

Section 117

Historical Background

"In March 1838 Joseph Smith moved the headquarters of the Church to Far West. Other Ohio Saints planned to follow later in the year. That summer, the population in Caldwell County reached five thousand, a large percentage living in Far West, where the Saints had built hundreds of homes, four dry-goods stores, three family grocery stores, several blacksmith shops, two hotels, a printing shop, and a large schoolhouse that doubled as a church and courthouse.

"The rapidly increasing LDS population required more new settlements." (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1-4 vols., edited by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 926)

Moving Church headquarters to Far West would necessitate liquidating any church assets in Kirtland. The Lord's storehouse was the stewardship of Bishop Newel K. Whitney, whose store was also the main mercantile establishment in town. Section 117 instructs Bishop Whitney and his assistant William Marks in spiritual matters, but from a practical standpoint, it was necessary that they move to Far West and help establish church headquarters there. Oliver Granger's assignment would be to redeem, as much as possible, the rest of the church assets in Kirtland. His would be a difficult assignment.

"On 6 July 1838, the last large group of faithful Saints, for the most part the poorest of Kirtland's inhabitants, began making their way west to Missouri. Known as the Kirtland Camp, or sometimes as the Kirtland Poor Camp, this group of more than five hundred Saints traveled through the summer and arrived in Far West on 2 October 1838, less than a month before Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs's Extermination order drove them out of the state. Roughly half of the Kirtland Camp actually made the entire journey to Far West. The other half dropped out along the way, mostly due to illness. Most who dropped out remained at Springfield, Illinois, and later gathered at Nauvoo after the main body of Saints had been driven from Missouri.

"When the Kirtland Camp left Ohio for Missouri, two notable Ohio Church leaders were missing from their number. Stake president William Marks, who was called to preside as stake president at Far West, and Bishop Newel K. Whitney had remained behind in an attempt to protect investments in Kirtland without simply walking away from them. On 8 July 1838, two days after the Kirtland Camp left without those brethren, Joseph Smith received a revelation informing him of that fact and commanding the two leaders to give up the Ohio properties and move to Zion." (Stephen E. Robinson, H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2001] 4:122-123)

Parley P. Pratt

On the 4th of July, 1838, thousands of the citizens who belonged to the Church of the Saints assembled at the City of Far West, the county seat of Caldwell, in order to celebrate our nation's birth. We erected a tall standard, on which was hoisted our national colors, the stars and stripes, and the bold eagle of American liberty. Under its waving folds we laid the corner stone of a Temple of God, and dedicated the land and ourselves and families to Him who had preserved us in all our troubles... Soon after these

things the war clouds began again to lower with dark and threatening aspect. Those who had combined against the laws in the adjoining counties, had long watched our increasing power and prosperity with jealousy, and with greedy and avaricious eyes. It was a common boast that, as soon as we had completed our extensive improvements, and made a plentiful crop, they would drive us from the State, and once more enrich themselves with the spoils. (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, edited by his son, Parley P. Pratt [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], 150)

DC 117:1 William Marks, and... Newel K. Whitney, let them settle up their business speedily and journey from the land of Kirtland

"Complying with these instructions, the two men (Whitney and Marks) left Kirtland in the fall of 1838. Before they reached western Missouri, however, they learned of the expulsion of the Mormons from that state. Therefore, like a number of other Kirtland Saints, they did not reach the Missouri frontier, but settled temporarily in other areas and then gathered in Nauvoo." (Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* [Salt Lake City: Desert Book Co., 1983], 368)

DC 117:4 let them repent... of all their covetous desires before me

Joseph Fielding Smith

Nothing that pertains to this world can any of us take with us when we are called to go beyond. Yet men labor and accumulate and spend their lives in the selfish desire to possess worldly wealth and call it their own; and the great majority of men forsake the treasures where moth and rust do not corrupt and thieves do not break through and steal. (Matt. 6:19-21) It is quite evident that these two brethren had fallen under the spell of speculation and temptation so rife in Kirtland in 1837, and which was the downfall of so many of the leading brethren of the Church. However, they had not lost their faith and when the Lord gave them this call, they proceeded to obey the command... Those brethren were not to spend their time fretting over the things they were to leave behind. (Roy W. Doxey, comp., *Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], 4: 163)

DC 117:4 what is property unto me?

Hugh Nibley

Elders of Israel are greedy after the things of this world. If you ask them if they are ready to build up the kingdom of God, their answer is prompt-"Why, to be sure we are, with our whole souls; but we want first to get so much gold, speculate and get rich, and then we can help the church considerably. We will go to California and get gold, go and buy goods and get rich, trade with the emigrants, build a mill, make a farm, get a large herd of cattle, and then we can do a great deal for Israel."

I have heard this many times from friends and relatives, but it is hokum. What they are saying is, "If God will give me a million dollars. I will let him have a generous cut of it." And so they pray and speculate and expect the Lord to come through for them. He won't do it: "And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property" (D&C 19:26). "Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous

desires, before me, saith the Lord; for what is property unto me? saith the Lord" (D&C 117:4). He does not need our property or our help. (*Approaching Zion*, edited by Don E. Norton [Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989], 53)

Neal A. Maxwell

The small, myopic view also lends itself to coveting "the drop" while neglecting "the more weighty matters." (D&C 117:8.) In all of our getting and grasping, we do not seem to grasp the implications of this question from the Lord: "Have I not the fowls of heaven, and also the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the mountains? Have I not made the earth? Do I not hold the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth?" (D&C 117:6.)

No wonder the Lord also asks us acquisitive mortals, "For what is property unto me?" (D&C 117:4.) "I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine." (D&C 104:14.) (*Meek and Lowly* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987], 96)

Neal A. Maxwell

The most sobering questions are often also the most brief, as when the Lord asked, "What is property unto me?" (D&C 117:4.) Can we become men and women of Christ if property means too much to us? The Lord continued with yet another question involving perspective: "[Why] covet that which is but the drop, and neglect the more weighty matters?" (D&C 117:8.) Oh, how we need this precious perspective! (*Men and Women of Christ* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991], 114)

DC 117:6 Do I not hold the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth?

Wilford Woodruff

As Saints of the Most High, we should prize them and lay hold of them with one united heart, and not consider that the battle is to the strong or the race to the swift; for the Lord holds the destinies of all, and we are in his hands. (*Journal of Discourses*, 6:141)

Joseph Fielding Smith

It is well for us all to remember this. Surely the Lord made the earth and he owns it. His government the nations of the earth rejected and in its stead set up governments of their own making, and this has been the condition from the beginning until now. Kings and potentates all down the ages, thought they, by their own acts, controlled the destinies of nations, and held dominion. Without the permission of the Almighty they never could have ruled and held dominion. All who have a correct insight into the history of nations must surely know that the Lord has always held a controlling hand over the nations of the world. When they have become corrupt, he has relieved them of power. When they have entered on expeditions of conquest, he has permitted them to go just so far, then as he said to Ezekiel concerning Gog and Magog, he puts hooks in their jaws, and defeats their purpose. (Ezek. 38:1-7.) Truly he holds the destinies of the armies of the nations of the earth (D&C. 60:4) ; and not only the armies, but the destinies of nations, and when the time is ripe he will make an end of all nations that now rule in their

arrogance and mistaken idea of might and power, and set up his own kingdom to endure forever. (*Church History and Modern Revelation*,3:123-125.)

DC 117:7 will I not make solitary places to bud and to blossom

"In 1830, when the Church was in its earliest infancy, it was predicted: 'Zion shall rejoice upon the hills and flourish before the final Salvation of Israel!' (Doctrine and Covenants 35:24-25). This remarkable prediction is often repeated, and finally, in the year 1838, at Far West, Missouri, it was again announced: 'Therefore, will I not make solitary places to bud and to blossom, and to bring forth in abundance, saith the Lord? Is there not room enough upon the mountains . . .?'" (D&C 117:7-8.)

"From the very foundation of the Church the Spirit of God, through the Prophet, thus announces in no uncertain way that Zion, the Saints, should move to the *hills*, the *mountains*, the *solitary places*, and there be prosperous, *blossom* gloriously. It must be remembered that these predictions were delivered at a time when no human wisdom could foresee such an event. When the Church was founded in 1830, there was no possibility-speaking from a mere human point of view-of foreseeing her removal to the hills, much less that she would be removed and would prosper upon the *hills*. Nor is there in the whole history of mankind anything analogous to this exodus of the Church. The probability, speaking from a human point of view, when the Church was founded, was either that she would be favored by the world and remain where she was, or that she would be crushed on the spot by an immense hostility. Either of these two occurrences might have been considered probable at the time; but none of them was predicted. The Church should blossom up on the hills. Has not this prediction, uttered over a century ago, been remarkably fulfilled? Who can travel through the valleys of the mountains today, among fragrant gardens and fruitful orchards, and notice the friendly, peaceful homes that everywhere abound to smile upon the stranger, or observe the condition of the Saints without seeing that the predictions have come literally true? Zion now blossoms upon the mountains." (George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1965], 49 - 50)

DC 117:8 the land where Adam dwelt

"When Adam and Eve were placed on the earth, they lived in the Garden of Eden. We do not know its dimensions, but the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it was located in or near Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. 16 We learn in the Doctrine and Covenants that Adam and Eve later lived, at least for a period, not far distant from the garden, at Adam-ondi-Ahman (see D&C 117:8).

"Without the benefit of latter-day revelation, many who have read only the Genesis account of events in the Garden of Eden have supposed that Adam and Eve were intended to stay in the garden forever. They assume that we were to be born in the garden and that we would also have lived there forever in a type of paradise. Consequently they blame Adam and Eve for disobeying God and look on them with disfavor because of the conditions we have on earth-pain, suffering, sin, evil, and death. Some even erroneously think that Adam and Eve's transgression was sexual in nature. They assume that none of the general conditions we find on earth now would ever have come if our first parents had not been sinful.

"Others have concluded that the whole story is a myth and that Adam and Eve are fictional characters. Still others speculate Adam and Eve were cave people whose descendants evolved into more advanced specimens.

"In contrast, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ makes it abundantly clear that Adam and Eve were children of God just as we are. They were placed on earth as immortal beings. We are told they could read and write (see Moses 6:5, 46), and they knew and understood the plan of salvation, having been taught it in the Garden of Eden." (Robert J. Woodford, " 'In the Beginning': A Latter-day Perspective," *Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 16)

Orson Pratt

Perhaps you may be anxious to know what "Ondi-Ahman" means. It means the place where Adam dwelt. "Ahman" signifies God. The whole term means Valley of God, where Adam dwelt. It is in the original language spoken by Adam, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph. (*Journal of Discourses*, 18:342)

George Q. Cannon

Asia has been ransacked in endeavoring to locate the Garden of Eden. Men have supposed that because the Ark rested on Ararat that the flood commenced there, or rather that it was from thence the Ark started to sail. But God in His revelations has informed us that it was on this choice land of Joseph where Adam was placed and the Garden of Eden was laid out. The spot has been designated, and we look forward with peculiar feelings to repossessing that land. We expect when that day shall come that we will be a very different people to what we are today. We will be prepared to commune with heavenly beings; at any rate, the preparation will be going on very rapidly for Jesus to be revealed. We expect that a society will be organized there that will be a pattern of heavenly society, that when Jesus and the heavenly beings who come with him are revealed in the clouds of heaven, their feelings will not be shocked by the change, for a society will be organized on the earth whose members will be prepared through the revelations of God to meet and associate with them, if not on terms of perfect equality, at least with some degree of equality. (*Journal of Discourses*, 11:337)

DC 117:8 covet that which is but the drop, and neglect the more weighty matters

Spencer W. Kimball

But I recently learned an interesting fact: If a man owns a million dollars worth of gold at today's prices, he possesses approximately one 27-billionth of all the gold that is present in the earth's thin crust alone. This is an amount so small in proportion as to be inconceivable to the mind of man. But there is more to this: The Lord who created and has power over all the earth created many other earths as well, even "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33); and when this man received the oath and covenant of the priesthood (D&C 84:33-44), he received a promise from the Lord of "all that my Father hath" (D&C 84:38). To set aside all these great promises in favor of a chest of gold and a sense of carnal security is a mistake in perspective of colossal proportions. To think that he has settled for so little is a saddening

and pitiful prospect indeed; the souls of men are far more precious than this. ("The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, 5)

Neal A. Maxwell

Jesus put everything on the altar without fanfare or bargaining. Both before and after His astonishing atonement, He declared, "Glory be to the Father." (D&C 19:19; Moses 4:2.) Jesus, stunningly brilliant, nevertheless allowed His will to be "swallowed up in the will of the Father." (Mosiah 15:7; see also John 6:38.) Those with pride-hardened minds are simply unable to do this.

Stubborn selfishness leads otherwise good people to fight over herds, patches of sand, and strippings of milk. All this results from what the Lord calls coveting "the drop," while neglecting the "more weighty matters." (D&C 117:8.) Myopic selfishness magnifies a mess of pottage and makes thirty pieces of silver look like a treasure trove. In our intense acquisitiveness, we forget Him who once said, "What is property unto me?" (D&C 117:4.)

...Whereas the natural man covets praise and riches, the men and women of Christ know such things are but the "drop." (D&C 117:8.) Human history's happiest irony will be that the covenant-keeping, unselfish individuals will finally receive "all that [the] Father hath"! (D&C 84:38.) ("Put Off the Natural Man, and Come Off Conqueror," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 15-16)

DC 117:10 my servant William Marks

Birth: 15 November 1792, Rutland, Rutland County, Vermont. Son of Cornwall (Cornell) Marks and Sarah Goodrich.

Death: 22 May 1872 at Plano, Kendall County, Illinois.

At age forty-nine William Marks was baptized and ordained a priest in New York. He soon moved his family to Kirtland, where he established a book and stationery store. His advertisement in the Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate read:

WILLIAM MARKS

DEALER IN

BOOKS, STATIONERY,

CAP, LETTER,

AND WRAPPING PAPER.

Plain and Ornamental

JOB PRINTING.

On 3 September 1837 he was called to the Kirtland high council, and two weeks later he was called to be an 'agent' to Bishop Newel K. Whitney.

On 29 March 1838 the Prophet recorded seeing William in a vision, being closely pursued by enemies that sought to devour him. When it appeared that the enemies had the advantage, 'a chariot of fire came, and near the place, even the angel of the Lord put forth his hand unto Brother Marks and said unto him, 'Thou art my son, come here,' and immediately he was caught up in the chariot, and rode away triumphantly out of their midst. And again the Lord said, 'I will raise thee up for a blessing unto many people.'

In a revelation given to the Prophet on 8 July 1838 William was commanded to settle his business in Kirtland and move to Missouri: 'Let him preside in the midst of my people in the city of Far West' (D&C 117:10). Before he could obey the directive the Saints were driven by mobocracy from Missouri. William joined the exiles in Quincy, Illinois.

At a conference on 5 October 1839 at Commerce (later Nauvoo), William was appointed to preside over the stake there. He also served as a city alderman, regent of the University of Nauvoo, associate justice of the municipal court, member of the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Association, and bodyguard for the Prophet. However, by 1844 his faith faltered. The Prophet, noting his failings, classified him with apostate William Law: 'What can be the matter with these men [Law and Marks]? Is it that the wicked flee when no man pursueth, that hit pigeons always flutter, that drowning men catch at straws, or that Presidents Law and Marks are absolutely traitors to the Church.'

After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, William helped wash the bodies of the slain leaders, despite his association with the conspirators. Afterwards, according to Hosea Stout, William attempted to hide conspirator John C. Elliot in his home, but John 'was found out and arrested.' William used his 'influence to notify the mob and raise an excitement,' and one of Elliot's lawyers 'gave the court to understand that if they committed him to jail, that it might cause some of our best men to be slain, thus threatening us with a mob if we attempted to put the law in force against willful murderers.' The court, however, 'took a bold and decided stand in favor of the Laws,' and Elliot was jailed. However, justice failed as Elliot later escaped and was never brought to trial.

The Saints recognized William as an enemy and on 7 October 1844 at general conference rejected him as the Nauvoo stake president for supporting the claims of Sidney Rigdon to the Presidency. On 9 December 1844 he publicly acknowledged his error in the Times and Seasons: 'After mature and candid deliberation, I am fully and satisfactorily convinced that Mr. Sidney Rigdon's claims to the Presidency of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are not founded in truth.... The twelve are the proper persons to lead the church.' After his confession he returned to the fellowship of the Saints, but did not return to his former position.

At a Strangite conference on 6 April 1846 William made a motion that the 'Church receive, acknowledge, and appoint JAMES J. STRANG as President of this Church, Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator.' William became president *pro tempore* of the Strangite high priest's quorum as well as bishop, apostle, and counselor to Strang.

However, in January 1849 Strang wrote, 'WILLIAM MARKS, has gone far ASTRAY in departing from me.' William withdrew from the Strangites and joined with Charles B. Thompson in organizing a new church in 1852. He left that church in 1853 and by 1855 was associated with apostate John E. Page. On 11 June 1859 he was received into the Reorganized Church. He became a prominent figure in the history of the RLDS Church, being one of three to ordain Joseph Smith III as president. In March 1863 he was called to be first counselor to President Smith. He was ordained to the position on 8 April 1863. William Marks died on 22 May 1872 at Plano, Illinois, at the age of seventy-nine.

On the records of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, William is eulogized: 'President Marks was a man of sterling integrity, true to his convictions, faithful and courageous in the discharge of duty.... He maintained his honor intact, and his record was unstained by immoral acts.... The last years of his life he spent in peace, satisfied in the possession of what he long had sought among the factions in vain.'" (Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 183 - 186.)

DC 117:11 my servant Newel K. Whitney

"The Lord, speaking in the Doctrine and Covenants, mentioned one man by name in at least eight revelations. (See D&C 63:45, D&C 72:8, D&C 78:9, D&C 84:112, 114, D&C 93:50, D&C 96:2, D&C 104:39-42, D&C 117:11.) He was a successful businessman, a presiding bishop of the Church, a prominent civic official, and a notable member of his community...

"Newel K. Whitney was born on 5 February 1795 at Marlborough, Vermont, the first son and the second child of Samuel Whitney and Susannah Kimball. Young Newel grew up only a few miles from the birthplace of Joseph Smith, who was ten years his junior, yet the two first met as grown men, far from the Vermont of their childhood. In February 1831 the Prophet Joseph Smith entered Newel K. Whitney's store in Kirtland, Ohio, and exclaimed to the startled proprietor, 'Thou art the man!' Newel protested that he did not know this stranger, then heard life-changing words: 'I am Joseph the Prophet. You prayed me here; now what do you want of me?'" (D. Michael Quinn, "The Newel K. Whitney Family," *Ensign*, Dec. 1978, 42)

Bishop Whitney had served as the first Bishop in the Church. To be sure, serving as a bishop in Kirtland would have been very difficult. Many poor converts were moving to Kirtland, the financial strains and divine demands were high, and Bishop Whitney had no latter-day examples to draw from. His faithfulness lasted through the difficulties of the late Kirtland period, and he would faithfully close up shop and head for Far West as commanded (v. 1).

DC 117:11 be ashamed of the nicolaitane band and of all their secret abominations

"*Nicolaitism* (also *Nicholaitism*, *Nicolationism*, or *Nicolaitanism*) is a Christian heresy whose adherents are called *nicolaitans*, *nicolaitanes*, or *nicolaites*. Nico means 'conquer' in Greek, Laitan refers to lay people, or laity, hence the word could be taken to mean 'Lay conquerors' or Conquerors of the Lay People; however, it is simply the name given to followers of the heretic Nicolas (Greek: Nikolaos-the name itself meaning 'victorious over people' or 'victory of the people' which he would have been given at birth).

They are first mentioned (twice) in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. According to Revelation 2, vv. 6 and 15, they were known in the cities of Ephesus and Pergamos around AD 99. The church at Ephesus is commended for 'hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate' and the church in Pergamos is blamed for 'having them who hold their [the Nicolaitans'] doctrines'. There is no other first-hand evidence to give us certainty about the nature of this sect and no evidence supporting the claim that Nicholas was in fact a Heretic... Several of the early church fathers, including Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and Theodoret mentioned this group. Irenaeus discusses them but adds nothing to the Apocalypse except that 'they lead lives of unrestrained indulgence.'"

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolaitianism>)

The actual nature of this Nicolaitane band and its secret abominations has not survived through the centuries. Bruce R. McConkie taught that it was a term descriptive of "members of the Church who were trying to maintain their church standing while continuing to live after the manner of the world." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3: 447.). The Lord seems to be comparing the wickedness of Nicolaitans of old to the more wicked members in Kirtland. They were the apostates who had rejected Joseph Smith, defiled the Temple, and left the church. Bishop Whitney would have known them well. **Joseph Fielding Smith**, taught, "Bishop Whitney was called on to forsake the abominations of those in Kirtland, whom the Lord designates as the 'Nicolaitane band.'" (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 3:125-26.)

The lesson is as follows:

"[Notice] how Bishop Whitney and Elder Marks received the chastening from the Lord. Instead of turning against the Lord's work and against the Prophet Joseph personally, they realigned their lives to be in harmony with the program of the Lord and remained useful instruments in the hand of the Almighty. We can contrast their behavior, when they were chastened, with that of others of the early Saints and even Church leaders who took offense personally, and because of pride set about to damage the Church, the Prophet, or both." (Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 1: The Doctrine and Covenants* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989], 445 - 446)

DC 117:11 be a bishop unto my people, saith the Lord, not in name but in deed

"Joseph loved Bishop Whitney. In June 1832 he wrote to Emma, 'He is chearful and patient and a true Brother to me.' On 7 October 1835 Joseph received a blessing for Newel through the Urim and Thummim: 'Blessed of the Lord is Brother Whitney, even the bishop of the Church of Latter-day Saints, for the Bishopric shall never be taken away from him while he liveth.... He shall deal with a liberal hand to the poor and the needy, the sick and afflicted, the widow and the fatherless.'

"In partial fulfillment of the blessing, Newel held a three-day feast in January 1836 for the poor Saints in the Kirtland vicinity. The Prophet wrote of this event: 'Attended a sumptuous feast at Bishop Newel K. Whitney's. This feast was after the order of the Son of God-the lame, the halt, and the blind were invited, according to the instructions of the Savior.... We ... received a bountiful refreshment, furnished by the liberality of the Bishop. The company was large.'

"Joseph's feeling for this faithful man was one of profound gratitude: 'Thou art a faithful friend in whom the afflicted sons of men can confide, with the most perfect safety. Let the blessings of the Eternal also be crowned upon his head. How warm that heart! how anxious that soul! for the welfare of one who has been cast out, and hated of almost all men. Brother Whitney, thou knowest not how strong those ties are that bind my soul and heart to thee.'

"After Joseph's death Newel was called as the Presiding Bishop of the Church. He and his family journeyed to the Salt Lake Valley in 1848.

"On Saturday, 21 September 1850, he returned home from his labors in the bishopric, complaining of a severe pain in his left side. By Monday, 23 September, his condition had become worse. President Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and other Church leaders gathered at his home. He passed away at 11:00 a.m. His obituary stated: 'Thus, in full strength, and mature years, has one of the oldest and most exemplary and useful members of the Church fallen suddenly; leaving a large family to mourn the loss of an affectionate husband, and a kind and generous father.'" (Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 341 - 342.)

DC 117:12 I remember my servant Oliver Granger

Many years ago, upon entering Temple Square, I was approached by an anti-Mormon protestor. One question I was asked was, "what can you tell me about Oliver Granger?" When I replied that I did not know who he was, the protestor acted as if he had proved that Joseph Smith was a false prophet. He read me D&C 117:12 and declared that Mormons don't know anything about Oliver Granger. He explained that Oliver Granger had NOT been held "in sacred remembrance from generation to generation."

When I went home and reviewed this scripture, I came to understand that the most important part of the passage was that *the Lord* would remember Oliver Granger, for "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance"-that is, they shall be remembered by the Lord (Ps. 112:6).

DC 117:12 Oliver Granger... shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation

Boyd K. Packer

There is a message for Latter-day Saints in a seldom quoted revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1838. "I remember my servant Oliver Granger; behold, verily I say unto him that his name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord" (D&C 117:12).

Oliver Granger was a very ordinary man. He was mostly blind having "lost his sight by cold and exposure" (*History of the Church*, 4:408). The First Presidency described him as "a man of the most strict integrity and moral virtue; and in fine, to be a man of God" (*History of the Church*, 3:350).

When the Saints were driven from Kirtland, Ohio, in a scene that would be repeated in Independence, Far West, and in Nauvoo, Oliver was left behind to sell their properties for what little he could. There was not much chance that he could succeed. And, really, he did not succeed [completely]!

But the Lord said, "Let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord; and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord" (D&C 117:13).

What did Oliver Granger do that his name should be held in sacred remembrance? Nothing much, really. It was not so much what he did as what he was.

When we honor Oliver, much, perhaps even most, of the honor should go to Lydia Dibble Granger, his wife.

Oliver and Lydia finally left Kirtland to join the Saints in Far West, Missouri. They had gone but a few miles from Kirtland when they were turned back by a mob. Only later did they join the Saints at Nauvoo.

Oliver died at age 47, leaving Lydia to look after their children.

The Lord did not expect Oliver to be perfect, perhaps not even to succeed. "When he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord" (D&C 117:13).

...Some worry endlessly over missions that were missed, or marriages that did not turn out, or babies that did not arrive, or children that seem lost, or dreams unfulfilled, or because age limits what they can do. I do not think it pleases the Lord when we worry because we think we never do enough or that what we do is never good enough.

Some needlessly carry a heavy burden of guilt which could be removed through confession and repentance.

The Lord did not say of Oliver, "[*if*] he falls," but "*When* he falls he shall rise again" (D&C 117:13; emphasis added).

Some years ago in the Philippines we arrived early for a conference. Sitting on the curb were a father and mother and four small children dressed in their Sunday best. They had come several hours on a bus and were having the first meal of the day. Each of them was eating a cob of cold, boiled corn. The cost of the bus to Manila probably came out of their food budget.

As I watched that family, my heart overflowed with emotion. *There* is the Church. *There* is the power. *There* is the future. As with families in many lands, they pay their tithing, sustain their leaders, and do their best to serve.

For more than 40 years, my wife and I have traveled over the earth. We know members of the Church in perhaps a hundred countries. We have felt the power in their simple faith. Their individual testimonies and their sacrifice have had a profound effect on us.

I do not like to receive honors. Compliments always bother me, because the great work of moving the gospel forward has in the past, does now, and will in the future depend upon ordinary members.

...Today we fulfill the prophecy "that [Oliver Granger's] name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever" (D&C 117:12). He was not a great man in terms of the world. Nevertheless, the Lord said, "Let no man despise my servant Oliver Granger, but let the blessings ... be on him forever and ever" (D&C 117:15).

Let no one underestimate the power of faith in the ordinary Latter-day Saints. ("The Least of These," *Ensign*, Nov 2004, 86)

DC 117:13 let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church

Howard W. Hunter

Many make their contributions in unsung ways... Oliver Granger is the kind of quiet, supportive individual in the latter days that the Lord remembered in section 117 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Oliver's name may be unfamiliar to many, so I will take the liberty to acquaint you with this early stalwart.

Oliver Granger was eleven years older than Joseph Smith and, like the Prophet, was from upstate New York. Because of severe cold and exposure when he was thirty-three years old, Oliver lost much of his eyesight. Notwithstanding his limited vision, he served three full-time missions. He also worked on the Kirtland Temple and served on the Kirtland high council.

When most of the Saints were driven from Kirtland, Ohio, the Church left some debts unsatisfied. Oliver was appointed to represent Joseph Smith and the First Presidency by returning to Kirtland to settle the Church's business. Of this task, the Doctrine and Covenants records: "Therefore, let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord." (D&C 117:13.)

He performed this assignment with such satisfaction to the creditors involved that one of them wrote: "Oliver Granger's management in the arrangement of the unfinished business of people that have moved to the Far West, in redeeming their pledges and thereby sustaining their integrity, has been truly praiseworthy, and has entitled him to my highest esteem, and every grateful recollection." (Horace Kingsbury, as cited in Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:174.)

During Oliver's time in Kirtland, some people, including disaffected members of the Church, were endeavoring to discredit the First Presidency and bring their integrity into question by spreading false accusations. Oliver Granger, in very deed, "redeemed the First Presidency" through his faithful service. In response, the Lord said of Oliver Granger: "His name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever." (D&C 117:12.) "I will lift up my servant Oliver, and beget for him a great name on the earth, and among my people, because of the integrity of his soul." (*History of the Church*, 3:350.)

When he died in 1841, even though there were but few Saints remaining in the Kirtland area and even fewer friends of the Saints, Oliver Granger's funeral was attended by a vast concourse of people from neighboring towns.

Though Oliver Granger is not as well known today as other early leaders of the Church, he was nevertheless a great and important man in the service he rendered to the kingdom. And even if no one but the Lord had his name in remembrance, that would be a sufficient blessing for him-or for any of us.

I think we should be aware that there can be a spiritual danger to those who misunderstand the singularity of always being in the spotlight. They may come to covet the notoriety and thus forget the significance of the service being rendered.

We must not allow ourselves to focus on the fleeting light of popularity or substitute that attractive glow for the substance of true but often anonymous labor that brings the attention of God, even if it does not get coverage on the six o'clock news. In fact, applause and attention can become the spiritual Achilles' heels of even the most gifted among us. ("No Less Serviceable," *Ensign*, Apr. 1992, 65-66)