

SCHOOL DIALOGUES;

OR,

LESSONS ON THE COMMANDMENTS AND THE
WAY OF SALVATION.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A DIALOGUE ON READING.

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THE CHILD ALONE.



God Almighty hath made me. He made the heavens and the earth: the sun, the moon, and the stars, are his work. He hath made of one blood all men on the earth. He gives life to all: he upholds all by his power: he supplies the wants of all.

He is present every where. He sees me at all times: he beholds all I do: he hears every word I speak: he knows all the thoughts of my heart. He keeps me from harm by day; he watches over me by night. He supplies all my wants, and is ever doing me good.

What must I do for this great God, who made me out of nothing, who does every thing for me?

I must love him with all my soul : I must seek to learn his will, and to do all he commands me.

I will keep in mind his goodness ; for he never forgets me. I will pray to him always ; for he knows what I daily want.

I will read his holy word ;, for it reveals his commands, and shows me the way to heaven. I will seek his favour, for nothing beside can make me happy.

What must I do for my parents ? I will love them, for they tenderly love me ; I will try to please them in all things ; for they are ever seeking my good.

I will not repine at their commands ; they know what is best for me.

I will avoid what they forbid me ; for they know what will do me harm. Let me never grieve them ; for so I shall offend my Maker.

Let me always love and honour them ; for God my Creator commands it. He is angry with all those who despise father or mother.

God is the Governor of all men.

He commands others to love me. If any take what is mine, or speak falsely of me, or injure me at all, he will observe it, and be angry with them.

And has he not charged me to love others ? If I do harm to any, if I speak falsely, if I am unkind ; will he not observe and be angry with me ?

Then let me be kind to others : let me not take what is theirs ; nor deceive them, nor injure them ; for God is ever near to me.

Let me do that to others which I wish them to do to me ; for this is his command to me and to all.


I shall not always remain upon earth : my body must soon die, and turn to dust, but my spirit can never die.

Birds, beasts, and fishes die, and never live again.

But my spirit is more noble than theirs; for I can think, From whence am I? Whither am I going? Who made me? and for what purpose I was made.

But beasts cannot think; they know not whence they came, nor for what purpose they were made. If I expect pleasure, I am joyful; if pain, my mind is full of sorrow: but they cannot expect future joy, nor fear future pain. My spirit is therefore nobler than theirs.

But whither will my soul, my spirit go, when my body dies?

It must live for ever.  But will it be for ever happy? Whither can it go, but to my Creator? He hath given it, and to him it must return.

But will he receive it to dwell in endless joy with himself?

He is good; but he is also righteous and holy: have I always kept his commands? have I not sinned against him?

Alas! I have forgotten him. He has been ever good to me, but I have not loved him; he has always preserved me, but I have lived without serving him.

I have taken his name in vain. I have neglected his holy word. I have broken his sabbaths: I have profaned his sacred day, by doing my own pleasures thereon.

He has been better than a father to me: but I have not even inquired, Where is God my Maker?

I have sinned against my parents: instead of obeying them, I have been often angry at their commands.

I have been unkind to others. I have spoken

falsely of them ; I have taken what was theirs. I have too often injured them.

My sins are many : surely my mind is wicked. How can I dwell with the holy and just God, who hateth all sin ; who is angry with the wicked every day ?

Yet where can I hide myself from him ? And can I endure his eternal frown ? or could I bear to be banished for ever from him in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore ?

In the holy word of God I have read of his mercy. He so loved the world, that he sent his Son Jesus Christ down upon earth to save sinners !

Full of love and pity, he came down from heaven, and dwelt among men. He constantly went about doing good.

Righteous and holy himself, he yet gave his life a ransom for sinners. He died for them on the cross ; but he arose and ascended to heaven. Thence he now invites all to come and receive his mercy. I will pray to him ; I will entreat him to pardon my sins—to forgive my evil actions, and words, and thoughts—and to make me holy, like himself.

And if I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, when I die, he will then take me to heaven, to dwell with him for evermore.



DIALOGUE I.

JOHN GEORGE

G. My dear John, will you be so good as to tell me something about God: I know you have read a great deal.

J. I do not know much myself, George, but I will gladly tell you what I do know.

G. I thought you would, you have always been so kind to me. I have learned more from you than from any boy in the school.

J. My dear George, I feel a very great pleasure in telling you any thing about God, or a future state; for these are the great things. What will play do for us? We must all die, and then whither shall we go?

G. Very true. I have never been easy about this since Robert Jones died, about three months ago.

J. Well, with what shall we begin?

G. Tell me about Him who gave me life, and who supports me every moment. What is God?

J. God is so great and so vast in his nature, that we should never have been able to form any just idea of him, had he not given us his holy word.

G. What description has he given of himself in his holy word?

J. The scriptures teach us that he is a Spirit, almighty, omniscient, or all-seeing, every where present. He therefore sees all that we do, hears all that we say, and knows even our thoughts.

G. Had God a beginning?

J. No. he is eternal without beginning or end.

He made the world and all things out of nothing by his word, and he supports them by his power.

G. How powerful and how wise he must be to form the earth, the trees, the beasts, the sky, the sun and moon, and all things, out of nothing!

J. And how good he must be to provide food always for the beasts, the birds, the fishes, and all creation!

G. What is meant by God's being just and true?

J. It means that he does to every man that which is right, rewarding them that obey him, and punishing those who break his law: and that he fulfils every word he speaks.

G. Does he now rule the world, and govern all men?

J. Yes: he is our Lord and Ruler now, and he will be our Judge at last.

G. How may we obtain his favour? Has he given us any law to obey?

J. Yes: a good and righteous law, and one so plain, that children like you and me can understand it. But it is school time now: I will tell you more about this law when we meet again.



DIALOGUE II.

OF GOD'S LAW, &c.

JOHN. GEORGE

G. Good morning, John, I am glad I have met with you. Come, let us go on with our yesterday's subject. You promised to tell me about the law of God: I long to hear respecting it.

J. Good morning to you, George: it gives me pleasure to see you so willing to hear instruction of this nature. The law of God contains ten commandments.

G. What are they?

J. The first forbids idolatry: it is, Thou shalt have no other gods beside me.

G. What does this mean?

J. That we must not worship any being or thing as God, but Him alone.

G. Well, I believe I have never broken this command. I have never worshipped any other god.

J. Ah, George! I dare not say so. You may not have bowed the knee before an idol, but have you never loved any thing better than God? Have you not taken more delight in play than in God and his word? Your mind perhaps has been upon your play from morning till night, while God has not been once in your thoughts.

G. Is it wrong for us to play then?

J. By no means. But when we give our minds so to play, as wholly to forget the God who made us, and to serve him, do we not make play our god, instead of the Lord?

G. True: I have not considered this before. What is the second command?

J. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, &c. nor bow down to worship it.

G. What is the third command?

J. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

G. What is it to take the name of God in vain?

J. Among other things, to call out upon God or Jesus Christ in common discourse, when you do not intend to pray.

G. But this is what a great many do: I hear people very often using the name of God in this manner.

J. If every one in the world were to do this, it would still be wrong. God says, He will not hold such guiltless; that is, he will account them punishable; and we know that every word of his shall stand.

G. What is the fourth command?

J. Remember to keep holy the sabbath day.

G. What is the sabbath? and what is remembering to keep it holy?

J. The sabbath is one day in seven, which God commands us to give up wholly to him. To keep it holy is, to do no worldly business on that day, but to read God's word, to talk about holy things, and to attend upon the public worship of God.

G. To do no worldly business! Do not many people around us work on Sunday? They cannot have heard of this command.

J. Many who know this command, do business on the sabbath, because they love money better than they love God. But God will bring them to judgment for this when they die.

G. Well, I think I have never broken this command, for I have never worked on the sabbath.

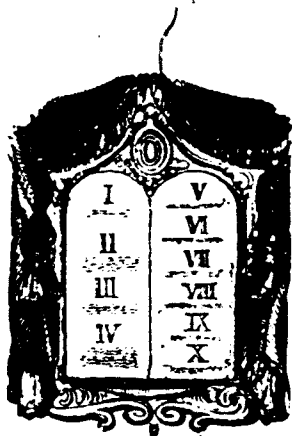
J. But have you never played on the sabbath? This is breaking the sabbath.

G. Ah! I have spent too many sabbaths in foolish play

J. These four commands relate to God, and are often called, the First Table of the Law; the other six are called the Second Table, and have relation to men. But the bell rings for school, I must leave them till another time.

G. Let that be after school then.

J. Very well. Good morning.



DIALOGUE III.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.



JOHN GEORGE CHARLES.

G. Come, now fulfil your promise. I have brought Charles too, as he wishes to hear something about things of this kind.

J. The fifth of God's commands is, Honour thy father and thy mother.

G. What does that mean?

J. It means, that you should love and revere them, and do every thing they bid you with a willing mind.

G. But suppose I were to be sullen, and cry when they bid me do any thing, and afterwards do it, would that be a sin?

J. Yes, for then you would not do it with a willing mind; you would only do it lest they should

punish you; it would be plain then, in the sight of God, that you did not love them.

G. Well, I cannot break this command now, for my father and mother are at home.

J. But your parents have placed your teacher over you in their place. If you do not obey him, the sin is just as great, if not greater; for then you disobey both your teacher, and your parents who have placed you under his care.

C. Alas! I have no parents! My father and mother are both dead.

J. My dear lad, ask your Maker to be your Parent. He is a Father to the fatherless, and he will be a Father to you, if you seek him.

G. What is the next command?

J. The sixth command is, Thou shalt not kill.

G. Well, I think I have not broken this command.

J. I suppose you have never killed any one; but have you never been angry with any one without cause? and that so as to be almost ready to kill him?

C. Yes, he has indeed, for he has often beaten me, when I have done nothing to him.

J. Then you have broken this commandment in the sight of God. Do not you recollect what the Saviour says, He that saith to his brother, Thou fool, is in danger of hell fire?

G. My dear John, you always find me out? What is the seventh command?

J. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

C. And what is the eighth?

J. Thou shalt not steal.

G. I have never stolen, I am sure.

J. What! not a play-thing, nor a pen, nor a top?

G. What! is it stealing to take a pen, or a top?

J. Yes, indeed. Will not the desire that makes you take a top because you want it, urge you hereafter to take a shilling or a sovereign?

G. Ah, I have never thought of this. What is the ninth command?

J. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour?

G. I hate falsehood. I cannot endure those who tell lies.

J. Very good, but have you never made the best of your own side, and the worst of your school-fellows, when you have brought a complaint against them?

C. I am sure he has done that, for he went to our teacher last week, and told him I had called him ill names; but he forgot to say, that he had beaten me first.

J. That was bearing false witness. When, in telling a thing, you conceal something, which if mentioned would quite alter the case, you bear false witness against your neighbour.

G. You are finding me out here too. What is the last of the ten commands?

J. Thou shalt not covet that which is thy neighbour's.

G. Well, I am not rich, nor do I want to be so. I don't want any body's money.

J. And do you never want another boy's marbles or his kite?

C. He took away a marble that I had, and then told me, that if I told our teacher he would beat me.

J. George, this was something beyond coveting; this was actual robbery.

G. But do you think God will ever call us to account for these little things?

J. Indeed he will. No matter whether the action be great or small; God views the heart. If you now take away a little boy's marble, would you not hereafter take away a poor orphan's estate if you were able?

G. But has God given this law for every body to keep? The heathen never have read it, how then can God have given the law to all?

J. True, they have not read the law as written in the scriptures, but they have the substance of the law written in their hearts.

C. How? I do not understand you.

J. The substance of this law is, Love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself. This God has written in the hearts of all.

G. Explain this a little more fully.

J. When Lochun, our bearer,* cheats his neighbour or injures him, do you suppose that he himself thinks this right?

C. I suppose not, for when Komui, the other bearer, took a little of his tobacco, he complained what a wicked fellow he was, and called him all the ill names he could.

J. Why did he this, but because he thought it wrong for another to take any thing belonging to himself. If he loved his neighbour then as well as himself, he would think it equally wrong to take any thing of his.

G. But how does this prove that he has the law written in his heart?

J. Does he not think that a thief does wrong, at least, the thief that steals from *him*? Then he has

* Bearers are men employed in India to carry burdens.

this part of the law written in his heart, though his covetousness makes him wish to cheat another.

C. This may be true of stealing, and such things; but how can the heathens learn from their own reason, that they ought to love God?

J. If one of them were to pick up a child when starving, and to supply him with every thing he needed till grown up, would he not think that the child ought to love him?

G. Of course he would.

J. Now they know that God who made them, keeps them alive, and supplies their wants; if they think at all then, they must think that they ought to love and serve him.

G. Very true. One would suppose also, that when they are bowing down before wooden or stone idols, they must reflect that the stone, or the block of wood cannot hear them, nor have done any thing for them.

J. They would certainly think so, if they were to think rightly. But this may show you that God has written his law on the hearts of all, and that all will be without excuse in the day of judgment.



DIALOGUE IV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

JOHN. GEORGE CHARLES.

G. Good morning, John:—"Day of judgment," What is that? I have been thinking of it ever since we parted.

J. You remember my telling you that God will fulfil every word which he has spoken, and reward all according to their deeds.

G. Yes, I do; but when will he do this?

J. He has appointed a day when he will judge the world. This is called the day of judgment.

G. And when will this great day come?

J. That no one can tell. It will be at the end of the world; but no one can tell when that will be.

C. Then I need not be afraid, it may be many years first.

J. My dear Charles, do not deceive yourself: however long that day may seem to be delayed, it will surely come. But at death your soul and mine will instantly go to the judgment-seat of God, and from thence either to heaven or hell.

G. And is our state fixed for ever when we die?

J. Yes, after death nothing can alter the state of the soul. As the tree falls, so it lies. The day of your death is to you the day of judgment, and you know not how soon that may come.

G. But will God bring every one to judgment, children as well as others?

J. He certainly will. The scriptures say, "Both small and great shall stand before God."

G. And does he know all that we have done?

J. Yes, and all that we have said too, and even all that we have thought; for he searcheth the hearts of the children of men.

C. But can we not run away and hide ourselves?

J. My dear boy, how can we run away and hide ourselves from Him who is present every where?

G. What will God do, in that day, to those who have forgotten him, and broken his commands?

J. He will cast them into hell; for the scripture says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all those who forget God."

G. What is hell?

J. No one can fully conceive. The word of God says, "that it is a place burning with fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and that those who are cast into hell can never come out from thence.

C. But they will soon die in that great fire.

J. No, never. At the day of judgment their bodies will be raised, and then both body and soul will be cast into hell; "and the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever."

G. But may not God forget our sins? or may he not at last go from his word?

J. He cannot forget our sins; and while he has said, "The soul that sinneth shall die," he has also said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

G. What then shall I do? I have neglected his commands. I have lived till now without once intending to obey him.

C. Alas! I too have broken his laws; I have

many times spoken falsely, and taken God's name in vain.

J. We have all sinned against God, and we justly deserve his righteous anger. But the great question is, How can we be saved from it?

G. It is indeed. Who can dwell with everlasting burnings!

C. I also wish to know this, I am certain my sins cannot be hidden from God.

J. Come to me to-morrow morning, and I will tell you what I have learned about the way of life.



DIALOGUE V.

JOHN GEORGE CHARLES

G. Good morning, John: Charles and I have been waiting for you. We cannot feel easy till we know how we can be saved from God's anger.

J. Do you recollect the answer to that question in your catechism, "Who is Jesus Christ?"

G. Yes: "The Son of God, and the Saviour of the world."

J. It is he then who can save you.

G. I want to have this explained. How is he able to save me?

J. God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, Jesus Christ, to die in the room of sinners.

G. But how could he die when he was the Son of God?

J. He could not suffer for sinners, without becoming a man like them.

G. And would he do this? Would he leave his heavenly glory, and come down upon earth to suffer death in the room of sinners?

J. He would indeed; for he has done it. He so pitied sinners, that he came down from heaven, suffered and died, to save them from hell.

C. Astonishing! Where was he born?

J. In Judea, about 1800 years ago.

G. But in what way does he save sinners?

J. He became man; and though he himself was without sin, he chose to suffer the punishment due to our sins.

G. Explain this a little more to us.

J. You know it is the law of our school that any thief shall be severely punished. Now, suppose you had stolen something, and I, pitying you, were to offer myself to be punished in your room, if my teacher consented to this, you would be saved from punishment.

G. Oh, now I understand. We have broken God's law, and he was justly angry with us. Jesus Christ so pitied us, that he became man, and bore the punishment due to our sins.

J. Just so; and God the Father so loved us, that for this purpose he sent him into the world.

G. What surprising love, that God should thus send his Son to die for sinners! Tell us something more about the Saviour. What did he while upon earth?

J. He went about doing good! He healed the sick, he gave sight to the blind, caused the dumb to speak, raised the dead to life, and preached the glad tidings of mercy to all who came near him.

G. That was like a Saviour. But who could put him to death? Surely every body must love him.

J. All who loved God did love him, but those who loved wickedness, hated him; as they will you, if you seek to be saved by him.

G. I do not care for that, if he will but save me. But what fault could they find with him?

J. None; yet they seized him, and brought him before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor: and procured persons to witness falsely against him.

G. But he could easily have cleared himself, and have struck his accusers dead.

J. He could have done this, it is true, but he bore all in silence. Though he was sinless, we were guilty, and he came into the world to die for us. He, therefore, suffered the judge to pass sentence of death upon him.

G. Cruel judge! In what manner did they put Jesus to death?

J. Having scourged and mocked him; they led him out of the city, and nailed his hands and feet to a cross; and there they left him to expire between two thieves.

G. How could he suffer himself to be thus treated when he had spent his whole life in doing good?

J. You forget that he suffered this for our sins. He, therefore, not only bore these dreadful sufferings, but prayed for his murderers, saying, "Father forgive them; they know not what they do." After he was dead, he was laid in a new tomb by one of his disciples, over which his enemies placed a great stone, and sealed it, that he might not rise again.

G. Rise again! Did he rise from the dead then?

J. Yes: he had power to lay down his life, and to take it again. On the third day he burst the bands of death, and rose from the grave.

G. And where did he go?

J. After staying on earth with his disciples forty days, he ascended into heaven in their sight, where he is now sitting at the right hand of God.

DIALOGUE VI.

JOHN. GEORGE.

G. What is Jesus Christ doing in heaven?

J. He sits at the right hand of God to plead for all those who desire to be saved.

G. To plead for them! what does that mean?

J. Suppose you had been guilty of stealing, and I had suffered the punishment due to you, I could then say to my master, "Sir, have the goodness to forgive this poor boy for my sake. True, he is guilty, but I have borne his punishment; forgive him for my sake." This would be pleading for you.

G. And does Jesus Christ thus plead for sinners?

J. Yes, for every sinner who comes to him, whether old or young. If you then wish to be saved from hell, go and beg of Jesus Christ to intercede with God the Father for you.

G. But will he hearken to such a wicked child as I am? I have never even wished to please him.

J. Will he? Yes, indeed, he will. Do not you know that he came down from heaven purposely to save sinners? If you are willing to be saved, he is a thousand times more willing to save you.

G. I am sure that I am willing to be saved. Who, do you think, can bear the thought of falling into hell and remaining there for ever?

J. True, my dear George, but let me beg you not to deceive yourself: many wish to avoid hell, who have no desire to be saved from sinning against God. Are you willing to leave off your evil ways?

G. I am indeed; for I grieve that I have lived so many years without wishing to please God, and have so often broken his commands. I wish never to do this again, but I dare not say that I shall not. I am afraid I shall if other boys entice me.

J. Have you never heard about the Holy Spirit?

G. I recollect your telling me once that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God. Are the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit the same?

J. Yes. The Holy Spirit makes a sinner willing

to leave all his sins, come to Christ for mercy, and to obey God's will.

G. But are not men willing to have God for their friend, without his making them willing?

J. Ask yourself. Did ever you desire this? Have you not lived all these years without caring at all about God?

G. Alas! I have indeed; but I hope I shall never live so another year.

J. Now God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to all that ask him.

G. Then I will beg him to give his Holy Spirit to me.

J. If you entreat him with your whole heart, he will certainly hear you. And if you obtain the Holy Spirit, he will enable you to understand the scriptures, and make you willing to give yourself up wholly to Christ. He will take away your love to sin, and make you fit for heaven, where you will go when you die.

DIALOGUE VII.

JOHN GEORGE.

G. Heaven! What is heaven?

J. The place where God and the angels dwell, and whither Jesus Christ leads all those that follow him.

G. But why must a person be made fit for heaven?

J. In heaven there is no sin. All who are there love God, and delight in obeying him. How then can any one dwell there, if, instead of loving God, he delight in breaking his commands?

G. Then a swearer, a liar, a hater of God would find nobody there like himself: to him heaven would become tiresome.

J. It would indeed: and on this account the scriptures say, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." For any one to be born again, is to have his heart changed; without which no one really comes to Jesus Christ as the Saviour.

G. But why cannot any one come to the Saviour without his heart being changed?

J. Will any one come to the Saviour while he thinks he needs him not? while he thinks that sin is not evil? or that his sins are too few and too trifling for God to notice; or that God will never call him to a strict account for them?

G. He will not, of course.

J. You will see this more clearly by calling it a change of mind, instead of a change of heart. Can the person who disliked the ways and the commands of Christ, really love and keep them without changing his mind respecting them?

G. But are not all who are born in a christian country, christians by birth?

J. No one becomes a christian by birth. Christians are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

G. But why cannot a person be born a christian, as well as a mussulman or a hindoo?

J. My dear George, no man can really believe in Jesus Christ without forsaking all sin. But neither the hindoo nor mussulman religion requires this, nor indeed any religion but that of Christ.

G. O! I now understand you: a man remaining in a state of sin, may be a mussulman or a hindoo, but a man cannot be a christian without a change of heart.

J. Just so. Therefore Jesus Christ says, "Ex-

cept a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

G. But what will become then of all those born in a christian country? all of them have not their minds renewed; for many swear and lie, and break the sabbath.

J. The scripture says, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Christ at his second coming will therefore say unto such, "Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity."

G. But will Jesus Christ come again?

J. Yes—not to suffer again; but to call men to account for breaking his commands, and slighting his mercy.

G. Will he be the Judge at the last day?

J. Yes. It is before the judgment-seat of Christ that we must all stand.

G. O, how happy will they be who now come to him for mercy! What will he do to them when they stand before him?

J. Do! He will welcome them to his arms, and say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

G. And what will he say to the wicked?

J. To them he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

G. I thank you, my dear John, for telling me all these things. I will go to Jesus Christ, and beg him to forgive my sins, and give me his Holy Spirit.

J. Do, my dear George, and then you will be happy for ever.

DIALOGUE ON READING.



JOHN. JAMES

John. James, you can now tell all your letters, and put them together in syllables. Would not you like to know how to read?

James. To read! I think I can read already. I have read the first part of the dialogues through, and can read any chapter in the Testament.

John. But what do you mean by reading? Merely telling the letters, or even pronouncing the syllables rightly, is not reading.

James. What is it then? If reading every word rightly be not reading, I know not what is?

John. I assure you that reading includes much more than this.

James. What can it include beyond this?

John. A good reader will not only read so that

one who carefully listens may perhaps mean-
ing, particularly with a book before him,
so that even a careless hearer shall be able
understand what he reads, even though he
heard it before.

James. That must be nice reading. My
teacher often finds fault, and says he
understand a sentence I read. I wish
teach me how to read in this manner.

John. One of the first things you must
is, to read without a tone.

James. I do not read with a tone at
first; but my teacher taught me better
left it off.

John. Very good. Another important
to pronounce your words so distinctly that
not run into each other.

James. I can understand this; but what
is necessary to good reading? Is there
thing to be minded about stops?

John. Yes; but unless you thus pro-
word distinctly, all the attention you now
will not enable you to read well.

James. I will endeavour to keep this
but I beg you will tell me something about
I cannot understand them. How many

John. There are only six which now
attention: of these the first four are the
mon. The comma, the semicolon, the
the period, which occur in almost every
The other two are the note of inter-
the note of admiration, which occur more

James. How long must I stop at each

John. The length of time you must
is not the only thing you are to re-

more depends on the tone of voice with which you read them.

James. Be so kind as to explain this a little.

John. The comma is the smallest of all the stops, and requires the shortest pause. But it requires you almost invariably to keep up your voice.

James. Why thus keep up my voice?

John. Because if you drop your voice, you conclude your sentence, and turn your comma into a period.

James. Then keeping up or dropping the voice seems to make a greater alteration, than the time given to the stops.

John. It does indeed. Did a person know how to suit his voice exactly to the subject he reads, he would be easily understood, without regarding any of the stops. And indeed without some idea of the management of the voice, he will be quite unable to apply the stops rightly.

James. I wish you would make me fully understand this. I want to read well, but without more knowledge than I now have, I see I shall never be able.

John. If I attempt to do it, I fear I shall not succeed. One of the best directions I can give you is, to mark with care some one who speaks English well, and try both to speak and to read exactly as he speaks.

James. But still you will much assist me if you will tell me how to manage the voice.

John. In managing the voice, there are three things to be particularly regarded; raising it, suspending it, and dropping it. Of these three, suspending, or pausing, and dropping it are required in the first four stops.

James. Which are they?

John. I have already told you; the comma, the semicolon, the colon, and the period.

James. Well; how long must I stop at a comma?

John. While you can say "one."

James. And must I drop my voice?

John. I have already told you, not in the least. If you do, you will make it either a colon or a period, stop as short a time as you may.

James. Why?

John. Because the dropping of the voice almost invariably marks the ending of the sense.

James. I thank you, John. I will try to mind this. What is the next of the four stops?

John. The semicolon. At this you must generally stop while you could say "one, two."

James. And how must I manage my voice here.

John. This will depend in some degree on the connexion of the sentence. In general, the voice must be kept suspended here as well as at a comma.

James. Why is this? the stop is twice as long.

John. Still however the sense is not complete, but depends for its full meaning on what follows. If you therefore drop your voice, you conclude the sentence in the midst, and thus destroy the connexion.

James. I understand you. Let us now come to the colon. How long must I stop at a colon?

John. The time in which you can distinctly count three will be sufficient, if you accompany it with a due falling of the voice.

James. But I have heard some say, I must drop my voice at a period. Must I drop it at a colon too?

John. In reality there is but little difference be-

tween a colon and a period as to the management of the voice. Both show that the sense is complete, but when a colon is used, it allows the addition of some further idea in the same sentence.

James. Then I suppose I need not ask particularly respecting a period. How long must I, however, stop at it?

John. This must depend on what kind of subject you are reading. If it be a lively one, stopping while you count "four" is quite sufficient. If the subject be a grave one, you must stop while you can count "six."

James. You have mentioned four stops; how many more are there?

John. Those of most frequent use are the note of interrogation and the note of admiration, to which we may add the parenthesis.

James. But can the parenthesis be reckoned among the stops?

John. Although it is not strictly a stop, it occurs so frequently in reading, and the management of it is so difficult, that it well deserves a place here.

James. What is the use of a note of interrogation?

John. It is placed at the end of a question.

James. How long must I stop at one?

John. It requires much the same time as a period, namely, while you can count four. But far more depends on the tone of voice with which you read it, than on the time you pause.

James. I think I have been told, that to express this rightly, I must raise my voice at the last word?

John. In some sentences you must, but if you were to do it in others, it would sound ridiculous.

A definite question requires the voice to be raised on the last word; but an indefinite question does not.

James. But how shall I know a definite question from an indefinite one?

John. The definite question does not begin with an interrogative word, and it may be answered by a simple "yes" or "no;" but an indefinite question begins with some interrogative word, as, why? how? what? &c. and cannot be answered by a simple "yes" or "no."

James. Be so kind as to give me some examples.

John. I will. Are you going to London to-day? will you return to-morrow? will you do any business there? are definite questions, and can be answered by a simple "yes," or "no." But, Why are you going to London? How will you return? and, What business have you to transact there? are indefinite questions, which cannot be answered by a simple "yes" or "no."

James. Can they not? Why?

John. Try them, and see. Why are you going to London? Yes. How will you return? No. See what nonsense you make! Now try the definite questions; Are you going to London to-day? Yes. Will you return to-morrow? No. Have you business to transact? Yes. Here you see all is suitable and clear.

James. I understand this now, I think I shall in future know a definite question from an indefinite one. How long must I stop at a note of admiration?

John. At least while you can count four, and if the subject be particularly grave and solemn, somewhat longer.

James. And with what tone of voice must I read the sentence?

John. You must in general either raise your voice.

on the word of comparison, and that signifying the quality, as, How *great* is his goodness! or on the thing admired, as, How great is his *goodness*!

James. But is the meaning the same in both cases?

John. No. In the first case you admire the extent of God's goodness, in the latter instance his goodness itself as distinguished from his power, his wisdom, &c.

James. Can you tell me any thing more respecting the note of admiration?

John. Little more that you can at present comprehend, except that you must beware how you raise your voice on the adverb of admiration alone.

James. Why?

John. If you do, you will destroy the sense, by turning your sentence into an interrogative.

James. Do explain this?

John. If, in the preceding sentence, you lay the stress of the voice wholly on *how*? thus *How* great is his goodness? instead of admiring his goodness, you make a question of it.

James. This is true, I thank you John. How must I read a parenthesis?

John. A parenthesis, as it is something thrown in which might be omitted, must be read, so as not to interrupt the sense.

James. How can this be done?

John. Very easily; you have only to drop your voice a little, and read the sentence somewhat quicker.

James. Favour me with an example.

John. This may form one. When you come to London inquire for Mr. P.'s house, (which every one knows,) and you will easily find it.

James. How long must I stop at a parenthesis?

John. A comma is generally placed at the beginning and at the end of it; and if you lower your voice a little, you will naturally require the time allotted to a comma, both to drop your voice, and to raise it again at the end of the parenthesis.

James. Have you any thing further to mention relative to reading well?

John. If you pause a moment after the first word of a sentence, you will find great advantage from it.

James. In what way?

John. It will give you time to adjust your voice, and prevent your raising it at the beginning, which destroys all the beauty of reading.

James. You mentioned emphasis in reading. What does this mean?

John. Emphasis, James, is that which gives life and beauty to reading. Without it, after all your care about the stops, your reading will be no more like good reading than an image is like a living man.

James. You surprise me. Do explain to me the nature of emphasis, if it be so necessary to my reading well?

John. I will try; but must tell you one thing; you must thoroughly understand, and even feel what you read, in order to read it with due emphasis.

James. And will my understanding and feeling what I read, as though it were my own words, enable me to read it aright?

John. Yes; if you *speak* with due emphasis. But I can tell you, many children speak as badly as they read, and you must not be angry if I tell you that you are among them.

James. I am not angry, John, but thank you for

telling me the truth, but I beg you to explain the nature of emphasis, that I may at least try to improve.

John. Do you not remark that when you speak a sentence, there is some word that you wish to be particularly noticed?

James. I shall know better if you will be kind enough to repeat a sentence or two.

John. This morning I heard you say to Henry, "I want my *own* book, I do not want *yours*." In the first clause you wished Henry particularly to mark the word *own*, and in the last the word *yours*. These then are the emphatical words.

James. And are there emphatical words in every sentence?

John. Generally speaking there are; but in order to find them out you must thoroughly understand the sentence.

James. But can you give me no rule to assist in finding out the emphatical words?

John. In your own sentence which I have just mentioned, "I want my own book," what did you mean to say?

James. That I did not want another's.

John. Then the words which stood opposed to *another's*, were the emphatical words, namely, *my own*.

James. True; so they were.

John. And the words opposed to these in your last sentence, namely *yours*, were the emphatical words in that. This then may serve as a rule, that the words which stand opposed to each other in a sentence, are those which require the emphasis.

James. But is this opposition to be found in every sentence?

John. It is not always expressed; for if you had only said, "I want my own book," the sense would have been complete. But it is generally understood, and it is your skill in finding out the opposition intended, that will enable you to place the emphasis rightly.

James. Then it is at this word that I am to raise my voice, is it?

John. You must in some cases raise your voice in a slight degree. But another thing is far more necessary to emphasis, than raising your voice.

James. What can that be?

John. Dropping your voice on the word immediately following the emphatical word. Thus, if you had said, "I want my *own* book," pronouncing *book* as loud as *own*, you could not have rendered *own* emphatical; but by dropping your voice on the succeeding word *book*, you render the word *own* conspicuous and emphatic.

James. I perceive it, and am greatly obliged by the pains you have taken with me. Can you think of any thing more?

John. There are many things more which relate to good reading, but you could scarcely understand them at present. And these few remarks, if you keep them in mind, and practise them, will greatly improve your reading.

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