Law of Consecration

Masterful Discourses & Writings of Orson Pratt


The command to “be one” [D&C 38:27] embraces all other commands. There is no law, statute, ordinance, covenant, or blessing, but what was instituted to make the Saints one. This is the ultimate end and aim of the great plan of salvation. For this, Jesus suffered and died; for this, his servants have toiled and labored day and night in our fallen world; for this, all the powers of heaven will be exerted, until Satan shall be overcome, and the earth be redeemed, and all the glorified inhabitants thereof become one.

As the grand and ultimate object of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is to take their own children who have made themselves imperfect, and restore them to perfection, and make them one like themselves, let us examine the plan by which this great work is accomplished. First, God has revealed a plan of adoption, by which these imperfect beings may be made members of His own family. Secondly, He has revealed laws for the government of His family; and lastly, He has ordained authorities to teach His laws and minister in all things to make the Saints one. Through faith, repentance, baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the imperfect sons and daughters of Adam become the sons and daughters of God; and being born of God, and all baptized with the same spirit into the same body, they begin to feel alike, think alike, and act alike, in many things; this is a first approximation towards a oneness; but being weak, and only having obeyed the first principles of the celestial law, they are tempted by the devil; divisions of feeling arise; each one sees the faults and imperfections on his brothers or sisters; and instead of trying to reclaim them in the spirit of meekness from their faults, he whispers them to others; prejudice arises; their love towards them begins to grow cold; this coldness is felt by others, and begets the same feeling in them. And thus the seeds of division are sown, and begin to sprout, and grow, and, if not checked, they speedily bring forth nauseous and bitter fruit, which, when ripened, contains the poison of death.

To counteract these divisions strict laws are given, and authorities ordained to strengthen and succor the weak; to root out all evil-speaking; and to check every sinful thing on its first appearance. Those who give diligent heed will become habituated to keep the law of God, and will understand their duties, and perform them with cheerfulness and delight. Such will become more and more assimilated in their feelings; their love towards each other, and towards God, and His word, will grow stronger and stronger; and thus by habit they learn obedience to the law of oneness, until they are ready and willing to do anything which that law requires. While those, on the other hand, who do not give heed, find themselves more and more tempted, and their, and their love growing colder and colder, and the faults and imperfections of their brethren and sisters still more magnified in their eyes; and at last, they become destitute of the spirit — destitute of good desires — destitute of the meekness and humility of the Gospel; and the devil takes possession of them, and leads them captive at his own will and pleasure. These do not abide a celestial law, therefore they cannot be made one.

The Saints are not only one in doctrine, but they are to be made one in temporal things, without which they cannot be made equal in spiritual things. For many centuries past mankind have sought to accumulate riches, and to aggrandize themselves one above another; and this covetous spirit has prevailed even among those who have professed to be the followers of Jesus and his Apostles; hence, we find rich and poor, all belonging to the same Church, and all expecting to go to the same heaven; one rolling in luxury and wealth, and another ground down in poverty and affliction. Was this the way that the Church was built up in the days of the Apostles? Did they not sell their houses and lands and lay the avails thereof at the Apostles’ feet? Did they not have all their property in common? Did not the poor rejoice in that he was exalted, and the rich in that he was made low? Were they not all considered equal and one in temporal riches? Yes; they consecrated all they had to the Lord; and holy men were appointed to minister these temporal things to others, according to their wants, without partiality; and this they did in the fear of the Lord; and no part or portion of the great common stock fund was considered as belonging to some individuals to the exclusion of others; but it belonged to the Lord, and to them all equally, and the officers who were appointed to supply the wants of the Saints had no more title to it than the least member of the Church. And thus they were all equal in temporal things.

This same oneness in temporal things existed in the Christian Church among the ancient Nephites, so long as they continued in righteousness; for each one had equal claims upon the whole. The same order of things existed in the
Zion of Enoch: there were no poor among them. [Moses 7:18.] And the same order of things must exist in Zion of the Latter-day Saints, or else the inhabitants thereof never will be one. Anything short of a perfect equality in temporal things is a sin; hence, the Lord says, “It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore, the world lieth in sin.” [D&C 49:20.]

Is this law now enforced upon the Saints? Do they have all things common? Do they all possess the same? No; they have not become righteous enough to obey this law. Covetousness has taken such deep root in their hearts, through the wicked tradition of their Gentile fathers, that this law remains unheeded. And had it been enforced in all its strictness, but few would have continued in the Church. The Lord, in order that He might be just, granted His Saints the privilege of living up to this law, when He first began to gather them on the land where the Zion of God is to be built. But the Saints soon manifested their Gentile covetousness and would not obey the law; and the rich refused to gather because the law required them to consecrate all their property, and place it in the general storehouse of the Lord, and henceforth become stewards over such portions of the Lord’s property as he saw fit to bestow upon them or place under their charge. This was too holy a law for their covetous dispositions; they could not endure it. The Lord, therefore, concluded that if they would not endure His holy law, they should not remain on His holy land to pollute and corrupt it. He, therefore, suffered them to be smitten and driven by their enemies, and to be expelled from His goodly land. But He did not wholly cast them off; because He knew that their covetousness was instilled into their minds by their wicked fathers; and He knew that they were very weak, and lacked experience, and that in the main they were inclined to do right; He therefore gave them another law more suited to their weakness. This latter law only required them to consecrate all their surplus property, and afterwards pay one-tenth of all their annual income. [D&C 119.] This left them with all the property which was not surplus, as their own. The first law required them to consecrate all their property, instead of the surplus portion, and afterwards to become stewards. The last law permitted them to keep a certain portion, not called surplus. The first law required them to consecrate annually all the income of their stewardships, except what they needed for their immediate support; the second law required them to pay annual tithes of only one-tenth of their income. Thus we see the great difference between the perfect law of oneness by which the latter-day Zion is to be built up, and the law given to the children of Zion in their scattered and persecuted condition.

But the Saints are not perfect enough to give heed even to this last law. When they gather to Utah, instead of consecrating all their surplus property as the revelation requires, they only give one-tenth to begin with, and afterwards pay one-tenth of their annual income; consequently, they are transgressors, and do not abide the lesser law, only in a degree. The children of Zion, while scattered from their inheritances, could not obey the perfect law of the Lord in all respects, as they could if they were dwelling on the consecrated land; hence the Lord said, “Let those commandments which I have given, concerning Zion and her law, be executed and fulfilled after her redemption.” [See D&C 105:34.] In the meantime, the Saints are under preparatory laws given because of the hardness of our hearts, and the blindness of our minds, and our covetousness; not that the celestial law has been wholly taken from us; for we are under an inferior law only in some temporal matters, adapted to our present conditions, during the days of our correction and chastisements, that we may learn by degrees how to subdue our covetousness. And when we have fully learned by the things we suffer, how to wean ourselves from the god of this world, the Lord will again restore us to the privileges of the celestial law of consecration; and we shall once more be permitted to consecrate houses and lands, flocks and herds, gold and silver, jewels and precious things. We shall then have the glorious privilege of giving everything to the Lord, and of receiving from him in return whatever He in His boundless liberality shall see proper to return or bestow upon us.

We are in hopes that the time will soon come, when the inferior law of consecration, which we are now under, will be kept to the very letter. We want to see the time come, that when the Saints arrive in Utah, all their surplus property shall be consecrated, instead of one-tenth; and that when a Saint arrives with one hundred thousand dollars, instead of giving ten thousand and keeping ninety thousand himself, he shall give all except what the bishop may judge sufficient for his immediate necessities in procuring house, and home, and other comforts in the same proportion that the rest of his brethren enjoy. After that, let him earn himself a living in whatever business he may be engaged, and give annually one-tenth of all his income, be it little or much. And if he by accident, or misfortune, or sickness, comes in want, let him be liberally supplied out of the Lord’s storehouse, and let the Lord’s bishops judge concerning the wants and necessities of all His people. And when the Saints have learned to keep this inferior law of consecration, it will prepare them to keep the more perfect one, when they shall return to build up Zion according to the celestial order; when all
the riches and wealth of Zion shall be common property, and each of the Saints inherit his portion as steward. Then, and not till then, will they be equal in temporal things; and the least member of Zion will be as rich as the highest apostle or prophet. This will be a oneness in earthly things which will prepare them for a oneness in heavenly things; for the equality in heavenly things is to be brought about and established upon the same principles as the equality in earthly ones; the one being a type of the other. [See D&C 70:14; 78:5-7.]

The Lord, in a revelation given in 1832, speaks of an "everlasting establishment and order," into which the Church must be organized, that they "may be equal in the bands of heavenly things; yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things; for if ye are not equal in earthly things, ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things." [D&C 78:5-6.] Nothing is more certain, than that the Saints must eventually become perfect enough to consent to the great principles of equality in regard to property. And if they cannot abide such an order of things in this life, they never can attain to the fulness of the glory of the celestial kingdom. Heavenly riches and earthly riches are of the same nature; only one is glorified and made immortal, and the other is in a fallen, unglorified state. If we are not willing to be governed by the law of equality in regard to that which is of least value, who shall entrust us with all the riches of eternity? If we seek to grasp more than our brother has of this world's treasures, will not the same spirit of selfishness govern and control us in regard to the more valuable treasures of the world to come? He that will not conform to the law in earthly things cannot be entrusted with the more sacred things of heaven.

Where property is all invested in one common fund, there will be one common interest among the Saints in increasing that fund. We see this illustrated in well-regulated families, where the husband and wife, sons and daughters, all seem to be engaged with equal interest to add to or increase the family property; for each receives a support from that property; and each feels anxious to contribute his portion to the fountain; and the father or head directs each one in regard to his particular branch of business, not only for his own good, but for the mutual good of the whole. When prosperity attends them, they all rejoice together; when adversity overtakes them, and their common fund is diminished, they all suffer together; and thus they bear each other's burdens; and as Paul says, when one member suffers, they all suffer; when one rejoices in affluent circumstances, and has an abundance of the luxuries of life, they all participate in the same, and rejoice with him. In such a family, under a wholesome discipline, there is an equality in the enjoyment of temporal things; there is a union and oneness of interest and feeling. By this union of action and interest, they are able to accomplish more, unitedly, than they could accomplish individually with separate interests. Indeed, in many circumstances, certain objects could be accomplished with a united exertion which never could be brought about by separate individual action. ["The greatest temporal and spiritual blessings which always come from faithfulness and concerted effort, never attended individual exertion or enterprise." Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 183.]

What is applicable to small families is also applicable to larger ones; and the same great heavenly principle is applicable to a union of any number of families; or to the whole body of the Saints; yes, more; it is applicable to the union of all the glorified inhabitants of all celestial worlds; they can accomplish great and wonderful works by union, which they could not accomplish as individuals.

In this life all Saints have not an equal degree of knowledge and wisdom to manage property, yet such may be equally faithful to all the commands of God. Now, is it right for these faithful ones to suffer for the good things of this life because circumstances, or the want of experience, has prevented them from accumulating property? No. They are just as much entitled to the good things which the Lord has made, and which He owns, as those whom circumstances have favored. And for one part of the Saints to retain these blessings from another part equally faithful, is sin, and not according to the celestial law which requires them to be one. If, then, all are to share alike, it is proper that the property of the whole Church should be placed under the management of those who have wisdom, and who are ordained of God to manage temporal things; for this purpose, God has appointed bishops, whose duty it is to appoint every family their stewardships, and to receive the avails of these stewardships, not to aggrandize themselves, but as the agents of the Church, and the Lord's agents, to regulate the temporal affairs of the Saints, by the revelations of the Holy Ghost, and the counsels and voice of the presidency of the Church. We are now speaking of what ought to be, and what must be when Zion is built up according to the celestial law. The First Presidency, and the Twelve, and other authorities, are doing all that they can, under present circumstances, to prepare the people for this more perfect law of consecration, which we know must, sooner or later, be brought into full force and operation.
Is a bishop any more honorable, or any better, in the sight of God, because he is called to direct in temporal things, than the humble, private citizen who consecrates the avails of his stewardship into his hands? No. If they are equally faithful, they are equally beloved of the Lord; and they are equally entitled to food and raiment, and to the good things of the earth. And the bishop has no more claim upon the Lord’s storehouse than the least member of the Church, only as his time may be more occupied in public matters, which may prevent him from cultivating the earth or engaging in other business avocations. And the same is true in regard to the Twelve or the First Presidency. The highest officers and the lowest are all one in Christ — children of the same great family; God is their father, and He looks upon His children without partiality; if they serve Him equally, He loves them equally, and He will make them equal; or, in other words, joint owners of all the property and riches which He thinks proper, in this life, to confer upon them.

An inequality in riches lays a foundation for pride, and many other evils. A family who is rich can build comfortable houses, purchase inheritances and fine carriages, clothe themselves in splendid attire, and educate their children in every branch of useful learning; while those who are poor, labor and toil from morning until evening to procure a scanty subsistence; their families are coarsely clad, their children are not so highly educated. These opposite circumstances produce distinctions; the rich family does not feel to associate with the same degree of familiarity with the poor as they do with the rich; the sons and daughters of the rich seek for companions among those that are wealthy, the poor feel themselves slighted, and feel envious, because they are not rich. Besides the great inequalities in regard to the actual comforts of life, it produces great inequality in education, in the social circle, in marriage associations, and in almost every other respect. Hence, an inequality in property is the root and foundation of innumerable evils; it tends to division, and to keep asunder the social feelings that should exist among the people of God. It is the great barrier erected by the devil to prevent that unity and oneness which the Gospel requires; it is a principle originated in hell; it is the root of all evil.

Riches are not a curse, they are a great blessing; it is inequality in riches that is a great curse. God has made all the riches of the earth, and the riches of all worlds. He made the gold, and the silver, and the precious metals; He formed the flocks and herds, and all useful animals. He has made the earth exceedingly rich; and He has given man dominion over all these things; the more His people enjoy of these things the better he is pleased; it is impossible for His people to become too rich; if the whole world, with all the treasures thereof, were in the hands of the Saints, the Lord would still be delighted for them to have more. But these blessings have become a great curse to man, because they have been unequally possessed. We again repeat the word of the Lord to this Church: “It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another; wherefore the world lieth in sin.” [D&C49:20.] Unequal possessions of that which God has made for the benefit of all His children is sin. All nations, kindreds, and people, are in sin because of this inequality. The Saints are still in sin so far as they approve of this unequal possession; and we shall remain in sin until we make exertions to put this inequality away from us. We must be one, not only one in heavenly riches, but one in earthly riches.

But how are we to be made one and equal in the inheritance of temporal things? If the riches of the earth were equally divided among all the children of God, circumstances would soon render them unequal; accidents, misfortunes, unwise calculations, sickness, and many other calamities would reduce some to poverty; while through experience and favorable circumstances, others would greatly add to their property; and in many instances, increase the same ten, fifty, or a hundredfold. Hence, it is supposed by some, that under such changing and fluctuating circumstances, equality could not be maintained, even though it should be established. They argue that if they were all made equal today, circumstances would render them unequal tomorrow. To such, we reply, that God’s plan of making His Saints equal in property is not subject to any fluctuating circumstances; it is a perfect plan; it is not brought about by an equal division of property, nor by any division at all. Division of property, like a division in doctrine, is a plan of the devil, followed by Gentiles. Equality among the Saints is not to be introduced by an equal division of property, but by a union of property. Let all the property of the Church be united instead of divided; and then let each person in the Church possess the whole; and let this joint possession be under strict and impartial laws; and let each individual and family have their stewardship; some in one branch of business and some in another; some having more capital under their charge, and some less, according to the nature of their callings and business; and let each one give an account of his stewardship to those whom God has appointed as judges in Israel; and let each family receive a sufficient portion of the avails of their stewardship to supply their proper wants and necessities, according to the magnitude of the
joint fund, and the population to be supplied from it. In this way a perfect equality could be maintained; for if each inherited all things remained, no circumstances could render them unequal. Then no one could say to his neighbor, I own more than you, or you own more than I. No one would shun his neighbor because he was more poor, or because his children had not the same advantages of education as his own. No envying could exist, because of wealth and riches. No chance for one to sit in idleness, and feast himself upon the luxuries earned by the hard labors and toils of others. Whatever a man earned in his stewardship, whether little or much, would go into the Lord’s storehouse, except what was needed for his immediate necessities; and thus there would be no chance for one to become rich and another poor. And, if any family were sick and unfortunate in their stewardship, so that they did not accumulate enough to supply their wants, they would have claim upon the Lord’s storehouse. The widow and the fatherless, as well as those of old age, or who are lame, or blind, or afflicted in any way, are just as rich as the others. The great common stock fund is all theirs, to be dealt out by those whom the Lord appoints by the voice of his people. The poor emigrant also who escapes from Babylon, and arrives in Zion weary, hungry, and naked, becomes as rich as any of his brethren. This order of things is not now established, but it surely will be established as a permanent and everlasting order, to remain, not in time only, but in eternity. For “he that is a faithful and wise steward shall inherit all things,” [D&C 78:22] in eternity as well as time; “all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs, and they are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” [D&C 76:59.] Each one becomes the “possessor of all things in heaven and upon the earth,” [see D&C 50:28] whether they are the heavenly worlds at present existing, or the heavenly worlds that are yet to come. All the fulness of the riches thereof is his. He is a joint inheritor — a joint heir — perfectly equal with all the rest “in dominion,” in power, in glory, being, as modern revelation says, made equal with Jesus, who is also equal with the Father; being one, as he and the Father are one; and their glory will be one, even as the glory of the sun is one.

Some, perhaps, may object to this perfect order of equality, on the supposition that it will lay the foundation for idleness among certain individuals who will claim a support, whether they labor much or little, or none at all. But this objection is effectually destroyed by the following items of revelation:

“All man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, inasmuch as is sufficient for himself and family. [D&C 42:32.]

“It is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity. For he who is faithful and wise is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for them of my Father.” [D&C 72:3-4.]

Every steward must render an account of his stewardship in time as well as in eternity. The individuals whom the Lord has ordained to judge those accounts and keep records of the same, are the bishops whom the Lord has appointed to be judges in Israel. These judges, with their counselors, are required to judge according to the law of the Lord. Now what law has God given concerning idlers?

“You shall not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.” [D&C 42:42.]

“And the inhabitants of Zion, also, shall remember their labors, inasmuch as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness; for the idler shall be had in remembrance before the Lord. Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them.” [D&C 68:30-31.]

“Let every man be diligent in all things. And the idler shall not have place in the Church, except he repents, and mends his ways.” [D&C 75:29.]

The idler, when he stands forth before the judgment seat of the bishop, will find that there are strict laws in regard to his case; he will find that it is not for him to eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer. He will find himself cast out, and entitled to no place among the people of God. Therefore, the Lord’s plan of equality is effectually guarded against idlers. We would remind such to study the parable of the talents. The steward that buries his talent in the earth, or is idle, and does not improve his stewardship, will have that which is committed to his charge taken from him, and given to other stewards who have labored faithfully, while the unfaithful steward will be cast out of the vineyard of the Lord, and be counted unworthy to have place among those that are faithful.

The benefits derived from this order of things are infinitely superior to the Gentile order; for it is not only impartial in conferring temporal blessings upon the Saints, but it prevents an immense amount of suffering, which would naturally attend any other order. Where individuals are wholly dependent upon their own resources, sickness, fires, and other calamities may reduce them to great poverty and
sufferings, but when these losses are sustained by the whole people, instead of one individual, the burden becomes light, or is scarcely felt. And thus much suffering is prevented.

This method is also the surest way of becoming rich and wealthy as a people. Much poverty is frequently the result of mismanagement; but where there are wise men ordained of God to manage temporal things, to whom the Lord's stewards must seek for counsel, and to whom they must render an account, the various departments of the Lord's vineyard will be managed by the wisdom of the Spirit; economy will characterize the movements of the whole people; the farmer, the mechanic, the manufacturer, and the merchant will flourish and greatly prosper in their business. Riches will flow in abundance through all these channels into the great common reservoir. If there is any great enterprise to be undertaken, requiring a vast amount of capital, that capital is on hand, being furnished by the whole people, instead of a few individuals. If any great public works, such as railroads, canals, electric telegraphs, temples, state houses, universities, forts, fortifications, walls, etc., are required for the good of the people, the union of the whole property and strength of the people have many-fold more power to accomplish these great undertakings, than the exertions of a few individuals. Where idleness is considered a sin, and not permitted to exist among a people, and where industry universally prevails, and is directed in the proper channels, there wealth will rapidly increase, and unbounded prosperity will necessarily crown their united exertions.

But it may, perhaps, be asked: What benefit is to be derived from becoming exceedingly rich as a people? We answer, that God designs to restore to civilization and Christianity, the American Indians who are a remnant of the tribe of Joseph of the house of Israel. These Indians number many millions and they are generally poor; and being unaccustomed to the arts and sciences, and the labors of civilization, they will require a vast amount of assistance, preparatory to their being in a condition to support themselves. The riches and wealth accumulated by the Saints will be of incalculable benefit towards alleviating their wants, in preparing food, raiment, habitations, farms, farming utensils and other necessities, to succor and sustain them while they are learning to take care of themselves. And in doing this work, we shall be fulfilling the word of the Lord, which says, "I will consecrate the riches of those who embrace my gospel among the Gentiles, unto the poor of my people who are of the house of Israel." [D&C 42:39.] Riches will also be needed to build up the city of the New Jerusalem, which, we are informed, is to be constructed of the most costly materials, and in the most magnificent style; and it will require immense wealth to procure the precious stones, the gold, and other costly ornaments with which it must be adorned. Riches will also be needful to gather home hundreds of thousands of poor Saints, who will embrace the gospel in foreign lands. For instance, to gather only one million Saints at the low rate of one hundred dollars per head, would cost about two hundred tons of gold. Many great enterprises the Saints will be obliged to engage in, which will require all the means that they can accumulate by their united energy and industry.

The object of riches is to alleviate the sufferings of mankind, and place them in a prosperous, happy condition. And when this can be accomplished upon just and equitable principles; when all can be made equally happy and comfortable, then the end is attained for which riches are given. Riches are not given to gratify the pride and ambition of man; they are not given to exalt one man in extravagance and grandeur above another; they are not given to make kings and princes of some and beggars and slaves of others; they are not given to encourage man in idleness and in vain and unprofitable pursuits but they are given to ameliorate his condition; to satisfy the wants of his physical nature; to beautify and adorn his habitations, his gardens, his vineyards, his inheritances; to supply him abundantly with wholesome food, with comfortable raiment, and with all the luxuries that can be righteously desired to please the eye, the taste, or the smell, to furnish him with useful or entertaining books, or with musical instruments to delight the ear or gladden the heart with melodious sounds; that with music and with cheerful songs and hymns of praise, the full hearts of the Saints may flow with joy and thanksgiving to Him who is the Author of riches and from whom all blessings flow. For all these, and many other great and good purposes, riches are given, not to be enjoyed by some, to the exclusion of others equally worthy; for this is sin, but to be equally enjoyed by the whole family of God, that they may be one. Otherwise, there will ever be envying, fault finding, dissatisfaction, pride, extravagance, oppression, murmuring, complaining, continual divisions, unjust speculations, defrauding, and every other evil work, all rising from separate interests and inequalities in temporal things.

If the riches of the Saints were all consecrated to the Lord, and they occupied the same as accountable stewards, being required to annually consecrate all the income of their stewardships, except what was sufficient to supply their wants, they would have no desire to speculate one out of another; for if one-half of the Saints should, by
close bargains and business transactions, speculate with the other half, and take away their stewardships, or any part of them, nothing would be gained at the end of the year; for all that the speculators had gained out of their brethren would have to be consecrated, and would still belong to the whole Church; the property would not be increased by merely changing hands from one family to another. Speculation, therefore, out of each other could not exist with the least degree of advantage to the common fund. The general fund could only be increased by a surplus of that which was actually manufactured or raised in flocks or herds, or from the ground, or obtained from some foreign source. If one-half should turn thieves, and steal millions of property from the other half, when the stolen property was consecrated it would not increase the general fund in the least; for if it had remained in the hands of the rightful owners, or other stewards, they would have consecrated it; therefore, there would be no object for stealing one from another; neither would there be any object in cheating or defrauding one another; for none of these evil acts would increase the great capital. Therefore, this order of equality would effectually do away with speculating, defrauding, cheating, or stealing from one another. Each one owning the whole, no one would feel any interest in stealing his own property, or in defrauding his right hand for the sake of his left. It is true, where each one receives his stewardship, there would still be buying and selling, trading and exchanging property with one another as well as with the world; for no one would be permitted to take that which was in the charge of another, without paying for the same. And in this way each could render a proper account of his stewardship. On the other hand, if each one had a right to take property wherever he found it, without paying an equivalent for the same, all would be confusion; no one would be able to account satisfactorily for his gains or losses. Hence, the Lord says, “Thou shalt stand in the place of thy stewardship; thou shalt not take thy brother’s garment; thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother; and if thou obtainest more than that which would be for thy support, thou shalt give it into my storehouse, that all things may be done according to that which I have said.”

[D&C 42:53-55.]

It will easily be seen, from what we have said, how the Saints are made equal and one in earthly things; it is not by dividing the properties of the Church equally among them all, but it is by a union of the same for the good of each; wherein each becomes the possessor of the whole, under certain restrictions and laws. But will there not be a difference in regard to the amount of the stewardships distributed among the Saints? Yes; there will be a great difference. Some stewards will be entrusted with a hundredfold more than others, and have a hundredfold greater responsibility resting upon them. There are many useful branches of industry which could not be successfully carried on, without ten, fifty, a hundred, or even a thousandfold more capital, than others; consequently, stewardships must necessarily vary in amount and value, according to the nature of the business, callings, capacities, and circumstances of the several stewards; but as all of the profits, arising from these unequal stewardships must go into the general fund, they are all equally enriched by them.

As in temporal things, so in spiritual; each faithful member here in this life is made a partaker of all spiritual blessings granted to the Church; each one inherits the benefits of all the gifts. There are a great variety of spiritual gifts given; but none of these gifts are given for the exclusive benefit of the individual possessing them; for instance, God has given to some to hold the keys of revelation, and knowledge, and wisdom; they become stewards over these gifts; they use these keys to unlock the sacred treasures of eternity, and become acquainted with hidden stores of knowledge; deep mysteries are made plain; secret things are manifested; wonders are exhibited; and the mind, richly laden with the choice treasures of the heavenly worlds, and the wonderful works of God, feasts upon the delicious food; the soul is filled with joy unspeakable; the heart swells with the love of God; and the bosom yearns with compassion towards all mankind, and especially towards all who are pure in heart. They long to pour out the knowledge which they have received, into the hearts of others who are equally worthy with themselves; the impartation of knowledge to others who are pure in heart, diffuses in each and all the same joy and happiness that they themselves have; indeed, their own joy is increased by imparting their knowledge to others; and if they impart all the knowledge they have to the pure in heart, then all become equal in knowledge, so far as it is revealed; this makes them one so far as the revealed knowledge is concerned. Now the whole body of the Saints who are thus made equal in knowledge are not revelators; the keys were not entrusted to them all, but the keys of this rich stewardship were entrusted to some for the benefit of all. Now it matters not, through what source this knowledge is first communicated, whether to one or to all, if the pure in heart are all equally benefitted by it.

There is not a division in knowledge; that is, it is not divided into equal shares, and one portion given to one, and another to another; this is not God’s plan of making His Saints one and equal in
knowledge; but each becomes the possessor of the whole revealed; they are joint heirs, joint owners of the whole, the same as in temporal things, which are they types of heavenly ones. There is this difference, however, between temporal riches and knowledge: when each obtains the fulness of all the knowledge revealed, instead of being made an accountable steward over a small portion of the joint fund, he is accountable for the whole; for each is made a steward of the whole which could not conveniently exist in relation to temporal things.

Each is required to improve upon his stewardship, and obey every law connected with the additional knowledge imparted, in order that he may be prepared for more, through the keys that are ordained; and thus knowledge is multiplied upon knowledge, and the light grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day, the whole body being perfected in knowledge, light, and truth, through the choice gifts of revelation given to some.

To some it is given to teach the word of wisdom, that the whole Church may be equally wise, inasmuch as they give diligent heed. The Saints may have great knowledge revealed to them, and still be exceedingly unwise in the use of that knowledge. Therefore, God has appointed some to be filled with great wisdom as well as knowledge; not for their own benefit alone, but for the benefit of the whole body. God is altogether in favor of the common stock principle in wisdom and knowledge, as well as in property. He, therefore, is not willing that the stewards over these rich treasures should hoard them up for their own exclusive use, when there are others equally worthy of enjoying the same. They are commanded to give, not a part, but the whole, to the pure in heart, that all may be equal in the enjoyment of these precious gifts.

So likewise the gifts of prophecy, visions, the discerning of spirits, or the beholding of angels and ministering spirits, the gifts of healing, miracles, tongues, interpretations, etc., are distributed among the Saints; each to be exercised for the benefit of all, being common stock blessings belonging to the whole body, though ministered through many channels. These gifts are given to perfect the whole Church, that it may become the tabernacle of God — His habitation — His temple, becoming sanctified, purified, glorified, and finally, perfected; being filled with the fulness of Him who is in all things — who knoweth all things, who maketh them equal, even one with himself. Then, and not till then, most of these gifts will be done away; having subserved the purposes for which they were given. Healings will then cease, for the Saints will then all be immortal, and will have no need of healing; tongues and interpretations will then fail, for from thenceforth they will all use one perfect pure language, viz., the language of the Holy Ghost; prophesying will cease, for all things in the future will be known by all; knowledge in part will be done away, for the Saints will know all things; the gift of revelation will cease, for the Saints no longer know in part, but already know as they are known, and as they are seen. While knowledge in part continues, revelations and prophesying will continue; but when all things are known, these gifts necessarily cease. But charity never faileth; it is a gift that will abide forever. The fulness of knowledge and wisdom, light and truth, will also remain for ever; the gift of immortality and eternal life will continue and have no end. All things that are perfected will be everlasting; but most of the instruments or gifts used to bring about this perfection will cease, being adapted to imperfect beings only, and like the scaffolding to a building, wholly unnecessary when the edifice is finished.

It is in this glorified perfect state that the most indissoluble ties will exist; being perfected in wisdom and knowledge, light and truth, justice and mercy, goodness and love, no one can nor will do anything but what will be the will of the whole. Each one in all the greatness and infinity of his works will be doing the perfect will of the whole. As the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are united in all their works, and never do the least thing contrary to each other’s will, so all this infinitude of celestial beings, inhabiting all glorified worlds, will possess the same perfect oneness, acting in this same perfect union. This oneness will be as undeviating and as unchangeable as truth itself, and will continue throughout all eternity, and have no end.

Although an equality of knowledge is intended for the Saints, yet there are some who do not prepare themselves to receive it; therefore, it is withheld from them. Some are permitted, because of their righteousness and faith to receive knowledge that is not lawful to be uttered to others. This inequality arises, not from any imperfection of those who profess to receive the plan. God desires them to have all the knowledge that He has; but he desires that they should obtain it in the way that he has appointed. If any fail of obtaining the knowledge which others have received, and which they are not permitted to utter, the fault is wholly in themselves; it is free to all upon the same principles; and God is better pleased with those who attain to it, than He is with those who do not. It is true, here in this life, there is a great inequality of circumstances surrounding individuals which may prevent them from obtaining a perfect equality in the...
knowledge of God. The improvement of the capacities or intellects of some may differ in consequence of some physical organization, or some injury which the body may have sustained, or which they may have inherited from their ancestors. All these things arise in consequence of the imperfections introduced into our world by the fall of man. And, furthermore, there is no doubt but the spirits of man in their antecedent state vary, not in capacities, but in the improvement of them; some spirits being reckoned among the noble and great ones, because of their attainments. All these circumstances combined prevent some from obtaining knowledge with the same ease as others. Yet, when all these shall be fully redeemed from all opposing causes, and all shall be blessed with immortal bodies, perfect in their organization, nothing will hinder them from understanding all things, discerning them by the Spirit of God. This will make them equal and one.

In what manner, it may be asked, will this fulness of truth be imparted? Will it be by the long and tedious process of study? Or will it be by the immediate light of the Spirit which is in us? We will answer these questions by a quotation from the word of the Lord spoken unto Moses, given to Joseph the Seer, in June, 1830, the Lord said unto Moses: “Look and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands, but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease. Wherefore, no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh…. And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, he cast his eyes, and beheld the earth, yea, even all the face of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the Spirit of God; and he beheld also the inhabitants thereof; and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the seashore. And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants upon the face thereof.” [Moses 1:4, 27-29.]

From this, we perceive, that Moses beheld the whole earth, not merely its general outlines, or the surface, consisting of land and water, islands and continents, rivers, lakes, and oceans, but the interior portions also; “and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold.” All the inhabitants thereof were also beheld; not one soul escaped his vision. The great telescope, by which the whole was rendered visible, was not formed by human art; it was no less than the all-wise, all-powerful Spirit of God. If this all-powerful telescope had been pointed to the sun, moon, planets, or comets, it would have rendered every particle of each distinctly visible; Moses could have looked upon each with the same ease that he looked upon those of the earth. It was a telescope not limited in its field of vision; its capacities were such that the astonished beholder could see in all directions at the same instant. And if prepared with an immortal body, so as not to be overpowered with the dazzling glory, and magnificence, and omnipotence of the scenery, eternity itself, with all its boundless contents, and infinities of worlds, would be present before the eyes; every particle in endless space could be seen through the same medium that Moses beheld every particle of the earth. But no man can have the aid of this most wonderful telescope, to show him all the works of God which include all His glory, till he is prepared with an immortal and celestial body; for the glory of the infinitely extended view would consume his mortal body in a moment.

Another wonder is connected with this telescope; it not only shows things as they now exist, but as they have existed, and as they will exist. That great and renowned philosopher, the brother of Jared, by calling upon the Lord, obtained the use of this magnificent telescope for a short time, by which he was enabled to look upon the Lord, and saw the body of His Spirit, and beheld his glorious face, and conversed with Him as a man converses with his friend; and not satisfied with beholding things present, he looked upon things past, and upon things present, he looked upon things past, and upon things to come; and the Lord showed unto him “all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and He withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth.” [Ether 3:25.] What a wonderful instrument! It enables one to look not only in all directions at the same time, but to look into the past, present and future, at the same moment. Lord Ross has constructed a telescope that will enable us to see millions of worlds so distant that their light by which they are now rendered visible must have left them hundreds of thousands of years before our earth was made; this enables us to see, not the present existence of these worlds, but their past existence. But with all his ingenuity, neither he, nor any other man can form a telescope that will show us the present existence of those distant bodies; neither can they invent instruments that will show the future existence of bodies that are to be created and made. Neither will his telescope, nor any other instrument of man’s invention, enable us to look at every particle that enters into the composition of worlds. Hence, the Lord’s plan of assisting the vision is infinitely superior to all others. We can readily perceive that the means
by which man discerns knowledge in the heavenly worlds are not by reasoning nor studying as here; it will be by a sudden process; for if the Holy Ghost when resting upon mortal men, can in a moment show them such wonderful things, what an infinitude of knowledge it will pour into the mind of an immortal being upon whom it rests, not in measure, but in fulness. Can anything, past, present, or to come, be hidden from them? Will there be bounds set to circumscribe their vision? Or is the field so extensive that the power of the telescope will not reach it?

It is upon this same principle that God the Father can behold all things or, as He says in the prophecy of Enoch: “I can stretch forth mine hands, and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also” [Moses 7:36]; or as our Savior says: “Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I Am, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made; the same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes.” [D&C 38:1-2.]

Enoch informs us that if every particle of this earth was numbered, and millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of worlds which that Being had made whom he was addressing, and yet that God informs him that He could pierce all these creations with His eye. Jesus also says: “All things are present before mine eyes”; and this he gives as a reason why he knows all things. It is very evident, therefore, that all these beings discern things through the same medium; that is, by the Spirit; and though the works of God are infinite, yet there are none beyond the reach of His all-powerful vision. And because they all behold and discern by the Spirit without any opposing obstacles, they all have an opportunity of seeing alike, and understanding alike, and knowing the same things; they are made perfect in one, and enjoy the same glory.

Oh, ye Saints of the latter days, do not forget the high destiny that awaits you. An eternity is before you, which has no end; a boundless space surrounds you, filled with an infinitude of worlds. The kingdoms, principalities, and heavenly powers that fill all the vast expanse are yours; the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, the riches and honors, the wisdom and excellency, the knowledge and power, the glory of all things, and the fulness of all things, are yours for ever and ever. Blessed is he that overcometh, for he shall inherit all things. (The Seer, pp. 289-300, July 1854.)