with hardly enough reference  
to its own peculiar context, or to the  
symbolic language of Scripture in other  
places. Ordinarily the owner of the vineyard   
is explained to be the *Eternal  
Father*: the dresser and intercessor, the  
*Son of God* : the fig-tree, the *whole Jewish  
people*: the vineyard, the *world*. But it  
may be objected to this, that the owner  
*comes* to seek the fruit, which can be properly   
said only of Him who “*came unto  
His own*”—who is even in Matthew “ *the  
heir*” —and by implication there, the *possessor   
of the vineyard “whey he shall  
come”* (for that destruction He universally  
represents as *His* coming). The other  
objections will come out in the direct  
exposition of the Parable, which I take to  
be this: — The link which binds it to the  
foregoing is *Except ye repent*...; and it  
is addressed rather to individuals than to  
the whole nation—though of course to the  
whole nation as made up of individuals.  
The vineyard is not *the world*, which would  
be wholly inconsistent with Scriptare symbolism   
(for Matt. xiii. 24 the comparison  
is to “*the kingdom of heaven*”—the  
*Gospel dispensation*, in which the field—  
*not the vineyard*—is the whole world);  
but, as in Isa. v.7, *the house of Israel and  
the men of Judah* (see notes on Matt. xxi.  
33 ff.). The fig-tree planted in the vineyard—among   
the vines—(a usual thing)  
denotes an individual application, fixing  
each man’s thought upon one tree—and  
that one, *himself*; just as the guest without   
the wedding-garment in Matt. xxii.  
He who had the tree planted in His vineyard   
(—‘ All things that the Father hath,  
are Mine’—John xvi. 15), came seeking  
fruit, and found it not: see Matt. xxi. 19  
and note. (The vine-dresser, see below.)  
He commands it to be cut down, as  
encumbering the soil (exhausting it,  
rendering it inactive); three years has  
He been coming and seeking fruit in this  
tree, and he findeth none. Then, at the  
intercession of the vine-dresser, He consents  
(for this is implied) to spare it this year  
also, until it been manured ; if that  
fail, the Intercessor himself has no more  
plea to urge —it is to be cut down.  
  
Now *who is this Intercessor?* First look  
at the matter of fact. *Who were the vinedressers*   
of God’s vineyard? They were  
many. Moses, the Prophets, the Baptist,  
the Lord Himself, the Apostles and Teachers   
after Him. But what *one Personality*  
might be set forth as pervading all these,  
‘striving with man’ in them all—as being  
**the vine-dresser?** Clearly it seems to me,  
*the Holy Spirit of God*. In the passage  
just alluded to, Gen. vi. 3, we can hardly  
but recognize the main features of our  
present parable ; especially when the days  
Of Noah are compared by the Lord Himself  
to His own coming to vengeance. The intercessory   
office of the Spirit (“*the Advocate*,” see   
on John xiv. 16), pleading with  
man and for man, and resigning that  
blessed conflict when met with inveterate  
obduracy, is often set before us in Scripture.   
See the whole history of Saul ; Zech.  
vii. 12—14: Prov. i. 23—32: Isa. lxiii.  
10: Neh. ix. 20: Rom. viii. 26, 27.  
  
**7. three years**] I have little doubt that  
an *allusion* is intended to the *three years  
of our Lord’s ministry*. The objection to  
this, that the cutting down ought then to  
have taken place *at the end of* **this year**,  
does not apply; for all is left indefinite in  
the request and the implied answer. In  
the individual application, *many thousands  
did bear fruit this very year* ; and of those  
who did not, who shall say *when* the Spirit  
ceased pleading with them, and the final  
sentence went forth?   
  
**why moreover  
cumbereth it the ground?**] i. e. Why, besides   
bearing no fruit, is it a impoverishing   
the soil—rendering the neighbouring  
ground useless ?   
  
**8.**] i.e. till **I dig  
holes about the root, cast in manure**,  
as is done to orange-trees in the south of  
Italy, and to hops in England.   
  
**9.**]  
After **fruit** there is a breaking off, and  
**well** is to be supplied: but not without