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Parentage of Ancient American Art and Religion

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Abstract: This series discusses the Babylonian and Israelite people who established Book of Mormon civilizations. Brookbank suggests that the Jaredites were Semites. The ancient ruins left in America have distinct Babylonian and Assyrian influence. The Nephite-Israelite people of the Book of Mormon have also left their mark upon civilization. The seventh part covers monumental architecture, winged symbols, bridges, statuary, double walls, lack of cloisters and fireplaces, idol worship, and "high places."

to right living, and the best internal safeguard against sin. The body will indeed be the temple of the Holy Ghost to be kept at all hazards from impurity—physical and moral; and on the other hand to be cultivated and developed in every way.

And, lastly, another effect of such a conception is to engender perfect peace of mind. A man obsessed with the idea that he is in all verity a child of God lives on a plane where the vicissitudes of life cannot affect his peace of mind. He may, like his great archetype, be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, or he may be everything that is connoted in the opposite; nevertheless all the experiences of life assume their true perspective, as he views them with this knowledge and from the standpoint of eternity. While not oblivious to the pain, or the joy, they cause, he feels that their influence is but local, and is subservient to the great object of developing his capacities and character. In this frame of mind, he realizes the condition for which we all pray, that peace of mind which the world cannot give, and the world cannot take away, and he moves through life with a serenity begotten of the consciousness that no one, nothing, but acts of his own volition, his own breaches of the law of his being, his progress, his development, can rob him of his rights as a child of God, with all the possibilities and potentialities bound up in that relationship.

PARENTAGE OF ANCIENT AMERICAN ART AND RELIGION.

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31. IMMENSE WORKS OF VARIOUS KINDS.

The mighty walls that enclosed the City of Babylon, or the hanging gardens of later times, are not greater in their way than was the superb road that anciently extended for thousands of miles from the vicinity of the present Quito in Peru, over mountains canyons, and rivers—cut in places through solid rock for miles—to the northern boundaries of the country now known as Chili. This mighty road has its branches, scarcely less remarkable, and the engineering skill displayed, and the almost inconceivable amount of labor required to construct them, distinguish these roads as one of the greatest works ever accomplished by man. When it comes to a question of stupendous works, early American spirit, grit and success, in this respect, are triplets that Babylonia never brought forth in better form.

32. WINGED SYMBOLS.

One of the scriptural symbols for Babylonia was a winged lion—a lion to show nobility of lineage and courage for any undertaking.

The wings, as the interpretation occurs to me, representing power to cross mountains, rivers and seas, to remote regions of the earth; and the lion-like Americans of old show where a cub of this winged lion found a new lair after leaving the Babylonian haunts.

Winged symbols among the aborigines of this country also indicate colonizing movements across mountains and rivers, and beyond seas to the islands of the Pacific and elsewhere; but under a less royal emblem, as the degeneracy of the colonists who made the second series of flights required.

33. LONG, SUBSTANTIAL BRIDGES.

One or more bridges were stretched across the Euphrates in the city of Babylon. In ancient America, bridges sustained aqueducts over large rivers and across ravines.

34. COLOSSAL STATUARY.

Figures of gigantic size are common to both the countries concerned.

35. DOUBLE WALLS FOR FORTIFICATION PURPOSES.

The city of Babylon was fortified partially, perhaps wholly, by a double line of walls. Some authorities say it was enclosed by three walls. Sometimes the ancient Americans likewise fortified with double walls.

36. NO CLOISTERS.

It is distinctly stated by good authority that there are no remains of cloisters exhumed in Babylonia. Failing to find mention made of any among the ancient American remains, it is taken for granted that none have been found in this country either.

37. NO FIREPLACES.

The statement that the Babylonian palaces were built without fireplaces, does not rest on the word of any authority to that effect, but since we have been unable to find where mention is made of them in history, it is taken for granted that none have been found in the remains of the structures in question. A similar architectural condition prevailed in America anciently; and the apparent facts indicate that in either country the food of the lordly classes was prepared in some building that was not directly connected with the palatial residence.

38. SEMITIC IDOLATROUS WORSHIP IN HIGH PLACES.

We have now reached a stage in these remarks when it will be necessary for us to turn our attention to the character of some of the tokens or monuments of occupancy that the Israelites would naturally have set up in this land, if they had colonized it as the

Book of Mormon claims they did; and we shall have to determine, partially, at least, to what extent these "signs" are found among the ancient American ruins. In doing this work a chain shall be forged that will bind the Babylonians, the Israelites and the ancient Americans together by certain common circumstances that pertain to their religious life.

It appears from sacred history that before the time when Solomon's temple was built, even the followers of God were permitted to worship Him on natural or artificial elevations. Samuel worshipped in a "high place."

Again, in I. Kings 3:2, it is stated that "the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord, until those days; that is, until the time of Solomon, or about 1000 B.C.

The temple of the Jews at Jerusalem was built on Mount Moriah, and that of the Samaritans—a people of mixed descent, partly Semitic—on Mount Gerizim. All these facts taken together indicate how deeply rooted was the propensity of the Israelites, like the Babylonians, for worshipping in "high places."

However, when Solomon's temple was built, the worship of the Almighty in out-of-door high places was interdicted. It was found that such religious retreats were not generally promotive of proper conduct, and the wickedness often practiced in connection with them led to repeated and determined efforts on the part of righteous kings and the prophets of God to suppress all resort to them for religious purposes. But it was a born-and-bred-in-the-bones propensity of many of the Semites to worship idols, and at the same time retain all the high place accommodations, and but little could be done to effect a permanent reformation. It was not until the bitter pill of the Babylonish captivity was administered, that the better classes of the Israelites, now known as the Jews, were willing, as a whole, to renounce idolatry with all its high place adjuncts. A few quotations from the scriptures will manifest to what an astonishing extent the Israelites of early times abandoned themselves to false modes of worship, and built high places for the practice of its ceremonials. Of Josiah, who was king of Judah about 680 B.C., it is written that in the twelfth year of his reign he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the altars, and the images of Baalim, etc., etc. He found, however, before his work was completed that his reformatory operations could not be confined to Judah and Jerusalem, but must be extended to the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali; or, in other words, throughout the length and breadth of the land.

At a later period, Ezekiel, denouncing the sins of Jerusalem, says to her, Ezek. 16: 24, 25, 31: "Thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street. Thou hast built the high place at every head of the way." The

very mildest form of idolatry ought to have been abhorrent to a people who had experienced so many tokens of God's regard for them, but multitudes of the Israelites plunged into the most abominable and revolting form of it; for concerning king Ahaz it is written (II. Kings, chap. 16), that he walked in the way of the kings of Israel—a common kingly example evidently—and made his son to pass through the fire according to the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. Again, Ezekiel, addressing Jerusalem says, Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne to me, and these thou hast sacrificed to them (idols) to be devoured. (Ezek. 16: 20.) This is a horrifying picture of Israelitish depravity, and it shall be closed with the additional remark that sometimes even the roofs of the houses, which were generally flat, were used for idolatrous purposes. (Jer. 19: 13, and 32: 29; II. Kings 23: 12; Zeph. 1: 5.) Thus it is made evident how firmly fixed was the hold that not only idolatry, but also the "high place" accompaniments had upon the Semitic mind in general.

In a land far away from Palestine—westward, across the broad stretches of the Atlantic—a counterpart, in every important essential, of these shocking idolatrous abominations was in existence. More concisely by far than we can do it, Mr. Hallock makes this fact apparent as follows:

"The sun-dance of the plains Indians is a relic of the sun-worship of Peru and Mexico, and back to the worship of Baal Peor; and all the altars and sacrificial stones, the human sacrifices, the passing through fire, and those horrid abominations which were bewailed and denounced by the Bible prophets in Asia Minor 3,000 years ago, were doubtless contemporary and in simultaneous practice on both hemispheres up to the advent of the Spaniards and the overthrow of the Montezumas. They obtain even now in isolated regions in this continent." Mr. Hallock having thus traced for us the idolatry of the ancient Americans and their descendants back to the Jews in Palestine, whose false worship consisted largely in deifying Baal Peor, we shall find no fault with that status of the case, and so let it rest.

38. PRACTICAL IDENTITY OF STRUCTURE, ETC., IN ANCIENT AMERICAN AND PALESTINIAN "HIGH PLACES" FOR IDOLATROUS WORSHIP.

Let us now recall a few points relating to the American Teocallis as already noticed.

- (1.) They were artificially raised structures, having an elevation varying from a few feet up to a half hundred or more.
- (2.) On the summit of the mound or hill was a chapel or shrine.
- (3.) At or near the base of the temple were statues or idols.
- (4.) Altars for sacrificial purposes were placed near the idols.

(To be continued.)