



Type: Magazine Article

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## Parentage of Ancient American Art and Religion

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Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 72, No. 46  
(17 November 1910)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 730–733

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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 eighth part continues the discussion of "high places" and further covers sun and serpent worship.

## PARENTAGE OF ANCIENT AMERICAN ART AND RELIGION.

*(Continued from page 711.)*

Now, like the pyramidal temples of the ancient Americans, the "high places" of the Israelites were artificially constructed mounds; not being, as some erroneously suppose, natural elevations alone. This fact is evident from terms used in Scripture when referring to them, as, for instance, the "high place" to which Solomon sometimes resorted to commit idolatrous sinning; and which was his own especial shrine, is said to have been "built." The name, moreover, for this structure, as given in the Septuagint, carries with it the idea of something lofty or towering. Practically the same remarks are applicable to the "high place" that Jeroboam "made." "Built" and "made" are terms that have no meaning in these cases, if natural elevations only are to be understood. A passage from the Bible (II. Kings 17: 9), shows that the common people everywhere followed the royal example in this particular. It is there written that they "built" themselves "high places" in all their cities. This occurred about B. C. 720. Remarks need not be further extended to manifest that the high places of the idolatrous Israelites were artificial structures generally, or, perhaps, always. They were sometimes, in part at least, built of wood, in other instances of common earth, and yet again of stone, as may be inferred from the circumstance that righteous kings sometimes destroyed them by fire, or by the use of the mattock, or lastly by breaking the rocks of which they were constructed, to pieces; or all these agencies might have been employed in the demolition of a single building. It can not be maintained, however, from the Scriptural descriptions, that the Israelitish high place mounds were terraced like many of those built in America anciently. That they were not terraced is most probably the fact. But since there are both terraced and un-terraced foundation mounds for "high place" structures among the ancient American ruins, the similarity in structure of the latter to those of the Israelites in Palestine, is all the more marked. Allowing that the more substantial terraced pyramids were built by the Babylonian Jaredites; their brethren, the Israelites, who went into idolatry in this land, found them so perfectly adapted to meet their own requirements, that no alterations in any respect were necessary.

We have, in the next place, to ascertain whether or not there were shrines, chapels, or temples on the summit of the artificial foundations erected by the Israelites in Palestine. Turning to II. Kings 23: 19, we read as follows: "And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the Lord to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in

Bethel." Again from II. Kings 17: 29, we learn that the several peoples who were sent to occupy the land of Samaria after the ten tribes had been led captive to Assyria, or about B. C. 675, all made images of their gods, and placed them in the still standing houses of the high places which the Israelites had built in their native land. The disposition of these images corresponds so exactly with the Babylonian custom of placing images of their gods in the topmost storey of their temples, that it seems no doubt can remain but the high places of the Israelites were constructed largely according to Babylonian models; and hence the "houses of the high places" constituted a topmost story.

Respecting the two points in this matter yet to be considered, the Scriptures nowhere, we believe, state that the larger statues and "standing images" (so often spoken of) and the idolatrous altars associated with them, were placed without the "high place" walls, or at the base of the structure, as in the Babylonian examples. But notwithstanding this fact, the terms sometimes used by the sacred writers when speaking either of the erection or of the destruction of these places for worship, leave little room for doubt, or perhaps none, that the high place with its shrine, chapel or temple cell, was distinct and separate from the altars and the idols nearby, and which were generally set up in a grove.

A single Scriptural quotation will suffice to justify the position here taken. Speaking of king Josiah, we are informed that after reigning twelve years, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; *and the images that were on high above them*, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them." (II. Chron. 34:3-4.)

From this language it is clear that there were statues or images of Baalim in whose presence, or face to face with whom, altars had been erected by the idolatrous Israelites. It is just as clear also that there were *high above them*, that is, *high above the altars and image of Baalim, other images also*, and which fell under Josiah's weapons of destruction.

Upon what ground can anyone claim, in reason, that these images pointed out as being in or on a higher place than that occupied by the altar and image of Baalim, were not the smaller idols enclosed and sheltered within the house of the high place which was so inseparably associated with Israelitish idolatry?

Thus accepting the most obvious sense of plain English terms, we find there is a remarkable agreement existing between the high places and associated idols and altars in ancient Palestine and the high places and their accompanying idols and altars in ancient America and Babylonia; and the chain that serves to bind all these peoples together is thus forged. This, another example of

agreement in several points affecting one matter only, is too exact to be reasonably ascribed to chance.

### 39. SUN AND SERPENT WORSHIP.

The Babylonians were sun worshippers. The Assyrians followed them religiously just as they did in so many other respects. Phœnicians, who almost certainly were descendants of Shem, since their language was Semitic, had their sun-gods; and their neighbors, the Israelites, were often in multitudes not a whit behind them as sun worshippers. The worship of the sun is a very ancient form of religion; and it is not difficult to assign a reason for its wide prevalence among heathen nations.

But when the question of serpent worship, or even reverential regard, is up for consideration, one will, we think, have to search profane history far and wide to find a satisfactory ground for that particular form of idolatry. What great good have serpents ever done for mankind, or for any portion of our race, that religious honors should be paid to a stone or metal representation of their loathsome species? What especial calamities are they accustomed to bring upon men that an attempt should be made to conciliate them by worship?

The only answer to these questions is their own echo, unless the records of sacred history are searched. In them a ground for serpent adoration is not difficult to find. It is not implied that the ground for the practice justifies it, but evidently the beginning of this form of idolatry is Israelitish, and can be traced to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness by Moses during the exodus of his people from Egypt. A mere look at that image of a serpent meant life to multitudes, and the great benefit thus derived from it as the visible means of their healing, readily suggested its worship to a people, who, as a whole, were none too remarkable for their spirituality, though of superstition they had a full measure.

Some facts respecting this brazen serpent are now recalled to our attention. The Israelites preserved it from the time when Moses made it, about 1450 B.C., until king Hezekiah destroyed it about 725 B.C., and during the intervening centuries, or 725 years altogether, it appears from Scripture that it was raised to the dignity of an Israelitish idol, and incense was burned to it. (II. Kings 18:4.)

That the ancient Americans, like the Babylonians, Assyrians and Phœnicians, were in great part, sun worshippers, is too well known to require the citation of any evidence to make that fact more worthy of our acceptance than it now is from the bare statement alone. Something more than this, however, is necessary to show that the figure of the serpent was intimately associated with some of the primitive American religious systems of worship. There are, for instance, three serpent figures carved on the sides

of an altar at Copan; and so frequently do serpent representations occur in supposed sacred places, that Professor Baldwin was constrained to remark that "Religious symbols are found among the American ruins that remind us of those of the Phœnicians, such as figures of serpents which appear constantly." (*Ancient America*, pp. 185-6.) This quotation not only serves the purpose of substantiating the point under consideration, but it also allies the serpent worship, or reverence, with that of the Phœnicians.

(*To be continued.*)

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### MINUTES OF LEEDS CONFERENCE.

THE Semi-annual Leeds conference was held on Sunday, November 13th, 1910, at Bradford. There were in attendance President Rudger Clawson of the European Mission, Elder D. Ray Shurtliff of the Liverpool office, President Samuel Cottam, Elders Albert McCann and John Hadfield of the Sheffield conference, President Ernest S. Horsley, Sister Eliza B. Horsley, Sister Elizabeth Smart and twenty-six traveling elders of the Leeds conference.

The morning session was held at the Westgate New Hall, commencing at 10 a.m., about two hundred saints and friends being present.

After the opening song, prayer was offered by Elder Clarence E. Bohling. The Sacrament was administered by Elders George B. Mowry and Silas Hinckley.

President E. S. Horsley spoke a few words of welcome, also reported the conference as being in a very good condition.

Elder Alfred C. Gunderson, who had been released to return home shortly, bore a strong testimony to the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He had labored in the Wakefield branch and reported the same as being in a good condition.

Elder Silas Hinckley stated that while the gospel cost nothing in the way of worldly means, yet it did require of us to place our lives and all we have upon the altar of sacrifice if it became necessary.

The choir then sang, "The Song of the Redeemed."

Elder D. Ray Shurtliff spoke on the things we must obey in order to be the children of God; he showed from the scriptures the love and unity that must exist, and also showed that in order to "put on Christ" it was necessary to be baptized in His name. He said that when obedience is given to these teachings the Spirit of God would lead and guide into all truth and righteousness.

The choir sang, "Come, Dearest Lord."

President Rudger Clawson stated that our purpose in assembling was to partake of spiritual food, which was just as essential for our spirits as temporal food was for our mortal bodies.