raised as to the interpretation of this  
parable which do not seem to belong to it.  
It has been questioned whether **leaven**  
must not be taken in the sense in which it  
so often occurs in Scripture, as symbolic of  
*pollution* and *corruption*. See Exod. xii.  
15, and other enactments of the kind,  
passim in the law; and ch. xvi. 6: 1 Cor.  
v. 6, 7. And some few have taken it thus,  
and explained the parable of the *progress  
of corruption and deterioration* in the  
outward visible Church. But then, how  
is it said that the *Kingdom of Heaven is  
like* this leaven? For the construction is  
not the same as in ver. 24, where the  
similitude is to the *whole course of things  
related*, but answers to “*a grain of mustard seed which a man took,*” &c.: so  
“*leaven, which a woman took,*” &c. Again,  
if the progress of the Kingdom of Heaven  
be *towards corruption, till the whole is  
corrupted*, surely there is an end of all the  
blessings and healing influence of the  
Gospel on the world. It will be seen that  
such an interpretation cannot for a moment stand, on its *own* ground; but much  
less when we connect it with the parable  
preceding. The two are intimately related. *That* was of the *inherent self-  
developing power* of the Kingdom of  
Heaven, as a seed, containing in itself the  
principle of expansion; *this*, of the *power  
which it possesses of penetrating and assimilating a foreign mass*, till all be taken  
up into it. And the comparison is not  
only to the *power*, but to the *effect* of  
leaven also, which has its *good* as well as  
its bad side, and for that good is used:  
viz. to make wholesome and fit for use  
that which would otherwise be heavy and  
insalubrious. Another striking point of  
comparison is in the fact that leaven, as  
used ordinarily, is a *piece of the leavened  
loaf* put amongst the new dough, just as  
the Kingdom of Heaven is the renewal of  
humanity by the righteous Man Christ  
Jesus.

The Parable, like the last, has  
its *general* and its *individual* application:  
(1) in the penetrating of the *whole mass  
of humanity*, by degrees, by the influence  
of the Spirit of God, so strikingly witnessed in the earlier by the dropping  
of heathen customs and worship;—in modern times more gradually and secretly  
advancing, but still to be plainly seen in  
the various abandonments of criminal and  
unholy practices (as e.g. in our own time  
of slavery and duelling, and the increasing  
abhorrence of war among Christian men),  
and without doubt in the end to be signally and universally manifested. But  
this effect again is not to be traced in  
the establishment or history of so-called  
Churches, but in the hidden advancement,  
without observation, of that deep leavening power which works irrespective of  
human forms and systems. (2) In the  
transforming power of the ‘new leaven’  
on the whole being of individuals. “In  
fact the Parable does nothing less than  
set forth to us the mystery of regeneration, both in its first act, which can be  
but once, as the leaven is but once hidden;  
and also in the consequent (subsequent?)  
renewal by the Holy Spirit, which, as the  
ulterior working of the leaven, is continual  
and progressive.” (Trench, p. 97.) Some  
have contended for this as the sole application of the parable; but not, I think, rightly.

As to whether the **woman** has  
any especial meaning, (though I am more  
and more convinced that such considerations are not always to be passed by as  
mugatory,) it will hardly be of much consequence here to enquire, seeing that *women bakers* would be every where a matter of  
course. Three of these measures, which  
composed an ephah, appear to have been  
the usual quantity prepared for a baking:  
see Gen. xviii. 6: Judg. vi. 19: 1 Sam. i.  
24. This being the case, we need not perhaps seek for any symbolical interpretation:  
though Olshausen’s hint that the *body*,  
*soul*, and *spirit* may perhaps be here intended can hardly but occur to us, and  
Stier’s, that “*of the three sons of Noah*  
was the whole earth overspread,” is worth  
recording.

**34, 35.**] CONCLUSION OF THE PARABLES  
SPOKEN TO THE MULTITUDES. Mark iv.  
33, 34.

**35. that it might be fulfilled**] See note on ch. i. 22. The