

The new cloth and the old garment, the new wine and the old bottles

(Matthew 9:16,17)

“No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.”

Luke’s version reads, “No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.” It is impossible for the new piece of cloth not to tear the old, and it is also impossible for there to be “agreement” between the new piece and the old.

This symbolizes an essential truth which applies on every hand — that the freedom of the spiritual and inorganic can never merge or blend with the organic and the organized. There will be criticism, conflict, and trouble between the two if anyone tries to put them together, for the one is opposed to the other. So the rule is that we should never try to attach the new cloth of Science to the old garment of belief in matter, for it cannot be done.

Why is this? The answer is that if we have the new cloth of Science, it is bound to be doing something for us, since it is permeating our thinking and it is revolutionary. What it is doing is weaving the garment of the Christ-idea based on spirituality as the only reality. If we try to apply this new cloth of Science to old concepts, which have materiality and its so-called laws as part of their fabrication (as in any human activity or institution based on the physical), we run into a worried experience and we lose the strength of the new cloth. So the art of Christian Science lies in not trying to patch up

the old, but to use our understanding of the new to find the unreality of that which seemed real and thereby allow the weaving of a new garment where the old appeared to be.

Mrs Eddy called her discovery Christian Science, and that very name shows that she did not try to put a piece of new cloth onto an old garment and associate her discovery with Christianity as it was then known. It had to be the new garment of scientific Christianity, the only true Christianity. Any man who sees the truth of Mrs Eddy's definition of "Church" as "the structure of Truth and Love" (S&H 583:12) and then tries to blend the new cloth of this purely spiritual concept into the old garment of a theological outlook on church as an organization will find that the new tears the old to shreds and so they can never "agree." But there will be no conflict if instead of trying to patch up the old by tying the new into its limitations, thought is devoted wholly to the new, to "the structure of Truth and Love," whilst acknowledging that on this human plane forms of organization are necessary as a "suffer it to be so now" until individuals no longer feel them needful to help them in their responses to that which may be termed the new, but which in reality has been the only thing going on in consciousness. There will be a genuine appreciation of present necessities, necessities which will pass away as they lead thought out of their channels into the open firmament of heaven, the kingdom of heaven in man.

We all tend to revere and hang on to our old garments, and so it requires alertness and much giving up of a sentimental sense of values to avoid attempting to sew a piece of obviously new cloth onto an old garment and thereby produce needless strains.

As students of Christian Science we can easily be caught out by the belief that matter can be patched up by Mind. There is no Science in this. To have Science, we have to acknowledge Mind and its manifestation as All-in-all. "One only of the following statements can be true: (1) that everything is matter; (2) that everything is Mind. Which one is it? Matter and Mind are opposites. One is contrary to the other in its very nature and essence; hence both cannot be real. If one is real, the other must be unreal. Only by understanding that

there is but one power, — not two powers, matter and Mind, — are scientific and logical conclusions reached" (S&H 270:2-10).

In the "scientific statement of being" in "Science and Health" are these words: "Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal" (S&H 468:11-13). To the student there are two spheres — the spiritual and real, and the material and unreal — and his progress is measured in the ratio that the spiritual becomes the real to him and the material becomes the unreal. Here in earth's preparatory school the work of the student is along these lines and therefore it is progressive and increasingly joyous and certain. It goes on until all that is left to consciousness is that which is spiritual and real.

Belief in matter is the old garment with which men clothe themselves, and opposed to that is the new garment of the Christ-vesture, in which Mind is All and matter is definitely nothing. And so to try to handle matter with Mind — to try to patch up that which is concerned with matter by that which is concerned solely (and can only be concerned solely) with Mind — is devastating and results merely in making worse the tear (the sickness or whatever it may be).

We need to watch continually against the attempt to patch up the old garment. We cannot put the new cloth of the idea of man as wholly spiritual into the old garment of the belief that Mind and matter mingle. Man is God's expression of Himself, and so our sense of the true man — the spiritual, real man — must be that he is consciousness which is conscious of and demonstrates only those attributes expressive of the Being termed God, the divine Principle.

If we want God to work in matter, we have lost God. Man is Mind's idea — that is the new cloth — and this can never be blended with or merge into the belief of matter as real. Such a blending can no more be possible than mathematics blending with a belief that it is dependent on the written numerals. When we find a child who has written down $2+2=5$ on his paper, we are not concerned at all with the figures as such; our one concern is to show the child that $2+2=4$ so that he understands it and ever after will use it and experience its truth. If we find that someone believes that a physical organ or a

material something has gone wrong, our job is not to worry about the organ or bit of matter and try to put it right, because there is no *matter* to require healing. Our job is to help him accept that man is wholly spiritual and functions as a wholly spiritual being in perfect harmony, for the understanding of this enables him to experience that spiritual wholeness and harmony in every way which makes it real to him. The new cloth weaves a new garment for him. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

Of course the body improves with an improved state of thought, because it is nothing more nor less than a tangible-to-sense expression of that thought. But the new cloth of Science operates in the realm of that thought, bringing it into the whole expression of goodness, which is the realm of Mind. In "Science and Health" is the statement, "The body improves under the same regimen which spiritualizes the thought" (370:5-6).

The seamless robe of Truth is you as you really are. Take it and wear it with the joy of its clarity of reasoning. Never be fooled into believing that there is any old cloth which could be allowed to spoil it, for Truth's garment can have no rent. Through Science find yourself for what you truly are, then clothe yourself wholly and finally in that finding, and rejoice that you have no other need than to keep alive to the wholeness of that seamless robe which is your expression of your true self. There are no old garments waiting for new pieces with which to patch them. There is one new garment waiting for you to take it and enjoy the freedom such taking brings. The fabric of that garment was spelled out in Mrs Eddy's words, "all is Spirit and spiritual" (S&H 331:24-25). Moreover, that is the only garment there has ever been.

To take but one example from the many which could be brought forward as illustrations of the fact that the new cloth cannot be blended with the old: a good human marriage is a partnership in which two individuals work together for the good of the family, and the new cloth of Science allows them to produce in that marriage conditions which are truly good both for themselves and for the children; the consequence is that the weaknesses of the so-called old

garment in their relationship to the children and also to each other are no longer there. The new garment of Science can and will even translate the old garment based on the creative purpose of marriage, so that the physical acts required lose their animality and are performed with a higher sense of love as a "suffer it to be so now;" they thereby lose a large measure of the erroneous forces associated with them under the guise of the old garment. This leads ultimately to a lessening of the physical claims and an increase of the spiritual qualities of love.

An understanding of this can make a big difference to an earnest student of Science, knowing as he does the basic truth that God is the only creator and then entering into marriage determined to have no other motivation but that one fact. This can lead to strains which may tear apart the relationship and therefore destroy the potential of a partnership working for the good of the family. In any case entering into the physical intercourse with subconscious turmoil (possibly not acknowledged, but nevertheless present) caused by the contradictions in his mind cannot be conducive to full happiness and health for himself and for any offspring. To apply the new cloth of Science as a patch on something opposed to its teaching is an impossibility, but to allow the new cloth of Science to demonstrate that there is no reality in anything opposed to its teachings produces harmony in our immediate experience on an increasing scale, as it did with the Master himself.

A child born of the intercourse between spiritually-minded and loving parents will start clothed with the new garment of an instinctive inclination towards and response to the spiritual. On the other hand a child born of intercourse in which physical lust plays the main part may well inherit propensities detrimental to mental and physical health, for lust is foreign to the true nature of man.

"Is not the propagation of the human species a greater responsibility, a more solemn charge, than the culture of your garden or the raising of stock to increase your flocks and herds? Nothing unworthy of perpetuity should be transmitted to children" (S&H 61:24-28). This surely indicates that during the period in human experience

when the "suffer it to be so now" of physical intercourse is the only means we are as yet capable of in the production of offspring, it should be controlled and influenced by an abandonment to the best of our ability of the physical side and a full clothing of our consciousness with those qualities of the new garment which express the spiritual in such attributes as tenderness and a true love and appreciation of each other's great value in character-expression. If this garment is taken on by two such individuals with a devotion which almost excludes the physical aspect, it must result in offspring already clothed in such a manner and therefore well started on their way to a wholly spiritual experience.

Generally speaking the experience of marriage is that love and appreciation cause the new cloth to grow beyond any possibility of being used for patching up the old garment, until the new cloth becomes a whole garment in itself, clothing its wearers in ever deeper and happier appreciation of each other and of the home and family. At that point the old garment is no longer a problem, for it has been reduced towards its native nothingness by the natural development of good through the individual and in the individual.

An observant person will find so many demonstrations of this truth of the natural growth of goodness in the family and between individuals that he can only echo these words: "the superabundance of being is on the side of God, good" (S&H 201:11-12). Mrs Eddy makes the following statement in her chapter "Animal Magnetism Unmasked": "Christian Science despoils the kingdom of evil, and pre-eminently promotes affection and virtue in families and therefore in the community" (S&H 102:31-2). Mortal thinking may maintain that the primitive garment of marriage is based on lust and the fear of personal and racial extinction, but a little honest reflection shows the true motivating power behind marriage to be the unity of the affections. The recognition of this forms the backbone of every nation, in spite of the puny attempts of pessimism to deny it.

When considering ideals set before him by the teachings of Christian Science, the student needs to remember the words of the Master, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;" he should en-

deavour not to take up an absolute position for which he is not properly equipped, because in so doing he may put strains on himself or his partner whose overall effect will be more detrimental than if they allowed themselves to respond to what are called natural inclinations as a "suffer it to be so now."

Whilst being fully aware of the wrongness of making a god of anything physical, Mrs Eddy was also aware that to make the teachings of Christian Science an excuse for selfishness was fraught with danger. And so the same individual who wrote, "May Christ, Truth, be present at every bridal altar to turn the water into wine and to give to human life an inspiration by which man's spiritual and eternal existence may be discerned" (S&H 65:3-6) also wrote, "I hereby state, in unmistakable language, the following statute in the *morale* of Christian Science: — A man or woman, having voluntarily entered into wedlock, and accepted the claims of the marriage covenant, is held in Christian Science as morally bound to fulfil all the claims growing out of this contract, unless such claims are relinquished by mutual consent of both parties, or this contract is legally dissolved" (Mis.297:16-23). If there is to be mutual consent, one has to be sure that it is truly mutual.

With such standards held clearly in mind each individual will be guided as to how best to conduct himself along the paths of an issue of such depth and challenge that no one can outline for another how he should walk along those paths. But this is certain: growing mutual affection and an intelligent consideration of each other's needs, with a great desire to keep close together, will create the sort of atmosphere where Christ, Truth, *will* be found present at the altar and will "give to human life an inspiration by which man's spiritual and eternal existence may be discerned."

He who knew there was no sin nevertheless went deliberately through the processes of baptism, saying, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." But he immediately came up *out* of the waters of this finite process reaching to the infinite, and as he did so, the voice of Principle became articulate to consciousness: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"

(see Matthew 3:13-17). In our approach to all human processes tending towards the ultimate, which is the onliness of Spirit controlling our whole experience, we too can "suffer it to be so now" as we reach forward out of them and do not try to cling to the old garment of the human process as the be-all and end-all. If we acknowledge the spiritual purpose of any human activity and devote our lives to reaching towards *that*, we shall never be held back by trying to patch up the old garment with the new. Whether it is church organization, the organization of groups to study thoroughly the letter of Science, marriage for human companionship and the propagation of children, or any other human process, we shall move through it and out beyond it to the spiritual ultimate which it has echoed humanly, but which like all echoing eventually dies away. A healthy attitude conforming to the Master's statement, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," leads to a balanced and happifying experience.

The point of the parable is not to apply the new cloth of the Christ as a patch on an admitted old garment as set up by human standards, but rather to use that new cloth to find that the old garment does not exist and never did exist; there in its place and without any loss, but with much gain, the new garment is ours for the finding through the reasoning of Science and obedience to that reasoning.

So the final and deep message of the parable is to follow Jesus and have no old garments anywhere to patch. We cannot put a piece of new cloth onto an old garment if there is no old garment to put it on. Therefore we must realize that there is no old garment needing a patch. Our work is to let the new garment be woven in thought where the old appears to be. This does not mean destroying any human institution through whose means we can discover the spiritual truth which it actually stands for, but it does mean putting on in increasing measure the new garment of the spiritual understanding of all things as woven for us by Christian Science.

"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles [made of skin in those days] break, and the wine runneth out, and

the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”

Just as there are no old garments in Science on which to put a new piece of cloth, so there are no old bottles in which to put the new wine. The pure inspiration of Spirit is the new wine which bursts all the old bottles into which men may try to confine or contain it. “God is Spirit; therefore the language of Spirit must be, and is, spiritual . . . Ear hath not heard, nor hath lip spoken, the pure language of Spirit” (S&H 117:6-7, 14-15). The language of Spirit can be understood only through spiritual sense.

All of us have experiences which are “out of this world” and they *are* out of this world and therefore we cannot through words fully convey them in their pure inspiration. In trying to do so, the inspiration usually bursts the old bottles of language capacity and is lost.

The cross of all great composers has been the endeavour to communicate in terms of sound what they have felt through Soul’s impressions. When they have done their best and we listen with consecration, we sometimes glimpse through the sound impressions the Soul which originated them and so when we come out of listening to a performance, we can only say, “Isn’t it wonderful?” We can say no more than that as its new wine flows through us.

We are obliged to use language in order to outline our conceptions of the spiritual, but language was made by men and is human, not divine. Therefore when it is used to define the divine Being, it is bound to be hampered, because the very meaning of words is “old bottle” material. But as long as we bear in mind the inadequacy of ordinary language, we are safe. We should never be satisfied with even the clearest expression of the divine through human language, but continually strive to reach beyond it to the better language and clearer articulation based on inspiration. At the same time, while there is the necessity of using human language, we should know that Principle will interpret itself, no matter how poor the instrument we use in our obedience to it. We should know too that nothing can stop man from understanding the spiritual and hearing the

language of Spirit in spite of the shortcomings of the medium of words. "Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need" (S&H 494:10-11), and those shortcomings will be overcome by our realization that the new wine can and will actually change what we thought were the old bottles into new ones adequate for its expression. Jesus' inspiration was such that his new wine changed the bottle as it was poured in.

When he said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," he was not referring to human language in any degree. If he had been, he could not have said it with truth, for his words *would* have passed away, since the language he spoke is no longer in use. He must have been referring to the spiritual language which we can understand in order eventually to reach out of the use of it into complete rapport with the divine Mind. The language he meant had nothing to do with a human vocabulary or dictionary, and it is that language alone which can express the inspiration of spiritual being. "The divine Science taught in the original language of the Bible came through inspiration, and needs inspiration to be understood" (S&H 319:21-23).

The most sophisticated intellectual approach based on the correct use of words will never be able to define the spiritual. If anyone tries to approach the words of Jesus or Mrs Eddy with a merely human sense of language, the wine will run out and be lost for him. What they said and wrote, taken at its face value of language, can be found self-contradictory, uninteresting, or merely peculiar. For instance, Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." If you take that statement on its face value as human language, it hardly shows signs of intelligent reasoning; it can scarcely be understood on a human basis, and no dictionary could help. But he who spake as never man spake spoke as God was speaking to him, and in doing so he fashioned words anew and made a new vocabulary. What makes the Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount and the other sayings of Jesus so magnificent was his abandon of any worship of words and his use of them without forethought as they spilled from the vast

unmeasured realm of inspiration where he lived and moved and had his being.

“Science and Health” was written in the same mood and attitude. No human pen worshipping at the feet of the correct use of words could have written so much in one lifetime, but that human pen controlled by inspiration used words which are super-correct and sometimes beyond human comprehension. They made a language of their own, of Principle’s own, often reaching beyond the meaning of any dictionary and yet always found to give the dictionary better definitions. Human language became translated into the language of Spirit.

Mrs Eddy used the term Mind, for example, but she had to be alert to see that Mind-science was not confused with mind-science — as it may still be today. The Science of Mind is the *divine* Mind’s expression of itself. Mrs Eddy was continually contending with human language. For instance, she says, “Prayer is the utilization of the love wherewith He loves us” (No.39:18-19). Someone might say, “That’s not prayer — prayer is asking God for something.” Mrs Eddy is reversing that definition of prayer by saying, in effect, “When you pray for something, use what you have through your understanding of God and His nature.” Jesus said, “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given.”

If anyone tries to confine the meaning of Christian Science to its letter, or feels that through study alone and being correct in his categories he arrives at the spirit, he will find that he loses even the true meaning and beauty of the letter — the wine of inspiration will be spilt for him. Of course we have to “study thoroughly the letter,” but if we worship the letter we do not “imbibe the spirit” (S&H 495:27-28). The study of the letter is purely to open the flood-gates of the spiritual and of spiritual inspiration, and if we regard it in that way, we are not putting the new wine of spiritual inspiration into the bottles of the letter for its own sake. The purpose of the letter in every subject is to lead us out of itself into that which it serves, just as the sound notes in music are made to lead us beyond them to the soul or essence of the music. We must

never deify any symbol or any form of human language, but always reach beyond it to the pure language of Spirit.

The textbook of Christian Science was written from the basis of the revelation to Mrs Eddy of the onliness of Spirit, and therefore all its sentences, paragraphs, and chapters, coming forth as they do from that wholly spiritual source, need to be approached with a desire to touch that source. Thus and thus only we find as we study thoroughly the letter that we are imbibing the spirit. We have the right attitude if we have admitted the truth of a wholly spiritual universe and man as the expression of a wholly spiritual Principle, for with that admission we find continual confirmation of this truth in the vast realm of expression which "Science and Health" employs and we also ensure that there is always the new wine of fresh revelation.

Mrs Eddy speaks of rising "from the scholastic to the inspirational" (the new wine). (See S&H 256:2-5.) Once anyone tries to put the inspirational into the scholastic, the scholastic will kick, because its methods and conclusions are challenged and he himself will be impeded in his true realization through not keeping to the pure language of Spirit.

Too often we feel that intellectual capacity is necessary in order to foster the ideas which bring the wine of inspiration, but nearly always that intellectual capacity, if worshipped, will burst under the strain of the inspirational and even the inspirational will be spilled and lost. Jesus once said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Trying to put the inspirational into the old bottles of the so-called "wise and prudent" causes it to lose its sparkle and originality. The "babes" are those who offer no interference through the preconceived notions which are old bottles.

The Master said to his disciples, "ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake ... but when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." So often we do not have the

wine of inspiration in our speech because we almost worship what we are saying and we think it all out and want it to be humanly correct. The only real correctness is Principle's own correctness, and our one desire should be to be true to that. An admission that humanly we are inadequate points to the fact that divinely we are wholly adequate, and in the proportion that we lay our "earthly all on the altar of divine Science" (S&H 55:23-24), we pick up the fires of inspiration and voice the certainties indefinable by ordinary language. We are resurrected from human means into the acceptance of that divine eloquence which Soul alone confers. Sense can fashion magnificent tools. Soul alone can discard them and define reality in a manner which anyone can accept, irrespective of education or ability in the sense realm.

Another way in which the new wine of the Spirit will burst the old bottles is if we try to put the new wine of healing by the Spirit into the old bottles of healing by argument. If we attempt to do this, it can become a matter of the power of mind over mind, whereas if we use the human argument merely to silence our own ignorance, so that the inspiration of Spirit can flood our thought, the inspiration is not lost. The healing comes about not through "human platitudes, but divine beatitudes" (S&H 446:25), or the true wine.

In Luke's version of the parable we find this: "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better." How often you and I have heard the equivalent of that. In every sphere men cling to the old wine as better and have to be brought to the new. They argue that the old wine is hallowed and matured by age, history, background, tradition, stability, and so forth. Obviously the more refined and sophisticated the senses, the more attractive is old wine in any form, and the lesson must be that if we are to enjoy the new wine in all its freshness, we must avoid indulgence in harking back to the old, other than appreciating what it tells us of the new. Maturity in anything becomes the symbol of age and finally decay unless it serves to so rouse the faculties of progressive manhood that the

individual recognizes the new as a cleaner and less burdened symbol of that which the old stood for; after all, the old in its day was a new symbol.

If men are steeped in old theology and its methods and moral concepts, they cannot be brought straightaway to desire or value the new wine of a pure spirituality, the recognition of the onliness of spiritual experience and spiritual being. But finally it has to come. "Divine Science does not put new wine into old bottles, Soul into matter, nor the infinite into the finite. Our false views of matter perish as we grasp the facts of Spirit. The old belief must be cast out or the new idea will be spilled, and the inspiration, which is to change our standpoint, will be lost" (S&H 281:27-1).

The progress of Jesus was in the ratio of his growing understanding of the pure language of Spirit and when that became to him the only language, without any further need of translation, he had ascended from the realm where translation is necessary. And so it is the development of our understanding and use of the language of Spirit which will take us along the same path, with immediate fruitage where we are. The new wine will no longer be contaminated by old bottles and will flow freely from its inexhaustible source.