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# William Marks

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1792–1872

D&C 117:10; 124:79

In April 1835 William was baptized and ordained a priest at Portage, New York. On June 3, 1836, he was ordained an elder. Following this ordination, he moved his family to Kirtland, Ohio, to be with the Saints of God. In Kirtland, William owned and operated a successful book and stationery store.

As for service in the Church, on September 3, 1837, William was called to be on the Kirtland High Council. Two weeks later, he was appointed to be an “agent” to Bishop Newel K. Whitney.<sup>1</sup> On March 29, 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith in a vision saw William being pursued by enemies. When it appeared the enemies were going to catch him—

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.”<sup>2</sup>

In a July 8, 1838, revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, William was instructed to settle his business in Kirtland and move on to Missouri, for he was to “preside in the midst of my people in the city of Far West” (D&C 117:10). William closed his book and stationery store in Kirtland and was en route to Missouri when mobs drove Latter-day Saints from Far West. William changed his route and joined the Saints in Quincy, Illinois.

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<sup>1</sup> *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 8 vols. (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1967–1976), 3:721.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:12.

At the October 1839 general conference in Commerce (later Nauvoo), William was called to preside over the stake. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed a city alderman, regent of the University of Nauvoo, and an associate justice of the municipal court. Fulfilling such important callings did not suit him well. William began to publicly find fault with Church leaders, especially the Prophet Joseph. Because of his prominent positions in Nauvoo, people listened to what he had to say.

The Prophet Joseph categorized William Marks in the same league as 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."<sup>3</sup>

At the October 1844 general conference, Latter-day Saints voted to reject William as the Nauvoo stake president for his support of Sidney Rigdon's claims to the presidency of the Church. On April 6, 1846, at a Strangite conference, William made a motion that the "Church receive, acknowledge, and appoint JAMES J. STRANG as President of this Church, Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator."<sup>4</sup> William was appointed president pro temp of the Strangite high priests quorum, a bishop, an apostle, and counselor to James J. Strang. Yet in 1849 he withdrew his affiliation with the Strangites.

For a time, William flirted with the religious stance of Charles B. Thompson and John E. Page. It was not until June 1859 that he affiliated and became prominent in the Reorganization movement. He was one of three men to ordain Joseph Smith III as president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In March 1863 he was called to be first counselor to President Joseph Smith III. William died on May 22, 1872, in Plano, Illinois, at age seventy-nine.

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<sup>3</sup> History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1857. Joseph Smith Papers.

<sup>4</sup> "Cornerstones of Reorganization: A Few Facts Concerning its Founders. ... Compiled from Early Church History," 4. Church History Library.