‘*sluggishly and imperfectly.*’

**their eyes they have closed**] (Heb. ‘*smeared over*.’) All this have they done: all

this is increased in them by their continuing to do it, and all lest they should  
(and so that they cannot) hear, see,  
understand, and be saved.

**I should heal them** = “*it should be forgiven them*” Mark. This citation gives  
no countenance to the fatalist view of  
the passage, but rests the whole blame  
on the hard-heartedness and unreadiness  
of the hearers, which is of itself the cause  
why the very preaching of the word is a  
means of further darkening and condemning them (see 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

**16, 17.**] See ref. Prov. {17} These verses occur  
again in a different connexion, and with  
the form of expression slightly varied, Luke  
x. 23, 24. It was a saying likely to be  
repeated. On the fact that prophets, &c.  
desired to see those things, see 2 Sam.  
xxiii. 5: Job xix. 23–27: also Exod. iv.  
13, and Luke ii. 29–32.

**18–23.**] INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. Mark iv. 10–20. Luke viii. 9–18, who incorporate  
with the answer of our Lord to the request of the disciples, much of our last  
section.

**18.**] **Hear**, in the sense of  
the verse before—**hear the true meaning**  
of, ‘*hear in your hearts.*’ With regard  
to the Parable itself, we may remark that  
its great leading idea is that “*mystery of  
the Kingdom,*” according to which the  
grace of God, and the receptivity of it  
by man, work ever together in bringing  
forth fruit. The *seed* is one and the same  
every where and to all: but *seed does not  
spring up without earth, nor does earth  
bring forth without seed*; and the success  
or failure of the seed is the consequence of  
the adaptation to its reception, or otherwise, of the spot on which it falls. But of course, on the other hand, as the enquiry, “Why is this ground rich, and that  
barren?” leads us up into the creative  
arrangements of God,—so a similar enquiry in the spiritual interpretation would  
lead us into the inscrutable and sovereign  
arrangements of Him who ‘preventeth us  
that we may have a good will, and worketh with us when we have that will’ (Art.  
X. of the Church of England). See, on  
the whole, my Sermons before the University of Cambridge, February, 1858.

**19.**] In Luke we have an important  
preliminary declaration, implied indeed here  
also: “*the seed is the word of God.*”  
This *word* is in this parable especially  
meant of the word *preached*, though the  
word *written* is not excluded: nor the  
word *unwritten*—the providences and judgments, and even the creation, of God.  
(See Rom. x. 17, 18.) The similitude in  
this parable is alluded to in 1 Pet. i. 23:  
James i. 21. The sower is first the Son  
of Man (ver. 37), then His ministers and  
servants (1 Cor. iii. 6) to the end. He  
sows over all the field, unlikely as well as  
likely places; and commands His sowers  
to do the same, Mark xvi. 15. Some,  
Stier says, have objected to the parable a  
want of truthful correspondence to reality,  
because sowers do not thus waste their  
seed by scattering it where it is not likely  
to grow; but, as he rightly answers,—the  
simple idea of the parable must be borne  
in mind, and its limits not transgressed—  
‘a sower went out *to sow*’—his SOWING—sowing over all places, is the idea of the parable. We see him only as a *sower*, not  
as an economist. The parable is not  
about *Him*, but about the *seed* and *what  
happens to it*. He is the fit representative of *God, who giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not*, James i. 5.

**and understandeth it not** is peculiar to