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THE MIRACLE BOOK AND ITS KEY
By Peter Wiseman

Second Edition Enlarged

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By Peter Wiseman

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DEDICATED
To all lovers of the Book,
known to me the dearest
and the best.

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01 -- THE MIRACLE BOOK -- THE WONDERFUL BOOK OF GOD

The Miracle Book is the Book of Truth. There are four grand arguments to support this assertion. 1. The miracles it records. 2. The prophecies it contains. 3. The goodness of the doctrine. 4. The moral character of the penmen. The miracles flow from Divine power, the prophecies from Divine understanding, the excellency of the doctrine from Divine goodness, the moral character of the penmen from Divine purity. Thus the religion of the Miracle Book, the religion of Christianity, is built upon four immovable pillars -- the power, the understanding, the goodness and the purity of God.

This Miracle Book must be the invention of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God. It could not be the invention of good men or angels, for they neither would nor could make a book and tell lies all the time they were writing, saying "Thus saith the Lord" when it was their own invention.

It could not be the invention of bad men or devils, for they could not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their soul to all eternity. It is therefore concluded that the Miracle Book must have been given by Divine inspiration. (Bible Explainer, p. 132)

The Miracle Book is the Book of the Ages. It is a divine revelation from God to man; a revelation of the Fatherly heart of the Eternal God Himself, a revelation of the wonderful Christ, a revelation of man -- his fall and recovery through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a revelation of the highest ideals possible in life. It calls for the highest ethical conduct. The Bible is the greatest and most complete code of laws ever published. It is the book of wisdom, making the foolish wise; the book of life, showing the way of life; the book of divinity unexcelled; the greatest book of biography ever published; the best covenant ever executed and the best testament ever signed. It is the youth's best instructor and companion. It is the learned man's masterpiece, the ignorant man's dictionary.

This wonderful Book is The Book of Revivals. One could hardly conceive of a spiritual awakening, a spiritual revival, without a Bible. Certainly we could not conceive of a Christian country without a Bible. If we would become Christian and remain Christian, we must have the Word of God. The Bible has been back of all civilizing and reviving movements. "From it has come the inspiration which has sent out the most successful missionaries and evangelists to gather in the lost; and no evangelical agency can expect to prosper unless it keeps the Bible in the very forefront."

This wonderful Book opens with the Fact of God and closes with a new heaven and a new earth. "In the beginning God," and then His creative work, "God created." God Almighty, a lovable Person, One who has created the world and man, and One who cares for His creative work. The first sentence of the Bible refutes many errors. For instance, Pantheism says that God and the universe are identical, but the statement, "God created the heavens and the earth," separates God from creation and thus refutes Pantheism. The same statement refutes creation by chance; for it reads, "God created." It refutes the eternity of matter, for God created matter.

This wonderful Book is still the Best Seller. It is translated today into almost every language known. The great Bible Societies cannot meet the demands for copies. No book has been more desired by humanity and God has seen to it that copies are available: no book has been more persecuted, but it has survived. It is settled in heaven and it settles those who will accept it.

This wonderful Book is the Divine side Book. It shows the way to God and heaven. It points the way of salvation. It reveals the way of the solution of our problems, at least, the deepest problem, namely, the problem of sin in the human heart. The Bible is the Guide Book for the nations. It guides in the greatest truths concerning man and his destination. One of our dailies recently in writing an editorial about the death of a gangster so early in life, ended the editorial by saying, "The narrow way is the better way after all." Where did he get the idea of the "narrow way"? Frequently we hear such expressions as "the wages of sin," "the way of life," "the apple of the eye," "the salt of the earth," "the powers that be," "the widow's mite," "the fat of the land," "all things to all men," "a mess of pottage," "the labor of love," "the handwriting on the wall," and similar expressions. We become use to them and perhaps forget for the moment that they are from the Word of God.

This wonderful Book is unequalled. It is "the only infallible text of real orthodoxy, the only unerring touchstone of truth, the only immaculate code of laws, the only faultless system of morals and the only immutable ground of hope," and to wear it out -- never! No: it cannot be equaled. An unknown writer has paid this tribute to the Bible: "This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the reward of saints and the doom of sinners. Its histories are true, its doctrines holy, and its precepts binding. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. It is a river of pleasure, a mine of wealth and a paradise of glory. It is given you in life, will be open at the judgment and will be remembered forever. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy." It is the book of culture, the book of ethics, the book of the philosophy of the plan of God, especially in redemption and the way of salvation. It is the Book eternal. It is "The well of English undefiled," to use Dean Chaucer's words; and with William Gladstone, it is "The impregnable rock." It is related of Dr. Samuel Johnson that he "read the sweet story of Ruth aloud in a literary club, at a time when infidelity was rife: and great was the amazement of his hearers when, in answer to their exclamation, 'Where did you find it?' he answered, 'This was written twenty-five hundred years before Columbus was born;'" and yet it contains the latest news. Read it over and over, and still added light comes from familiar passages. On being asked by his daughter what he was reading, Dr. Elliott, who was sitting by the window with the Bible open on his knees, replied, "The news, my dear, always good news.

This wonderful Book is Eternal and Supreme. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof is as a flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of God shall stand forever" (Isaiah 40:6-8). And it is supreme: "There are no songs," says Milton, "comparable to the songs of Zion, no politics like those which the Scriptures teach;" and he might have added, no literature equal to that of the Bible. Yes, the Bible is supreme in the field of books.

This wonderful Book is a Universal Book. It is the Book for the nations as well as the Book of the nation, home and individual. Blackstone holds its place for the lawyer, and special texts by others for different vocations in life; but the Bible is for all. It is in a realistic sense the Peoples' Bible. It has its place in every field of research. It has been there before us in some degree or respect and will be there after we are gone.

This wonderful Book is a Saving Book. We are born again by it: "Born again by the incorruptible seed, the word of God that liveth and abideth forever." We are sanctified by it: "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth." A church father, while yet a terrible sinner, read the Scripture: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh;" and Saint Augustine said, "No farther would I read; nor needed I; for instantly at the end of the sentence. light infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away. The great Spurgeon had a similar experience. It occurred while listening to a humble Primitive Methodist man speaking on the text: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Setting his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart," says Spurgeon, "the preacher said, 'Young man, You are in trouble.' 'Well,' says Spurgeon, 'I was, sure enough.' Says he, 'You will never get out of it unless you look to Christ.' And then, lifting his hands up, he cried out, as only a Primitive Methodist could, 'Look, look, look!' I saw at once the way of salvation. Oh, how I did leap for joy at that moment! I knew not what else he said. I was so

'Look,' what charming word it seemed to me! I looked until I could have almost looked my eyes away: and in heaven I will look on still in my joy unutterable."

This wonderful Book is Here To Stay. It has survived many a storm and it will survive. It is the Book of the past, it is true, but it is the Book of the present and it will be the Book of the future. It has met the needs of the past. It meets the need of the present. It will meet the needs of the future. It has been the hope and consolation of millions, and it will continue to be so. It is God-inspired, God breathed. Some person has put it well in a poem:

"Last eve I stood before a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring its vesper chime;
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had,' said I,
'To wear and batter all these hammers so?'
'Just one,' he answered; then, with twinkling eye,
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'

"And so the Bible, anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
And though the voice of Paine, Voltaire was heard,
The anvil is unworn -- the hammers gone."

This Miracle Book, this Book of God! Let us get back to it! Back to Christ and His saving religion! Back to the leadership of the blessed Holy Spirit. Back to God, the God of battles, the

God of victory! Yes, back to the grand old Book the Bible! One of the greatest joys of my busy life is the joy of commencing the day upon my knees with my open Bible. I arise enriched, illuminated, encouraged and strengthened for the duties of the day. "In the beginning God" fits in nicely here. Back to reading the Book! Back to a reverent, sincere and prayerful study of the Bible, the Word of God! The Miracle Book!

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02 -- THE KEY TO THE MIRACLE BOOK -- HOW TO STUDY IT

First, The Reason

In approaching the study of the Miracle Book, the following should be kept in mind:

1. The Miracle Book is God's inspired Word. Out of the silence of eternity God spoke by the Word of His mouth (Genesis, the first chapter. He then spoke by the Word of His Son (John, first chapter); then by the Word of Scripture (I Peter 1:1).

2. The Miracle Book is God's gift. What a gift from God is this precious Book! The fact that it is here and we have a copy is a miracle in itself. We are told that the Geneva press that sent Voltaire literature over Europe is now printing the Word of God. It is said that the home of Bob Ingersoll is used for a Methodist parsonage, and Tom Paine's house is used for a Bible house. Good!

3. The Miracle Book is a Revelation of the very heart of God. Think, if you can, of the greatest ideal in the realm of parenthood; then realize that you have but a vague illustration of the heart of God, the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ is in Person and in word a revelation of the Father: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

4. The Miracle Book is God's gift in English. John Ruskin said: "All that I have taught of Art, everything that I have written, whatever greatness there has been in any thought of mine, whatever I have done in my life, has simply been due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read with me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart."

5. The Miracle Book is God's medium of expression. The blessed Triune God speaks to us through His Word. It is, then, the great medium of contact with God. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is a Divine light. Without it we can neither see the way nor know the way.

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Secondly, The Requirements

1. Pardon: a change of heart is a necessity. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually

discerned" (I Cor. 2:14, 15). "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3). It is clear from these two passages that the natural man, the unsaved man, can neither understand spiritual things nor see them. He is dead and he is blind.

2. Passionate Love. The new birth brings with it a Divine love for the Miracle Book: "O how I love Thy law!" (Ps. 119:97).

3. Prayer and Meditation. "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Ps. 119:18). "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

4. Performance of God's Will. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John 7:17).

5. Personal. The Miracle Book should be studied with the personal application: that is, it means me. One should apply it to one's self.

* * *

Thirdly, The Research

"Search the Scriptures," said the Master. "Study to show thyself approved unto God," said Paul, "rightly dividing the word of truth."

An understanding of symbolism is necessary. There is the symbol of seed, the sowing (Matt. 13:19; I Peter 1:23); the rain, refreshing (Isa. 55:10); the lamp, light, illuminating (Ps. 119:105); the mirror, revealing (James 1:25); milk and meat, nourishing and developing (Heb. 5:12, 13); honey, delighting (Ps. 10:10); water, cleansing (Eph. 5:26; 6:17); the critic, discerning (Heb. 4:12).

An understanding of types is necessary. There are typical persons, because of some relationship they might sustain in the history of human redemption. Adam, the first man and federal head of the race is a type of Christ (Romans 5:14-19); Elijah, in his translation, a type of the ascending Lord; Moses, a type of Christ in his prophetic office; Aaron, as high priest, a type of Christ in his Priestly office; Melchizedek, a type of Christ the King of peace. There are typical institutions such as the Passover and Pentecost. There are typical events such as the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan.

An understanding of figures is helpful. There is the metaphor, "A whelp is Judah," "Broad is the way," and other passages. The simile is a formal comparison, suggested by such words as "like," "as," "such as"; "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven." Metonymy, "Moses and the prophets," "Kill the passover," The idea is the writings of Moses and the prophets, and lamb for the passover. Synecdoche, a whole for a part or a part for a whole: "All the world" for the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1), "Three days and three nights" for a part of that time. The soul for the

whole man. Personification is giving a personal form or character to an object! (See Matt. 6:34; Heb. 3:10). Apostrophe is addressing an absent and imaginary person or thing (Ps. 114). Hyperbole is an exaggeration, "Stronger than lions!" Irony is saying the very opposite to what is meant: "Ye are the people and wisdom will die with you." Riddle is a dark saying. Allegory is an extended metaphor (John 15: Eccl. 12:3-7, the wise and unwise master builder (I Cor. 3:10-15), the Christian armour (Eph. 6:11-17), the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-16); these are allegories. Proverb is a short, pithy saying in which there is wise counsel, a moral lesson.

There are certain typical actions often suggestive of great truths; such as the following:

The brazen serpent is a type of lifting up Christ; the prophet walking naked, a type of the captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia (Isa. 20:2-4); Jeremiah putting a linen girdle upon his loins, then hiding it in a hole of a rock, a type of how God would mar the pride of Judah (Jer. 13:1-11); the potter's work, a type of God's sovereignty over the nations (Jer. 18:1-6); the breaking of the potter's vessel, a type of the utter desolation of Judah and Jerusalem (Jer. 19); bonds and yokes upon the prophet's neck, a type of the subjugation of nations by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27); Hananiah taking the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and breaking it, a type of how God would break Nebuchadnezzar's yoke (Jer. 28:10-17); the prophet lying upon his left side three hundred and ninety days for Israel, and on his right side forty days for Judah, a type of the siege of Jerusalem (Ezek. 4:1-8); the preparing of bread with cow's dung, a type of the severity of the famine (Ezek. 4:9-16); the cutting of the hair, weighing and scattering of it, a type of God's judgments upon Jerusalem (Ezek. 5); the prophet removing, a type of the flight and captivity of Zedekiah (Ezek. 12:3-20); the prophet mourning not for his wife, a type of the awful calamity of the Jews (Ezek. 24:15-27); the prophet, Hosea, taking an adulterous wife, a type of the departing of the people from the Lord (Hosea 1:3); the crowning of Joshua the high priest, a type of Messiah the Branch and of his Kingdom (Zech. 6:9-15).

* * *

Fourthly, Review Of Methods

It is scarcely necessary to remind one that there could be no study of any book without much reading of that book and that systematically. This is true with respect to the Miracle Book. We should read it through at least once a year, independently of the much reading and re-reading of the subject in hand.

1. The Topical Method. This is a very simple method. It simply means that a subject is selected. It may be a person, place, custom, doctrine, name. It may be the subject of faith, prayer, grace, and such like. The results will be satisfactory.

2. The Periodic Method. This is a study by periods. One may commence with the first period of history, from the beginning of the world to Abraham; the period of Patriarchal history, from Abraham to the bondage of Israel in Egypt; the period of Israelitish history; then the period of the Theocracy, then the Monarchy, then the Captivity, and then the Restoration. In the New Testament there are four periods: the History of our Lord upon earth, as revealed in the fourfold record -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the History of the church, as revealed in the Acts of the

Apostles; the period of the training of the Church, as revealed in the epistles; and the period of the Consummation, as revealed in Revelation.

3. The Analytical Method. This is a splendid method. It is a study of the Miracle Book by books. Take the book of Genesis and after some readings, analyze it, and so on through all the books.

* * *

Genesis

I. The Beginning of the World. (1:1-2:6)

II. The Beginning of Man. (2:7-11).

III. The Beginning of History of Israel (Gen. 12 -- to the end of the book).

Take Exodus: a good yet simple analysis may be built on the letter E. Enslavement of Israel, Emancipator of Israel, Emancipation of Israel, and the Education of Israel. Acrostic analysis of Ruth may serve the purpose: R -- Removing to Moab. U -- Universal Bereavement. T -- Turning Back to Bethlehem. H -- Happiness and Honor in Bethlehem. The Book of Nehemiah may be analyzed by the letter C. I. City Reform (1-4). II. Civic Reform (5-12). III. Church Reform (13). Let us look at one book in the New Testament, Matthew -- I. Introduction, (1-4:16). II. "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, Repent (4:17-16:20). III. "From that time Jesus began to show unto His disciples how He must suffer" (16:21-28:20). Thus we have the Birth of the King, the Propaganda of the King, and the Passion of the King.

4. The Group Method. In such a wonderful library as the Miracle Book, and with such continuity throughout the books one might well expect the group method to be profitable. The Book of Law -- Genesis to Deuteronomy; the Book of History -- Joshua to Esther; the Book of Poetry and Philosophy -- Job to the Songs of Solomon the Book of Prophecy -- Isaiah to Malachi. The New Testament: the Book of Redemption -- Matthew to John; the Book of History -- Acts; the Book of Training -- the Epistles; the Book of Prophecy -- Revelation. The Group Method may, however, take the following form:

Creation -- Genesis, The Beginnings.

Redemption -- Exodus, God Delivers His People.

Legislation -- Leviticus To Deuteronomy, The Law Is Given.

Possession -- Joshua, The Land Promised.

Preparation -- Judges To Chronicles, The King And The Kingdom.

Restoration -- Ezra To Esther, Restoration And Reformation.

Aspiration -- Job To Solomon. The Soul's Cry And God's Sufficiency.

Expectation -- Isaiah To Malachi, He Will Come.

Manifestation -- Matthew To John. He Is Come.

Realization -- Acts, The Ascended Lord And His Gift (Experience).

Education -- Romans To Jude, The Church In Training.

Consummation -- Revelation, The Church In Battle And Final Victory.

5. The Expository Method. From a devotional standpoint this method is most beneficial. The idea is to take a cluster of passages and dig out their meaning. One may take a chapter of the Book, such as the Suffering Messiah (Isa. 53), the Shepherd Psalm, (23), Psalm of Deliverance (141), the Love Chapter (I Cor. 13), the Spiritual Gift Section (I Cor. 12:1-14:40), the Resurrection Chapter (I Cor. 15), or one may follow the cluster idea, such as, Spiritual Blessings (Eph. 1:3-14), and you have the blessings of being "chosen," "predestinated," "redemption," "forgiveness," "an inheritance," and "sealed." Take Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus: study each expression using the word "that" as a starting place for each division (Eph. 3:14:21)

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Fifthly, The Results

1. Pleasure. One of the first effects of the study of this Miracle Book is the pleasure that it will give. When once the Book presents itself as a matter of great interest, the study of it becomes a real pleasure. As to its interest, well, ask some great question and let the Book answer. Whence came the world? Whence came man? Whence came sin? What of man and his destiny? The stories of the Miracle Book are wonderful. The Book is quite human yet Divine.

2. Protection. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." It is a protection from error: "Ye do err not knowing the Scripture and the power of God." It will protect from sin: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:1). Not only will it protect the youth but the home, the institutions of learning, and the nation. "I am afraid," said Martin Luther, "that universities will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the hearts of youth. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

3. Provision. It is milk for the new born babe, and meat for the older Christian. It is the bread of God to the soul. There can be no growth without food; indeed, there can be no life without it, for "my words are spirit, and they are life" (Christ).

4. Power. There is the power of knowledge: "Thou through Thy commandments has made me wiser than mine enemies (Ps. 119:89). It was "written for our learning." (Romans 15:4-7).

5. Presence. On the margin of an aged saint's Bible, opposite certain promises of God, were found the letters T. P. -- meaning, tested and proved. Well does the writer remember a busy week in the wheat fields in Western Canada during which time he had not the privilege of studying the wonderful Word of God. At the close of the week, when this blessed privilege came to him, alone with His Book he pressed it to his heart and then to his lips, and with tears thanked God anew for the Miracle Book.

One has remarked concerning our daily portion from the Word of God that we should (1) Study it through, (2) Pray it through, (3) Put it down, (4) Work it out, and (5) Pass it on.

O Lord God, we thank Thee for the Miracle Book, Thy revelation to us. Give us, we pray Thee, a great love for it, and a great thirst to know what Thou hast said: for Thou hast said all that was necessary to be said and all that is necessary for our spiritual and eternal welfare. It is a complete revelation of Thy will concerning us, our need, and of Thy wonderful provision through Jesus Christ, Thine only Son, our Redeemer and Saviour. Thou didst give this Thy Revelation by Thy Spirit through holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. May that same Spirit aid us and move us in our search of the Scriptures. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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THE END