

**CLERICAL ERRORS  
IN THE READING OF  
THE BIBLE**

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Clerical errors in the reading of the Bible by Henry William Pullen

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**HENRY WILLIAM PULLEN**

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# CLERICAL ERRORS

IN THE

## READING OF THE BIBLE.

COLLECTION OF PASSAGES WHICH ARE COMMONLY  
READ WITH A WRONG EMPHASIS OR  
PUNCTUATION,  
AND ARE THEREFORE  
MISUNDERSTOOD BY THE PEOPLE.



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## CLERICAL ERRORS.

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NOTHING on earth is so catching as a blunder. The facility with which even intelligent and well-instructed persons will reproduce mistakes committed in their hearing is marvellous. The instinct of conventionalism saves men indeed from a multitude of faults, but sometimes leads astray; and the Clergy, among whom this instinct, developed into the higher principle of orthodoxy, is most strong, are especially apt to learn the trick of repeating what somebody else has said, because it is safer to imitate than to think. The Bible is no doubt a difficult book to read, and is seldom read in church after a manner which greatly tends to edifying; but the educated layman would suffer perhaps less severely, if the Minister would trouble himself to glance at his Greek Testament or his Vulgate before leaving his study in the morning,

and would abstain at the very least from making nonsense of a book which it is his peculiar office to interpret to the congregation. That many passages of the Bible are habitually turned into utter nonsense by careless reading, the short series of corrections here offered to the theological student will testify. The list does not pretend to be complete, but is designedly limited to an exposition of those less transparent blunders into which it is perfectly certain that nine clergymen out of every ten will fall, when next the opportunity comes in their way.

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GEN. i. 25. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind.

This verse is invariably read with a strong emphasis on the three pronouns—after *his* kind, after *their* kind, after *his* kind. If this means anything, it must mean that only one kind of beast was created, one kind of cattle, and one kind of creeping thing. The words ‘after their



kind' do not however imply any contrast between one class of creatures and another, such as the above emphasis would indicate; but are intended to express the fact that each class was subdivided into a host of distinct and permanent species, too numerous to be catalogued at length. The stress therefore, such as it is, should be laid rather on the word 'kind'—the pronouns 'his' or 'their' being passed over as lightly as possible. Similar passages occur in vv. 11, 12, 21, 24 of this chapter.

GEN. i 27. So GOD created man in his own image, in the image of GOD created he him; male and female created he them.

Here again the pronouns suffer terribly, a slight stress being always laid on *him*, a mode of treatment which is harmless, indeed, but wholly without meaning—and a tremendous emphasis being given at the end of the last sentence—male and female created he THEM—as if it were freely admitted that he created the males; but there might exist some little doubt whether he created the females. The true

sense of the passage however is not that God made the women as well as the men, but that he made human beings of two separate sexes, male and female (S. Mark x. 6); and the pronoun 'them' has less right to an emphasis than any other word in the sentence.

GEN. ii. 18. And the LORD GOD said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

Almost everybody who reads this verse joins the words 'help' and 'meet' together as if they were connected by a hyphen, whereas they ought to be separated by a comma—'I will make him a helper, suitable for him.' The compound word 'help-meet' is simple nonsense, and is the parent of another word as foolish as itself, which poets and novelists have been pleased to accept as if it were of the most irreproachable authenticity. Few persons probably are aware, when they poetically call somebody's wife a 'helpmate,' that they are perpetuating a blunder which had its origin in nothing else but a careless reading of a text in Scripture history.

GEN. xxiv. 15. It should be noted that in almost all Hebrew names of three or more syllables the accent is to be laid on the last syllable but one. Bethūel, Havilah, Penūel, Zippōrah, Rephīdim, Meribah, Elishāma, and Eliphaz, are among the commonest of those words which are invariably mis-pronounced.

GEN. xxvii. 19. As thou badest me. The word 'bade,' because it happens to be spelt with an 'e,' is usually pronounced long, as if it rhymed with 'shade;' and the second person, 'badest,' suffers a like indignity. The intelligent reader can scarcely need to be reminded that the pronunciation of both words should be short, as if they rhymed with 'saddest' and 'sad.' The same remark applies to the verb 'satest,' in Psalm l. 20.

JOSHUA x. 32. Who took it on the second day. The word 'second' is emphatic. The rest of the cities appear to have yielded on the first day; but Lachish was a more strongly fortified place, and resisted longer. Even Sennacherib could not take it—see Isaiah xxxvii. 8.