any should testify of man; for He knew  
what was in man, John ii. 25: moreover,  
He *made* man, and orders the course and  
character of human events. And this is  
the reason why none can, or dare, teach  
by parables, except Christ. We do not, as  
He did, see the inner springs out of which  
flow those laws of eternal truth and justice, which the Parable is framed to  
elucidate. *Our* parables would be in danger  
of perverting, instead of guiding  
aright. The Parable is especially adapted  
to different classes of hearers at once: it  
is understood by each according to his  
measure of understanding. See note on  
ver. 12.

The seven Parables related  
in this chapter cannot be regarded as a  
collection made by the Evangelist as relating to one subject, the Kingdom of  
Heaven, and its development; they are  
clearly indicated by ver. 53 to have been  
all spoken on *one and the same occasion*,  
and form indeed a complete and glorious  
whole in their inner and deeper sense.  
The *first four* of these parables appear to  
have been spoken *to the multitude from  
the ship* (the interpretation of the parable  
of the sower being interposed); the *last  
three, to the disciples in the house*.

From the expression **he began** in the  
parallel place in St. Mark, compared with  
the question of the disciples in ver. 10,—  
and with ver. 34—it appears that this  
was the *first beginning of our Lord's  
teaching by parables,* expressly so delivered,  
and properly so called. And the natural  
sequence of things here agrees with, and  
confirms Matthew’s arrangement against  
those who would place (as Ebrard) this  
chapter before the Sermon on the Mount.  
He there spoke *without parables*, or  
mainly so; and continued to do so till the  
rejection and misunderstanding of his  
teaching led to His judicially adopting  
the course here indicated, *without a parable spake He not (nothing) unto them*.  
The other order would be inconceivable;  
that after such parabolic teaching, and  
such a reason assigned for it, the Lord  
should, that reason remaining in full force,  
have deserted his parabolic teaching, and  
opened out his meaning as plainly as in  
Sermon on the Mount.

**3—9.**]  
THE SOWER. Mark iv. 2–9: Luke viii.  
4–8. See note on the locality in vv. 51,  
52.

**3.**] For the explanation of the  
parable see on vv. 19–23.  
**4. by the way side**] **by** (by the side of, along the  
line of) the **path** through the field. Luke  
inserts “*and it was trodden down,*” and  
after *fowls*—”*of the air.*”

**5.**] **the  
stony places** (=“*the rock*” Luke), places  
where the native rock is but slightly covered  
with earth (which abound in Palestine),  
and where therefore the radiation from  
the face of the rock would cause the seed  
to spring up quickly, the shallow earth  
being heated by the sun of the day before.

**6.**] **root** = “*moisture*” Luke. If  
the one could have struck down, it would  
have found the other.

**7. among the  
thorns**] In places where were the roots of  
thorns, beds of thistles, or such like.

**sprung up** = “*sprung up with it*” Luke:  
Mark adds “*and it yielded no fruit.*”

**8.**] After fruit Mark inserts “*that  
sprang up and increased.*” Luke gives  
only “*as hundredfold.*”

**9.**] is common to all three Evangelists (Mark  
and Luke insert “*to hear*”).

**10—17.**] OUR LORD’S REASON FOR  
TEACHING IN PARABLES. Mark iv. 10–  
12. Luke viii. 9, 10, but much abridged.

**10.**] **the disciples** = “*they that  
were about him with the twelve,*” Mark.  
This question took place during a pause in