strongly convinced were the mass of the disciples that this was the law of the kingdom, that after the ascension of Jesus, when an emergency arose which seemed to call for the sacrifice of all, we are told that "neither said any man that the things which he possessed were his own," and that "as many as had lands or houses sold them and brought the price of the things which were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet." This was an abnormal state of society, never meant to last as a permanent condition in the Church; but it beautifully illustrated the spirit which Christ's teaching and example had inspired, and is a standing example of what the Church should do again if circumstances demanded and justified the sacrifice.

That all the Savior's followers possessed or earned was the property of the Master is illustrated by the parables of our Lord. In the parable of the "talents" the good and faithful servants who had traded with the lent money brought back both principal and profit to return to the Lord; and the servant who hid his talent in the earth is not only declared to be wicked and slothful, but is deprived of the talent loaned to him, and is punished for being "unprofitable." The parable of the pounds teaches the same lesson: the faithful servant returns not only the one pound lent, but the ten or the five pounds gained by trading; and the timid servant is punished because he had not brought interest at even the small rate of a deposit account at the bank. The way in which the Lord is represented as returning to the faithful servants both the profit gained by trading and the original principal is fitted, as it was designed, to encourage His people. Having proved their fidelity, He could trust them with more, and rewards them in proportion to their diligence. He will never be indebted to His children; they will gain more than they can ever give to Him. He proves the truth of the proverb, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Even some of the Old Testament saints understood and acted on this principle of regarding all they possessed as God's. David, after laying up for the building of the temple what some say was equal in amount to the "reserve" in the Bank of England, says with true humility, "Of Thine own have we given Thee."

But it may be asked, What is the normal responsibility of the Christian under such an arrangement? If all he has be Christ's, how is this capital and income to be expended? Christ's answer is explicit, and is illustrated by many parables. The Christian's responsibility is that of A STEWARD, to whom all the property of the Master is intrusted, as was the custom of the East. We see this in the parable of what is ironically called the wise steward. His fault was that he had misused his master's substance, and the way in which he used his power for his own selfish ends showed the unlimited trust placed in him as well as the sin of which he was guilty in turning it to his own advantage. So unchanging are the customs of the East, it is said of the faithful old steward of Abraham, "All the goods of his master were in his hand."