

His Readings of Scripture.

V.

Pronouns must still occupy our attention, though enough has been said at present upon the emphatic nominative. The other variety of pronouns will now be spoken of, though we cannot so easily gather them into groups.

The first chapter of Genesis will give more than one example of ordinary misplaced emphasis. "The beast of the earth after *his* kind, and cattle after *their* kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after *his* kind." (Gen. i. 25.) Many readers emphasize the *his* and *their*, which they would not do if they thought a minute. For the possessive pronoun here should be passed over as lightly as possible, whatever emphasis or accent there is given being reserved for *kind*. In verse 27 the words *him* and *them* require no such stress as is often given them; indeed they require no emphasis at all.

The possessive pronoun is sometimes mangled in public reading in a sad way. The last verse of the eighteenth chapter of S. Matthew is a case in point, being hardly ever read with proper emphasis or punctuation. The wording is no doubt rather peculiar, and somewhat difficult, and this may account for the general break-up of ordinary readers when they come upon the passage unawares. It is a great advantage, however, that the meaning is always transparent, even through the most reprehensible reading; yet it would make nonsense if there were an attempt to explain it as commonly read. The most common reading of the passage may be represented thus: "If ye from your heart, forgive not every one, *his* brother *their* trespasses." What can "*his* brother *their* trespasses" mean read in a clause by itself in this way? While, no doubt, the passage is difficult to read properly, there is a way of meeting the difficulty if a little care be used. The words "every one his brother" must be read as in a parenthesis, and when this is done all will go smoothly. "If ye from your hearts forgive not (every one his brother) their trespasses."

In reading parentheses it is well to lower the voice, and also to drop into another key, while the parenthesis lasts. This enables the hearer to recognize that it is a parenthesis, and he will listen with greater intelligence,

and therefore with greater attention. St. Paul, however, in his eagerness and rapidity of thought, sometimes becomes involved in a parenthesis of considerable length, which makes his epistles very hard at times to be read properly, and all the more worthy to be read with the utmost care.

To return to our pronouns: A great source of perplexity to the unwary, and indeed sometimes also to the careful reader, is the identical spelling of the pronoun *that* and the conjunction *that*. Over and over again does the reader (wary or unwary) puzzle his hearers by his own misapprehension of a passage he has undertaken to read. Sometimes the pronoun is made to appear as the conjunction, and *vice versa*, until the hearer is obliged to be content with a general perception of what is intended to be conveyed. Here again we would appeal to all to whom is committed the glorious privilege and the grave responsibility of reading God's Word, God's Word, in public to bend all their best energies to the work. And what a difference there is in the congregation when there is intelligent and devout reading, and when the reader grows out something as if it were in a character with which he was not familiar, in a language with which he was unacquainted. How often does a reader do his work as if he had never seen the passage before, and was trying to make out the meaning as he went along. Let such an one read the following (Rom. xiii. 11, the epistle for Advent Sunday): "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake." Let each reader ask himself what is the meaning of the first *that*. Is it merely a kind of anticipation of the second *that*, or is it a different word with a different meaning altogether? The probability is that four out of five of our readers are much perplexed as they read to tell what meaning should be given to the passage. The first *that* is a pronoun and should be emphasized, and no emphasis whatever should be placed on the next ensuing *that*, which is a conjunction.

This ambiguity is very prolific in mistakes, as our readers can always mark for themselves. Here is another difficult passage, which is indeed very hard to analyze or parse with exactitude. In the Epistle of St. James (St. James iv. 15) a verse begins, "For that ye ought to say." What does this mean? Does *for that*