence, become deeply embedded in human culture” (1995). Shuker even included a world map showing the existence of dragon legends in cultures on every con-





This plesiosaur, known as *Elamosaurus*, had a neck 26 feet long.

continent except Antarctica (pp. 6-7). Daniel Cohen called the dragon “the most common monster in the world.... People all over the world have believed in dragons” (1975, p. 97). “A thousand years ago dragons were such familiar creatures that what they looked like and how they behaved was common knowledge to every man, woman, and child,” wrote Dr. Peter Hogarth and Val Cleary in their book *Dragons* (1979, p. 12). They continued: “No matter where they lived, everyone could describe dragons and dragon behavior...” (p. 12). In her book, *British Dragons*, Jacqueline Simpson mentioned how in Great Britain alone some 80 dragon legends have been uncovered (1980, p. 10). “Over 70 villages and small towns [in Great Britain—EL] still have a tradition about a local dragon, or can be shown on good evidence to have had such a tradition in the past” (p. 9).

In 2005, *Animal Planet* aired a program (later released on DVD) titled *Dragons: A Fantasy Made Real*. The film incorporated legend, alleged scientific facts, various theories (including, and especially, evolution), state-of-the-art CGI animation, and the voice talent of Patrick Stewart. It was a highly publicized film that once again put a spotlight on dragons. Although it was far from a legitimate documentary, several statements from the film reinforce the ubiquitous nature of dragon stories. Within the first minute of the program, the viewer learns:

There is one creature remembered in the legends of almost every human culture that’s ever existed. A creature depicted with remarkable similarity by the Chinese, the Aztecs, even the In-

uit who live in a frozen land where no reptiles are found—even they have stories of this animal: the dragon. Cultures from different continents, people who had no contact with one another yet all of them have stories describing the same mythical animal (*Dragons: A Fantasy...*, 2005a).

The dragon is “a creature that burns bright in the memory of all humankind” (2005a). “People that could have never spoken to one another shared visions of the same creature”—the dragon (*Dragons: A Fantasy...*, 2005b). On the back cover of the *Dragons* DVD, *Animal Planet* highlighted how “[t]hroughout human history, people have been fascinated with drag-

ed comments about the world’s immersion in dragon lore are backed by an enormous reserve of testimony. All historians and dragon lovers seem to be in agreement on at least this one point: **reports of dragons are universal.**

Dragon legends also are characterized by their longstanding tradition. According to *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, “**From ancient times**, it [the Chinese dragon—EL] was the emblem of the Imperial family, and until the founding of the republic (1911) the dragon adorned the Chinese flag” (“Dragon,” 1997, 4:209, emp. added; see also Bates, 2002, p. vii). In his book, *History Begins at Sumer*, Dr.

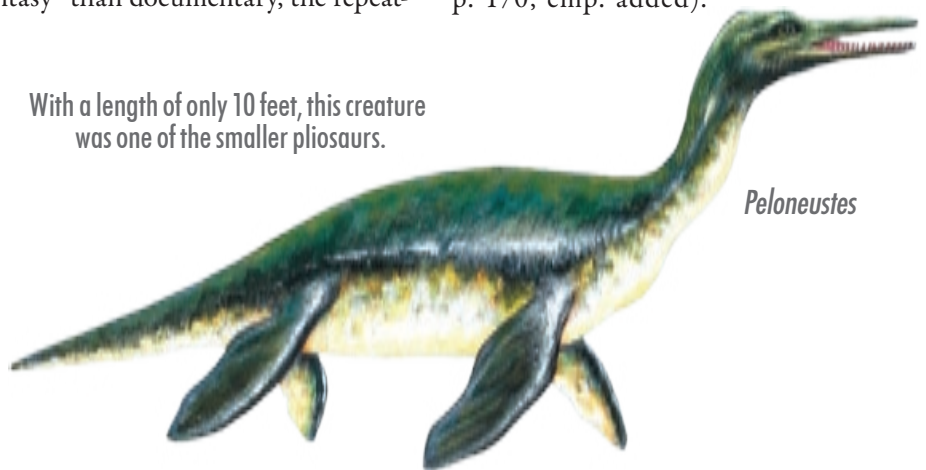


Tanystropheus longobardicus

ons, which have appeared in the myths and legends of almost every world culture” (2005a). Although, admittedly, *Dragons: A Fantasy Made Real* was more “docufantasy” than documentary, the repeat-

Samuel Kramer observed how “the dragon-slaying theme was an important motif in the Sumerian mythology **of the third millennium B.C.**” (1959, p. 170, emp. added).

With a length of only 10 feet, this creature was one of the smaller pliosaurus.



Peloneustes

“[F]our thousand years ago,” Hogarth and Clery wrote, “sightings of dragons seem to have been almost as frequent as sightings of whales today” (1979, p. 13). Dragons are anything but new. Unlike new breeds of dogs and other animals which seem to pop up every few years, the dragon seems always to have been in the mind of man. *Animal Planet* admitted: “This is the animal about which humankind has **throughout our history** been most compelled by” (*Dragons: A Fantasy...*, 2005a, emp. added). Though we would disagree highly with *Science Digest*’s extended, evolutionary timetable, notice what the journal suggested about the antiquity of dragon legends: “[T]he earliest dragonlike [sic] myths may have originated as long as **100,000 years ago**.... As myth they [dragons—EL] are among **the most ancient**.... Dragon legends have been with humanity **since the dawn**



Compsognathus

of recorded history...” (“The Spread...,” 1981, 89:103). Dragon legends are not just cute stories that our ancestors began telling only in the last few centuries. They have been told all over the world for millennia. Such antiquity and ubiquity deserves an adequate explanation.

The Variety of Dragons

The English word “dragon” is derived from the Greek word *drakon* via the Latin *draco*, which “was used originally for any large serpent” (“Dragon,” 1997, 4:209) or reptile (Hogarth and Clery, 1979, p. 80), whether real or mythological, aquatic, aerial, or terrestrial. [NOTE: The Greek legend of Medea flying through the air in a chariot pulled by dragons indicates that even in Greek culture something more than just large snakes often was implied by the use of *drakon*.] In English, “dragon” came to mean a creature that was “basically reptilian,” though with a variety of possible features, such as wings, legs, claws, horns, etc. (cf. Simpson, 1980, p. 14). The forms of dragons “varied from the earliest of times,” but its reptilian traits were always dominant (“Dragon,” 4:209).

In his book, *Dragons: A Natural History*, Dr. Shuker observed: “For although the winged, four-legged, flame-spewing horror of classical mythology may well be the most famous type of dragon in the Western world, it is far from being the only type on record” (1995, p. 9). Daniel



National Flag of Wales

Cohen agreed, saying, “[T]here are many kinds of dragons” (1975, p. 97). Tiamat of ancient Babylon was said to have a scaly body, four legs, and wings (“Dragon,” 4:209). Sarrush was depicted in Babylon with four legs, scales, a horned head, and a snake-like tongue. Chinese dragons have “a long, scaly, serpentine neck and body,” as well as four legs, but they are mostly wingless (Rose, 2000, p. 279). According to Hogarth and Clery, Chinese dragons were said to have resembled each other in nine ways, more or less: “The horns resemble those of a stag, his head that of a camel, his eyes those of a demon, his neck that of a snake, his belly that of a clam, his scales those of a carp, his claws those of an eagle, his soles like those of a tiger, his ears those of a cow” (1979, p. 53). Western dragons, like the oriental dragons, had large, scale-covered, elongated bodies with two or four legs, and tails. Unlike most of the Eastern dragons, however, many of the Western dragons had “vast wings like those of a bat” (Rose, p. 104), and some with crested heads.

Wales, whose national flag predominantly displays a red dragon (an animal associated with the country for centuries), reportedly once had many reptiles occupying its airspace. According to Marie Trevelyan:

The woods round Penllyne Castle, Glamorgan, had the reputation of being frequented by winged serpents, and these were the terror of old and young alike.... Some of them had crests sparkling with all the colours of the rainbow. When disturbed they glided swiftly...to their hiding places. When angry, they flew over people’s heads, with outspread wings bright...like the

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October 12-14	Fort Worth, TX	(817) 353-3873

Eric Lyons

September 7-8	Buda, TX	(512) 268-0230
September 15	Sylacauga, AL	(256) 249-0000
September 28-30	Jeffersonville, IN	(812) 283-7710

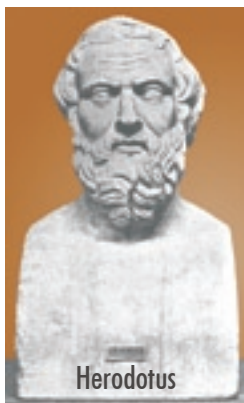
Dave Miller

September 7-9	Huntsville, AL	(256) 534-4001
September 28-30	Mayfield, KY	(270) 247-8574
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features in a peacock's tail (as quoted in Simpson, 1980, p. 34).

After being wounded, one of these "winged serpents" was said to have begun beating its assailant about the head with its wings" (p. 34).

In the English epic *Beowulf*, more than 1,000 years old, the hero is said to have encountered a "fearsome earth-dragon." It was described as a "crooked, coiled worm" that "flies through the night, enveloped in flame," causing men to "fear him greatly." As the story goes, Beowulf killed the beast, but not before its venomous bite ultimately led to his own doom (see Simpson, pp. 28-29).



Two well-known ancient historians documented that flying reptiles and humans were contemporaries more than 2,000 years ago. Herodotus, respected Greek historian who lived in approximately 450 B.C., once wrote:

There is a place in Arabia...to which I went, on hearing of some **winged serpents**; and when I arrived there, I saw bones and spines of serpents, in such quantities as it would be impossible to describe. The form of the serpent is like that of a water-snake; but **he has wings without feathers**, and **as like as possible to the wings of a bat** (n.d., emp. added).



Dimorphodon

Herodotus recognized that such creatures were not birds, mammals, or insects—but reptiles with wings. In the first-century A.D. the Jewish historian Josephus wrote about Moses and the Israelites having a difficult time passing through a particular region because of the presence of flying reptiles.

When the ground was difficult to be passed over, because of the multitude of serpents (which it produces in vast numbers...**some** of which ascend out of the ground unseen, and also **fly in the air**, and do come upon men at unawares, and do them a mischief)...

[Moses] made baskets like unto arks, of sedge, and filled them with ibes [i.e., birds], and carried them along with them; which animal is the greatest enemy to **serpents** imaginable, for **they**

fly from them when they come near them; and **as they fly** they are caught and devoured by them (1987, 2:10:2, emp. added).

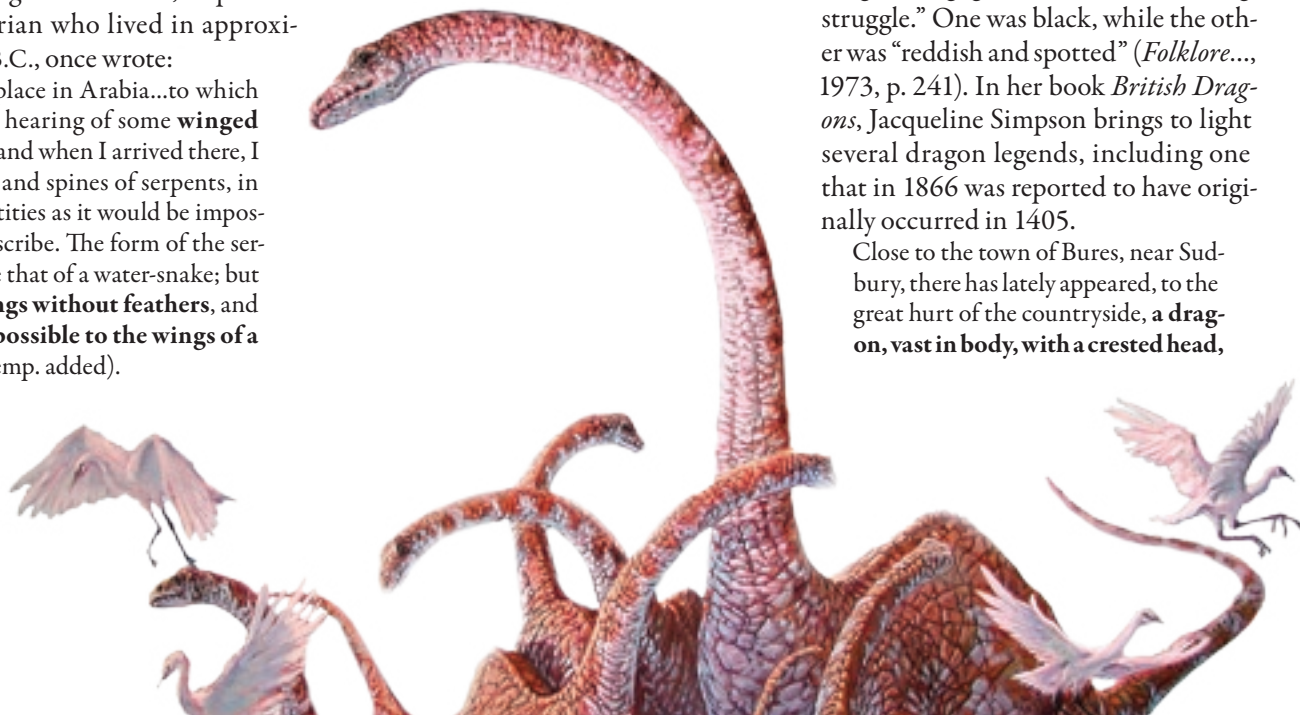
Although these two historians did not mention the extremely large flying reptiles, they did record snake-like winged creatures that could fly.

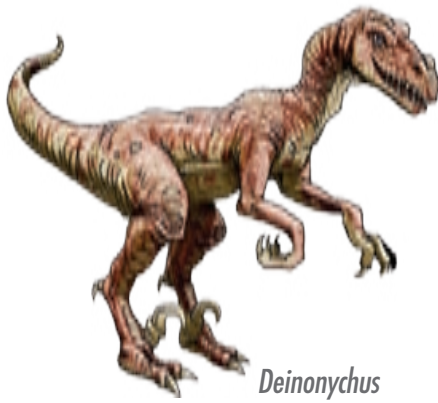
In the 1200s, Italian explorer Marco Polo wrote of seeing long, two-legged reptiles (called "lindworms") while passing through Central Asia (n.d., 2:49). Time-Life reported how one ancient Chinese emperor of the Sung Dynasty (c. A.D. 1000-1300) is said to have raised a drag-



on in his palace (*Dragons...*, 1984, p. 57). According to a chronicle in Canterbury Cathedral, around A.D. 1449, Englishmen reported seeing "two fire-breathing dragons engaged in a fierce, hour-long struggle." One was black, while the other was "reddish and spotted" (*Folklore...*, 1973, p. 241). In her book *British Dragons*, Jacqueline Simpson brings to light several dragon legends, including one that in 1866 was reported to have originally occurred in 1405.

Close to the town of Bures, near Sudbury, there has lately appeared, to the great hurt of the countryside, a **dragon, vast in body, with a crested head,**





Deinonychus

teeth like a saw, and a tail, extending to an enormous length. Having slaughtered the shepherd of a flock, it devoured many sheep. There came forth in order to shoot at him with arrows the workmen of the lord on whose estate he had concealed himself, being Sir Richard de Waldegrave, Knight; but the dragon's body, although struck by the archers, remained unhurt, for the arrows bounced off his back as if it were iron or hard rock. Those arrows that fell upon the spine of his back gave out as they struck it a ringing of tinkling sound, just as if they had hit a brazen plate, and then flew away off by reason of the hide of this great beast being impenetrable. Thereupon, in order to destroy him, all the country people around were summoned. But when the dragon saw that he was again about to be assailed with arrows, he fled into a marsh or mere and there hid himself among the long reeds, and was no more seen (p. 60, emp. added).

[to be continued]

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Pteranodon

"Some of them had crests sparkling with all the colours of the rainbow. When disturbed they glided swiftly...to their hiding places"

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Rhamphorhynchus

"a dragon, vast in body...teeth like a saw, and a tail, extending to an enormous length"

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

APOLOGETICS
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A.P. RELEASES TWO MORE TIMELY TOOLS

The work of Apologetics Press is unique. For nearly 30 years, the central thrust has been Christian evidences—proving the existence of God, demonstrating the inspiration of the Bible, and combating the errors of atheism and evolution. In our efforts to promulgate these truths, it is common for people who come in contact with A.P. materials (especially via our Web site) to ask questions about our views on the basics of Christianity—particularly salvation. We receive considerable calls, letters, and e-mails from around the world, requesting our assistance. Though we attempt to respond to every inquiry by providing the information requested, we also have typically found it necessary to refer them to other sources where they may receive the information they seek. We have lacked a readily available, concise resource to assist these inquirers with their search for the truth. A few months ago, we decided the time had come to produce our own resource that may be made available to those who ask. The result is our brand new booklet: *Receiving the Gift of Salvation*. This brief, succinct booklet offers a non-threatening treatment of the New Testament plan of salvation. It addresses key



concepts that clarify this critical topic, including in what sense salvation is a “free gift,” how one takes possession of a gift, whether baptism is a “work,” and the meaning of salvation “by faith.” Due to the generous assistance of our supporters in the publication of this resource, we anticipate giving many thousands free to non-Christians. We will make them available at a nominal cost to

Christians and congregations that desire bulk quantities to use in local evangelistic efforts.

In addition to this tool, please be advised of yet another effective form of outreach available for your use: our Web site audio resources. We are in the process of posting on our Web site audio lectures on various aspects of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences. These audio presentations will be from either a recording before a live audience, or from video and/or audio presentations delivered in a professional production studio. Many of these audio lectures, and the videos from which they were taken, are available for purchase from our offices. These audio tracks are available as streaming audio and may be downloaded free to iPods and CDs for use while driving to work or simply while enjoying a listening experience at home. Please visit our site at: www.ApologeticsPress.org.



Dave Miller

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