

THE LEAVEN;

OR,

A DIRECTION TO HEAVEN.

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.—MATT. XIII. 33.

THE word of God is pure, saith the Psalmaist, 'converting the soul,' Ps. xix. 7: pure *formaliter*, in itself; pure *effectivè*, in purifying others. 'Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you,' John xv. 3. There is life in it, being the voice of Life itself: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life,' John vi. 68.

As God, 'who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,' Heb. i. 1; so also this Son, whom 'he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds,' when he took flesh and went about on earth doing good, taught the people after diverse fashions and forms of speech, though in all of them he carried a state in his words, and taught with authority, unlike the verbal sermons of the scribes. 'He was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,' Luke xxiv. 19. Sometimes he taught by explication, sometimes by application; sometimes propounding, at other times expounding his doctrine. Often by plain principles and affirmative conclusions; not seldom by parables and dark sentences: in all seeking his Father's glory, his church's salvation. In this chapter, plentifully by parables. Divines give many reasons why Christ used this parabolical form of speaking:—

1. The impletion of Scriptures, which had so prescribed of him: 'I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,' Ps. lxxviii. 2.

2. That the mysteries of God's kingdom might not be revealed to the scornful. To such it shall be spoken in parables, that 'seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand,' Luke viii. 10. They are riddles to the Cains, and paradoxes to the Judases of the world. But 'if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,' 2 Cor. iv. 3. These come to church as truants to school, not caring how little learning they get for

their money ; but only regarding to avoid the temporal punishment. But at the great correction-day, when the schoolmaster of heaven shall give them a strict examination, their reward must be abundantly painful.

3. That Christ might descend to the capacities of the most simple, who better understand a spiritual doctrine by the real subjection of something familiar to their senses. As the poet :—

‘Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.’

But the ‘testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple,’ Ps. xix. 7. He said once to poor fishers, ‘To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,’ Luke viii. 10. He says, not *mysteria regis*, but *mysteria regni*,—not the mysteries of the king, but the mysteries of his kingdom. The former may not be known, the other may, must be known.

And it is also observable, that his parables were diverse, when yet by those sundry shadows he did aim directly at one light. He doth, as it were, draw the curtain of heaven, and describe the kingdom of God by many resemblances ; yea, and some of these *unum sonantia* ; like so many instruments of music playing one tune. In that immediately precedent parable of the mustard-seed, and this subsequent of the leaven, he teacheth the same doctrine, the spreading virtue of the gospel. The intention of which course in our great Physician is to give several medicines for the same malady in several men, fitting his recipes to the disposition of his patients. The soldier doth not so well understand similitudes taken from husbandry, nor the husbandman from the war. The lawyer conceives not an allusion from physic, nor the physician from the law. *Forenses domestica nec norunt, nec curant ; neque forensia domesticam agentes vitam*,—Home-dwellers are ignorant of foreign matters ; neither doth the quiet rural labourer trouble his head with matters of state. Therefore Christ derives a parable from an army, to teach soldiers ; from legal principles, to instruct lawyers ; from the field and sowing, to speak familiarly to the husbandman’s capacity. As that parable of the seed, the first in this chapter, may be fitly termed the ploughman’s gospel ; as Ferus saith, that, when he ploughs his ground, he may have a sermon ever before him, every furrow being a line, and every grain of corn a lesson, bringing forth fruit. So Paul borrows a comparison from wrestling, and from running in a race ; and our Saviour from a domestical business, —*muliebrium officium*,—from leaven, ‘which a woman took,’ &c.

We may reduce the parable to three general heads, *quid, ad quid, in quo* :—I. What is compared ; II. To what ; III. In what. Two natures are accorded in *quodam tertio* ; two subjects shake hands by a reconciling similitude. I. The matter compared is ‘the kingdom of heaven ;’ II. The matter to which it is compared is ‘leaven ;’ III. Now the concurrence of these lies in the sequel, ‘which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened :’ wherein are remarkable, the agent, the action, the subject, the continuance. 1. The agent is a woman ; 2. The action is double, taking and hiding, or putting in the leaven ; 3. The subject is meal or flour ; 4. The continuance, *donec fermentetur totum*,—until the whole mass be leavened. This is the *in quo*, the manner of the concurrence. The general points then are—what, whereto, wherein. We are, according to this method, to begin with the—

I. WHAT.—The subject compared is the kingdom of heaven. This hath a diverse sense and apprehension in the Scriptures. Specially it is taken three ways :—

1. For the kingdom of heaven in heaven, which the godly shall possess hereafter; the scope or main mark we level at. That high pyramid which the top of Jacob's ladder reacheth to, and leaneth on. That which St Peter calls 'the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls,' 1 Pet. i. 9. Whereof David sings, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. Which no virtue of mortal eye, ear, or heart hath comprehended. 'They shall come from east, from west, from north, and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God,' Luke xiii. 29. Unto which our king that owns it, and Saviour that bought it for us, shall one day invite us, if he find us marked for his sheep: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,' Matt. xxv. 34. Dear Jesus, bring us to this kingdom!

2. For that which qualifies and prepares us to the former, grace and holiness. For into that 'shall enter no unclean thing, nor whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life,' Rev. xxi. 27. No flesh that is putrefied, except it be first purified, shall be glorified. No man goes to heaven *per saltum*, but *per scansum*. Now this sanctity is called the kingdom of heaven, because the life it lives is heavenly; though we are on earth, 'our conversation is in heaven,' Phil. iii. 20; and because the joy of the Holy Ghost, and peace of conscience, which is heaven upon earth, is inseparable from it: 'The kingdom of heaven consists not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy of the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17.

3. For that whereby we are prepared to both the former: this is the kingdom of heaven here meant; and to declare it in a word, it is the preaching of the gospel. This, by the powerful co-operation of God's Spirit, begets grace in this life, and grace in this life shall be crowned with glory in the life to come. The word of God,—which is called the testimony, Isa. viii. 20, because it bears witness to itself,—examined and compared in like places, calls the preaching of the gospel the 'kingdom of heaven,' Luke x. 11: 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth fruits thereof,' Matt. xxi. 43. The children of God live in this first kingdom; the second lives in them; the third, which is above, doth perfect both the former. In this kingdom we might observe—(1.) Who is king? (2.) Who are subjects? (3.) What are the laws whereby the one governs, the others are governed?

(1.) God is king in two respects: *potentialiter*, in regard of his majesty; *præsentialiter*, in regard of his mercy. Potentially he is king over all the world, governing all things, actions, events, *in foro poli*, *in foro Pluti*, *in foro conscientiæ*. God is king, be the earth never so unquiet, saith the Psalmist. He can still 'the raging of the sea, the roaring of the world, the madness of the people.' Thus he reigns over Satan, and all his factors on earth, executioners in hell. He cannot touch a hog without his license, nor cross a sea without his passport. He hath a hook for Sennacherib, a bridle for the horses and mules, a chain for that great leviathan, a tether for the devil. The Lamb of God leads that great roaring lion in a chain; and with the least twitch of his finger, gives him a *non ultra*. All powers are inferior to, and derived from this power; to which they have recourse again, as rivers run to the ocean, whence they were deduced. Let all potentates 'cast down their crowns before his feet, with the twenty-four elders,' Rev. iv. 10. *Subjiciuntur omnes potestates Potestati infinitæ*. Dominion riseth by degrees: there be great, saith Solomon, and yet greater than they; and yet again higher than they all, Eccles. v. 8. Begin at home: in man there is a

kingdom. *Est animi in corpus regnum*,—The mind hath a sovereignty over the body. Restrain it to the soul; and in the soul's kingdom *dominatur ratio in irascibilem et concupiscibilem partem*,—reason hath a dominion over the affections. This kingdom is within man. Look without him; behold, God hath given him a kingdom over reasonless creatures. Yet among themselves, God hath set man over man; the householder is a petty king in his family, the magistrate over the community, the king over all. The heavenly bodies have yet a power over us. *Est corporum caelestium, in inferiora dominum*. God is king over them, and all. *Astra regunt homines, sed Deus astra regit*. God is then only and solely an absolute king.

But he reigns in this place rather presentially by his grace; where his sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness, and his throne man's heart. For that is so excellent a place, that it is evermore taken up for a throne, either by God or Satan. To the godly then is this great king most propense; though others also taste the sweets of his bounty. As the earthly prince governs, and providentially sustains all the people of his dominions, but those that stand in his court, and feast at his table, more especially partake of his royal favours: God at his own cost maintains all the world, and hath done almost these six thousand years; but he loveth Jerusalem above all cities, and the gates of Zion above all the dwellings of Jacob. All Joseph's brethren shall be feasted at his charges, but Benjamin's mess shall five times exceed the rest. There may be one favour left for Esau, but Jacob goes away with the blessing. God is still good to all Israel; let him be best 'to them that are of a pure heart,' Ps. lxxiii. 1.

(2.) The subjects in this kingdom are the godly; not such as give a passive and involuntary obedience, doing God's will (as the devil doth) *contra scientiam, contra conscientiam*, of whom more properly we may say, *Proposita Dei fiunt potius de illis quam ab illis*. These, though they work the secret decrees of the great king, are not of this kingdom. Only they that give to him the sacrifice of a free-will offering, that *libenter* and *ex animo* subscribe and assent obedience to his hests; whose lives, as well as lips, pray that article, 'Thy will be done.' They are indeed subjects to this king, that are themselves kings: 'Christ hath made us kings and priests,' Rev. i. 6. Every king on earth is as it were a little god, Ps. lxxxii. 6. Only our God is the great king, able to 'bind kings in chains, and nobles with links of iron,' Ps. cxlix. 8. In respect both of his power reigning over all, and of his mercy over his chosen, he may well be called *Rex regum*, the great king over both temporal and spiritual kings: he is the King of kings. For all his faithful children are mystically and spiritually made, and called, kings in Christ, and the Lord is king of all.

(3.) The laws whereby this kingdom is governed are the statute laws of heaven, Ps. cxlvii. 19, written of the Holy Ghost by prophets and apostles, sealed by the blood of God's Son; a light to our darkness, a rule for our actions.

Upon this ground thus laid I build a double structure or instruction:—

First, Christ hath a kingdom also in this world, not of this world; himself denies it to Pilate, John xviii. 36. He would none of their hasty coronation with carnal hands. Yet he was and is a spiritual king. So was it prophesied, Dan. vii. 14, Micah iv. 7. So the angel told Mary, Luke i. 32, 33, 'He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' So Pilate wrote his inscription, though in the narrowest limits, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.' To expect or respect the Messiah for a temporal prince, was the Jews' perpetual dotage, the apostles'

transient error, Matt. xx. 21, Acts i. 6, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' But Christ is a king after a spiritual manner on earth; restraining the violence of the wolves and goats like a good shepherd; not suffering them to annoy and infest the lambs at their pleasure, or rather displeasure; ruling his chosen, overruling the reprobates, as the great master over the whole family of this world. His throne is at the right hand of his Father in heaven; but his dominion is throughout all ages, and extends to the ends of the earth.—We should not pass this without some useful application.

App. 1.—If there be a kingdom of heaven here to be had, why do we not seek it? The charge is not less for our good than God's glory, which Christ gives: 'First seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, and then all these things shall be added unto you,' Matt. vi. 33. Seek it in faith, with prayers, with tears, with reformation. Seek it first; let no worldly thing stand in your thoughts worthy preferment to it. Seek it with disregard and a holy contempt of other things: for this once come, they shall be cast upon you.

App. 2.—Since Christ hath a kingdom here, let us rejoice. 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof,' Ps. xcvi. 1. And among those lands, let the joy of England be none of the least. What was foretold by Zechariah, chap. ix. 9, is fulfilled by our Saviour, Matt. xxi. 5: 'Rejoice, shout out for joy, for thy King cometh.' Let his exaltation be thy exaltation. If he were impotent and could not help, impotent and would not, we were never the better for our King. But his power is immense, his mercy propense: 'He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep,' Ps. cxxi. 4.

App. 3.—This is terror to the wicked; they serve a king, but he is not an absolute king; his head is under Christ's girdle, nay, under his feet, Matt. iv. There is in Satan *nec voluntas, nec validitas*, neither might nor mind to succour his subjects, his abjects. Prodigal Lucifer (the father of prodigious Machiavels, that are bountiful with what is none of their own, dealing states and kingdoms, like the Pope, as God's legacies, when God never made him executor) makes Christ a bountiful offer of kingdoms. Poor beggar! he had none of his own, not so much as a hole out of hell; whereas Christ was Lord of all. Disproportionable proffer! he would give the King of heaven a kingdom of earth; the glory of this lower world to *him* that is the glory of the higher world, and requires for price to have *him* worship an angel of darkness who is worshipped of the angels of light. Tremble, ye wicked! you serve an ill master, are subjects to a cursed king. Well were it for you if you might scape his wages; well for himself if he might scape his own. Both he and his subjects shall perish. 'The prince of this world is already judged,' John xvi. 11.

App. 4.—Since there be two spiritual kingdoms on earth, and we must live under one of them, let us wisely choose the easiest, the securest, the happiest. For ease; Satan's services are unmerciful drudgery: no pains must be refused to get hell. 'Christ's yoke is easy, his burden is light.' For security; we say in terrene differences, it is safest taking the stronger side. Why then should we forsake the strongest man, who commands the world, and revolt to the tents of Belial, the son of vanity? For happiness; Christ's kingdom is the far more blessed: for countenance, for continuance in the heart-solacing sunshine of his mercy, and the unclouded eternity of it.

Secondly, Our second inference is this: Such is the excellency of the gospel, that it is dignified by the title of a kingdom, and that of heaven.

Earthly things cannot boast this privilege, to have that ascribed to the means which belongs to the end. Bread is not health, but the sustenance of it. Reading is not learning, but the way to get it. In divine graces the way is often honoured with the title of the end. Faith is called life; grace, salvation; the gospel, the kingdom. Such is the infallibility of God's decrees, and the inseparable effects that follow his heavenly intentions, that the means shall easily perform the office they were sent to do. The preaching of the gospel shall save those whom God hath determined to save by it, and shall as assuredly bring them to the kingdom of heaven as if itself were that kingdom. Here, then, is matter—

First, Of instruction: that God hath so decreed it that we must ordinarily pass through one kingdom into another, into a greater. From the gospel of life we shall go to the God of life. From the preaching of the word to that the word hath preached—the 'end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.' For we climb to heaven by Paul's stairs, Rom. x. 9, 10, (and without that manner of ascending few come thither :) from preaching to believing, from believing to obeying; and obedience precedes our eternal life. Such a man shall only hear that comfortable allocution: 'Good and faithful servant, enter into thy Master's joy.'

Secondly, Of comfort: that seeing we have the gospel, we have the kingdom of heaven amongst us. They see not this marvellous light that live in their own natural darkness; no, nor do all see this kingdom that live in it, but they alone in whom this kingdom lives. 'Our gospel is hid to those that are lost,' 2 Cor. iv. 3. It is an offence to the Gentiles, contempt of the Jews, riddles to the Athenian Stoics, Acts xvii. 18, a paradox to Julian; but to 'them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God, and the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24. Open your scornful eyes, lift up your neglected heads, ye abortive generation of lust and sin, the sun shines in your faces. Shadow not your eyes with carnal security; remove those thick clouds of ignorance and contempt interposed betwixt you and this light. See, see, and glorify our God; the kingdom of heaven is among you. Come out of your holes, ye Roman dormice; pray for spiritual unction, ye sotted worldlings, that the scales of ignorance may fall from you. Waken your heavy spirits, ye mopish naturals; live no longer in the region of darkness and tyranny of sin, and bless His name that hath called you to his kingdom. You need not travel a tedious pilgrimage, leaning on the staff of a carnal devotion, as the Papists are forced, nor trudge from east to west to seek this kingdom, as the Jews were menaced, nor cry, It is too far to go to Jerusalem, and therefore fall to worship your calves, your little gods at home, as Jeroboam pretended. But to take away all excuse, and leave your obstinacy naked to the judgment-seat of God, behold *venit ad limina virtus*; you need but step over your thresholds, and gather manna; the kingdom of heaven is among you.

Thirdly, Of reproof: cease your despising of the gospel, ye profane ruffians, whose sport is to make yourselves merry with God. You cannot stick the least spot of contempt on the cheek of preaching, but it lights on heaven itself, where you will one day desire to be. While you would shoot arrows against the invulnerable breast of God, they shall recoil with vengeance on your own pates. You little think that your scurrilous jests on the word, and the messengers thereof, strike at the side of Christ with the offer of new wounds. You dream not that you flout the kingdom of heaven itself, which, when you have lost, you will prize dearer than the West Indies doth her gold, or the East her spices. If you knew what this kingdom was, you

would weigh out your blood by ounces, like gold in the balance, till your hearts had not a drop left to cherish them, for the purchase of it. Behold, you may have it for less. Why do you despise it? Perhaps you make full account of this kingdom, though you allow yourselves in your vanities. What, will you scorn it, and yet be glad of it? How unequal are these thoughts! How impossible these hopes! God will not give his pearls to swine; shall they inherit the kingdom of heaven that despise it?

II. This is the *what*: now follows the TO WHAT.

The thing whereby this mystical nature is shadowed out to us is leaven. In this we must confine ourselves to the scope of the parable; and as we would not look short, so we will not look beyond. Sobriety must guide our course in every sermon; then especially, when our navigation lies through the depth of a parable. We find leaven elsewhere used in the worse sense; and before we step any further, this point objects itself to our observation.

The same things are often taken in different senses; sometimes oblique, not seldom opposite. Christ in another place premonisheth his apostles against the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians; the leaven of hypocrisy, of irreligion, of savage policies. And the chosen vessel bids us 'purge out the old leaven,' &c., 1 Cor. v. 7. Here it is used as graciously as there grievously; and no meaner a thing is likened to it than the kingdom of heaven. But I refer this note to a place where I have more liberally handled it.

The intent, force, and vigour of the parable consists in the *propagation*. As leaven spreads into the whole lump, so the gospel regenerates the whole man. This is the pith and marrow of it; yet what other resemblances serve to the illustration of it are considerable. Therefore two remote and improper observations in the leaven shall lead us to the main, which is the dilation of that and the gospel:—

1. Leaven hath a quality somewhat contrary to the meal, yet serves to make it fit for bread. The gospel is sour and harsh to the natural soul, yet works him to newness of life. It runs against the grain of our affections, and we think it troubles the peace of our Israel within us. Our sins are as dear to us as our eye, hand, or foot, Matt. v. 29, necessary and ill-spared members. The gospel, that would divorce our loves so wedded to our iniquities, seems *durus sermo*; who can bear it? It is leaven to Herod to part with his Herodias; to Naaman to be bound from bowing before Rimmon. Christ gives the young man a sour morsel, when he bids him give his goods to the poor. You choke the usurer with leaven when you tell him that *non remittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum*,—his sins shall not be forgiven till his unjust gains be restored. You may as well prescribe the epicure leaven instead of bread, as set him the voider of abstinence, instead of his table of surfeits. This is leaven indeed, to tell the encloser that he enters commons with the devil, while he hinders the poor to enter-common with him; or to tell the sacrilegious that Satan hath just possession of his soul, while he keeps unjust possession of the church's goods. When this leaven is held to carnal lips it will not down; no, the very smell of it offends. The combat of faith, the task of repentance, the mercifulness of charity, this same 'rule of three' is hard to learn. To deny a man's self, to cashier his familiar lusts, to lay down whole bags of crosses, and to take up one, the cross of Christ; to forsake our money, and assume poverty, persecution, contempt for the gospel; oh sour, sour, leaven, leaven! No such tart thing shall come into the vessel of our heart, among the meal of our affections; we cannot brook it. But this must come and be made welcome, or we shall not

be bread for God's table. It is said of the leaven that *massam acrove grato excitat*. It is *acror* but *gratus* when the soul is once sensible of the virtue. God is fain to wrestle with our corruptions, and, like a loving father, follow us up and down with his leaven; we turn our backs upon him, and bid him keep his leaven to himself, as Daniel to Belshazzar: 'Keep thy rewards to thyself, and give thy gifts to another,' Dan. v. 17. But when we are once weary of the world's husks, and begin to long for the bread in our Father's house, Luke xv. 17,—do but taste and digest this leaven,—then that that was *fel in ore* proves *mel in corde*; we turn again, and follow him for it: 'Lord, evermore give us this bread,' John vi. 34; feed us with this leaven, that we may be bread for thine own table. The law was not so harsh in mortifying our sins, but the gospel is found more sweet in saving our souls.

2. One saith of the leaven, that *massam calore suo excitat*,—it raiseth the lump with the heat, as the housewife's philosophy gives the cause. The meal is cold of itself, and unapt to congeal. The leaven by heat doth it. In the gospel preached, there is a spreading heat. It is not only fire in Jeremiah's bones, but in the disciples' ears and hearts: 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' Luke xxiv. 32; 'Is not my word as fire? saith the Lord,' Jer. xxiii. 29. In the minister's soul it is like fire shut up in the bones, which must have vent, or it will make him weary of forbearing, and ring a woe in his conscience, if he preach not the gospel. It hath no less powerful fervour in the Christian heart, and enkindles the kindly heat of zeal which no floods of temptation can quench, or blasts of persecution blow out. This is that thaws the frozen conscience, warms the benumbed spirit, and heats the cold heart. Men are naturally cold at heart, and sin runs like a chill ague through the general blood. The covetous, proud hypocrite hath a cold stomach, that for want of digestive heat turns all good nourishment into crudities. Summon them to just trial, feel their pulses, and they beat coldly. If the minister entreat a collection for some distressed Christian, there is a cramp in our fingers; we cannot untie our purse-strings. It is a manifest sign that we are not leavened. So long as the meal of our affects continues thus cold, we are incapable of being bread. The word puts fervour into our hearts, and leavens us.

3. The special instance of this resemblance is, that the leaven spreads virtue into all the meal; the gospel disperseth salvation into the whole man. The word of God is powerful to our renovation, speeding and spreading grace into all parts of us. It works us to perfection, though not that gradual perfection* (as the school termeth it) which is above, yet to that partial perfection which Paul prays for his Thessalonians, 'The God of peace sanctify you throughout,' 1 Epist. v. 23, and assumes to be in his Philippians, 'Let as many of us as be perfect be thus minded,' chap. iii. 15. For though justification admits no latitude, yet sanctification is wrought by degrees. And a Christian goes forward into grace, as into those waters of the sanctuary: first to the ankles, then to the knees, and so higher, till all be washed; as the leaven spreads till all be leavened. This doctrine will more clearly manifest itself in the *in quo*, or subsequent observations. Only let us not leave it without a double use:—

Use 1.—Suffer yourselves to be leavened; give entertainment to the gospel in your hearts. Though it be 'a more blessed thing to give than to take,' yet it is a less chargeable thing to take than to give. It is God's bounty to give his word; do not you in a nice sullenness refuse it. 'Let the word dwell in you richly,' Col. iii. 16. Do not pinch this leaven for room, nor

* That is, perfection in degree.—ED.

thrust it into a narrow corner in your conscience, whiles you give spacious receipt to lust, and sin, and such lewd inmates. But let it soak into your veins, and dilate itself into your affections, that it may breed good blood in your hearts, good fruit in your conversations.

Use 2.—So judge of yourselves, as you find this leaven spreading in you. If you should hear every day a sermon, or could read every hour a volume, yet whiles your lives are barren, you are but unleavened bread; so unsavoury, that God will not admit it at his board. He hath an unleavened hand, that is not charitable; an unleavened knee, that is not humble; an unleavened tongue, that blasphemeth; an unleavened eye, that maliceth; an unleavened heart, that securely offendeth. The outward working shews the inward leavening, and the diffusion is an argument of the being. It cannot be pent up, no more than fire. It is no less operative than it is blessed.

III. You have heard the *what*, and to *what*; the *IN WHAT*, *how*, or the concurrence of these, follow in many particulars. Here is the *agent*, the *action*, the *subject*, the *continuance*.

1. The agent is a woman; by whom is shadowed the minister. And here are observable three things:—

(1.) The agent, that must work with this leaven, is a woman, weak in her sex; yet the leaven works never the less for her imbecility. The minister, that must put this leaven to our souls, is a man, a weak, sinful, despised man; yet doth not his weakness derogate from the powerful operation of the word in the hearts of God's chosen. It is the word of a mighty and majestic God, who speaks, and the mountains tremble; threatens, and the foundations of the earth are moved. I appeal to your consciences,—who have a testimony from them, and they from the Spirit, that you are God's,—hath not his word, spoken by a silly man, made your hearts bleed within you for your sins? Yea, hath not Felix himself trembled like an aspen leaf, when Paul, even his prisoner, preached? What power hath stirred you, human or divine? Tertullus could not do it, whiles authority and credit with men seconded his eloquence. Peter taken from his nets shall catch a thousand and a thousand souls at a draught. What presumptuous folly in some is it, then, to loathe the word of eternal truth, because such a man speaks it! God must not only give them meat, but such a cook as may dress it to their own fancies. Our weakness makes way for God's brighter glory: 'That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 5. Oftentimes the pillars of the church move not him whom a weak leavener hath converted. It is a reason convincing the wicked, confirming the faithful, that Paul gives: 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things to confound the mighty; that no flesh should glory in his presence,' 1 Cor. i. 27, &c.

(2.) The leaven doth this without the woman's virtue, not without her instrumental help; but the woman in no respect without the leaven. The minister cannot leaven his own heart, much less the souls of others. The word doth it; the minister is but the instrument to apply it. The physician heals not the sore, but the medicine. The hand feeds not the body, but the meat it reacheth to it. Neither in district terms doth faith save, but only apprehend the Lord Jesus, in whom is assured salvation. Indeed, so doth God dignify our ministerial function, that the priest is said to make the heart clean, and Timothy to save souls, by attribution of that to the instrument which is wrought by the agent, the happy concurrence of the Spirit and the gospel, Acts iii. 12, 16.

(3.) A woman is the fittest for this domestical business. The minister

being a man, is aptest in God's choice for this spiritual leavening. Should God speak in his own person, his glory would swallow us up. 'For our God is even a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29. 'Who hath seen God and lives?' Ask Mount Sinai, if as stout-hearted men as we can be did not run away, tremble for fear, and entreat that Moses might speak to them from God, not God himself. If angels should preach to us, their brightness would amaze us, and in derogation to his glory, to whom alone it belongs, and he will not give it to another, we would fall down to worship them, ready to give them the honour of all good wrought on us. The word should not be said to save, but the angels. If one should rise from the dead, as Dives—having learned some charity in hell that had none on earth—wished, it would terrify us. Lo, then, by men of our own flesh, of the same animation with ourselves, doth Jehovah speak to us, that the praise might be, not man's, but God's.

2. The agent thus considered, let us look to the action. This is double : taking the leaven ; putting it into the meal.

(1.) The woman took the leaven : she hath it ready before she useth it. We must first have the gospel, before we can leaven your souls with it. We must not be vaporous and imaginative enthusiasts, to trust all on a *dabitur in hora* ; but with much study and painfulness get this leaven, and apply it. What betters it to have a physician, that hath no medicine ; or a medicine, without skill to apply it ? Men think sermons as easy as they are common. You that never prepare yourselves to hear, think so of us, that we never prepare ourselves to preach. If this cheap conceit of preaching did not transport many, they would never covet to hear more in a day than they will learn in a year, or practise all their lives. Alas ! how shall we take this leaven ? The skill of mingling it is fetched from the schools of the prophets ; from meditation, from books. But in these days, disquietness allows no meditation ; penury, no books. You deprive us of our means, yet expect our leavens ; as Pharaoh required of the Israelites their number of bricks, but allowed them no straw.

(2.) We must (with the woman) hide our leaven in the meal—apply it to your consciences. We must preach in pain of death. We are salt, and must melt away ourselves to season you. We are nurses, and must feed our children with the white blood of our labours, strained from our own hearts. And you must be content to let this leaven be hidden in your consciences. The word must not be laid on superficially, with a perfunctory negligence, like loose corn on the floor of the heart. The seed that lay scattered on the highway, the fowls of the air picked up, and prevented the fructifying, Matt. xiii. 4. This leaven must be hid from the eyes, and laid up out of the reach of Satan, lest his temptations, like ravening vultures, devour it up. Mary 'hid the sayings of Christ in her heart.' 'Thy law, O Lord,' saith David, 'is within my heart.' If this leaven have not taken the conscience, all outward reformation is but Jehoiakim's rotten wall, painted over with vermilion. What cares a good market-man how fair the fleece or the flesh look, if the liver be specked ? It is the praise of Christ's spouse, that 'she is all glorious within.'

3. This leaven must be hid in the meal ; which is the third point, the subject : 'three measures of meal.' Observe—

(1.) Three measures. We have no time to discuss the literal and numeral glosses hence inferred, and by some enforced. Either what the measure is ; translated by some a peck : for this read the marginal note in the new translation. Or what are those three ; by which some understand the three parts of the world, Europe, Asia, Africa ; some the whole

man, which they will have to consist of the body, soul, and conscience. Others refer it to the soul, wherein they find the understanding, will, and affections: the understanding enlightened, the will reformed, the affections sanctified. But I rather take it spoken, not *terminis terminantibus*, but a finite number put for an indefinite. The gospel, by the power of the Spirit, doth sanctify the whole man, and gets conquest over sin and Satan. Therefore, not to stretch the words of Christ further than he meant them, but to keep the bounds of sobriety, laying our hand on our lips, and where we understand not, to be silent, let our instruction be this: The gospel is of such force, that it can leaven us throughout; *quanti quanti sumus*, three pecks, more or less, we shall be made clean by the word. 'Now are ye clean through the word I have spoken unto you,' John xv. 3.

Thus God's little beginnings have great effects. *Hoc discrimen inter opera Dei et mundi*: the works of the world have a great and swelling entrance, but *malo fine clauduntur*,—they go lame off. But the works of God, from a slender beginning, have a glorious issue. So unequal are his ways and ours. A little mustard-seed proves a great tree; a little leaven (saith Paul, though in another sense) sours the whole lump. How proudly the world begins, how it halts in the conclusion! The tower of Babel is begun, as if it scorned earth, and dared heaven: how quickly, how easily is all dashed! Behold Nebuchadnezzar entering on the stage, with 'Who is God!' but he goes off to feed with beasts. So dissolute is our pride at the breaking out, so desolate at the shutting up. God, from a low and slender ground, at least in our opinion, raiseth up mountains of wonders to us, of praises to himself. Joseph from the prison shall be taken up into the second chariot of Egypt. Drowning Moses shall come to countermand a monarch. David shall be fetched from the sheep-folds to the throne. The world begins with great promises; but could it give as much as ever the prince of it proffered to Christ, it cannot keep thy bones from the ague, thy flesh from worms, nor thy soul from hell. Behold, a little leaven shall sanctify thee throughout; the folly of preaching shall save thy soul, and raise thy body to eternal glory.

(2.) This leaven must be put in flour or meal. There must be a fit matter to work on. *Rebus idoneis immiscendum est; non cineribus, non arena, sed farina*.—It must not be mixed with ashes, or sand, or bran, but meal. It doth no good on the reprobate Jews, but broken-hearted Gentiles. Not on atheists and mockers, but on repentant souls, groaning beneath the burden of their sins. Hence so many come to this place of leavening, and return unleavened; their hearts are not prepared, how should they be repaired? They are sand or dust, not meal or flour. There must be a congruity or pliability of the subject to the worker. Christ doth not gather wolves and goats into his fold, but sheep. He doth not plant weeds and thorns in his garden, but lilies, roses, and pomegranates. The dogs and swine are excluded the gates of heaven; only the lambs enter to that holy Lamb of God. Ashes and rubbish cannot be conglutinate by leaven, but meal. Whiles you come other substances, look you to be leavened? You may put leaven to stones and rocks long enough, ere you make them bread. When you bring so unfit natures with you, complain not that you are not leavened.

(3.) The third observation hence serves to take away an objection raised against the former conclusion. You say Christ will not accept of goats into his fold, nor thorns into his vineyard; nor can leaven work effectually upon incapable natures, as sand, stones, or ashes; but wherefore serves the word but to turn goats into sheep, and wild olives into vines, and refractory ser-

wants into obedient sons? The gospel intends the expunction of the old image, and a new creation of us in Christ Jesus. True, it doth so; but still there must be in you a co-working answerableness to the gospel. Whiles you obstinately will continue dust and stones, look you to be leavened? First grind your hearts with a true repentance for your sins; or because you cannot do it of yourselves, beseech God to break your stony bowels with his Spirit, and to grind you with remorse and sorrow. Of corn is made bread; but not till first it be turned to meal. The unbeaten corn will make no paste or dough. Though there be matter in us,—for we are reasonable creatures,—yet God must turn our corn into meal, prepare our hearts with fit qualities to receive his grace. True it is, that God doth often work this preparation also by preaching; as our sermons have two subjects, the law and the gospel. By the law we must be ground to meal, before the gospel can leaven us. Christ here speaks of sanctification, the effect of the gospel. For the law admits of no repentance; because we cannot satisfy for the evils we have already committed. Thus we are corn men; but must be ground to meal before fit to be leavened. There is matter in the rock to build a house of, but not form, till it be hewn and squared. Thus God by his grace must prepare us to receive his grace, and by first making us meal, to leaven us. Away, then, with that Popish doctrine of self-preparation by congruity; God works first, in order of place, if not of time. We weakly meet him, when his secret operation has once called us. We are men, there is in us reason, will, capableness, which are not in a block, in a beast. Yet hitherto we are but corn. Our God must grind us to meal by his law, and then leaven us by his gospel.

4. This is the subject. The continuance is, till the whole be leavened. We must preach, and you must hear the gospel perpetually, till you be wholly leavened: which because you cannot fully attain in this world, therefore you frequent the place of leavening till death. Peter doth warn the pure minds of the saints, 2 Peter. iii. 1; and Paul preacheth the law even to those that know the law, Rom. vii. 1. You cannot be perfect, yet labour to perfection. Sit not down with that pharisaical opinion, We are leavened enough. The more you know, the more you know your own wants. 'Now the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Thess. v. 23. Amen!