

of the Kingdom. The earth represents those who had obeyed (for the tense is the 2 aorist) His Word, for here it is assumed that the ground is good. The harvest is the end of the world. For a time, such, then, is the doctrine, Jesus Christ impressed his Word upon men's hearts; then he ceased, and so far as immediate agency (which does not exclude the work of the Spirit) is concerned, even He has as little to do with its development (*i.e.* the making of the impression it produced complete by extending it to all God's people, and deepening it to the utmost in all), as if he knew not the manner of the process, but when the consummation of the Kingdom has taken place, the time will have come for Him to interfere a second time in His own person, and that to gather together the citizens of the Kingdom and take them to Himself. A comparison of what is said *e.g.* in commendation of the unjust steward in Luke 16: 8, will show that it is not necessary to interpret the clause "He knoweth not how" more closely than has been done. Such then is the teaching of the first part. The second part adds that men, by their own efforts, unaided by the personal presence of the historic Messiah, without the pressure of any external force, are to produce those results which Christ is to find at the end. Not even at great crises does He appear, but to the very end the work of development belongs to the Church. It is at this point, I think, that many miss the true track of interpretation. Trench explains that earth is put for seed. Others assume the same thing, and accordingly treat this clause as subordinate, as a sort of parenthesis indeed. Bruce rightly recognizes its independence and makes it the kernel of the parable, but (as his title indicates) lays the stress upon the last part of the sentence, and, therefore (following apparently Weiss), considers the point of the parable to be the gradualness and progressiveness of the growth, and goes on to try to specify the stages of progress, and to lose himself, as I venture to think, in the attempt (To this interpretation he was, as he says, led by an experience which gave him an open eye for all texts which speak of the waiting on God, necessitated by the gradualness of Christian growth.) He, too, takes the earth to mean the seed. He does, indeed, speak of the earth's spontaneity, but the spontaneity of which he is thinking is seen when he says that the parable teaches that "growth in the kingdom proceeds spontaneously by fixed laws over which the subject has little or no control." But, according to the text, it is the