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The World of the Jaredites, Conclusion

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My dear F.

MORONI assures us that it is the Lord who is running things, and that men miss the whole point and meaning of their lives by failing to recognize the fact: "... the winds have gone forth out of my mouth, and also the rains," (Ether 2:24) he tells the brother of Jared—but to men it does not seem that way, for the Lord is constantly showing forth "great power, which looks small to the understanding of men." (*Ibid.*, 3:5.) Men simply do not have faith and so deny themselves the blessings and the powers that might be theirs—boundless knowledge, "knowledge of all things" that is "hid up because of unbelief." (*Ibid.*, 4:13.) Given faith, God will not withhold from us a knowledge of all things. And ironically enough, men know that they *should* have faith even apart from the thought of any reward, "for it persuadeth [men] to do good." (II Nephi 33:4.) You begin with hoping—"man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance," (Ether 12:32) for "faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for



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The Kensington Runestone

The WORLD of the JAREDITES

CONCLUSION

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ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith." (*Id.*, 6.) "... If there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them," (*Id.*, 12) for he "worketh unto the children of men according to their faith." (See *Id.*, 29.)

Nothing is harder than to convince a man of a thing he has not experienced: "Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not." (*Id.*, 5.) Those without faith live in a world of their own which to them seems logical and final; they take the very unscientific stand that beyond the realm of their own very limited experience nothing whatever exists! God's works to them look small, and they will never be cured of their myopia until they are willing to face facts and pass a test that only the honest in heart can consider without a chill of aversion. The test is this: "... if men come unto me, I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; ... then will I make weak things become strong unto them." (*Id.*, 27.) What man of the world or posturing Ph.D. is ever going to *ask* for weakness? The men of the world seek for the things of the world, the realities they know—and the greatest of these are "power and gain." Through the ages, the book of Ether assures us, men have sought these things as their highest goal, and have invariably made the tragic discovery that the key to control over one's fellow men, i.e., the key to power and gain, lies in three things: secrecy, organization, and freedom from moral scruples, especially from squeamishness in the matter of shedding blood. Of these three things Moroni says: "the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it,

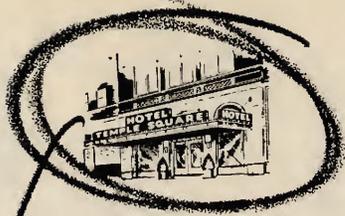
from the beginning of man." (*Ibid.*, 8:19.) These things, the prophet explains, have destroyed one civilization after another, and shall continue to destroy "whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations." (*Id.*, 22.)

We seem to be reading Thucydides, who comments on Greek history just as Moroni does on Jaredite: Men who live for this world only invariably become dangerous paranoiacs who destroy themselves and all connected with them. But the Greeks never showed us the other side of the picture. It is there that the book of Ether far surpasses all other commentaries on human history. The greatest of Greeks taught us, wrote Goethe, that "life on this earth is a hell." Farther than that they could not go. But the book of Ether teaches us that life *on this earth* can be heaven, that there actually have been *many* "before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw *with their eyes* the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad." (*Ibid.*, 12:19.) Here we are not dealing with the usual platitudes and truisms to the effect that if men would only behave themselves and help each other, they would have no troubles—men have always known that, only too well.

Ether shows us human society divided into two groups, not the good and the bad as such, but those who have faith and those who do not. They live in totally different worlds, the one group in real heaven, the other in a real hell. In no uncertain terms we are shown just what kind of world the faithless make for themselves to live in. This is Moroni's tract for our times. A generation ago the doings of the grim and bloody maniacs of the Asiatic steppe were as far removed from the thought and

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THE WORLD OF THE JAREDITES

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experience of Western man as the other side of the moon.

On the other side of the picture we have the Lord himself speaking "in all humility" (what a commentary on humility!) to *any* man who is ready to receive him. The Jaredites were not Israelites or even the seed of Abraham: They were simply human beings, apparently a nondescript body of no particular racial affinity. Time and place cease to exist in this story, for many men of whom we have no record spoke face to face with the Lord long before he came to fulfil his earthly mission. This remarkable indifference to any quality but faith is carried in Ether even into the next world, where we learn that the Lord has prepared "among the mansions of [his] Father" a house for man (see *Id.*, 32), "a place for the children of men" where the faithful of this earth shall be at home among the faithful of other worlds. Thus the bonds of time and place are completely dissolved in Moroni's theology, and the same promises and warnings that hung over the world of the Jaredites are handed on to our own world.

In closing, let me point out that it is in the Book of Mormon, specifically in the book of Ether, that we read about things beyond the veil, of other worlds than this—many mansions, among which the faithful of this world inherit but one—and of men who talk with Jesus Christ face to face in visions. All this I find

published in 1830, when Joseph Smith was but twenty-four years old and the Church not yet organized. Yet some of my intellectual friends are even now knocking themselves out to show that all such ideas were the product of Joseph Smith's later thinking, and that the idea of anything like his First Vision was first worked out by a committee in Nauvoo in 1843.

There is nothing like the story of the Jaredites to show us that the gospel is as timeless as it is true.

If the historical part of the book of Ether were to be put forth to the world as the translation of some text found, let us say, in the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas, the experts on early Asia might think it a work of fiction but would find nothing in it, barring the strange proper names, to make them doubt that it reflected a genuine ancient culture. If you want to be very cautious, you might say there is very *little* in it that would annoy the expert. But bearing in mind that Asiatic studies are still in embryo, and considering the conditions under which this work was published and the fabulously remote probability of the writer's getting anything right at all, I think no further credentials are necessary to establish the authenticity of the book. The book of Ether, claiming to be reporting the ways of very early Asiatics, rings the bell (like the book of First Nephi) much too often to represent the marksmanship of man shooting at random in the dark.

(The End)

TOBACCO, AN EVIL INFLUENCE

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harmony with the program and doctrine of the Church then they are antagonistic towards it, and because the influence from the Church is unquestionably good, it is of course *wrong* for the youth to remain away from Church activity.

Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants was given as a revelation from God. In this section we are told, "Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revela-

tion." We believe, with no reservation, that the cigaret is a device of the devil, and the insidious methods applied by the advertising mediums bear this out.

Are we narrow-minded? We think not, and we say this in all sincerity even though we are well aware that some who smoke remain away from church activity because they may feel unwelcome. These members are not denied the usual privileges, however, and they are never singled out as being unworthy. Any incentive gained by them to remain away is something entirely personal with them. The consensus among our members is that we should certainly