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Abstract Review of *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (2008), by Margaret Barker.

ANTECEDENTS OF THE RESTORATION IN THE ANCIENT TEMPLE

Frederick M. Huchel

Review of Margaret Barker. *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*. London: T&T Clark, 2007. xii + 286 pp., bibliography and indexes. \$130.00 (hardcover from Continuum Books); \$29.95 (paperback from Continuum Books).

Margaret Barker is an unassuming British scholar whose primary engagement is with the Old Testament. Her expertise and research have also embraced the New Testament and, more recently, a consideration of Mormon sources. When I say she is unassuming, I mean that her personal manner is utterly devoid of pomposity. By contrast, her writing is bold and direct—she has not hesitated to turn the world of biblical scholarship on its head. And when she speaks, her crisp, direct delivery takes charge of the audience from the very first sentence. Well trained, she writes and speaks with authority, but she has chosen to be an independent scholar, free from the constraints of mainstream academia.

Her first published book, *The Older Testament*, appeared in 1987.¹ Since then she has produced twelve books and many articles. The shape of her work can be traced by the titles of her publications. *The Older Testament* puts forth one of her main theses: that the so-called reform of King Josiah in the seventh century BC was less a reform than a bold apostate purge of Judaism. She backs up her assertions

1. Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987).

with solid research. In the words of one Protestant publication, “Her thesis is that the ‘reform’ of Josiah and Hilkiah just before the Exile, was actually a massive repression of an older Israelite religion and priesthood.”² The writer adds: “These original elements were systematically removed—in terms of the furnishings of the Temple quite literally—by the puritanical party we know as the Deuteronomists. The Deuteronomists revised much of the tradition to suit their iconoclastic and radically monotheistic theology.”³

The Deuteronomist purge is only one of the hypotheses Barker puts forth, but it is one of the cornerstones of her work. The bottom line is that scholars have taken it as “given” that the text of the Bible as we have it is reliable. Barker argues that there was an older tradition, the Bible before the Deuteronomists, as it were, that was based in the First Temple: Solomon’s temple. She calls this older tradition “temple theology.” With the destruction of Jerusalem just after 600 BC, all known copies of the scriptures were destroyed. When Ezra and his priestly colleagues recomposed the Old Testament during the exile, it was an Old Testament with a Deuteronomist slant, a scriptural corpus from which almost all the old First Temple theology and books were eliminated. According to Barker, “It is becoming increasingly clear that the Old Testament that should accompany the New Testament is not the one usually included in the Bible.”⁴ We cannot be assured that the books long accepted as canonical are the same texts that composed the pre-exile canon. Nor can we be sure that the books *not* included in the post-exile canon are properly excluded. The Lord cautioned Joseph Smith not to reject the Apocrypha out of hand (Doctrine and Covenants 91). One of Barker’s main theses is that from certain apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works we can recover

2. “On Margaret Barker: A New Paradigm in Biblical Studies,” World Alliance of Reformed Churches RAX Web site, <http://home.earthlink.net/~paulrack/id55.html> (accessed 14 November 2008).

3. “On Margaret Barker.” For an explanation of the Deuteronomists, see Margaret Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 523–42.

4. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), xi, emphasis removed.

significant elements of the configuration of pre-Deuteronomist, First Temple theology—works carried (and preserved) far from Jerusalem and Deuteronomist influence. She is specifically fond of First Enoch.⁵ Barker gives evidence that seems to fit well with the prominence given to Enoch in Joseph Smith’s restoration—and especially with the presence of an Enoch text in the Pearl of Great Price (Moses 6–7).

The First Temple theology that Barker teases out of pre-Deuteronomist sources gives a vastly different picture of the early Old Testament than has been believed in both Catholic and Protestant scholarly circles. “Were anyone to demonstrate these hypotheses,” one writer has pointed out, “it could have the potential to cause a seismic shift in the way we read and interpret the Bible.”⁶ In addition, “Barker paints a picture of the era from the reform of Josiah and Hilkiiah to the visions of John the Apostle that is radically different from what we learned in seminary.”⁷ Mainstream scholars, it is true, tend not to like the implications of such a radical shift, but they find it difficult to refute her.

Before she had contact with Latter-day Saint scholars, Barker had staked out positions that eventually brought her to the attention of Noel B. Reynolds, John W. Welch, Kevin Christensen, Daniel C. Peterson, and other Latter-day Saints who found that her work was supporting positions taken by Joseph Smith—positions that have long been at odds with mainstream Christianity. She made some tentative correlations with the Book of Mormon in her 2003 forum address at Brigham Young University.⁸ She continued to consider the connections in her 2004 book *An Extraordinary Gathering of Angels*,⁹ in her address at the 2005 bicentennial symposium on Joseph Smith at the Library of Congress,¹⁰ and in her address at the

5. Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988). Republished by Sheffield Phoenix Press in 2005.

6. “On Margaret Barker.”

7. “On Margaret Barker.”

8. The presentation was published as “What Did King Josiah Reform?” in Welch, Seely, and Seely, *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, 523–42.

9. Margaret Barker, *An Extraordinary Gathering of Angels* (London: MQ Publications, 2004).

10. Published as “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 69–82.

annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Diego, California, in November 2007.¹¹

It is in the interface between Barker's biblical studies and Joseph Smith's restoration that the book *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (along with her other books and articles) has relevance for Latter-day Saints. In effect, much of her work can be viewed as a witness to important aspects of the restoration. Many doctrinal facets of the restoration that have been the most annoying to mainstream Christian scholars are also the very things now shown by Barker's research to have come from the older tradition of the First Temple, whereas the mainstream Christian tradition rests on the Deuteronomist textual tradition.¹²

When Joseph Smith says that "we believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly" (Articles of Faith 1:8), when the Lord says to Moses that "the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write" (Moses 1:41), when Joseph says—referring, we might now assume, to the Deuteronomist recomposition of Genesis during the exile—that the first letter in our book of Genesis "was not originally put there when the inspired man wrote it, but it has been since added by an old Jew,"¹³ the work of Barker and the doctrines of Joseph Smith's restoration seem to complement each other. Barker's work adds a dimension of understanding to the "why" of things Joseph Smith taught.¹⁴

In Barker's explanation of King Josiah's purge we find a setting and a matrix for understanding the whys of Lehi's conflict with the leading party in Jerusalem, leading to his own throne theophany, his flight into the wilderness, the critical necessity of obtaining the brass plates, and his two older sons' conflict with him and Nephi, who would appear to be holding to important elements of the older,

11. Margaret Barker, "Who Was Melchizedek and Who Was His God?" copy in my possession, courtesy of Margaret Barker.

12. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent," *Ensign*, November 2007, 40–42.

13. *History of the Church*, 6:475.

14. See, for example, the loss of the "plain and precious" things in 1 Nephi 13 (esp. vv. 28–29).

First Temple theology.¹⁵ Barker's work starts bells ringing, bringing to mind Hugh Nibley's pioneering work on Christ's forty-day ministry.¹⁶ It is the "Hidden Tradition" that forms the ancient context for Latter-day Saint temples and temple worship as a restoration of things "kept hid" from the world but given in sacred settings to the faithful from the dispensation of Adam to the dispensation of the Prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 124:41; 128:18).

It is the First Temple tradition—the very form and function of the First Temple—that, according to Barker, was markedly altered in the temple(s) built after the return from Babylon. Explanation of this forms the core of her work. The thread she strings together begins with *The Older Testament* (the pre-Deuteronomist one containing the theology of the First Temple) and proceeds through *The Lost Prophet* (Enoch) and *The Gate of Heaven* (the temple). In her book *The Great Angel*, she shows that the God of the Old Testament is Yahweh (Jehovah), the same being as the Messiah or Christ of the New Testament. This is a concept familiar to Latter-day Saints but foreign to much mainstream theology. The book *On Earth as It Is in Heaven* is, in her own estimation, "in effect a supplement to *The Gate of Heaven*."¹⁷ *The Risen Lord* makes a bridge to the New Testament. She shows that Jesus, as High Priest of what was considered to be a Jewish heresy, was in effect rolling back the Deuteronomist apostasy and restoring ideas found in the First Temple. In her commentary on Isaiah,¹⁸ Barker "argued that Isaiah was the crucial influence on Jesus . . . and that the Isaiah tradition continued to be dominant in the early church . . . [by representing] the world view of the first temple, an Enochic . . . faith . . . known to the Christians who consciously looked back to the first, the

15. I have discussed this in my unpublished essays "The Book of Mormon and the Deuteronomists" (2006) and "Things Kept Hid: An Ancient Context for Mormon Understanding of the Old Testament" (2008).

16. See Hugh Nibley, "Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: The Forty-day Mission of Christ—the Forgotten Heritage" and other essays in his *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987).

17. <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/History.htm> (accessed 18 November 2008).

18. Margaret Barker, "Isaiah," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 489–542.

true, temple.”¹⁹ *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*²⁰ continued her New Testament studies, in which she argues that Revelation, as well as the Johannine Gospel, was rooted in Isaiah and in the theology of the First Temple. Her next book, *The Great High Priest*,²¹ consisted of a collection of essays exploring the *liturgy* of the temple. In this book she examines the “hidden tradition” as related to the liturgy of the First Temple. In *Temple Theology*²² she spotlights such critical elements as creation and the eternal covenant. Her graphic exploration of angel tradition, *An Extraordinary Gathering of Angels*, though at first seemingly foreign to Latter-day Saint doctrine, ends up, I believe, showing that the understanding of angels in the First Temple fits within the context of the latter-day restoration, with references to Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and other angels. *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*²³ highlights the importance of Enoch, Aaron, and Melchizedek.²⁴ The prominence of Enoch and Melchizedek in First Temple theology is found nowhere in modern religious tradition except in the restoration of ancient texts and doctrines brought forth by Joseph Smith. *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* is, in effect, a continuation of *The Great High Priest*.²⁵ These elements should not be foreign to Latter-day Saints, particularly those who are familiar with Hugh Nibley, who introduced the Saints to many of the same subjects. Although Nibley and Barker approach the subjects from different perspectives, their work seems complementary.

Barker’s passion is the recovery of the First Temple, its form and function, in light of her discoveries regarding the pre-Deuteronomist “Older Testament.” Her interest is in the temple, before Deuteronomists

19. <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/History.htm#Isaiah> (accessed 23 October 2008).

20. Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: T&T Clark, 2000).

21. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest* (London: T&T Clark, 2003).

22. Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004).

23. Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: SPCK, 2007).

24. See also her presentation at the November 2007 annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, held in San Diego, California. The presentation was entitled “Who Was Melchizedek and Who Was His God?”

25. Author’s personal conversation with Margaret Barker, 19 November 2007, San Diego, California.

presumably changed both its form and function. She has explored what she calls the secret tradition, as well as atonement, healing, liturgy, priesthood, the veil, and the holy of holies, in *The Great High Priest* and *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*. In the latter book's first essay, Barker says that an Essene who received the *musterion*, or hidden teachings of the temple, "swore a tremendous oath 'invoking the living God and calling to witness his almighty right hand, and the Spirit of God, the incomprehensible, and the Seraphim and Cherubim, who have insight into all, and the whole heavenly host'" to the effect "that he would reveal none of their secrets, even under torture, and that he would preserve their books and the names of the angels" (p. 5).

In the book of Ether, the God of the Old Testament appears to the brother of Jared. The text says, "Behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: . . . Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ" (Ether 3:13–14). The identity of Jesus Christ as the Jehovah of the Old Testament is familiar to Latter-day Saints, but it is foreign to credal Christianity. Barker discusses the understanding of early Christians (building on the pre-Deuteronomists) that Jehovah and Jesus Christ were one and the same being. "Jesus was Yahweh" (p. 76); "When the Christians read the Old Testament, they read it as a record of the work and words of Yahweh, the LORD, the pre-incarnate Jesus" (p. 78); "John was emphatic that the One who appeared in the Old Testament was not God the Father but Jesus, before his incarnation: 'Not that anyone has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father' (John 6.46)" (p. 79); "There is no doubt that Jesus was recognized and proclaimed as Yahweh, the LORD, the Son of God Most High" (p. 84); "When the Christians declared that Jesus was Yahweh this implied he was a High Priest like Melchizedek" (p. 97).

Through a discussion of the Greek word *Kyrios* (p. 77), Barker shows that when the New Testament refers to "the Lord," primitive Christians understood it in precisely the same sense as the word translated "LORD" in the Old Testament: Yahweh (or Jehovah). Using arguments that have not been adequately utilized by Latter-day Saint scholars, she holds that

Jesus was also described as “Yahweh”. John the Baptist had preached “Prepare the way of Yahweh” (Matt. 3.3; Luke 3.4 quoting Isa. 40.3). He sent to ask Jesus if he was indeed the one who was to come (Luke 7.18–23), and Jesus implied that he was. Jesus was called “Saviour” and “Redeemer”, titles of Yahweh in the Old Testament. (p. 77)

“The Old Testament,” Barker concludes, “was read as the record of two deities: God Most High and his Son Yahweh. Philo emphasized this, and since he was chosen to represent the Jewish community in Alexandria before the Emperor Caligula in 40 CE, he and his beliefs must have been acceptable” (p. 79).

Discussing a temple doctrine that she calls “binitarianism” (p. 92), Barker explains that “worshipping one God and one LORD means that there were two divine figures in heaven to receive this worship. Who were these figures? This is a complex issue, not least because there is so little evidence for anything. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, especially when other factors such as later evidence make one identification of the figures more likely than another” (p. 84). She clinches her argument by saying, “*The Christians were not involving a figure other than the God of Israel in their worship. They worshipped Yahweh incarnate*” (p. 89, emphasis in original). She cites John 17 in support of her position (p. 90), a chapter translated as a temple text, in the same sense, by Hugh Nibley.²⁶ Barker explains temple binitarianism:

Returned to its temple context, and interpreted within temple norms, early Christian worship was binitarian because all temple worship was binitarian. The human king was the presence or face of the LORD, Immanuel, and so Christian devotion to Jesus the Anointed One as Yahweh the LORD was no innovation. Far from there being no parallel to this Christian practice in Hebrew tradition, it was in fact the restoration of the original temple cult. (p. 92)

26. See Hugh Nibley, “The Meaning of the Atonement,” in Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 606–7.

Barker concludes her essay with these words: “The Christians worshipped the LORD, the God of Israel. They knew—how we do not know—the ways of the original temple and restored them. They proclaimed Jesus as the great High Priest, the LORD, Melchizedek, the Son of God Most High, Immanuel, God with us” (p. 98).

Barker’s work may help provide the Saints with the tools to discuss important aspects of their faith with others. The genius of Barker’s work is that it helps us understand *why* our beliefs are as they are, that they are not based in Joseph Smith alone. She gives us tools to take our doctrine back past Joseph Smith into antiquity. Her work, I believe, helped us to realize, in contrast to the Deuteronomistic doctrines that were made normative, that our doctrine goes back to the First Temple and that it is thus a restoration given by God himself to Adam, to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, *and* to Joseph Smith

In discussing the form and authority of baptism, Barker discusses the Greek word *’eis* and notes that baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ carries the meaning of “baptizing *into* the name of Jesus Christ” (p. 119). She says that the phrase has to do with the authority of the baptizer (the priesthood), implying “that the name was borne by the baptizer and was the source of his authority” (p. 119). This is testimony of the form given in the Book of Mormon: “Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen” (3 Nephi 11:25). She also discusses the anointing that follows baptism—as it does in the temple—and says that a “derivation . . . , used in Egypt, mentions only one post-baptismal anointing, when the elder put oil on the forehead, mouth and breast, the whole body, head and face, in the name of the Father, and Son and the Holy Spirit” (p. 132). She quotes Cyril of Jerusalem, whom Nibley quotes in the same context,²⁷ as saying, “With this ointment, your forehead and sense organs are sacramentally anointed, in

27. See Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2005), 515–22.

such wise that while your body is quickened with the visible oil, your soul is satisfied by the holy quickening Spirit” (p. 133).²⁸

Barker also takes on the subject of the heavenly ascent. In these ascensions the end of the journey was the face-to-face meeting with God. The pilgrimage tradition began and was brought into full bloom with such journeys as the Camino de las Estrellas (the pilgrimage from England and Europe across Spain to Santiago de Compostela) and the journey to Canterbury Cathedral, so wonderfully memorialized in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

The Deuteronomists had, Barker claims, “changed the language to make it not state that the pilgrim came before the Lord. In the original, the Lord came face-to-face with the pilgrim in the temple. The idea of an ascent, and of a face-to-face meeting with deity, was suppressed in the Deuteronomist ‘reform.’” Barker cites a number of places in the Old Testament where the language seems to have been subtly altered to obfuscate the original meaning (pp. 146–47). Prefacing her list, she says,

Three times a year according to the ancient calendars—at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths—the men of Israel had to make a pilgrimage to the temple, “to appear before the LORD” (Exod. 23.17; 34.23; Deut. 16.16). “To appear before the LORD” is the usual translation, but the Hebrew actually says: three times a year shall all your men *see the face of the LORD*. Under the influence of the Deuteronomists and their spiritual heirs, it became the custom to read the letters differently, even though the Psalms show clearly what the original meaning must have been. None of these readings involves any change in the consonants of the text, just in the way they were understood and therefore pronounced. (p. 146, emphasis in original)

28. Compare Hugh Nibley, “But What Kind of Work?” in Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 265–70; and “Return to the Temple,” in Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 56.

According to Barker, “*The pilgrim seeing the LORD in the temple must have been a part of the older tradition*” (pp. 148–49, emphasis in original), one that she identifies in the Old Testament. The doctrine of the temple being a place to see the Lord’s face is a doctrine restored by Joseph Smith. One most important thing that Richard Bushman makes clear in his recent book on Joseph Smith concerns the point and emphasis of Joseph Smith’s restoration. Bushman did, in a very important sense, figure out what Joseph Smith was up to. “In the temple, . . . Joseph hoped his Saints would face God as Moses’ people never could. At the completion of Solomon’s temple, God came in a cloud of glory. A fall 1832 revelation said that when the Kirtland temple was finished, “a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord.”²⁹ “The people were told . . . [that] if they kept the temple holy, ‘the pure in heart that shall come into it, shall see God.’”³⁰ Joseph’s whole emphasis was to prepare his people to see God face-to-face. He restored the First Temple doctrine of the temple as a place where one went with the full expectation of seeing God face-to-face. This is the kernel that is at the heart of such verses as D&C 88:68 and D&C 93:1 and that is brought to realization in D&C 110.

In Barker’s view, this brings up the matter of incarnation: the anthropomorphism of God (p. 153). If, as related in so many passages in the Old Testament (and related noncanonical texts), seers saw the face of God, then God had a face. Barker cites Philo as saying (and she gives linguistic justification for it) that the name *Israel* means “the one who sees God” (p. 154), as indeed Jacob did at Beth-el (Genesis 28). Indeed, the place-name *Penuel* means “the face of God” (p. 157). She shows how the term was expanded to refer to Israel as a people and later to Jesus himself (pp. 154–56).

Barker takes up the subject of the “Great Oath,” which she also explored in an essay entitled “The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin.”³¹ Using words like “the Great Oath,” “the Cosmic Covenant,” and “the

29. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 217.

30. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 222.

31. Margaret Barker, “The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin,” <http://thinlyveiled.com/barkerweb.htm> (originally printed in *The Ecologist*, January 2000).

Eternal Covenant,” which she says “are all, in essence, the same thing,” she discusses the great ancient covenant that binds all creation. She introduces the Hebrew word for “covenant,” *b’rith*, the German *Bund*, “a binding oath.”³² Her treatment of covenant should remind Latter-day Saints of binding and sealing in the milieu of “the New and Everlasting Covenant.” Latter-day Saints find that Barker has in effect footnoted Joseph Smith’s revelation in D&C 1:15 (“they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant,” echoing Isaiah 24:5, referring to what the Deuteronomists did to the temple) that altering the rituals of the temple brings a breaking of the cosmic (or everlasting) covenant, which, Barker explains, “binds the forces of creation”:³³ “For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant” (D&C 1:15). Such changes as the Deuteronomists made in the temple bring destruction, says Barker (pp. 182–83),³⁴ and, as in Noah’s day, chaos begins to threaten the world.

In *Temple Themes* Barker comes back to a theme she mentioned in her 2003 address at BYU. At that time, she said, referring to Isaiah as a proponent of the cult of the First Temple: “Isaiah, it would seem, favored the older ways. He spoke of the great tree that had been felled but preserved the holy seed in its stump (Isaiah 6:13).”³⁵ Keeping in mind that Isaiah (740–701 BC)³⁶ and Lehi (left Jerusalem 600 BC) were roughly contemporary, and that Jacob’s allegory of the olive tree was also set in the cultural milieu of that time,³⁷ Barker’s statement about the holy seed of the great tree (which she associates with Asherah in the temple)³⁸ being preserved in its stump ought to generate further

32. Barker, “The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin,” 2.

33. See Barker, “The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin,” 1. See also D&C 1:1–17.

34. See also Barker, “The Book of Enoch and Cosmic Sin,” 6.

35. Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?”

36. David R. Seely and Robert D. Hunk, “Dramatis Personae: The World of Lehi (ca 700 B.C.),” in Welch, Seely, and Seely, *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, 52.

37. See Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds., *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994); and essays in Welch, Seely, and Seely, *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*.

38. See Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 16–25. A longer version of this study, entitled “Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23,” appears in *Mormons, Scriptures, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998).

study by Latter-day Saint scholars. It is not without interest that the felling of the Asherah (a stylized tree) was contemporaneous with the disappearance of the holy anointing oil from the temple (p. 215),³⁹ that the holy anointing oil was olive oil,⁴⁰ and that Barker links them (p. 215). Lehi, I do not find it possible to doubt, was an anti-Deuteronomist, and the felling of the Asherah by Josiah (640–609 BC)—which happened in Lehi’s lifetime—would have been of great significance to him.

Barker nicely complements Hugh Nibley’s article on the early Christian prayer circle.⁴¹ She enriches our understanding of the music that accompanied the temple choral dance that was thought to open the conduit to heaven. In the context of the great throne-visions of the Old Testament, she shows that not only the singing of angelic choirs (p. 222) but also the sound of the beating of angelic wings “like the noise of great waters” (Ezekiel 1:24) was music accompanying the vision of the heavenly throne (p. 222), a vision opened up by the circular prayer-dance of the temple.⁴² This should help Latter-day Saints see that Joseph Smith’s language describing his vision in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:3) was part of a temple-prayer tradition that goes back far beyond Joseph Smith, into “the Older Testament.” It helps remind us, as did Nibley,⁴³ that the angels surrounding the heavenly throne in 1 Nephi 1, “singing and praising their God” (1 Nephi 1:8) in that ancient tradition, may have been a heavenly prayer-circle chorus. Barker finds the same angel chorus in the *Ascension of Isaiah* (p. 222) when she writes, citing the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, “from his place in the fire and the music, Abraham looked down on the creation and

39. See also Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?” 533.

40. This is not at all compromised by the fact that the Asherah was a stylized almond tree (Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?” 526; Exodus 25:31–39). The best treatise on tree symbolism is Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1948).

41. Hugh Nibley, “Early Christian Prayer Circle,” in his *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 45–99.

42. See Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, Winter Semester 1986* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 207 (lecture 17).

43. Nibley, “The Heavenly Prologue,” 6.

was able to see the (formerly) invisible angels in their ranks: ‘the host of stars and the orders they were commanded to carry out, and the elements of the earth obeying them’ (Ap. Abr. 19.9). As he sang the song, Abraham saw the harmony of creation” (pp. 224–25). She almost seems to be quoting Hugh Nibley: “If they sang in chorus, would they not dance? Philo says that the true initiate during the rites moves ‘in the circuit of heaven, and is borne around in a circle with the dances of the planets and stars in accordance with the laws of perfect music’—the music of the spheres.”⁴⁴ What we learn about the cosmic dance can help us understand the cosmology of chapter 3 of our Book of Abraham and its accompanying cosmic diagram (Facsimile 2). Writes Barker, “There were far more singing angels in the Hebrew Scriptures than appear in the surface text” (p. 237).

There are, of course, points in which Barker’s opinions diverge from the Latter-day Saint tradition. However, some of the differences turn out to be not so great as at first they appear. One item that seems to be at odds with Latter-day Saint faith is Barker’s statements about monotheism. Latter-day Saints stand firmly with Jews in the *Shema*, the mantra-like “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4). Polytheism (I was once taught at BYU) is pagan, and monotheism is Jewish and Latter-day Saint. The clue comes from the reference that was the set piece of the Deuteronomist purge. Barker explained in her address at BYU that the book of Deuteronomy was written by the Deuteronomists and planted in the temple to be discovered and used as the foundation stone of the purge of Josiah’s time.⁴⁵ It was the Deuteronomists who foisted the kind of strict monotheism upon the people in the seventh century BC. Joseph Smith clearly shows the truth of Barker’s claim. Instead of “In the beginning God,” Joseph Smith renders it “And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods . . .” (Abraham 4:1). Instead of introducing a stand-alone monotheistic deity, Joseph Smith introduces a council of the Gods.⁴⁶ At the end of his brief life,

44. Nibley, “Early Christian Prayer Circle,” 54.

45. Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?” 523.

46. *History of the Church*, 6:307.

Joseph Smith was teaching the plurality of gods.⁴⁷ Latter-day Saints, of course, balk at the word *polytheism* but have no problem with the idea of a “plurality of gods” who are one in purpose. Barker’s discoveries about the First Temple seem to go hand in hand with what Joseph Smith taught.

Another “problem” is that of the resurrection. Latter-day Saints view the resurrection as a return of the spirit to the body after mortal death. Barker speaks of “resurrection” as a state of perfection or exaltation that can occur during mortality (see pp. 111–18). For her, resurrection is tied up in the concept of the “heavenly ascent,” a doctrine of the First Temple but expunged by the Deuteronomists. Even the discussion of the ascent was forbidden. Elements of the heavenly ascent tradition squeaked through into our Bible—for example, in accounts of Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, Jesus, and John. In Barker’s language, once one had experienced the heavenly ascent and had seen God face-to-face, one was in one sense “resurrected.” In his essay “The Meaning of the Atonement,” Nibley notes that the divide is not great; in fact, it is not really a divide at all. Barker tells us that “the central message of Christianity was the atonement” (p. 20). Nibley explains that it is, among other things, the *at-one-ment* that takes place at the veil of the temple.⁴⁸ After one has made the journey of the heavenly ascent and has been taken into the embrace of God at the veil, one gains possession of certain keys. He has the keys of traveling at will up and down the path of the heavenly ascent (see D&C 132:19–20). He has the keys to bind, to seal, and to loose. His eventual exaltation is sealed upon him (D&C 131:5–6). Whereas it is given provisionally in the earthly ordinances, it is sealed upon him by the ordinances of the holy of holies.⁴⁹ In short, once one has the sealing, he becomes as one who has received the blessings received on the Mount of Transfiguration. His blessings and his authority are, in effect, the same as those of one who

47. *History of the Church*, 6:473–79.

48. Hugh Nibley, “The Meaning of the Atonement,” in Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 566–68; 560–62 speaks specifically of the veil.

49. George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 24:274 (12 August 1883).

has been resurrected in glory.⁵⁰ Barker says it this way: “Resurrection could mean many things, but in temple tradition it meant ascent to the heavenly throne” (p. 111). Then she argues that “this means that ‘resurrection’ in this sense was part of what it meant to be the Messiah” (p. 112). This expansion of resurrection beyond Jesus himself into the broader temple context has profound implications for the Latter-day Saint concept of becoming “Saviors on Mount Zion.”⁵¹ Many of those parts of Barker’s research that may seem dissonant in the Latter-day Saint context find a snug fit when we become better acquainted with the nowadays-lesser-known facets of Joseph Smith’s restoration.

It has been said of Hugh Nibley that “although he has not walked down every hallway, he has gone along opening doors that others will have to walk through for many years to come.”⁵² Barker seems to have discovered some of the same doors. She is a teacher of Methodist preachers. That seems in no way to hamper her in what she is finding. In fact, she stands as a witness to principles restored by Joseph Smith. She is not, of course, a Latter-day Saint apologist. She is an independent Bible scholar following her own lights. She is not seeking to support Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, or the restoration. For those Latter-day Saints who find familiar chords being struck in her work, Barker has become a kind of academic Thomas L. Kane.

Not only do her opinions constitute a “seismic shift” for non-Latter-day Saint scholars by painting a picture “radically different from [that] learned in seminary,”⁵³ her work is equally stunning in its implications for Latter-day Saints. For Latter-day Saints who wish to better understand the Bible and their own scriptures, and particularly for those who have been influenced by Nibley, Barker’s *Temple Themes*

50. See Heber C. Kimball blessing, given by Brigham Young, 8 January 1846; Brigham Young blessing, given by Heber C. Kimball, 11 January 1846, in Nauvoo Temple “Book of Anointings,” Historian’s Office Library, 8 January–7 February 1846, Family and Church History Department Archives, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, CR/342/3/box 4.

51. See Obadiah 1:21; *History of the Church*, 4:360, 424–25, 599; 6:184, 365.

52. John W. Welch, “Hugh Nibley and the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 25/1 (2005): 3–9; also available at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/display.php?table=insights&id=417> (accessed 23 October 2008).

53. “On Margaret Barker.”

in Christian Worship (as well as her other books and essays) should be of interest.

Do I agree with everything Barker says? No, but in light of her background and her academic training, that is to be expected. The points of intersection between her findings and Joseph Smith's restoration, however, are far more numerous than those ideas that do not intersect. I find that there is much more to learn from her work than to quibble with.

This book—and really all her work—is focused on the temple. In her conclusion, she makes it clear that “all the mysteries . . . can be traced back to the temple” (p. 239). Her work is a voluminous and well-documented lament that, beginning with Josiah's “reform,” “the world of the temple . . . faded from view” (p. 239).⁵⁴ Her passion is a recovery of the rites of the First Temple. It is this that overarches and undergirds her many books and articles. Having sketched the links between the Christianity of Jesus and his early followers and the First Temple, she notes, “The details of this sketch need to be filled in, but there is enough here, I trust, to show where the roots of Christian worship and its world view are to be found.” For Latter-day Saints, who hold that their faith is indeed a restoration of the theology of Jesus Christ, and of the things of the temple “kept hid” for many, many years, this book, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, provides not only rich detail but also the whys of the restoration, which will become more and more important as Latter-day Saints have to preserve, protect, and defend their faith in these increasingly secular times.⁵⁵

54. This, of course, is the very position pioneered by Hugh Nibley in his 1959 essay “Christian Envy of the Temple,” in his *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 391–434. Nibley's study originally appeared in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50 (1959–60): 97–123, 229–40.

55. I am grateful to Dr. Gregory G. Oman, Gary N. Anderson, and John L. Fowles for comments and suggestions that have made this a better review.

