

**DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES
FOR SCHOOLS
AND FAMILIES**

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Devotional Exercises for Schools and Families by Joseph Tinker Buckingham

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JOSEPH TINKER BUCKINGHAM

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By Joseph T. Buckingham.

NEW EDITION,
WITH ADDITIONS.

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JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

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PREFACE.

If, on examination, the book here presented to the public should be thought to possess merit sufficient to justify its introduction into the common schools, the hopes rather than the expectations of the compiler will be realized. It is not intended to supplant any other book now used in schools, nor can it be condemned as an intruder on the office performed by any of the numerous excellent works in the various branches of common education. Its contents are drawn entirely from the Bible; and its object must be apparent at a single glance.

It will be perceived that each lesson consists of three principal divisions.

The first is a selection of short sentences of a didactic character, selected chiefly from the Book of Proverbs, each calculated to impress on the mind some important moral truth. These are to be read by the instructor, or by an advanced scholar appointed by the instructor.

The second division is a selection from the Book of Psalms, arranged in a suitable manner to be read by the instructor, or one, whom he may appoint to perform that office, and the pupils. The portion assigned to the pupils is generally a response in sentiment, as well as in form, to that, which is read by the person, who leads in the service.

The third division is selected chiefly from the Gospels, and embraces a complete narrative of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Founder of the Christian religion, with as copious extracts from his discourses and conversations as the limits of the book would admit. This portion is also to be read by the instructor, or some one under his direction.

The Lord's Prayer is then to be recited by all the pupils in concert, following the instructor.

No other form of prayer has been introduced, because, in

the judgement of the compiler, this is sufficient; but, if any teacher who may use the book, should think otherwise, he can introduce any other, extempore or otherwise, that may seem to him to be more appropriate.

In many of the towns in New England, — probably in most of them, — the instructors of the common schools are required to open them every morning with a devotional service, — a prayer, or the reading of a portion of the Scriptures. To what extent this requirement is observed, is not known; but, within the limited experience of the compiler, its observance is neither regular nor extensive. Many of the instructors are young, and many, also, are females, who, not having been accustomed to such an exercise, feel an awkwardness in attempting it, which is difficult to be overcome. It is obvious, too, that while the instructor is engaged in prayer, the pupils are not subject to his immediate supervision: their eyes and their thoughts are frequently diverted from the act of devotion, and it is not unreasonable to suppose, that some may treat it with levity or disregard.

This book offers a remedy for both of these difficulties. The teacher, who may use it, will be relieved from any embarrassment, that might arise from the attempted performance of extemporaneous prayer; and the pupils generally will be sufficiently interested in the exercise, to give to it a serious and respectful attention. It will be perceived, also, that the book may, if deemed necessary, be used without the participation of the teacher, and that, if the reading of the leading portion of the exercise should be performed by an advanced pupil, the teacher may, in the mean time, see that proper decorum is observed.

The language of the common translation of the Bible has been conscientiously followed. In a few instances, at the beginning of the narrative portion of the lessons, the name of *Jesus* is used instead of the pronoun *he*. Twice, the relative pronoun *which* is inserted where it was wanting in the text. In Lesson XXII. the word *himself* is substituted for a phrase less agreeable to the ear. It is believed, that there are no other variations from the common version; but if any should be detected, they are the consequence of inadvertence in transcribing. The grammatical construction of many sen-

tences might have been improved, and the language might have been frequently varied to correspond with modern usage, without injury to the sense; but it has been chosen rather to follow, implicitly, the common version, than to incur the censure of the most scrupulous believer.

It will be perceived, and, perhaps, with disapprobation, that none of the selections in this book are from the Gospel of John, and it is proper that the reason for the omission should be given. Copious extracts from that Gospel were selected, and would have been inserted in their appropriate places, had it not been found, in the progress of the printing, that the book would thereby be swelled to a size, — and, consequently, to an expense, — beyond what the circumstances of the compiler would justify. The publication is an experiment. If it receive enough of public approbation to warrant a second edition, that edition will be enlarged by the introduction of ten or twelve lessons, which will embrace all the most striking passages from John's Gospel, and some other appropriate portions of Scripture.

Should the book be deemed entirely superfluous in respect to the peculiar object, for which it has been compiled, it may possibly meet with favor from some, into whose hands it may fall, from other considerations. For reasons, which it is unnecessary here to recite, the Bible is now excluded from many of the schools, and has become almost a sealed volume to the younger classes of society. This compilation contains nothing, which can offend the most scrupulous delicacy, — nothing, it is presumed, that will render it obnoxious to the censure of an age of refinement. If not needed to assist in a devotional exercise, it may, without impropriety, be used as a class-book. If, in either case, it should create in the youthful mind a taste for the simple, the beautiful, the energetic attributes of the English language, and inspire a sentiment of reverence for the volume, which must ever be esteemed sacred, as the foundation of virtue and piety here, and the only sure conductor to eternal life, the time and labor, which its preparation has cost, will not have been spent in vain.

J. T. B.

July 1, 1842.

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TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In the fulfillment of a suggestion in the Preface, the compiler has added to this edition ten new exercises, embracing as many extracts from the Gospel of St. John, as could be introduced without incurring an expense, which would render an addition to the price of the book indispensable. These extracts consist chiefly of incidents and discourses not recorded by the other evangelists.

In compliance with the advice of friends, and the request of instructors, Hymns have been added to the Exercises. By adopting a smaller type, these have been inserted without increasing the number of pages. Since singing has become, in many places, a part of public instruction, and is generally practised in public schools, it is hoped that the introduction of sacred poetry, suitable for that exercise, will add something to the value of the book.

In the belief that this humble offering to the cause of popular education will not be altogether worthless, it is again submitted to the public; but should the compiler's expectation be disappointed, it is hoped that good intention will be a sufficient apology for the presumption.

June 12, 1844.

DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES.

I.

THE fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. If sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path; For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

1

Teacher. Give ear unto my words, O Lord; consider my meditation.

Pupils. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for unto thee will I pray.

T. I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me out of his holy hill.

P. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.

T. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord:

P. In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.