

a symbol, for the purpose of conveying it to minds reluctant or indifferent." In adopting the parabolic method of teaching our Lord followed the favorite method of Oriental teachers.

But there were special reasons besides :

1. The minds of the people were pre-occupied with the expectation of a very different "kingdom of heaven." It was necessary to sow germinal thoughts regarding the true mission of the Messiah on which their imagination might be exercised until the false view was gradually supplanted.

2. Had Jesus spoken plainly he would inevitably have been misunderstood and misrepresented. Few would have comprehended him, or believed in the sincerity of his aims, if he had proclaimed a kingdom, even although, he added "not of this world." The Jews would have risen in arms to their destruction and the Romans would have been forever prejudiced against the Christian religion.

3. The spiritual apprehensions of the people were dull and needed the stimulus which the parable afforded in its covert significance provoking thought.

4. It was equally helpful to the disciples who were "babes in knowledge," although willing to learn. The kingdom of heaven here means the entire system of God's redemptive dealings with men. The verb "is likened" is in the past tense ("was likened," or "made like") indicating that such was the character of the kingdom in the divine plan, which is finding its realization in Jesus and his mission.

Comparing this parable with that of the Sower, we notice that in that the seed was good, but the soils differed ; while here the soil is alike good, but there are two kinds of seed and two sowers. The seed in the former parable is the Word, but here it stands for persons ; there the planting of the seed and its reception by different classes is described, here its struggle with evil as it grows in the field of good soil.

The Sower of the good seed is Christ himself. He taught the saving truths of the Gospel which transform believers into children of God. The Field is the world, but only as the sphere of the Church's being, for in one verse of it is said that He will gather "out of his kingdom" the tares and all other hurtful

things. The parable has reference not to the world of humanity, but to the church and its mixed composition.

25.—No blame is to be attached to the husbandman and his servants for sleeping. Satan works secretly, evil deeds are done in the darkness.

"Tares" are probably the English "darnel." The grass resembles rye but the grain is poisonous. In the earlier stages of growth it cannot be distinguished from wheat. Its effect is narcotic and emetic and the utmost care is taken to winnow the noxious grains out of the wheat before it is made into flour.

Eastern farmers believe that it is a kind of degenerate wheat. Our Lord gives no sanction to this idea of a transmission of species. Some one sowed the tares. A similar notion prevails amongst our own growers in regard to "chess."

Dr. Thomson says that while such a malicious act as is described in the parable must have been known in our Saviour's time, yet he had not found a single person in Palestine to-day who had either known or heard of such dastardly conduct. The parable fitly attributes such a mode of revenge to the arch-enemy of God and man.

26.—When the ears shot out the true character of the evil seed was manifest. "As I once heard it remarked in that country, 'the ears which God has blessed bow their heads, but these accursed tares stick their's above the whole field.' For the tare there carries a light head of small dark grains which in every respect contrasts with the weighty golden ear of the good seed." (Thomson.)

27.—The servants well represent those who are officially responsible for the Church's welfare ; its ministry and office bearers.

28.—The over zealous guardians of the Church have often adopted persecution as the best means of extirpating heresy, but they only succeeded in destroying the good grain and leaving the tares to flourish.

29.—This does not forbid the exercise of Church discipline and the casting out of manifestly unworthy members ; but it does inculcate patience with those who seem to be insincere, and charitable judgment of the most imperfect Christians. Extra severity of discipline will injure more than it will purify the Church.