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GEOLOGIC ANTIQUITY OF MAN IN AMERICA¹

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THE PROBLEM

THE Europeans who first explored the Americas found in this "New World" numerous tribes of dark-skinned, black-haired people. They differed in dress, habits and social organization, but all of them lived by agriculture or by a combination of agriculture, food-gathering, hunting and fishing. Only a few tribes were solely dependent on hunting, and most of them were in touch by trade with agricultural groups. These cultural similarities and a common physiognomy led to the popular recognition of these newly found people as a separate race, the Red or American. More detailed scientific study has shown that these peoples are much more diverse in physical and cultural attributes

¹ Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of the Section on Geology and Geography of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Philadelphia, December 27, 1940.

than was at first supposed. It is clear that there has been an intimate blending of racial strains. One must suppose that these people, descended from whatever diverse stocks, have a long common history.

From the beginning of exploration also the question of the origin has been posed. As the people of the Americas are obviously not closely related to the peoples of western Europe their origin by migration across the Atlantic has been rejected except by advocates of the myth of Atlantis. The Mongolian strain clearly marked in many American tribes and the narrow seas of Bering Strait point to migration from Asia. Most of the immigrants must have crossed on foot either on the ice north of the strait² or on a land bridge produced by the lowered sea level of glacial

² P. S. Smith, "Certain Relations between North-western America and North-eastern Asia: Early Man," pp. 85-92. Ed. by G. G. McCurdy. Philadelphia, 1937.

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