of the absence of the Bridegroom in the  
soul,—not the forced and stated fasts of  
the old covenant, now passed away. It is  
an instructive circumstance that in the  
Reformed Churches, while those stated  
fasts which were retained at their first  
emergence from Popery are in practice  
universally disregarded even by their best  
and holiest sons,—nothing can be more  
affecting and genuine than the universal  
and solemn observance of any real occasion of fasting placed before them by God’s  
Providence: It is also remarkable how  
uniformly a strict attention to artificial  
and prescribed fasts accompanies a hankering after the hybrid ceremonial system of Rome.

Meyer remarks well that  
**then** refers to a definite point of time, not  
to the whole subsequent period.

**16.**] Our Lord in these two parables contrasts the old and the new, the legal and  
evangelic dispensations, with regard to  
the point on which He was questioned.  
The idea of the *wedding* seems to run  
through them; the preparation of the  
robe, the pouring of the new wine, are  
connected by this as their leading idea to  
one another and to the preceding verses.

The old system of prescribed fasts  
for fasting’s sake must not be patched  
with the new and sound piece; the complete and beautiful whole of Gospel light  
and liberty must not be engrafted as a  
mere addition on the worn-out system of  
ceremonies. For the *filling it up*, the  
completeness of it, the new patch, by its  
weight and its strength pulls away the  
neighbouring weak and loose threads by  
which it holds to the old garment, and a  
worse rent is made. Stier notices the  
prophetic import of this parable: in how  
sad a degree the Lord’s saying has been  
fulfilled in the History of the Church, by  
the attempts to patch the new, the Evangelic state, upon the old worn-out ceremonial system. ‘Would,’ he adds, ‘that  
we could say in the interpretation, as in  
the parable, *No man doeth this!*’ The  
robe must be *all new*, all consistent: old  
things, old types, old ceremonies, old  
burdens, sacrifices, priests, sabbathe, and  
holy days, all are passed away: behold  
all things are become new.

**a worse rent is made**] a worse rent, because the  
old, original rent was included within the  
circumference of the *patch*, whereas this  
is outside it.

**17.**] This parable is  
not a repetition of the previous one, but a  
stronger and more exact setting forth of  
the truth in hand. As is frequently our  
Lord’s practice in His parables, He advances from the immediate subject to  
something more spiritual and higher, and  
takes occasion from answering a cavil,  
to preach the sublimest truths. The garment was something *outward*; this wine  
is *poured in*, is something *inward*, the  
spirit of the system. The former parable  
respected the outward freedom and simple  
truthfulness of the New Covenant; this  
regards its inner spirit, its pervading principle. And admirably does the parable  
describe the vanity of the attempt to keep  
the new wine in the *old skin*, the old ceremonial man, unrenewed in the spirit of his  
mind: *the skins are broken*: the new wine  
is something too living and strong for so  
weak a moral frame; it shatters the fair  
outside of ceremonial seeming; and *the  
wine runneth out*, the spirit is lost; the  
man is neither a blameless Jew nor a  
faithful Christian; both are spoiled. And  
then the result: not merely the damaging,  
but the utter destruction of the vessel,—  
*the skins perish*. According to some expositors, the *new patch* and *new wine*  
denote the *fasting*; the *old garment* and  
*old bottles*, the *disciples*.

This view is stated and defended at some length by  
Neander; but I own seems to me, as to  
De Wette, far-fetched. For how can fasting be called *a patch of new* (unfulled)  
*cloth*, or how compared to new wine?  
And Neander himself, when he comes to  
explain the important addition in Luke  
(on which see Luke v. 39, and note), is  
obliged to change the meaning, and understand the new wine of the spirit of the  
Gospel. It was and is the custom in the  
East to carry their wine on a journey in  
*leather bottles*, generally of goats’ skin,  
sometimes of asses’ or camels’ skin.