

Cuppa Joe | Historic Sites Foundation Fall Lecture Series | The Life of William Marks: Leader to Two Josephs | John Dinger and Cheryl Bruno

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

William Marks, Reorganization, Kirtland, Joseph Smith III, Emma Smith, Christ, Strangite, Thompsonite, Mormon

SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Cheryl Bruno, John Dinger

Karin Peter 00:29

Welcome to Cuppa Joe, where we explore restoration history. I'm your host for this series Karin Peter. Now here at Cuppa Joe, we partner with the Historic Sites Foundatoin to interview the presenters from their Spring and Fall Lecture Series. So our guests today are John Dinger and Cheryl Bruno. John is an independent historian and who lives in Idaho, and he has published a variety of articles and books related to Mormon history. He and his co-author Cheryl Bruno have written a biography on William Marks. So, all you Community of Christ, folks who are waiting to hear about this, here we go. And this should soon be published. I see how do we have a publication date yet?

Cheryl Bruno 01:15

Yes, we've heard this morning that it should be published by May.

Karin Peter 01:20

Oh, excellent. All right. You heard it here first. Cheryl, who you just heard share the publication date is a published author in the realm of Mormon history. She is particularly interested in Mormon esoteric, is it esotericism? is that, am I pronouncing that right?

Cheryl Bruno 01:39

Esotericism.

Karin Peter 01:40

I missed a syllable. Esotericism,. She published a book on Mormonism and Freemasonry. So that would be an interesting read. And you might be familiar with John and Cheryl from Sunstone in past summers. So I want to welcome you both. Hi, John and Cheryl, welcome to Project Zion.

John Dinger 02:01

Happy to be here.

Cheryl Bruno 02:03

Thanks for having us. So

Karin Peter 02:05

Your contribution to this past fall Lecture Series is titled, "The Life of William Mark's: Faithful Leader to Two Joseph's." Now, John, did you do this lecture on your own? Or Cheryl? Did you participate in the lecture as well?

John Dinger 02:21

I did this one on my own?

Karin Peter 02:22

You did? All right. So if you go to the archives, faithful listeners, you know that you can hear this lecture, but only here on Project Zion will you hear from Cheryl as well. So in the lecture, John discusses the life of William Marks. And Marks was an early convert, who quickly gained the trust of Joseph Smith. He was given many important assignments and served in many leadership positions. After the death of Joseph Smith Jr., he joined several different restoration movements, but always left disappointed. And eventually he found the RLDS movement, which helped convince Joseph Smith III to join and lead this small, fledgling church. Because he was so well trusted, Marks was eventually called to the First Presidency where he served until his death. So with that in mind, and some of us who are always intrigued by early Mormon history are familiar with William Marks. But why this topic? Why did you both choose to write a book about it and John, for you do a lecture about it?

John Dinger 03:32

Well, how about I go first, and then Cheryl can tell me her view. I had, years and years ago, edited the Nauvoo High Council and City Council minutes for publication and, being raised in the LDS tradition, a lot of the names in there were familiar. One that was not was William marks. But as I did this, he was the man who impressed me the most. And I know we don't usually talk about certain heroes when we're looking at documentary books, but he was just an amazing man who so impressed me, particularly during the trial of Sidney Rigdon. He knew that if he stood up for what was right and made sure that the rules were followed, at that particular hearing, it was going to be bad for him, but he still did it because he was a man of such character. And so that's what really sold me on him. And so I started researching him for years and years. And then a few years ago, Cheryl, and I realized we were both independently working on him. And I made the wonderful decision to join with her. I don't know how she feels about that, but I certainly thought it was great. And so that's kind of how we ended up working on this book together.

Karin Peter 04:44

Excellent. Cheryl, let's let's hear from your perspective.

Cheryl Bruno 04:47

Well, I feel William marks is really underappreciated, especially in the Brighamite tradition where I'm also a member. John and I both are in the Latter Day Saint Church, and so he's kind of gotten a bad rap over the years. I wanted to fix that. And, even in Community of Christ, I don't think there's a lot of

understanding of how influential he was in the early RLDS, the early reorganization. And so, we wanted to bring that out. And I just have to say that the collaboration that John and I have done has made this a way better project than if either of us had done it on our own. I think we both have added our own little expertise to this project. And I'm so pleased with how it's come out and how we've been able to collaborate on it.

Karin Peter 05:41

Well, I'm looking forward to reading the book when it comes out in May. So as you did your independent research and study because it sounds like you both were at this a long time before you joined forces here, what were some of the most important aspects about William Marks life that you wanted to make sure you got into the lecture? Now you've said he was underappreciated, and I think you're right. Not a lot is talked about William Marks, even in Community of Christ historical discussions, Sunday school type of things. He did have quite an impressive streak of standing for righteousness and justice. So those those obviously stood out, but what else did you feel like you really needed to include in the story?

Cheryl Bruno 06:28

So I guess I'll start this one. Maybe we should just alternate. So I thought it was, for me, his fairness was, again very impressive, that he felt that it was very important to be fair and honest. And one of the little incidents that I had looked at was when he right after the martyrdom after Joseph Smith died, he moved to a place called Shabbona Grove, and it was named after an Indian Chief, Chief Shabbona, who had sold his land out to some of the settlers. And, at a certain point, it was 1848, when the US government, the General Land Office stepped in, and they said, Well, we have given this land to the Native Americans. And if they don't want to settle on it, they can't just sell it. So they were going to take away all the land that William Marks, and everyone in the town had purchased and developed. And they were very upset about this. So William Marks was the justice of the peace, and he's very respected in town. And so he helped them devise this little kind of plan, where he and another man would go in and bid on the land. And they would go ahead and pay for it, but they wanted to get a fair price. So they paid \$1.25 an acre, they bid on it, and the rest of the townspeople surrounded the area, so that they couldn't let any newcomers come in and over bid. And it kept them out while William Marks was bidding on the land. And so I think it's a cute story. And I also think it shows how he was respected, and that he was fair and honorable, and most of the things that we found that he did,

Karin Peter 08:19

And a little bit of Frontier justice, there tossed in. That's good for him. So John, anything to add to that, that you wanted to be sure to share?

John Dinger 08:27

Well, I just wanted to share, he pops up everywhere in early Mormon history. So, you know, after the martyrdom when he moved to Shabana Grove, so many people, he was such an honorable man, like Cheryl said, that a lot of these new groups really wanted him in their church. So he, for a short time affiliated with the Strangites, the Thompsonites, was sort of the independent groups, James E Page, and then finally found himself in the Reorganization. And so his whole life, he was always a seeker. I always saw him as wanting. He was a, I don't know if it makes sense, but he was like, he was a Kirtland Mormon. He loved how the church was in Kirtland. And in Nauvoo, I think he was a bit uncomfortable

with some of the innovations and things happening there. And so after the martyrdom, he was always looking for that return back to his Kirtland Joseph. And so he really wanted to tell that story and how he then found that home in the RLDS church. He he was a man who was conflicted about gathering. He was more than willing to gather in Kirtland and then with all those other groups, he always dragged his feet until near the end of his life, he was more than willing to gather again in Plano with Joseph III and so I really wanted to get that story out that he kind of just touched all these restoration churches until he found the one where he truly was most home at.

Karin Peter 10:08

That's an interesting observation, the Gathering where in Kirtland was successful for him personally. And then he just couldn't find that again. I think that's a trait that Community of Christ has carried with it all through its existence. So it's different than going west and finding the place, west of the mountains. For the RLDS tradition, it was really a struggle to find where to gather and how to gather and with whom to gather. So I appreciate that that's something you wanted to highlight in the story. So what were some of the initial maybe challenges to the story?

John Dinger 10:45

I'll go first on this one, so some of the challenges well, two, I guess, and Cheryl kind of brought one up. One is there was such a negative view of him over the years through Latter Day Saint historians. And so kind of wheeling through that and figuring out what was correct. So for years, he was called an apostate. And he clearly never was.

Karin Peter 11:12

As we all are, right? We're comfortable with that in Community of Christ.

John Dinger 11:18

One other one, was that a lack of we don't have enough, we have enough that it's going to be a good biography. But boy, he's the guy that we wish we had more of his letters, diaries, that kind of thing. Cheryl recently uncovered, how some of the letters that he had written, were burned, after later, and she can probably tell you a little bit about that. But those are some of the challenges I found.

Karin Peter 11:43

Cheryl, about you.

Cheryl Bruno 11:44

Yeah, I definitely. What made it hard was we don't don't have a journal. He didn't, as far as we know, he didn't keep a journal. He did write letters to others. So we were, you know, combing through these letters. And as John said, he had done quite a bit of work on the the minutes of different meetings in that happened in Nauvoo. And so that was helpful to kind of get an idea of what he was involved in. We have minutes, also RLDS minutes, but they're not extensive. So it was a struggle to just dig out. And we had to analyze the little that we had, and try to decide some of the things that he said later in his life can kind of go both ways. So we don't know exactly what he meant by some of the things that he said, so, um, John and I were able to, and this is also another good thing that came out of our collaboration is that we're able to discuss with each other and, and try to analyze what exactly some of these things meant. And that was, that was really fun for me. Because sometimes we'd had two different views. But I

don't think we ever in the book really come down hard on a certain viewpoint, I think we like to show some of the different ways that you can see, to interpret what William Marks said in some of the letters that we have. So that's fun. And that's a fun thing about our book is, the reader will be able to read it and kind of decide for themselves from the evidence that we present where they think William Marks was trying to go.

Karin Peter 13:27

So say a little bit about the that a lot of his letters were burnt that John mentioned, what was that about?

Cheryl Bruno 13:35

Okay, well, we will be talking about this more at MHA. So I hope that a lot of you'll be coming to MHA, we're going to present on documents that we have on William Marks and also Joe Geithner will join us. And he's going to be talking about lost documents, especially in the LDS tradition. We know of certain documents that were once available, but now are lost. And so that's very tantalizing for the researcher and frustrating, too. So what happened in a nutshell, the other day is that I was trying to get some provenance of a certain letter that we have that William Marks wrote to Josiah Butterfield and Hiram Falk. And Josiah Butterfield's son, after and he was the one that contributed this letter to the Community of Christ library archives. So that's, I was asking Rachel Killebrew. Do we have any provenance on this letter and she came up with a set of letters that Josiah Butterfield son wrote to the library when he was donating this letter to them. And in one of the letters he says, "mother and I after father died, mother and I went through and found this packet of letters that William Marks had written to the father who had burned them. So how could that have happened? So that was that was quite frustrating for both of us that we had once had this resource of letters. And now only one of the letters is left, but we do have the one letter. So and it's quite, it's quite important in, in our research.

Karin Peter 15:19

So I imagine that's the stuff of nightmares of historians researching and writing is to get that kind of a comment. [CB: Absolutely]. In a letter, I can understand that. Well, I wanted to give you just a little bit of time, both of you, to simply talk about the subject and the things that you found most interesting, and John, maybe even a little tantalizing, so that people will want to review the lecture that you did for Historic Sites Foundatoin. So John, I'm gonna start with you, if you just share a little bit and then Cheryl, jump in, and then we'll pick up with you as we as we move on.

John Dinger 15:57

Okay. Well, the presentation I gave on was I titled it, "Between Josephs." So kind of what I talked about before, where that's what he was looking for, a return to this sort of Kirtland Mormonism. And so there's a just a lot of stuff in there that I hope people found important. But I think one of the ones I guess I'll kind of talk about now that that should be real applicable to the to the listeners is how when he finally sort of made his way through those different groups: Strangites, Thomsonites, and that..., and when he really realized that the RLDS church was for him, he helped sort of bring Joseph III into it. I don't need to tell your your listeners how Joseph III was kind of reluctant to get involved, having learned that from his mom, and what had happened to his father. And so he was a very careful man. And so he was visited by people from time to time, and he was kind and listened to them, but never really took it serious, until he learned that William Marks is starting to take this seriously. And so that kind of perked

him up and made it more important. And so when he finally decided, he, he wrote to William Marks. So, Joseph III later describes this is, during the year of 1859, "the question of my connection with my father's work was finally determined, I became satisfied satisfied that it was my duty. In the winter, I resolved to put myself in communication with the brethren of the Reorganized Church, in accordance with this resolution, I wrote to elder William Marks announcing my intention to make the effort to take up the work left by my father." And so it was William Marks who got him there. So when William Marks got this letter, he grabbed two other guys, and they immediately went to Nauvoo and, and spoke with him. And so I think it says a lot about both men, that they trusted each other. That William was so excited, when Joseph III was ready to lead them. And Joseph III, how he only really started taking it serious when a man like William Marks did and so and then they're, they're sort of, I guess what I'll say collaboration from from there on. And this kind of goes to what Cheryl was talking about how even in the Reorganization it seems, maybe you don't appreciate what you've got in him. But he helped in so many ways. He he was there when he went and picked up the Bible Manuscript. He was there when Emma passed it over. He was there when they talked about a lot of things made a lot of decisions. And then finally, at his death, Joseph III wrote his obituary in the Saints Herald and if I could just call it a little bit of that. But he said, "Brother Marks was one of the noblest of man, he has lived a life of most singular usefulness to his fellow men. Kind and upright in thought. It was known of him that his acts were founded in a consciousness of right, and what was wrong to him, he would not do." And that last line, "of what was wrong to him, he would not do," I mean, that really sums up William Marks, how honorable he was, and really the guiding principle of his life.

Cheryl Bruno 19:33

Well, um, I really feel that all through his life, he was very respected. And one of the stories that I remember is when Edmund Briggs and Samuel Gurley went to visit Joseph Smith III in I think it was 1856 and invite him to come into the Reorganization. And during that time, Emma mentioned how much she respected William Marks And we see that ever since the martyrdom, we see Emma, she actually wanted William Marks to take the reigns of church leadership at that time. But she mentioned to these two men that how much she respected William Marks and so much, Joseph Smith III so much respected him, to let him to be the first one that he let know that he had decided to go ahead and take the leadership. But also in Emma Smith handing over the manuscript to the new translation. I think that if she had not trusted William Marks so much, I think that she wouldn't have been so pleasant about, about giving them that into the care of others because she really treasured that manuscript. And she, she did trust the people that she was handing it over to and, and so William Marks had a lot to do with that.

John Dinger 20:57

On Emma, I love talking about Emma, so can I jump in here?

Karin Peter 21:01

Well, we love hearing about Emma John, so you go for it.

John Dinger 21:03

Another thing is, is that she actually did leave Nauvoo for a time with the family, right there after the martyrdom in 1845, when things were getting bad, she did move away to Fultontown, Illinois for a little while, and she moved there, because that's where William Marks ended up. And so they lived very

close to each other. In that town, they were friends there, she trusted him enough to move with her family, by him and you know, they they spent time together, Joseph Smith III in his recollections, talked about seeing the Marks family, and William there in Fulton. And so, again, this was something that, you know, I kind of focused on Joseph and William, but Emma too very much respected William Marks, and William Marks very much respected Emma as well. And William's wife, Rosanna and daughter, Sophia, they were part of the Relief Society there with Emma, and Nauvoo. And so they were families that truly love each other, and trusted each other.

Karin Peter 22:15

Which helps make sense to why Joseph Smith III trusted William Marks so much, and I respected his opinion so much, because his mother did as well.

Cheryl Bruno 22:25

So to play on that a little bit, I'm going to jump back to 1865. And one of the documents that we have from that period is the RLDS Council of 12 minutes. And this is available at the also at the library archives. And Rachel Killebrew was so kind to really help us find a lot of these documents. So in that minutes book on May, the first through the third, there was a special Council that the 12 held. And they invited Joseph Smith III and William Marks to be a part of that council so that they could get their opinions on some of the resolutions that they were making. And that's really fascinating to read, just to see how William Marks is treated in those minutes. And he's very respected and very honored for the opinions that he has. He weighs in on several things. One of the things he does is give his opinion on, they're talking about the doctrine of sealing as relating to marriage for eternity, which is another way of just saying polygamy. Where are we going to come down on polygamy? We know how Brigham Young went, but where was the Reorganization going to stand on this? And William Marks weighed in and told his opinion of and his experience in Nauvoo that he had with that doctrine. And then another one that they considered at the time was that was interesting to me was baptism for the dead, which is also a Brighamite, has carried over into that LDS tradition. So they asked William Marks to tell them a little bit about, now he was at the time he was, I believe, close to 70 years old. So I don't think that he always had a perfect recollection of what had gone on in Nauvoo. But he did say that, when Joseph Smith discontinued the practice of baptism for the dead, he said that it wouldn't be practiced anymore until there was a fountain built in Zion, or Jerusalem. So we do know that the baptism for the dead was discontinued for a time until the temple was built. And so I think that's kind of what he was referring to. When he says a fountain built in Zion, he was referring to, you know, the temple would have to be completed before or at least their you know, a place for baptism in the temple before this baptism for the dead could continue. So he remembered things maybe a little bit cloudedly. But he was able to share some of the things that he had experienced in Nauvoo with this council. And they gave him quite a bit of respect. At that time, he had been made the first counselor to Joseph Smith, III. And interestingly, he was the only counselor until his death at age 79. So Joseph Smith, III only had one counselor, it was William Marks.

Karin Peter 25:31

So this, this is fascinating to hear some tidbits of kind of his recollection that he shared in these minutes, because, of course, they carry over into actions that the RLDS church took later, in removing the doctrine of baptism for the dead from the Doctrine and Covenants, putting it into the appendix years ago, and then by conference action, removing it all together, so you can see it as kind of continuity of

the story that kind of begins in the Reorganization here with that meeting. So that's fascinating. As you both did your research and prepare, and I realized it was a it was a long period of preparation, John, especially you said, You've, you've been fascinated with William Marks for a long time through your other research. Did you learn anything new, or gain any insights, as you prepared that, that were just really kind of, oh, my gosh, or AHA kind of learnings or incidents that really stuck with you that you could share with our listeners?

John Dinger 26:46

Well, I guess, for me, one of the things that really drew me to him, I guess, that I learned. But hopefully this answers your question. But it was new to me when I read how right after the martyrdom where there was sort of a dispute over who's going to lead the church. It was between Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon and Sydney lost. And so then the 12 apostles, excommunicated him. And it wasn't quite the 12 apostles, it was the it was the High Council that was kind of hijacked by the 12 apostles. And so we have this just weird meeting, where the 12 say, this is a High Council meeting, they're in charge, but then take it over and sort of act as prosecutors. And so this aha of what a great man is, it kind of alluded to it. But William Marks sees that the rules set up by Joseph Smith and by the revelations aren't being followed. And one of the AHA things to me, I guess, was I started working on this when I was still in law school. So I was really into, you know, statutes and rules and that kind of thing. And so I watched that in the High Council. in Nauvoo, William Marks helps set certain procedures that we actually see in the legal field. Such things as the defendants, I guess, I'll call them are the people that are up for excommunication or those kinds of things, they have to be given notice, they have to have the opportunity to be present and speak in their own behalf. They have to be given representation, if you will,\. Certain members on the High Councilor are supposed to speak on their behalf. But and so he helped set these rules in place that that needed to be followed. And what he saw in this hearing is they were not being followed. And so he knowing how bad this would be said, "Hey, guys, there are rules, and somebody has to speak for Sidney Rigdon. So that's going to be me. And so in a way, he ensured that, and I'm kind of talking in air quotes here, that it was a legal excommunication. He was the one who stood up and did that, but by keeping it legal, keeping it right and following the rules, it just had these detrimental effects on him. And so the AHA, to me, I guess, was just watching sort of the church government governance, and how he fit into that and in rules and doing the right thing doesn't always have the right results. At least for the person doing the right thing always doesn't end up right. But that was one of the things that that I think really stuck out to me. Um, sort of an aha moment.

Karin Peter 30:01

I was just doing some research for a podcast for Lent. And one of the Lenten scriptures, this, this lectionary cycle is the take up your cross and follow Me. And that's kind of that's kind of that kind of a moment there for William Marks, isn't it?

John Dinger 30:19

It does and that it goes right back to kind of what I said with his obituary that was written that that last line that Joseph the third wrote about that, that which was not right, he would not do. So that's what really sticks out to me.

Karin Peter 30:38

That's a powerful line.

30:40

And it's so sad to that. This was one of the reasons why he was removed from the High Council. And the story behind that is just so incredibly unjust, because by him representing Sidney, Rigdon, then later he was removed from the High Council without anyone representing him. He was just without even being there. Without anyone speaking for him. He was removed from the council. So he did not get the opportunity to be represented, like he gave to Sidney Rigdon. So that was just,

Karin Peter 31:15

Yeah. The injustice of it.

Cheryl Bruno 31:18

Yes.

John Dinger 31:19

Well... a sad story for me as a Brighamite but I have a sense that the Josephites are cheering, thinking, Oh, good, great, they cut him off, we're gonna get him.

Karin Peter 31:32

Don't know, we can look back and wonder about some of those things? Absolutely. As we, as we go on, I want to ask you a couple of questions that maybe go out of the more documentary style, unbiased, observer historian kind of profile, and ask you some questions about how this shapes and forms us, and how history, the story of history, can shape and form us as a people. So how might a more if not in depth understanding of William Marks, but a more prevalent understanding of William Marks, shape and form discipleship in Community of Christ and other Restoration traditions? Obviously, it would be different than the Utah tradition than in the Community of Christ tradition, but from your perspective, what do you see that might be beneficial? Do you have a deeper understanding of this individual?

Cheryl Bruno 32:36

For me, something that can come across in both traditions is he's an example to me of retaining your faith throughout trials and vicissitudes of life, because he was sort of squeezed out of Nauvoo. And then he just, he had trials when he joined with the group of followers of James Strang, and followers of Charles Thompson. And he just was looking and looking looking for so many years. And Joseph Smith, III wrote about him, that he retained his faith in Mormonism, as taught by Joseph and Hiram, to the end of his life. So even through those times, when he didn't realize there was gonna ever be a church that he could comfortably associate with, he still retained that faith and went back to the first principles of the Book of Mormon, and kept those as guidelines in his life. So I think that that's something that we can do also, because all of us are going to experience times when the church is disappointing to us, or, you know, maybe it doesn't seem like God is acting the way we think he should. So, but to retain our faith, and that's an important thing that William Marks teaches us.

John Dinger 33:57

I like that.

Karin Peter 33:58

Yeah, I do, too. Thanks, John. say why?

John Dinger 34:02

Well, it seems I look at him, right, he was an individual who is always trying and constantly being let down. And it's so easy to just throw it in right and be done and say enough of this. In one of his letters, as he wrote to James Adams after his dealings with the Strangites. He said, I arrived there on that day, with but little understanding of the work and about as much faith for I have been so often disappointed that I had become fearful and unbelieving, and with a determination to be very inquisitive. For I have learned from experience that it is a very easy thing to be deceived. And so I like that how he talks about being inquisitive and how it's easy to be deceived. And he was he was let down. He kind of describes this period after after his time with Charles B. Thompson is I have long been wandering in darkness and and following false prophets until I had become tiresome and weary. And so he got down, right he was despondent, he had bad days, he struggled, he... but But even though he was let down by churches, by leaders, by people he believed were men of God, he knew that there was truth out there, and he kept seeking for it. And you compare that to when he finally met and went to the first conference with those with the RLDS church, it talks about this just overwhelming Spirit and love that he felt. And then he felt homeless there. And so I guess what we can learn from him is, listen to your gut, listen to the Spirit, don't give up when when men let you down, just remember it is a man that is letting you down, not God, and keep seeking, keep looking until you find that spiritual home that's right for you.

Cheryl Bruno 36:02

Another thing that was disappointing to him was that his family didn't retain their faith, they had seen so many awful things that he wrote about in the letter. One of his daughters, and his grandson did join the Reorganization as well as he did, but others just lost their faith. Because he they had seen so many striving, so many fighting, so much fighting between the the different breakoff sects, and they had just had it. So he, he was very disappointed that his family was affected like that, but he did retain his faith.

John Dinger 36:49

And he retained his family. They all live near him. Even though they didn't join with him in his belief, they were still around each other and still a family. And I mean, we don't have his thoughts, you know, written down, this is some of the stuff that's missing, but they all lived around each other and, and stayed as a family.

Karin Peter 37:12

So there are so many wonderful qualities about this individual that kind of stand out. But I'm wondering, in kind of the realm of study, you both have lived with William Marks for a little while. And when we live with someone, we begin to adopt some patterns of their behavior or, or maybe embody some of their traits and characteristics. So what about William Marks has shaped you in your own discipleship outside of historical study, outside of all of that, just inside of you, what do you think you're going to carry with you from this period of living with William Marks?

John Dinger 37:54

So for me, it could be that I'm just getting older, and a little more confident. But I guess the thing that I like is, I guess what I'll call respectful dissent. When he saw things going, that he didn't believe were right, he was very kind about it. He was respect respectful about it, but he raised his voice and made known, "Hey, I don't think this is right." And I think that that's something we actually need more of in churches, people need to stand up when the status quo is going a way that maybe you don't think Christ would want that respectful dissent is okay. And I think he is a wonderful example of that.

Karin Peter 38:35

Thanks, John. Cheryl.

Cheryl Bruno 38:38

For me, I guess, some of the things I learned as I went through this journey with William Marks is that I have often maybe a little bit of a myopic view of history, because I'm looking through the lens of my religious tradition. And so following William Marks and seeing how he looked at the gospel, through a Strangite position, or through the teachings of Thompson, Charles Thompson, or when he was out there with nobody should I should I build up a church myself, you know, or whether he was with the Reorganization, it's, it's all, he sees the gospel a little bit differently in each place. And so that was fun for me to kind of look at, because when I first started with William Marks, studying him, I only knew his positions in the LDS church, I only knew him up to the death of Joseph Smith. I didn't know anything else about him. So learning those things is opened my mind I think, a little bit different religious traditions and, and to seeing doctrines differently. You mentioned the baptism for the dead. So it's interesting to encounter what the other faiths believe about these early doctrines and how they develop over time and that's something that William Marks helped me discover.

Karin Peter 40:04

I appreciate both of those. John respectful dissent in Community of Christ, we have a tradition called faithful disagreement. So that resonates with us in our tradition, we can have common ground there with you. And Cheryl, Community of Christ has had to broaden its own lens, new Mormon history was quite a shock or Community of Christ in the 1970s. And even now, things come out that are quite surprising for folks who learned a faith building version of church history and have had to broaden their own lens as we've gone forward as a people. So again, we have common ground with you there as well. I wanted to give each of you opportunity for any, like last thoughts, any pieces of the story you want to share before we close our episode? So Cheryl, we'll start with you. Any last comments you want to make about this topic about?

Cheryl Bruno 41:00

Well, um, it was fun to write. Our final chapter sort of discusses the how William Marks was viewed over the years and how he gained the reputation he had within the LDS church and Community of Christ. And that was very interesting to me to be writing that chapter with John and discovering all these little I guess, little barbs, I can even say that people would throw out about William Marks. So I mean, I would just say, like, just give him justice, like he gave to others, you know, give him a little bit of justice and look at his life in a forgiving light, you know, because not everybody is perfect. And William Marks I'm sure was not perfect. And the Brighamites especially wanted to pick it out all his faults and tell us what he had done wrong. So, you know, give him give him a chance, and also bring him back into Mormon history. He's been lost because especially LDS. We haven't liked the way he behaved. And so we just

kind of erased him from Mormon history. And we don't see all the contributions he made in Nauvoo because we think in the end, he betrayed Joseph Smith, or he betrayed Brigham Young at least. So give him a chance and bring him back into Mormon history.

Karin Peter 42:37

John, how about you?

John Dinger 42:37

Oh, I think my last comments aren't real fair, because it's going to kind of be I guess, a bit of a tease. It will focus mainly talking about him post-Nauvoo and into the restoration, the Reorganization. But there is so much more, as we've kind of teased and talked about he joined the church during the Kirtland era, he was integral in Kirtland, he owned the temple for a time. He then moved to Nauvoo, where he was sort of against gathering that he was one of the most prolific individuals there. There were those who, and by those people who eventually went to Brigham Young, believed he, William Marks should be the successor. And had he probably pushed it during succession, he probably could have. He had so much to do with polygamy, with helping route it out. So many excommunication trials as High Council and then served on a grand jury that actually indicted Joseph Smith, for polygamy, for adultery and fornication. And so we've just talked about such a small part. He, when Cheryl talks about bringing him he needs to be brought back to Mormon history, he does because he was there for so much of it, so integral, so important, that he does he deserves that justice. He deserves to be brought back. I think you saw my tradition have to do it with Emma. They had to accept that. We got this wrong. I think William Marks deserves that same sort of treatment. Just this good man where truly I don't see him failing the church. I see the sort of Brighamite, my tradition, failing William Marks, and it ended up all the better for the Reorganization because he is such a good man.

Karin Peter 44:45

Well, I want to thank you both John Dinger and Cheryl Bruno for joining us today here at Project Zion Podcast. For our listeners, we encourage you to view this lecture that John gave on the historicsitesfoundation.org website in the archives, as well as the other lectures from the spring series at historicsitesfoundation.org. Also, as we mentioned, their book is coming out in May. I don't know if we got the official title of the book. Can one of you tell us the official title?

Cheryl Bruno 45:22

We're not quite sure on that yet. But it's going to have to do with the gathering. Because he was. He was very... that was one of our themes of the book. So we may incorporate that that in the title.

Karin Peter 45:38

So we'll be surprised when it comes out in May. Absolutely. So be looking for that. So in the meantime, this is Cuppa Joe on Karin Peter, your host. Were part of the Project Zion Podcast, and we thank you so much for listening