

CHAPTER III.

A FEW MORMON MIRACLES.

A few of the miracles recorded in the Book of Mormon will be reviewed in this chapter.

The volume abounds in wonderful works. The Bible bears no comparison to the Book of Mormon, either in the number of its miracles or in their strange, unnatural, supermiraculous character. This peculiarity of the book, its disposition to beat the Bible in this special direction will be more fully discussed in a future chapter. The simple purpose of the present chapter will be to call attention to a few of the recorded wonders of the book, as samples illustrating some general characteristics of its miraculous element.

A.—*Raw Meat Made Sweet.*

There is a little affair, too unimportant to be noticed, were it not that it flatly contradicts a rule which the world in general, and all biblical scholars in particular, have taken for granted without a question, because it so fully accords, not only with human reason and common sense, but with Bible examples and Christian experience. The rule is this: In the performance of a miracle, God does not do for us what we can do for ourselves. He cultivates self-reliance and independence to such a degree that he usually employs human agency, human hands, and human brains, as far as they can be

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employed; and the divine aid comes in where the *utmost of human effort fails to reach*. But upon page 37 (N. Ed., 40), we have this statement:

“And after I had made a bellows that I might have where-with to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together, that I might make fire; for the Lord had not hitherto suffered that we should make much fire, as we journeyed in the wilderness; for He said, I will make thy food become sweet, that ye cook it not; and I also will be your light in the wilderness.”

Comment upon this is not needful. There was no lack of wood for fire in the wilderness, no lack of stones to smite

together, but simply to prove to them that they are the Lord's special pets, he saves them the trouble of making fire by performing the prodigious miracle of making raw meat sweet and palatable, and of furnishing them light in the wilderness for their evening entertainments!

B.—*Help in Hunting.*

Of a similar character is a little occurrence related just before page 35. It is usually supposed that a little common sense would be sufficient to tell a man who had spent some time traveling in a wild, mountainous region, about where he would naturally go to find wild game, if he wished to hunt. But Nephi's God is so unusually good to him, that he takes the trouble to write the directions upon the pointers in a certain ball, called the “Director,” which we will presently explain.

“And I said unto my father, whither shall I go to obtain food? And it came to pass that I did enquire of the Lord.
“. . . . And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord said unto me, look upon the ball, and behold the things

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which are written. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did go forth up into the top of the mountain, according to the directions which were given upon the ball. And it came to pass that I did slay wild beasts, insomuch that I did obtain food for our families; and it came to pass that I did return* to our tents, bearing the beasts which I had slain.”

C.—*The Brass Director.*

“And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord spake unto my father by night, and commanded him that on the morrow he should take his journey into the wilderness. And it came to pass, that as my father arose in the morning and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground, a round ball of curious workmanship, and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.” Page 33 (N. Ed. 36).

And they started into the wilderness, “following the directions of the ball, which led us in the more fertile parts of the wilderness.”

Here is a round ball, made of fine brass, and within it are two spindles, one of which points out constantly “the way whither we should go into the wilderness.” Just how they could see spindles inside of a round brass ball, does not appear. However, as it was of *curious* workmanship, this may have been one of the curious things about it. We will therefore pass this as an unexplained wonder.

But those two spindles within this ball are the real puzzles. The author call them *spindles* here, on the next page he calls them *pointers*. Either word would indicate that they must have been small affairs, not cap-

*Was the help of an angel needed to tell us that he returned to his tent after a successful hunt? Would God lumber His book with statements that a writer of ordinary intelligence would take for granted without recording?

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able of holding a very large amount of reading matter. But see page 35 (N. Ed. 38):

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the faith, and diligence, and heed which we did give unto them. And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.”

Nephi’s God certainly had an eye to convenience in this cute little affair. He had usually taken the trouble to send an angel down from heaven, or come himself, to inform Nephi and his father as to his will, from time to time. But by this ingenious mechanical device he saves himself any further trouble in that matter. One of the spindles points out the general directions they are to travel, and the other one (possibly both) has written upon it directions for special occasions, as for instance, where Nephi shall find a *deer*, or a *bear* or a *wild turkey*, when the company are in want of food; the directions being “changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.” Yea, verily.

D.—*The Compass.*

While upon this subject of ingenious inventions, let us consider another, called a *compass*, also prepared of the Lord, which had the peculiar quality of *becoming balky and refusing to work* when anything was done against the Lord’s pet, Nephi.

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After wandering in the wilderness about eight years altogether, Nephi, at the command of God, builds a ship, and the whole party embark in it, with provisions, etc., to last them during a trip across the Indian and Pacific Oceans, until they shall land upon the shores of the new world, their promised land. Everything moves smoothly for a time; for the “space of many days they were driven forth before the wind towards the promised land.” But by and by, a mutiny on ship board! Nephi preaches, and his two older brothers

don’t like his preaching. But please read page 42 (N. Ed. 46):

“And it came to pass that after they had bound me, insomuch that I could not move, the compass which had been prepared of the Lord did cease to work, wherefore they knew not whither they should steer the ship, insomuch* that there arose a great storm, yea a great and terrible tempest, and were driven back upon the waters for the space of three days, and they began to be frightened exceedingly, lest they should be drowned in the sea; nevertheless they did not loose me.

“And it came to pass that we were about to be swallowed up on the depths of the sea. And after we had been driven back upon the sea for the space of four days, my brethren began to see that the judgments of God were upon them, and that they must perish, save that they should repent of their iniquities; wherefore they came unto me and loosed the bonds which were upon my wrists.

“And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold I took the compass and it did work whither I desired it. And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord; and after I had prayed the winds did cease, and the storm did cease, and there was a great calm.”

* Just how their inability to steer the ship produced this terrific storm is not explained. Probably the author mistook the meaning of *insomuch*. See preceding chapter.

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Now, first of all, we are slightly puzzled over this binding of Nephi with cords by his brothers. They had tried that thing on at least *three times* before with unusual results.

On page 7, as these two older brothers began to smite Nephi with a rod, suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared upon the scene and said, “Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities?”

On page 13, they became so enraged at his preaching that they bound him with cords, proposing to leave him in the wilderness, to be devoured by wild beasts; and he simply prayed unto the Lord, and suddenly “the bonds were loosed from my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren and spake unto them again.”

On page 40, as they were about to lay hands upon him, and throw him into the sea, he coolly straightened up and said to them:

“In the name of the Almighty God, I command you that ye touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh; and whosoever shall lay hands upon me, shall wither even as a dried reed; and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for God shall smite him.”

And the brothers’ wicked purposes immediately collapsed:

“Neither durst they lay their hands upon me, nor touch me

with their fingers, even for the space of many days, lest they should wither before me.”

But in a few days after this, the climax of absurdity is reached; the Lord is represented as removing this

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terrible ban, “raising the blockade,” as it were, in this withering business, by introducing the following silly and childish expedient, p. 41 (N. Ed. 44):

“And it came to pass, that the Lord said unto me, stretch forth thine hand unto thy brothers, and they shall not wither before thee, but I will shock them, saith the Lord, and this will I do, that they may know that I am the Lord their God. And it came to pass that I stretched forth my hand unto my brethren and they did not wither before me, but the Lord did shake them even according to the word which he had spoken. And now, they said, we know of a surety that the Lord is with thee; for we know that it is the power of the Lord that hath shaken us. And they fell down before me, and were about to worship me, but I would not suffer them, saying, worship the Lord thy God, and honor thy father and thy mother.”

But now, after all these experiences of the past, and this that he records upon these plates is not a hundredth part of the things that actually occurred; probably, upon “mine other plates” would be found a hundred such incidents as this; and yet, after all this, we are asked to believe that these unnatural and strangely perverse brothers still venture to bind this chosen favorite of heaven, and that this time they succeed. No angel appears to rebuke them, no shock is felt when they touch him, no withering of limb or muscle; they bind him so tight that he cannot move, and the cords are not suddenly broken; he remains in their power for four long days. But, lo! instead of all these past experiences, an unexpected and unheard of phenomenon occurs! Their trusted compass, without which they are lost at sea, refuses to work, all on Nephi’s account; and suddenly a terrible storm arises. Nature, herself, proposes to show her spite for the insult offered to this peculiar

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favorite of the gods. And this storm continues and increases its fury day and night, until, frightened out of their wits, and threatened with immediate death, these wicked brothers are forced once more to terms, and unloose their brother. Whereupon the storm ceases at once, and the compass resumes its wonted fidelity.

And what, reader, has been accomplished by all this reversal of nature’s laws and angry exhibition of the tem-

pest? In all the Bible examples of miraculous interposition, there is some important end to be gained, an end worthy the character and the dignity of the great God. But what has been gained in this case? An exhibition of spite on the part of Nephi, and whipping into submission those irate and foolish brothers.

Nephi evidently designs in this narrative to “pose” as a saint of the first water, but look at the facts as he himself states them. His wife and babes were pleading and crying with tears day and night, and his poor old father and mother were so overcome by the excitement and the excessive strain of the four days’ terrific storm that they were prostrated, and brought down to death’s door; and, in fact, the whole company are about to be swallowed up in the angry sea; and yet this man, Nephi, not only refuses to pray and thus bring about a great calm, but he coolly occupies his holy soul in spiritual exercises, for he says, “Nevertheless, I did look unto my God, and I did praise him all the day long.” As much as to say to his brothers, “Now I have got you, and we will see who will beat this time! Let the old folks die, and wife and babies cry, it will not disturb my peace so long as I can whip you into submission by the help of this storm and the balky compass! When you say

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‘quits,’ and unloose me, then I will pray and fix this thing up, but not till then!”

But a word farther about this compass. It is exceedingly puzzling to ascertain what it was good for. Apparently as useless as a “fifth wheel.”

If the pointers in that brass director worked as usual pointing out the direction they should go, of what possible use the compass? If, however, that brass director was a *land machine* and would not work upon salt water, how did Nephi find out the directions he must go to reach the desired promised land? He had never been there, never met one who had been there; how then did he know *which way to work his compass*? And when the naughty compass refused to work for the brothers, *how* did they find out that they were *going backwards* during the four days of storm? And if they did know without the aid of the compass that they were going backwards, what was the use of the compass? And why did they not shift their sails and go the other way? And when finally Nephi took the compass “and it did work *whither I desired it*,” not controlled, as the modern compass, by the earth’s currents, but by the sweet will of Nephi, we ask again, what use the compass?*

E.—The Lamanites’ Curse.

This is claimed to have occurred in immediate connection with the separation between Nephi and his two brothers, Laman and Lemuel, and the organization of

*About as useful as the pioneer hog scales of California. A wide plank is balanced across a log, the hog fastened to one end, and stones piled on the other end till they balance the hog; *and then guess at the weight of the stones.*

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the two infant but rival nations already referred to, between twenty and thirty years after leaving Jerusalem.

The miracle is certainly one of the most remarkable of the ages, settling one on the mooted questions of four hundred years standing: "*How came the American Indian with a black skin?*" (The American Indian is the reputed descendant of the Lamanites.)

Nephi tells us that his two brothers, with their families, because of their opposition to Nephi, and their general depravity, became the subjects of a *peculiar curse*.-p. 66 (N. Ed. 72).

"For behold they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people, the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. And thus saith the Lord God, I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities. And cursed shall be the seed of him that mixeth with their seed; for they shall be cursed even with the same cursing. And the Lord spake it and it was done."

It is strange what peculiar favorites of Heaven this Nephi and his people were, that God should be willing, for the sole purpose of removing temptation from them, "that they might not be enticing unto my people," to curse his own brothers with a skin of blackness. It is something God never did for any other people under heaven. He never exhibited such tender care for the *Jews* in the Old Testament history. The New Testament furnishes no incidents of this character. The early Christians, in their best and purest days, had no such favors shown them. And, so far as we can learn, the Lord had never "caused a skin of

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blackness to come upon" any Gentile of modern times, to prevent their "becoming enticing to my people," the Latter-day Saints. All God's other saints, in all the ages, have been left to *grapple with temptations*. The notion somehow has pervaded the divine mind that strong temptation and fiery trials were needful to strengthen the faith and purify the life of his people; and, therefore, he has allowed his people—all his other people except these Nephites—to meet sin face to face with all its blandishments; to live

among and mingle freely with those who were "white and exceeding fair and delightsome," without any such tender precaution as to turn their tempters' skin black and make them loathsome, lest his dear people should be coaxed into sin by their enticements!

If there could be anything more silly or preposterous than this, it is found on page 436 (B, Ed, 480), occurring over five hundred years after the above:

"And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites, and their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites: and their young men and their daughters became exceeding fair, and they were numbered among the Nephites, and were called Nephites."

Wonderful! Wonderful! When a *black* man is soundly converted and unites himself with the people of God, the curse is removed, and he becomes white like the Nephites! Isn't it so? Certainly, God is no respecter of persons. He is not partial in the bestowment of his favors. Would he remove the curse once, and in one portion of the world, and never do it again? Why, then, in all the history of the world was such a

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phenomenon never heard of, that the color of the skin was changed in conversion? Have the unfortunate colored people anywhere on earth, in all the history of the past, been made white by conversion? Ah! but we forget. In the estimation of our Mormon friends there have been no true conversions since the first century after Christ until now. But in the first age of the Church there were multitudes of the *Ethiopians* converted. Do you think the eunuch became white after Philip baptized him? And now, in the last days since the *fullness of the Gospel* has been restored to the earth by the Latter-day Saints, and scores and hundreds from the Indian races, the colored people, Asiatics and Sandwich Islanders, have been soundly and thoroughly converted, has the skin of any of these converts been made white by the change any farther than soap and water would whiten them? Friends, produce your specimens, show us one single instance of the bleaching power of conversion upon the skin, or else hang your heads for shame, that you have allowed yourselves to believe that such silly twaddle as this could be the word of Him who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*.

F.—Jesus, Sampson, Peter's prison and the Philippian Jail combined.

The following is given in full and without comment, that the reader may have a good example of our angel's method of combining Bible incidents so as to pro-

duce one startling prodigious affair, such as the Bible and all past history cannot approach, nor the future hope to rival:

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“Now it came to pass that when the bodies of those who had been cast into the fire were consumed, and also the records which were cast in with them, the Chief Judge of the land came and smote them with his hand upon their cheeks, and said unto them, after what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people, that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone?”

Will the reader bear in mind that this scene is supposed to have occurred *eighty years* before the birth of Jesus Christ.

“Behold, ye see that ye had not power to save those who had been cast into the fire; neither has God saved them, because they were of thy faith. And the Judge smote them again upon their cheeks, and asked, what say ye for yourselves? Now this Judge was after the order and faith of Nehor, who slew Gideon. And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek answered him nothing; and he smote them again, and delivered them to the officers to be cast into prison. And when they had been cast into prison three days, there came many lawyers and judges, and priests, and teachers, who were of the profession of Nehor; and they came unto the prison to see them, and they questioned them about many words; but they answered them nothing. And it came to pass that the Judge stood before them and said, why do ye not answer the words of this people? Know ye not that I have power to deliver ye up unto the flames? And he commanded them to speak; but they answered nothing.

“And it came to pass that they departed and went their ways, but came again on the morrow; and the Judge also smote them again in their cheeks. And many came forth also and smote them, saying, will ye stand again and judge this people and condemn our law? If ye have such great power, why do ye not deliver yourselves? And many such things did they say unto them, gnashing their teeth upon them, and spitting upon them, and saying, how shall we look when we are damned? And many such things, yea, all manner of such things did they say unto them; and thus they did mock them for many days. And they did withhold food from

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them that they might hunger, and water, that they might thirst; and they also did take from them their clothes, that they were naked; and thus they were bound with strong cords, and confined in prison.

“And it came to pass after they had thus suffered for many days, (and it was on the twelfth day, in the tenth month, in the tenth year, in the reign of the Judges over the people of Nephi,) that the Chief Judge over the land of Ammonihah, and many of their teachers and lawyers, went unto the prison where Alma and Amulek were bound with cords. And the Chief Judge stood be-

fore them, and smote them again, and said unto them, if ye have the power of God, deliver yourselves from these bonds, and then we will believe that the Lord will destroy this people according to your words. And it came to pass that they all went forth and smote them, saying the same words, even until the last; and when the last had spoken to unto them, the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose and stood upon their feet; and Alma cried, saying, how long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance; and they break the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them.

“And it came to pass that so great was their fear that they fell to the earth and did not obtain the outer door of the prison; and the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that they fell to the earth; and the Chief Judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek were slain by the fall thereof. And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them power according to their faith which was in Christ. And they straightway came forth out of the prison; and they were loosed from their bonds; and the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul who were in the walls thereof save it were Alma and Amulek, were slain; and they straightway came forth into the city. Now the people having heard a great noise, came running together by multitudes, to know the cause of it; and when they saw Alma and Amulek coming forth out of the prison, and the walls thereof had fallen to the earth, they were struck with

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great fear, and fled from the presence of Alma and Amulek, even as a goat fleeth with her young from two lions; and thus they did flee from the presence of Alma and Amulek.” pp. 249-251 (N. Ed. 277-278).

G.—A Still More Wonderful Combination.

Perhaps another similar scene will be acceptable to the reader, wherein Nebuchadnezzar’s *burning fiery furnace*, the *Philippian jail experiences*, the *darkness and awful dread of Sinai*, the *shining face of Moses*, the *still small voice* heard by Elijah, and the *outpouring of the spirit* on the day of Pentecost are all combined together, and all of them *beaten*, in the marvellous experiences of two preachers, the brothers Nephi and Lehi, sons of Helaman. (Date 29 B.C.)

“And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did proceed from thence to go to the land of Nephi. And it came to pass that they were taken by an army of the Lamanites and cast into prison; yea, even into that same prison in which Ammon and his brethren were cast by the servants of Limhi. And after they had been cast into prison without food, behold, they went forth into the prison to take them that they might slay them. And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi were encircled about as if by fire, even insomuch that they durst not lay their hands upon them, for fear lest they should be burned. Nevertheless, Nephi and Lehi were not burned; and they were as standing in the midst of fire, and

were not burned. And when they saw that they were encircled about with a pillar of fire (a funny thing for a *pillar* to do!) and that it burned them not, their hearts did take courage. For they saw that the Lamanites durst not lay their hands upon them; neither durst they come near unto them, but stood as if they were struck dumb with amazement.

“And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did stand forth, and began to speak unto them, saying, fear not, for behold, it is God that has shown unto you this marvellous thing, in which is shown unto you that ye cannot lay your hands on us to slay us.

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And behold, when they had said these words, the earth shook exceedingly, and the walls of the prison did shake, as if they were about to tumble to the earth; but behold they did not fall. And behold they that were in the prison were Lamanites and Nephites who were dissenters. And it came to pass that they were overshadowed with a cloud of darkness, and an awful, solemn fear came upon them. And it came to pass that there came a voice as if it were above the cloud of darkness, saying repent ye, repent ye, and seek no more to destroy my servants whom I have sent unto you to declare good tidings.

“And it came to pass when they heard this voice, and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder; neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise; but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce, even to the very soul. And, notwithstanding the mildness of the voice, behold the earth shook exceedingly, and the wall of the prison trembled again, as if it were about to tumble to the earth, and behold the cloud of darkness which had overshadowed them, did not disperse. And behold the voice came again, saying, repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and seek no more to destroy my servants. And it came to pass that the earth shook again, and the walls trembled; and also again the third time the voice came and did speak unto them marvellous words which cannot be uttered by man; and the walls did tremble again, and the earth shook as if were about to divide asunder.”

Elijah’s still, small voice, and Paul’s unutterable words combined, are nothing compared with this.

But the record proceeds:

“And it came to pass the Lamanites could not flee because of the cloud of darkness which did overshadow them; yea, and also they were immovable because of the fear which did come upon them. Now there was one among them who was a Nephite by birth, who had once belonged to the church of God, but had dissented from them. And it came to pass that he turned him about, and behold he saw through the

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cloud of darkness the faces of Nephi and Lehi; and behold they did shine exceedingly, even as the faces of angels. And he be-

held that they did lift their eyes to heaven; and they were in the attitude as if talking or lifting their voices to some being whom they beheld.

“And it came to pass that this man did cry unto the multitude, that they might turn and look; and they did behold the faces of Nephi and Lehi. And they said unto the man, behold what do all these things mean? and who is it with whom these men do converse? Now the man’s name was Aminadab. And Aminadab said unto them, they do converse with the angels of God. And it came to pass that the Lamanites said unto him, what shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us? And Aminadab said unto them, you must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ who was taught unto you by Alma and Amulek, and Zeezrom; and then it shall be removed from overshadowing you.

“And it came to pass that they all did begin to cry unto the voice of Him who had shook the earth; yea, they did cry even until the cloud of darkness was dispersed. And it came to pass that when they cast their eyes about, and saw that the cloud of darkness was dispersed from overshadowing them, and behold, they saw that they were encircled about, yea every soul, by a pillar of fire. And Nephi and Lehi were in the midst of them; yea, they were encircled about; yea, they were as if in the midst of a flaming fire, yet it did harm them not, neither did it take hold upon the walls of the prison; and they were filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. And behold the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as with fire, and they could speak forth marvellous words.

“And it came to pass that there came a voice unto them, yea, a pleasant voice, as if it were a whisper, saying, peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my well beloved, who was from the foundation of the world. And now when they heard this, they cast up their eyes as if to behold from whence the voice came; and behold they saw the heavens open, and angels come down out of

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heaven, and ministered unto them. And there were about three hundred souls who saw and heard these things; and they were bid to go forth and marvel not, neither should they doubt.” Pages 401-403 (N. Ed. 441-443.)

And they went forth full-fledged and successful preachers.

H. *Helaman’s Pets.*

In the Book of Alma, pages 368-371 (N. Ed. 406-409) we have an account of a band of two thousand young men or boys whose war experiences are given to illustrate the power of faith.

“Yea, they had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, that God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying, we do not doubt our mothers knew it.”

After their first battle with the Lamanites, Helaman says:

“Behold I numbered those young men who had fought with me, fearing lest there were many of them slain. But behold, to my great joy, there had not one soul of them fallen to the earth; yea, and they had fought as if with the strength of God; yea, never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength; and with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites, that they did frighten them; and for this cause did the Lamanites deliver themselves up as prisoners of war.”

During the following year their number was increased by sixty others of like faith, and then they had another terrible encounter with the Lamanites, when

“ . . . Behold, my little band of two thousand and sixty fought most desperately; yea, they were firm before the Lamanites, and did administer death unto all those who opposed them.”

And the results were truly marvelous.

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“And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty, who had fainted because of the loss of blood; nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the foes of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish; yea, and neither was there *one soul among them who had not received many wounds.*”

(Our angel is nothing if he is not *ahead*—the more improbable and marvelous the story, the better it suits his idiosyncrasies.)

“And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army; yea, that they should be spared, while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe, that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt that they should be preserved by his marvelous power. Now this was the faith of those of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually.”

I. *He could not be hit.*

But here is a still more remarkable case. Those two thousand boys *were hit* repeatedly. Not “one soul among them who had not received *many wounds.*” But here is a prophet, *Samuel* by name, *who cannot be hit.*

“But as many as there were who did not believe in the words of Samuel were angry with him, and they cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him as he stood upon the wall; but the spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that they could not hit him with their stones, neither with their arrows. Now when they saw this, that they could not hit him, there were many more who did believe on his words, insomuch that they went away unto Nephi to be baptised.” p.430(N. Ed. 473.)

A somewhat peculiar method of conversion! But

how is it that so many good Mormons in our day *can be hit*? The Utah penitentiary, Carthage jail, and Missouri experiences all prove that in *modern* times faithful Mormons *can be hit* and be *sacrificed too*. Is it for lack of *faith*, or for a lack of the *Spirit* of the Lord?

J. *Jared's Barges.*

The building of Noah's ark is cast quite into the shade by the feat of Jared's brother and his company, who built *eight barges* or *vessels* all “according to the instructions of the Lord.” p.519 (N. Ed. 574).

“And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did go to work, and also his brother, and built barges after the manner which they had built according to the instructions of the Lord. And they were small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water; and they were built after a manner that they were exceeding tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight, like unto a dish.”

When they are finished the brother of Jared “Cried unto the Lord saying, O Lord, I have performed the work which thou hast commanded me, and I have made the barges according as thou hast directed me.”

Please notice, friends, that they are built exactly “*according to the instructions of the Lord.*” But lo and behold! the Lord had *forgotten* two very important matters.

a. No *ventilation* has been provided—as tight as an

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egg-shell—and so the brother of Jared informs the Lord of the omission.

“And also we shall perish, for in them we cannot breathe, save it is the air which is in them; therefore we shall perish. And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top thereof, and also in the bottom thereof; and when thou shalt suffer for air, thou shalt unstop the hole thereof, and receive air. And if so be that the water come in upon thee, behold ye shall stop the hole thereof, that ye may not perish in the flood. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did so, according as the Lord had commanded.”

The exact object of the hole in the bottom does not clearly appear,* nor is it stated how they are to get air to breathe when the waves are breaking over them, so fiercely that they have to close the hole at the top; for the sequel tells us positively:

“And it came to pass that they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind.”

b. But now another sad deficiency is discovered:

“And again he cried unto the Lord saying, O Lord, behold I have done even as thou hast commanded me; and I have prepared the vessels for my people, and behold there is no light in them. Behold, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross the great water in darkness?”

And the Lord, apparently, is puzzled to know how

* At the close of a lecture in ____, Utah, a good Mormon brother came to the writer and with all the candor imaginable said - “It has always seemed to me like this. Those barges must have been shaped something like a *cigar*, and as they plowed through the ocean would, of course, frequently *roll over*, and hence the *hole* in the bottom would be on top!”

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to manage this matter, and so he asks advice of the brother of Jared:

“And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, what will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels? For behold, ye cannot have windows, for they will be dashed in pieces; neither shall ye take fire with you, for ye shall not go by the light of fire; for behold, ye shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon you. Nevertheless, I will bring you up again out of the depths of the sea; for the winds have gone forth out of my mouth, and also the rains and the floods have I sent forth. And behold, I prepare you against these things; for howbeit, ye cannot cross this great deep, save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come. Therefore what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?”

And the brother of Jared was quite equal to the emergency. He was evidently a man of remarkable resources. He went up into a very high mountain “and did moulten out of a rock sixteen small stones, and they were white and clear even as transparent glass.”*

And those sixteen stones he presented before the Lord; and after an earnest prayer, in which he informs the Lord of his ability to do anything he pleases, he says:

“Therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in the darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.”

And the Lord did so, and touched the stones one by one with his finger, and they became luminous with

* Just a little *early* in the history of the race (100 years after the flood) to speak of glass, and he mistakes “moulten” for “quarry.”

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light, and were placed two in each barge, one at each end.

“And it came to pass that when they had prepared all manner of food, that thereby they might subsist upon the water and also food for their flocks and herds, and whatsoever beast, or animal, or fowl that they should carry with them. And it came to pass that when they had done all these things, they got aboard of their vessels or barges, and set forth into the sea, commending themselves unto the Lord their God.”

Perhaps we should not stop to cavil over such small matters as to *who* pushed these vessels, or barges, off the shore when they were all loaded; nor how they managed for 344 days without *fresh water* to drink; nor yet the statement, “And it came to pass that the Lord God caused that there should a *furios wind* blow upon the face of the waters *toward the promised land*,” and that this wind continued to blow furiously in one direction, day and night for 344 days, driving them across the mighty Atlantic, Gulf Stream and all, meanwhile keeping those eight barges together and landing them all safely on the shores of the new world! A miracle compared with which all the ordinary miracles of the Bible are tame and almost insipid.

K. *The Climax of all Miracles.*

(For the full account, see pages 450-455 (N. Ed. 495-500).

Only in the briefest possible manner can we sketch this climax of all the miracles, which occupies nearly five pages of very closely printed matter in the Book of Mormon, and gathers into it more that is strange and

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unaccountable and foolish and physically impossible, we may safely say, than any other miracle ever performed upon earth. The author, evidently, mounts the fiery steed of his imagination and herds together every strange thing, every wonderful thing, every blood-curdling story, and every impossible thing he had ever heard of, or thought of, or dreamed of, and attempts, in this master effort, to combine them all in one *huge*

miracle!

He finds the fitting occasion for such a display of exalted genius in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the central point in this world's history; in fact the central act in the grander drama of the entire universe of worlds.

In the New Testament record, we learn that while the Lord Jesus was suspended upon the cross, from the sixth hour to the ninth, there was darkness over all the land, that is, the land of Judea. This darkness was followed by an earthquake, the rending of the veil in the temple, etc., at the instant Jesus expired upon the cross, as if nature were expressing her sympathy with her suffering and dying Creator. All instantly ceased, however, as soon as Jesus' sufferings were ended and his soul released.

But our author, true to his instincts to beat the Bible, and everything ever written by man or by the gods, begins his account by recording a three hours' storm, the most terrific and destructive ever heard of. In three hours, destruction and desolation have swept over this entire country, from the southern coasts of South America to the northern seas of this western hemisphere. Sixteen great and populous cities are expressly mentioned by name as completely annihilated. Some of

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them set on fire and burned to ashes by the terrific lightning; others sunk down into the earth, the earth opening her mouth and swallowing them up; others still, upon the sea coast, swept away by immense ocean waves; while still others were covered up in an instant by a neighboring mountain tipping over and burying them out of sight. And these sixteen are only specimens of the fearful destruction that swept over the entire country:

"And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward (South America), but behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward (North America): for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempests and the whirlwinds and the thunderings and the lightnings and the exceeding great quaking of the whole earth.

. . . And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many burned, and many shook until the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain." Some cities remained, "but the damage thereof was exceeding great . . . And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed."

And this frightful destruction of human life and prop-

erty, and deforming of earth, *for what?* To signalize the consummation of God's plan of *mercy, of salvation, of peace and good will* to men!*

But this was only the beginning of wonders. After three hours of storm, then the darkness began. And such darkness!

"Thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof could feel the vapor of darkness; and

* In entire harmony and beautiful accord with the real design of Jesus' death, we learn that in Palestine (See Matthew, 27: 52,53), at the instant Jesus said, "It is finished," and gave up the Ghost, graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, etc. That is, *life, resurrection*, and not *destruction and death*, were the accompaniments of Jesus' completion of the grand work of human redemption.

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there could be no light, neither candles, neither torches, neither could there be a fire kindled with their fine and exceeding dry wood." (Reader, could God inspire such nonsense?) And this "did last for the space of three days." Meantime, "There was great mourning and howling and weeping among all the people continually. . . . And thus were the howlings of the people great and terrible."

And right in the midst of all this horrible tempest and darkness that extinguished fires, and would not allow lights to burn, and the terrible howlings of the people, the *Lord Jesus suddenly appears upon the scene!* His body, of course, was at that time peacefully sleeping in Joseph's new tomb in Palestine; but his spirit appears and speaks with the most remarkable voice that has ever been heard on earth:

"And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land. ("This land," at that time, included the whole of North and South America), crying wo, wo, wo, unto the people."

And then follows an address that occupies two pages, in which he recounts all the terrible things that have occurred, mentions the names of the various cities that have been so suddenly blotted out of existence, and tells the reason why this terrible visitation has been permitted, because of their sins, *all the while proceeding upon the supposition* that those whom he is addressing *know all the facts*. But do they? Let me read you again:

"And in one place they were heard to cry, saying, Oh, that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla."

How did they know that the city of Zarahemla had been burned?

“And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying, Oh, that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out (A quotation from the New Testament): then would our mothers and our fair daughters and our children have been spared, and not have been buried up in that great city Moronihah.”

This is the silliest nonsense; a physical impossibility. Please recall the situation. At the very beginning of such a frightful storm, a most destructive tornado and earthquake combined, every family will rush to their cellars, or out to some place of shelter, and there remain, frightened beyond a thought of their neighbors till the fury of the storm has passed. But they have scarcely reached their hiding places when this awful darkness overtakes them, and they are buried as in a living grave for three days! No lights are possible, they can see nothing; and as the horrible roar of the tempest, and the reeling and rocking of the earth beneath them continues, they dare not venture outside, lest they be overwhelmed. They, therefore, know nothing and can know nothing of what has happened of their nearest neighbors; how much less of towns and cities that are hundreds and some of them thousands of miles apart. The telegraph wires are all down, the railroad tracks are all torn up, the telephone business as well as the daily papers have all suspended; besides, the public highways have been rendered impassable; there is, therefore, no possibility of finding out, till after the darkness passes away, that the inhabitants of that great city Zarahemla have been burned, or that a mountain has tipped over and buried

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that great city Moronihah and its people out of sight forever. The whole conception, as you see, is most ridiculously absurd, and so is the closing scene:

“And it came to pass that thus did the three days pass away. And it was in the morning, and the darkness disappears from off the face of the land, and the earth did cease to tremble, and the rocks did cease to rend, and the dreadful groanings did cease, and all the tumultuous noises did pass away, and the earth did cleave together again that it stood, (?) and the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentation into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer.”

We think not. The first thing they did that morning was to crawl out of their hiding places, and run over to the next neighbor to learn how they fared, and to send a messenger

to the other part of the city where a married son or daughter lived, to see whether they are dead or alive. And as all over that city they find neighbors and dear ones by the hundreds buried under fallen houses, or wedged in between broken timbers, bruised and mangled, and yet, perhaps, enough left of ebbing life to plead piteously for help and succor, and as the messengers begin during the day to come in from the rural districts and from the little towns adjacent, with information of the desolation and ruin everywhere prevailing, the time for real mourning begins. During the three days it has been horror and fright and unutterable suspense; now, when the real facts are ascertained, will begin the weeping and heart wailing.

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Dear reader, the miracles reviewed in this chapter are wholly unworthy the character of God. They present Him to us as a weak minded parent, resorting to the silliest measures to help his pets, and the cruelest acts to spite those who venture to oppose said pets.

They present Him as performing the most prodigious deeds for the most insignificant purposes. The *mountain* laboring to bring forth a *mouse*, in ancient fable, is surpassed in extreme absurdity by the picture of the Almighty moving heaven and earth to accomplish objects most ridiculously small and totally needless.

They present Him as a blundering architect, having to patch up His work to make it passable. They present Him as using His infinite power in the destruction of a vast continent, chiefly for the purpose of an exhibition, —sweeping untold millions of the innocent with the guilty into an unending eternity, ostensibly to punish the sinners—but really to get up an exhibition in honor of the sacrifice of His Son over in Palestine, when that sacrifice was to save men!

Such presentations of the character of God, that degrade Him to the level of a foolish, conceited and deranged man, furnish unanswerable argument against the divine inspiration of the Book of Mormon.

Another of the very serious objections to the Book of Mormon miracles—that they aid in undermining faith in the Bible—will be considered in Chapter V.