*prophet*, according to the superscription of  
Psalm lxxviii., is Asaph, so called 2 Chron.  
xxix. 30, LXX.

**36—43.**] INTERPRETATION OF THE  
PARABLE OF THE TARES OF THE FIELD.  
*Peculiar to Matthew*.

**38.**] This verse  
has been variously interpreted, notwithstanding that its statements are so plain.  
The consideration of it will lead us into  
that of the general nature and place of  
the parable itself. **The field is the world**;  
if understood of the Church, then the  
Church only as *commensurate with the  
world, Go ye into* **all the world**, *and  
preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark  
xvi. 15); THE CHURCH *standing for* THE  
WORLD, not, the *world* for the *Church*.  
And the parable has, like the former ones,  
its various references to various counter-workings of the Evil One against the  
grace of God. Its two principal references  
are, (1) *to the whole history of the world*from beginning to end; the coming of sin  
into the world by the malice of the devil,—  
the mixed state of mankind, notwithstanding the development of God’s purposes by  
the dispensations of grace—and the final  
separation of the good and evil at the end.  
The very declaration ‘the harvest is the  
*end* of the world’ suggests the original  
sowing as the *beginning* of it. Yet this  
sowing is not in the fact, as in the parable,  
*one only*, but repeated again and again.

In the parable the Lord gathers as it  
were the whole human race into *one lifetime*,as they will be gathered in one harvest,  
and sets that forth as simultaneous, which  
has been scattered over the ages of time.  
But (2) as applying principally to the *Kingdom of heaven*, which lay in the future and  
with the Lord’s incarnation, the parable sets forth to us *the universal sowing of*GOOD SEED *by the Gospel*: it sows *no bad  
seed*: all this is done by the enemy, and  
further we may not enquire. Soon, even  
as soon as Acts v. in the History of the  
Church, did the tares begin to appear; and  
in remarkable coincidence with the wheat  
bringing forth fruit (see Acts iv. 32–37).  
Again, see Acts xiii. 10, where Paul calls  
Elymas by the very name, “*son of the devil.*”  
And ever since, the same has been the  
case; throughout the whole world, where  
the Son of Man sows good seed, the Enemy  
sows tares. And *it is not the office*, however much it may be the desire, of the servants of the householder, the labourers in  
His field, to *collect or root up* these tares,  
to put them out of the world literally, or  
of the Church spiritually (save in some few  
exceptional cases, such as that in Acts v.);  
*this is reserved for another time and for  
other hands*,—for the *harvest*, the *end*;  
for the *reapers*, the *angels*. (3) It is also  
most important to notice that, as the  
Lord here gathers up ages into one season  
of seed time and harvest, so He also  
gathers up the various changes of human  
character and shiftings of human will into  
*two distinct classes*. We are not to suppose that the wheat can never become  
tares, or the tares wheat: this would be  
to contradict the purpose of Him who  
willeth not the death of a sinner, but  
rather that he should be converted and  
live; and this gracious purpose shines  
through the command “*let both grow together*” —let time be given (as above)  
for the *leaven to work*. As in the parable  
of the sower, the various classes were the  
*concentrations of various dispositions*, all  
of which are frequently found in one and  
the same individual, so here the line of  
demarcation between wheat and tares, so  
fixed and impassable *at last*, is *during the  
probation time*, the time of *growing together, not yet determined* by Him who  
*will have to be saved, and to come to  
the knowledge of the truth*. In the very  
first example, that of our first parents, the  
good seed degenerated, but their restoration and renewal was implied in the promises made to them, indeed in their  
very punishment itself; and we their progeny are by nature the children of wrath,  
till renewed by the same grace. The  
parable is delivered by the Lord as *knowing all things*, and *describing by the final  
result*; and gives no countenance whatever to predestinarian error. (4) The