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## Twenty Years After “Paradigms Regained,” Part 1: The Ongoing, Plain, and Precious Significance of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship for Latter-day Saint Studies

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# TWENTY YEARS AFTER “PARADIGMS REGAINED,” PART 1: THE ONGOING, PLAIN, AND PRECIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF MARGARET BARKER’S SCHOLARSHIP FOR LATTER-DAY SAINT STUDIES

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Kevin Christensen

**Abstract:** *Twenty years ago, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies published “Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies” as its second FARMS Occasional Paper. The first part of this essay provides an overview of Doctor Barker’s scholarship and its wider reception through early 2022, and then includes a broad survey of Latter-day Saint interaction with her work to the present. Part 2 of this essay (forthcoming) will address specific criticisms and appreciations of Barker’s work.*

Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before.<sup>1</sup>

The new paradigm is that the Enoch tradition is ancient, as it claims, and that it was the original myth of the Jerusalem temple, long before Moses became the key figure and the Exodus the defining history. The world of the first temple was the taproot of Christianity, and that is why the young Church treated Enoch as Scripture. Those who preserved the Enoch traditions were a formative influence on Christianity and its key concepts: the Kingdom and the resurrected Messiah.

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1. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 111.

Since Enoch was a high priest figure, and Jesus was declared to be “a great high priest” (Heb. 4:14), we should also concern ourselves with the high priesthood.<sup>2</sup>

Over twenty years ago, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (which became the Maxwell Institute) published my essay “Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies.”<sup>3</sup> Doctor Barker is an English biblical scholar and Methodist preacher who had, up to 2001, published seven books, many papers in a range of scholarly journals, and in 1998 had been elected as the President of the Society for Old Testament Study in England. In the wake of “Paradigms Regained,” Barker accepted an invitation to come to BYU for a week-long seminar in 2003, and that led to many interactions and collaborative ventures with Latter-day Saint scholars, including a notable 2005 talk on the Book of Mormon at the Joseph Smith Conference in Washington D.C., the organization of successful Temple Studies groups in London and Logan, and an appearance in the 2020 video *Temples Through Time*,<sup>4</sup> produced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>5</sup> To date, she has increased the number of her published books to 17,<sup>6</sup> with one more at press for publication and another well underway. Besides her appreciation in Latter-day Saint circles, her wider recognition among many scholars worldwide has also increased, with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen of England awarding her a Lambeth Doctor of Divinity upon the publication of her 2008 book *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*,<sup>7</sup> and the introduction to her 2010 book on *Creation*, by His All Holiness

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2. Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007), 33.

3. Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies,” *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/paradigms-regained-survey-margaret-barkers-scholarship-and-its-significance-mormon-studies>.

4. See the video by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Temples Through Time,” August 6, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6a10hpWeZA>.

5. Sidney Walker, “Watch: What ancient and present-day temples mean to scholars of other faiths and Latter-day Saints,” *Church News*, August 6, 2020, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/temples/2020-08-06/church-video-temples-interfaith-solomons-temple-190400>.

6. See discussion of her books and other publications on her website, MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/Default.htm>.

7. Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, (London: T&T Clark, 2008).

Patriarch Bartholomew.<sup>8</sup> Among numerous honors she has received for her scholarship, many of which will be mentioned below, one that might be of interest to Latter-day Saints is that she was asked to write the section on Isaiah in the highly acclaimed *Eerdman’s Commentary on the Bible*,<sup>9</sup> where she incorporated some of the revolutionary results of her research on temple traditions in early Judaism, while drawing connections between Isaiah and 1 Enoch.

To understand who Margaret Barker is and the reasons for both the wide appreciation of her work and the peculiar Latter-day Saint interest, I will begin by offering an overview of her life and work to demonstrate how and why she gained prominence as a biblical scholar. The detailed picture will be important both as a story of interest and because, once established, it provides a check on the accuracy of the picture offered by her critics. The details also demonstrate accumulating points of significance in her scholarship. With the broad picture of Barker’s significance established, I will then tell the story of Latter-day Saint interest as a growing and arresting phenomenon.

### **An Overview of Barker’s Scholarship and Its Reception**

Born in England in 1944, Margaret Barker was raised as a devoted Christian in “the most Protestant part of the Church of England and became a Methodist and then a Methodist preacher, in 1984.”<sup>10</sup> She attended Sunday school from the age of three, and reports being taught to believe in the Creedal Trinity, occasionally collecting pennies to proselytize Catholics, and enjoying the society of girlfriends through schooling, followed by marriage and the arrival of her own two children.<sup>11</sup> An early indication that she was atypical occurred when, as a young girl, for her thirteenth birthday present she asked for and received a Hebrew grammar and lexicon, which she taught herself to read. She went to Cambridge to study theology. In a recent interview, she stated positive influences of her time there:

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8. Margaret Barker, “Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment,” MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/Creation.htm>.

9. Margaret Barker, “Isaiah,” *Eerdman’s Commentary on the Bible*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman’s, 2003), 489–542.

10. Margaret Barker, e-mail message to author, May 2022.

11. A bit of fun trivia: Barker reports that among her circle of friends, the first child born to the first marriage grew up to be Jonathon Stroud, author of the noted young-adult fantasy *Bartimaeus* series, and the equally brilliant *Lockwood and Company* series.

I was Hugh Montefiore's last undergraduate in Cambridge, before he was a bishop. We stayed friends for the rest of his life. He taught me how to research: to accept nothing without checking, to trust nobody's translations, to read secondary sources only when you have already worked out your ideas from primary sources, and never to forget what biblical study is really about.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, she also reported:

When I had finished my three years there, I was left with a feeling not of elation but in fact of disappointment; I didn't stay to do any postgraduate work because I felt somehow everything we had done had missed the point. Now, this is a terrible thing to say, because I had some wonderful teachers, but it wasn't what I was looking for. And one of the things that struck me most was that in the stuff I was taught — and I may have gone to all the wrong lectures, but I don't think I did — there was no obvious link between the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the life of the early church and its worship. These were separate compartments.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of her studies at Cambridge of the various layers of authorship in the Old Testament, redactors, sources of the Psalms, sources for the Gospels, and whether John knew the gospels, she summed up,

And I thought at the end of this "Goodness me! This is a course in literary criticism." It wasn't really what I was hoping for. So I didn't stay in Cambridge; I went off and did my own thing.<sup>14</sup>

One thing that did begin for her at Cambridge was her interest in the Temple.

I've been immersed in Temple Studies for nearly 50 years, since I was an undergraduate at Cambridge. It seemed to

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12. Margaret Barker, "Interview: Margaret Barker, Theologian," interview by Terrence Handley McMath, *Church Times*, Jan. 20, 2017, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/20-january/features/interviews/interview-margaret-barker-theologian>.

13. Margaret Barker, "Welcome and Opening Comments by Presenters," *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, ed. Gary N. Anderson (Logan, UT: Academy for Temple Studies, 2013), 11–12, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>.

14. *Ibid.*, 12



me, even then, that the Temple was neglected, and that this distorted biblical study. I had the modest youthful ambition to redraw the map of biblical studies. It’s far too early to say that I have had any influence, but I notice my ideas in several other writers,’ not always acknowledged. What matters is to get the Temple worldview restored to the Christian way of thinking.<sup>15</sup>

How her own thing became distinctive occurred not only with respect to her language skills, and what she began to read, but also whom she met.

I discovered the Apocalypses, which aren’t taught very much in England — I think not at all at the time. I discovered Enoch in particular and started working on my own on Enoch. It happened that we had living next door to us in the village in Derbyshire, where I was by then married, an elderly Anglican clergyman who was retiring and downsizing his library. He said to me one day, “There are some books, would you like them?” And he gave me R. H. Charles’s first edition of the Enoch in English and the three volumes of the Swete Septuagint. And I went off like a squirrel and put these in my treasure place. That’s how I got interested, really interested, in Enoch and particularly in different varieties of texts, because I could look at those, such as the Septuagint with all those terrible footnotes that go on forever and ever and get smaller and smaller, and think, “Well, how is it possible that this Greek came from this Hebrew?” And that’s when I first started being aware of the varieties of the text.<sup>16</sup>

In the mid-1970s, as a housewife raising two children, as well as working as math teacher at the local Ockbrook school, she managed to publish two academic articles in the *Heythrop Journal*. After a chance/providential meeting on a bus between the then “just a housewife” and a “great Syriac scholar” Father Robert Murray,<sup>17</sup> with his encouragement and support, she published her first book, *The Older Testament*, in 1987. In her introduction, she explains:

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15. Barker, “Interview: Margaret Barker, Theologian.”

16. Barker “Opening Comments,” 12.

17. See Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1992).



The life and work of Jesus were, and should be, interpreted in the light of something *other* than Jerusalem Judaism. This *other* had its roots in the conflicts of the sixth century BC when the traditions of the monarchy were divided as an inheritance amongst several heirs. It would have been lost but for the accidents of archaeological discovery and the evidence of pre-Christian texts preserved and transmitted *only by Christian hands*.<sup>18</sup>

She followed this with *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Early Christianity*,<sup>19</sup> written for a more popular audience than the densely written, very technical and detailed *The Older Testament*.

Her third book, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Jerusalem Temple*,<sup>20</sup> appeared in 1991. She explains three points of focus:

First, there will be evidence for the temple as a place of creation and renewal; these themes centre upon the garden of Eden, which the temple was built to represent. Second, there will be evidence for the temple as a place of mediation and atonement, themes associated with the veil of the temple which symbolized the boundary between the material and spiritual worlds. Third, there will be evidence for the temple as a place where some could pass beyond the veil and experience the vision of God, seeing into the essence of all things, past, present and future.<sup>21</sup>

Her fourth book came out in 1992, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*.<sup>22</sup> She described the roots of this book as a question raised by a young woman at a Study Day she had done at Oxford.

And one young lady came up to me afterwards. She had just completed her first class degree from Oxford and she

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18. Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1987), 6–7.

19. Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and its Influence on Early Christianity* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1988).

20. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Jerusalem Temple* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1991).

21. *Ibid.*, 2.

22. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992).

said to me, "You know, the question that worries me is what happened to Yahweh in the New Testament." And I thought, that's a very good question, and that's when I wrote *The Great Angel*. But *The Great Angel* wasn't the book I set out to write. I set out to write something very different. When I was about a third of the way through the other book that never came to be a book, I realized I was having to reject a lot of evidence. In the end, I used that rejected evidence to write *The Great Angel*. So that was the next step forward.<sup>23</sup>

She writes in *The Great Angel* that

there were many in first-century Palestine who still retained a world-view derived from the more ancient religion of Israel in which there was a High God and several Sons of God, one of whom was Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. Yahweh, the Lord, could be manifested on earth in human form, as an angel or in the Davidic king. *It was as a manifestation of Yahweh, the Son of God, that Jesus was acknowledged as Son of God, Messiah, and Lord.*<sup>24</sup>

In 1994, she read a paper called "Atonement: Rite of Healing" to the Society for Old Testament Study in Edinburgh, which was later published in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*.<sup>25</sup> Barker made the case that "there was no influx of paganism into the concept of atonement as that was expressed and assumed in the New Testament, and no major reinterpretation. *What was assumed by the New Testament writers was a traditional understanding of the temple rituals and myths of atonement.* When the rituals had ceased and the myths were no longer recognized for what they really were, the key to understanding the imagery of atonement was lost."<sup>26</sup>

In 1995, she published "The Secret Tradition" in *The Journal of Higher Criticism*, which explored the evidence that "there was far more to the teaching of Jesus than is recorded in the canonical gospels. For

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23. Barker, "Opening Comments," 12.

24. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 3.

25. Margaret Barker, "Atonement: Rite of Healing," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49/1 (1996): 1–20.

26. Barker, "Atonement: The Rite of Healing," reprinted in Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (New York and London, T&C Clark, 2002), 43; also available at <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/Atonement.pdf>.

several centuries a belief persisted among Christian writers that there had been a secret tradition entrusted to only a few of his followers.”<sup>27</sup>

Barker’s next book was *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism and the New Testament*.<sup>28</sup> She explains that

all religious belief is expressed, transmitted, and received in code. Even the simplest statements, when they are examined carefully by an outsider, have very little meaning. This is because every religious community has its own way of speaking about faith, and the most effective way to do this is in pictures. People brought up in a Christian community recognize immediately what is meant by the Lamb of God, or by bread and wine; to someone from another culture, however, these are not vivid images but a solid wall which separates those inside, those “in the know,” from everyone else.<sup>29</sup>

She writes that “the images and pictures in which the ideas of the Bible are expressed” are “specific to one culture, that of Israel and Judaism, and until they are fully understood in their original setting, little of what is done with the writings and ideas that came from that particular setting can be understood. Once we lose touch with the meaning of Bible imagery, we lose any way into the real meaning of the Bible.”<sup>30</sup>

She was invited by Dr. Ian Torrance to the University of Aberdeen to deliver the lectures that became the basis of her 1996 book *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith*.<sup>31</sup> Professor John McDade cited *The Risen Lord* in a paper on “Jesus in Recent Research” for the Catholic Theological Association Conference. He wrote, “A very original contribution to these questions of Jesus’ religious experience, its connection with experiential patterns in first century Jewish religion

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27. Margaret Barker, “The Secret Tradition,” *The Journal of Higher Criticism* 2/1 (1995): 31–67. The essay is also included in Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 1–33, and is available at MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/SecretTradition.pdf>, page 1.

28. Margaret Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

29. *Ibid.*, 1.

30. *Ibid.*, 2. Compare 2 Nephi 25:5: “there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews.”

31. Margaret Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

and the possible value of non-Gospel New Testament writings for Jesus research has come recently from Margaret Barker: her proposals about these three areas go against the grain of much New Testament scholarship and are therefore worth attention.”<sup>32</sup>

A significant honor came when she was elected President of the Society for Old Testament Study in 1998 and began editing the Society’s second Monograph Series, published by Ashgate. Her presidential address to the Society for Old Testament Study at Cambridge that year was “Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origins of the Apocalypses,” was published in *The Scottish Journal of Theology*.<sup>33</sup>

In the visionary texts, however, the holy of holies is vividly described, suggesting not only that the visionaries knew the holy of holies, but also that they had a particular interest in it. Isaiah saw the throne in the temple with heavenly beings beside it; Enoch entered a second house within the first house, a place of fire where there was a lofty throne surrounded by the hosts of heaven (1 En. 14). The undateable *Similitudes* of Enoch have the same setting: the throne of glory and the hosts of heaven. These images were memories of the cult of the first temple, and it was the visionaries who kept the memory alive: Enoch in the Book of Jubilees is depicted as a priest, burning the incense of the sanctuary (Jub. 4.25) and Ezekiel, who saw the chariot, was also a priest (Ezek. 1.3).<sup>34</sup>

In 2000, she published *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*,<sup>35</sup> her commentary on Revelation, not as the last book of the New Testament, but the first, “the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place” (Revelation 1:1), that is, a revelation that Jesus received at his baptism, and later shared with his disciples, and eventually had John make public. On her website summary of this book she explains,

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32. John McDade, “Jesus in Recent Research,” *The Month: A Review of Christian Thought and World Affairs*, 31 (December 1998): 502–503.

33. Margaret Barker, “Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origins of the Apocalypses,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51/1 (1998): 1–21. This was also published as a chapter in *The Great High Priest*, and is available at MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/BeyondtheVeil.pdf>.

34. *Ibid.*, 1.

35. Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1)* (London: T&T Clark, 2000).

The whole of Jesus' ministry was understood both by him, and later by his disciples, as the ministry of Melchizedek described in the Qumran Melchizedek Text. The great high priest was expected to appear at the start of the tenth Jubilee and to complete the final atonement and renewal of the creation. In the life and death of Jesus, the hopes that had been ritualised in the Day of Atonement were being realised in history. The death of Jesus was the first part of the great atonement, and the expected Second Coming was his return from the holy of holies to complete the atonement and renew the creation.<sup>36</sup>

More books followed. In *The Great Angel* she mentioned the presence in the first temple of the Tree of Life, a symbol of Asherah, lady Wisdom, the Heavenly Mother that was destroyed by Josiah (2 Kings 23:6).<sup>37</sup> In *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* she discussed the "woman clothed with the sun" who would bring "the royal child destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron."<sup>38</sup> She developed these notions further in a paper she read at Cambridge in 2001 on "Wisdom: The Queen of Heaven." It was originally published in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*.<sup>39</sup> Among other things, it shows self-reflective consciousness of the background assumptions that can either open or close a scholar's eyes

1. By giving priority to the evidence of the Hebrew texts, including inscriptions. There is no exact parallel to the phrasing of the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions, which shows that biblical traditions are not representative of everything about Hebrew language and religion.
2. By allowing for singular and plural forms, and for a variety of names for one figure, and for the undoubted practice of using a singular verb with a plural form for a divinity.
3. By admitting that if conceptions of the male aspect of the deity moved away from anthropomorphism, then the female must have had the same fate. There are unlikely to have been

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36. Margaret Barker, Publications History, MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/History.htm>. Compare 3 Nephi 12:47: "Old things are done away, and all things have become new." Also see Christensen, "Paradigms Regained," 68–75.

37. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 52–67.

38. Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 200.

39. Margaret Barker, "Wisdom: The Queen of Heaven," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 2 (2002): 141–59. This essay also appears in *The Great High Priest*, 229–61.



simultaneous movements away from anthropomorphism for the male but towards personification for the female.<sup>40</sup>

Though Barker has never had a formal academic post, she around this time was invited by the Centre of Advanced Religious and Theological Studies at Cambridge to devise a research project. She later withdrew, and the essays she produced as seed for that project along with six essays that she had previously published in various journals was published in 2002 as *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy*. In her introduction, she states that

it is no longer wise to consider one form of Judaism as “orthodoxy” and all others as sectarian, it is being recognized that there was a huge difference between Rabbinic Judaism and the varieties of the faith in the second temple period. The Sages had not been preserving the older ways but creating a substantially new system after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Part of their method was defining the canon, but the books excluded from that Hebrew canon were preserved by Christian scribes. We now know that even the text of the Hebrew Scriptures was different before the advent of Christianity. *It is becoming increasingly clear that the Old Testament which should accompany the New Testament is not the one usually included in the Bible. ... All the major elements of Christianity had been part of the earlier temple tradition: incarnation, atonement, covenant, resurrection, and the Messiah.*<sup>41</sup>

In an address in 2000 on the state of Biblical Studies in the twentieth century, she broadly surveyed the state of scholarship in the Universities, while noting that

there is a major crisis in biblical studies of which the churches seem unaware, and there is need for urgent action to ensure that at least in theological colleges something is taught that does not simply rely on university departments and replicate their syllabus and interests. Theological colleges and university departments now have very different agendas.<sup>42</sup>

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40. Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 233.

41. *Ibid.*, xi.

42. Margaret Barker, “Reflections on Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century,” (paper read to the Society of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 2000), 2–3, MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/ReflectionsOnBiblicalStudies.pdf>.

For example, she reports,

Prof. Philip Davies from Sheffield, who has a completely secular approach to Biblical studies, read a paper entitled “Ownership? Responsibility? What is the Guild to do with the Bible?” He looked at the various disciplines which now have some sort of interest in biblical studies: cultural studies, literary theory, feminist issues, sociology and such like, and hailed this as a great liberation for biblical studies. When asked about the Church he was nonplussed. This implies that there is a need for university departments to make biblical studies relevant to all these latest trends in academe, and therefore, by implication, give it some sort of respectability, but no need to make it relevant to those who are the major users of the texts.<sup>43</sup>

Of her own approach, she says,

Since these are my reflections on biblical studies, I should perhaps say something about my own approach. I favour the use of context materials rather than the currently fashionable approaches such as social scientific or rhetorical studies. I believe that a careful use of the historical critical method is most useful, as it enables us to stand where they stood, look where they looked and even to read what they wrote. What we find is not always expected or even welcome. There have been several times in my own research and writing when I have been forced to abandon the very position I was trying to establish, and with it a great deal of my personal baggage, but this has always led to something even more exciting.<sup>44</sup>

She was invited to deliver the Cardinal Hume lectures at Heythrop College in London in 2003, and these became *Temple Theology: An Introduction*, published in 2004.<sup>45</sup> Here she

shows how the restoration of the original temple and its teaching is the key to understanding the role and teaching of Jesus. It is the best introduction to four key areas of temple

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43. Ibid., 4. Compare Spencer Fluhman, “On Audience and Voice in Mormon Studies Journal Publishing,” *Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship* (blog), November 21, 2016, <https://mi.byu.edu/intro-msr-v4/>.

44. Ibid., 8.

45. Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004).



theology: Creation, with the temple built to represent the creation, the significance of the holy of holies and the veil. Covenant, showing that the Eternal Covenant binding all creation together, was the covenant of the Last Supper and thus the basis of the Eucharist. Atonement explaining the original meaning of atonement, the blood/life of the Lord renewing the broken bonds of the covenant of creation. Wisdom, introducing the symbols of the almost lost Wisdom tradition of the temple: the Bread of the Presence, the Tree of Life and the anointing oil.<sup>46</sup>

This little book was shortlisted for the Michael Ramsey Prize for Theological Writing. Barker was the first woman so honored.

In 2004 she also published *An Extraordinary Gathering of Angels*,<sup>47</sup> like a mini-coffee table art book, beautifully illustrated with more than 170 colorful illustrations, looking at angels in ancient and modern culture. It includes her interviews with scholars from a range of Jewish and Christian traditions, including Bishop Basil of Sergievo, Dr. Richard Baukham, Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis, Dr. Bernard Lang, Father Robert Murray, Phillip Pullman, Dr. Geoffrey Rowell, Reverend Doctor Christopher Rowland, Dr. Alan F. Segal, Father Silouan, and Dr. John W. Welch of BYU.

In 2007, she published *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*,<sup>48</sup> in which she “shows how fashions in scholarship have obscured much of the ancient evidence, and then reconstructs the traditions of the high priesthood — Enoch and Melchizedek as well as Aaron — before reading the gospel evidence with this new paradigm.”<sup>49</sup> She also explains that “*the visions of the Book of Revelation underlie the Gospel narratives and explain the choice of biblical texts that accompany events.*”<sup>50</sup> She can show that “memories of the visions that inspired Jesus are found in the

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46. Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction*, Publications History, MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/History.htm>.

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

48. Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 2007).

49. Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, Publications History, MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/History.htm>.

50. Barker, *Hidden Tradition*, 94.

Book of Revelation and in the Gospels”<sup>51</sup> and that “there are places in his parables where Jesus alludes to the visions of Revelation.”<sup>52</sup>

In 2008, Margaret Barker, Robin Griffith-Jones, Laurence Hemming, Susan Parsons and Bishop Geoffrey Rowell organized a Temple Studies Group to promote “study of the Temple in Jerusalem, believing that the worldview, traditions, customs and symbolism of the Temple were formative influences on the development of Christianity.”<sup>53</sup> The group successfully organized symposia for several years running, up to 2018, with several participants, including Latter-day Saint contributors Professor John Hall, Frederick Huchel, Professor John W. Welch, and Professor William Hamblin. The success of the London Temple Studies group inspired a sister organization, based in Logan, Utah, the Academy for Temple Studies.<sup>54</sup>

In 2007, Barker published *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*.<sup>55</sup> The jacket comment praising the book was written by Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. In July 2008 she was given a Lambeth Doctor of Divinity by the same Archbishop of Canterbury and Queen Elizabeth “in recognition of her work on the Jerusalem Temple and the origins of Christian Liturgy, which has made a significantly new contribution to our understanding of the New Testament and opened up important fields for research.”<sup>56</sup> On March 10, 2008, T&T Clark held a colloquium in London to celebrate the publication of the book.<sup>57</sup> Speakers included

His Grace Bishop Basil of Amphipolis  
Dr. Robert Hayward, University of Durham  
Dr. John W. Welch, Brigham Young University  
Rabbi Professor Marc Saperstein, Leo Baeck College, London  
Dr. Crispin Fletcher-Louis, Westminster Theological Centre,  
London  
Dr. Susan Frank Parsons, Society of St. Catherine of Siena

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51. Ibid, 95.

52. Ibid, 97.

53. Temple Studies Group.com, <http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/index.html>.

54. Academy for Temple Studies.com, <https://www.templestudies.org/>.

55. Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007).

56. MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/index.html>.

57. “Margaret Barker Colloquium in London,” *Theology and Temple Studies* (blog), T&T Clark, March 10, 2008, <https://tandtclark.typepad.com/ttc/2008/03/margaret-barker.html>.

Soon she also published *Christmas: The Original Story*,<sup>58</sup> in which she reads the gospel accounts, as well as the early Protoevangelium of James, in the context of enlightening temple symbolism throughout. Her case is that reading the nativity stories in light of the temple tradition help us better understand them. Let us think about the obvious temple accounts in the nativity stories, for instance, with Zacharias, serving in the temple in Luke 1:5–9, or Jesus being presented at the temple in Luke 2:22–39, then skipping twelve years to tell another temple story. Barker wants us to learn to see the significance of these and other less immediately obvious temple themes. Consider, for instance, the significance of details that Luke provides:

She wrapped him in swaddling clothes is, literally, “she wrapped him around.” Why mention the baby’s clothes? Because the clothing of the “newly born” high priest was an important part of his becoming the Son. Enoch was taken from his earthly garments — his human body — and clothed with garments of God’s Glory because he had become part of the Glory. The new child is clothed with earthly garments, and so the process is reversed.<sup>59</sup>

In 2009, Barker contributed the essay “The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus” to a volume on *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*<sup>60</sup> and in 2010 published *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment*, with a forward written by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Barker explains that “the biblical world view is a vision of the unity of all things ... into one divinely ordained system known as the eternal covenant, the creation covenant.”<sup>61</sup> That covenant is the one Isaiah 24:5 refers to as broken with dire consequence. (D&C 1:15 again describes this covenant as broken, and D&C 1:22 invites us all to enter into and keep that covenant.)

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58. Margaret Barker, *Christmas: The Original Story* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008).

59. *Ibid.*, 75–76.

60. Margaret Barker, “The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus,” in Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93–111.

61. Margaret Barker, *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (London: T&T Clarke, 2010), 19.

In 2011 she published *Temple Mysticism: An Introduction*.<sup>62</sup> In a review of her book for *Interpreter*, I wrote that “for Barker, temple mysticism centers on ‘seeing the Lord.’ Her temple mystics, [Isaiah and John] are unquestionably more akin to Lehi, Nephi, Alma, Joseph Smith, and Sidney Rigdon than are Nibley’s mystics.”<sup>63</sup>

In 2012, she published *The Mother of the Lord: Volume 1 The Lady in the Temple*.<sup>64</sup> Again, Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote an appreciative note for the back cover:

Once again, Dr. Barker offers us a massively learned and creative re-reading of what the Bible has to tell us about the religion of ancient Israel, using her wide knowledge of material in Hebrew, Syriac and other Semitic languages, texts from Jewish, Gnostic and Christian sources. She reinforces the case she has made in earlier books that the Hebrew Scriptures represent a deeply conflicted set of traditions, and excavates the lost cult of the divine “Lady of the Temple,” the personification of divine Wisdom and the bearer of the divine Son. Her contention that this alone makes sense not only of tensions within the text of the Hebrew Scriptures but also of persistent and otherwise baffling themes in early Christianity is argued with vigour and comprehensiveness of scope. Controversial as it is, this is a very significant contribution to the fuller understanding of both Christian and Jewish origins.<sup>65</sup>

In January of 2012, she delivered the 29th Annual Father Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, Yonkers, New York. Her topic was Jesus as “The Great High Priest.”<sup>66</sup> The talk was very well received by

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62. Margaret Barker, *Temple Mysticism: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011).

63. Kevin Christensen, “Book Review: Temple Mysticism: An Introduction, by Margaret Barker” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013), 192, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/book-review-temple-mysticism-an-introduction-by-margaret-barker/>.

64. Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, vol. 1, *The Lady of the Temple* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012).

65. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, back cover of Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*.

66. “LISTEN & READ! Schmemmann Lecture: Dr. Margaret Barker ‘Journeys’ from Solomon’s Temple to Christian Church,” Headlines, St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, January 29, 2012, <https://www.svots.edu/headlines/listen->

the audience of Orthodox scholars and leaders. St. Vladimir’s Seminary published this report:

As Dr. Barker focused on the structure of the first temple and on the figure of the high priest within that temple, she led her audience along “the trail that leads from Solomon’s Temple to the Christian Church,” her premise being that both the first temple and its high priest were restored by the coming of Jesus Christ. “The Christian community was the temple of the Messiah,” she noted, “the original temple restored, and it was a living temple.” Further on, she added, “There is good evidence in the gospels that Jesus did see himself as the great high priest, and that his ministry was shaped by that ideal.”

Upon her closing words, “Christians are the anointed ones of the restored temple, and our covenant is the eternal covenant,” the audience exploded with sustained applause in gratitude for her presentation. At the close of her talk, His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah, primate of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), presented Dr. Barker with a beautiful icon of “Christ the High Priest.”

Other hierarchs in attendance at the lecture were His Grace The Right Rev. Benjamin, bishop of San Francisco and the West (OCA), and His Grace The Right Rev. Maxim, bishop of the Western Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church of North and South America.<sup>67</sup>

In 2014, she published *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John’s Gospel*.<sup>68</sup> She explains that according to John, the title written on the cross was “the Nazorean,” which is not the word used elsewhere for Jesus as a man “of Nazareth.”<sup>69</sup> That is, “Nazorean derived from the Hebrew *nsr*, meaning ‘watch, guard,’ and described the LORD watching over his people. ... His Servant restored the *preserved* of Israel (Isa. 49.6). ... The followers of Jesus were called the Nazorenes (Acts 24.5), and the *nosrim*

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read-schmemann-lecture-dr-margaret-barker-journeys-solomons-temple-christian. A recording of the lecture is available, entitled “Our Great High Priest: The Church Is the New Temple,” Voices From St. Vladimir’s Seminary (podcast), [https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/svsvoices/our\\_great\\_high\\_priest\\_the\\_church\\_is\\_the\\_new\\_temple](https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/svsvoices/our_great_high_priest_the_church_is_the_new_temple).

67. Ibid.

68. Margaret Barker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John’s Gospel* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2014).

69. Ibid., 522.



became the Hebrew term for Christians.”<sup>70</sup> The book’s jacket explains that “Jesus’s mission was to restore the ways of the original temple. ... The background to the Fourth Gospel is temple tradition. John shows how Jesus’ debates with the Jews centered on the great difference between the world of the second temple and world of the priest-kings of the first temple from which Christianity emerged. The Johnine community were the Hebrew disciples of Jesus who saw themselves as the true high priesthood restored.”

In 2014, Barker spoke in Dublin, Ireland on “The Eternal Covenant Between God and Every Living Creature.”<sup>71</sup> She explains,

The covenant underlying all the other covenants in the Old Testament was the everlasting covenant, which depicted heaven and earth bound together in one great system that encompassed the powers of heaven, the visible creation and human society. ... The first book to draw attention to the everlasting covenant was Robert Murray’s *The Cosmic Covenant*, published in 1992. Fr Murray showed how the psalms and the prophets — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel — all knew about the everlasting covenant. They presented it in forms that suggested temple liturgy, and central to the cosmic covenant was the sacral king who held all things together. The everlasting covenant protected all within it and kept away the chaos and disaster that would otherwise engulf everything. This was the divine wrath. The business of maintaining the covenant was entrusted to the sacral kings, the Melchi-Zedeks, who had rituals of atonement.<sup>72</sup>

In a section of “Paradigms Regained,” on “The Cosmic Covenant” (61–63), I discuss the relevance of this covenant to Latter-day Saint scriptures, including D&C 1, Benjamin’s discourse (where Benjamin is the sacral King holding the Melchizedek priesthood, officiating in the Day of Atonement rituals at the temple, and inviting all to enter the covenant), Moses 7, and 3 Nephi 9–28 with Jesus at the temple, and D&C 88:7–13 as best description of the covenant bonds.

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70. *Ibid.*, 522–23.

71. Margaret Barker, “The Everlasting Covenant Between God and Every Living Creature,” ECO Congregation Ireland (website), <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/The-Everlasting-Covenant-Margaret-Barker-DD.pdf>.

72. Barker, “The Everlasting Covenant,” 2–3.

In 2015, scholar Crispin Fletcher-Louis, in the introduction to the first volume of *Jesus Monotheism*, refers to his influences as his Oxford teachers, mentioning N.T. Wright, Christopher Rowland, John Ashton, Rowan Williams, Kallistos Ware and others, and then mentions Margaret Barker as “a muse to many of us, albeit from beyond the immediate confines of Oxford on the cosmology and religious experiences nurtured by Israel’s Temple.”<sup>73</sup>

In 2015, Margaret Barker was invited to be part of an evaluation panel for the recently discovered Jordan Lead books.<sup>74</sup> After two years of investigating, the panel released their first evaluation in 2017, concluding the books are worthy of further investigation.<sup>75</sup> Their website includes the reports of the metallurgical analysis,<sup>76</sup> detailed responses to a handful of bloggers claiming that the books are modern forgeries,<sup>77</sup> and information on the content and context of the books. The Academy for Temple Studies website includes a 2018 video presentation by Margaret Barker, discussing the books, showing how information is encoded on them.<sup>78</sup> In a recent email to me she reports,

I am now certain that these lead books are [perhaps copies of] first-temple oracle tablets. They have 8th century BCE vocabulary in places, mostly words used by Isaiah, and they reveal all sorts of temple details that occur elsewhere in later texts. My hypothesis is that these represent the earliest iteration of temple theology which later fragmented after the Josiah upheavals and the various exiles to Babylon, Egypt, etc.

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73. Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism: Christological Origins: The Emerging Consensus and Beyond* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), xiii–xiv, [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Jesus\\_Monotheism/EkRgCgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Jesus_Monotheism/EkRgCgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1).

74. See the website for The Centre for the Study of the Jordanian Lead Books, <https://www.leadbookcentre.com/>.

75. “Report of the Evaluation Panel: May 2017,” The Centre for the Study of the Jordanian Lead Books, <https://www.leadbookcentre.com/downloads/panel-report-june-2017.pdf>.

76. Films, The Centre for the Study of the Jordanian Lead Books, <https://www.leadbookcentre.com/films.php>.

77. Publications, The Centre for the Study of the Jordanian Lead Books, <https://www.leadbookcentre.com/downloads/response-to-the-bloggers.pdf>. Also see *Heritage Daily*, December 9, 2016, <https://www.heritagedaily.com/2016/12/jordan-lead-codices-not-modern-forgeries/113620>.

78. Margaret Barker, “Some Lead Books Found in Jordan,” video recording of presentation given October 11, 2018, sponsored by the Academy for Temple Studies, Logan, Utah, <https://www.templestudies.org/lead-books-found-in-jordan/>.



Memories of this earlier system survive in many later sources, such as the Targums and the pseudepigrapha. There is a lot of material that links the people who devised them to the area around Petra, and much in them that is not in the Bible but passes directly into early Christian hymns and prayers.<sup>79</sup>

Back in 1998, Professor John McDade of Heythrop College had reviewed Barker's work in relation to trends and streams in Life of Jesus Research, including showing how her work strengthened Christian claims, extending beyond arguments by influential believing scholars, such as Ben Myer and N.T. Wright. In 2018, N.T. Wright was invited to give the Gifford Lectures, and there spoke on "Jesus, the Temple, and the Kingdom," noting that in the published version, "Margaret Barker has done remarkable work in alerting scholarly and popular circles to 'Temple' based theological understanding."<sup>80</sup>

Barker continues to write and research, and teaching and preaching in a range of settings. She maintains working contacts with a wide range of scholars from different religious traditions. Her daughter has created a very useful website that includes discussions of her book publications, and a wide range of papers that she has presented and published in various places.<sup>81</sup> She has one book currently close to publication, delayed due to pandemic issues, and another on the Jordan books well underway. There are a few dozen videos of her presentations, interviews, and preaching available on YouTube.<sup>82</sup> With the background of her wide accomplishments and broad appreciation set in a range of scholarly settings, it is time to account for how and why her connection to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints arose.

### Weaving in the Latter-Day Saints

Within a few years after the publication of *The Great Angel* in 1992, several different Latter-day Saint scholars began quoting it. The first two

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79. Margaret Barker, e-mail message to author, October 2, 2021.

80. N. T. Wright, *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 307n2. The note continues to the next page with squeamishness about early Israelite "non-monotheism."

81. MargaretBarker.com.

82. For example, "The Mother in Heaven and Her Children," 2015 FAIR Conference, Provo UT, August 6, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilF9NXEl6Xs>; and "Restoring Solomon's Temple," Academy for Temple Studies, Utah State University, Logan, UT, October 29, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xalAoRGsU7c>.

citations I know of came in responses to an essay on the Christology in the Book of Mormon by Melodie Charles,<sup>83</sup> namely Ross David Baron’s “Melodie Moench Charles and the Humanist Worldview,”<sup>84</sup> followed the same year by Martin S. Tanner’s review.<sup>85</sup> Both Baron and Tanner quoted this passage from *The Great Angel*:

There were many in first-century Palestine who still retained a worldview derived from the more ancient religion of Israel [that of the First Temple] in which there was a High God and several Sons of God, one of whom was Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. Yahweh, the Lord, could be manifested on earth in human form, as an angel or in the Davidic king. *It was as a manifestation of Yahweh, the Son of God, that Jesus was acknowledged as Son of God, Messiah and Lord.*<sup>86</sup>

Tanner also quotes this key passage from *The Great Angel*:

*All the texts in the Hebrew Bible distinguish clearly between the divine sons of Elohim/Elyon and those human beings who are called sons of Yahweh. This must be significant. It must mean that the terms originated at a time when Yahweh was distinguished from whatever was meant by El/Elohim/Elyon. A large number of texts continued to distinguish between EI Elyon and Yahweh, Father and Son, and to express this distinction in similar ways with the symbolism of the temple and the royal cult. By tracing these patterns through a great variety of material and over several centuries, Israel’s second God can be recovered.*<sup>87</sup>

Other Latter-day Saint scholars who began quoting and referencing *The Great Angel* or others of Barker’s books and articles in the mid- to late 1990s included Daniel Peterson, William Hamblin, Barry Bickmore, Eugene Seiach, John Tvedtnes, and Mark Thomas. Kevin Barney’s

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83. Melodie Moench Charles, “Book of Mormon Christology,” *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 81–114.

84. Ross David Baron, “Melodie Moench Charles and the Humanist Worldview,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 7, no. 1 (1995): 91–119, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol7/iss1/8/>.

85. Martin S. Tanner, “Review of Melodie Moench Charles, ‘Book of Mormon Christology,’” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 7, no. 2 (1995): 6–37, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol7/iss2/5/>.

86. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 3.

87. *Ibid.*, 10.

2001 FAIR essay on “Do We Have a Mother in Heaven?” also included a reference to *The Great Angel*.<sup>88</sup>

During a 1999 visit to a Dallas Half Price Books, when I chanced upon a shelf with several copies of *The Great Angel*, I recognized the book as of interest. I bought a copy, took it home to Kansas and began to read. Before I was halfway done, I called my brother near Dallas, and asked him to go back and buy up all the remaining copies of the book and send them to me. When I finished reading *The Great Angel*, I searched for copies of her other books and several journal essays, tracking some down via Amazon and Bookfinder.com. During my first visit to the Kansas University Library, I found a rare copy of her first book, the then out-of-print *The Older Testament*.<sup>89</sup> This was crucially important for my study.<sup>90</sup>

Whereas the other Latter-day Saint writers who quoted *The Great Angel* did so to emphasize pre-exilic theology, the passages that struck me most in *The Great Angel* concerned the history and the key themes of Deuteronomist Reform, launched in the days of King Josiah, the father of King Zedekiah, named in 1 Nephi 1:4. Because Latter-day Saint culture and pedagogy have traditionally had little to say about Josiah, it is necessary to first sketch the story of King Josiah and the Reform.

### A Brief Overview of King Josiah

2 Kings 22–23 and 2 Chronicles 34–35 give accounts of Josiah and his reform, with some important differences. Both accounts describe how King Josiah’s father Amon became King at 22 and was killed during the

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88. Kevin L. Barney, “Do We Have a Mother in Heaven?,” The Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research, 2001, 7n17, <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Kevin-Barney-MotherInHeaven.pdf>.

89. This was reprinted by Sheffield Phoenix Press in 2005 and has been in print ever since.

90. For Latter-day Saint readers starting out with Barker, the best place to begin depends on your background. If you begin as an established Nibleyophile, then *The Great Angel* is an excellent place to start. Five different top Latter-day-Saint scholars independently gave me the same one-word review of that book: “Wow!” For readers to whom this kind of scholarship is a new world, then the little *Temple Theology: An Introduction* would work best. I also recommend reading Barker’s “Text and Context” essay alongside 1 Nephi 13, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/TextAndContext.pdf>. Also see Margaret Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 9 (2005): 69–82, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/joseph-smith-and-preexilic-israelite-religion/>.

second year of his reign. “And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.” (2 Kings 21:24; compare 2 Chronicles 33:25).

Josiah was eight when he became king and reigned for 31 years. Lehi would have been an eyewitness to a part of his reign, and his four oldest sons were likely born during the last years of Josiah’s reign.<sup>91</sup> After Josiah’s unexpected death in battle at the hands of the Egyptians at age 39, Lehi’s older sons variously grew to adolescence and early manhood during the eleven-year reign of Josiah’s son Jehoiakim, who was installed as king by the Egyptians. Then the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and installed Zedekiah, another son of Josiah, when the Book of Mormon begins.<sup>92</sup>

During Josiah’s reign, according to 2 Kings 22:8, the high priest Hilkiah “found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.” Many scholars associate this found book with Deuteronomy,<sup>93</sup> and the account in 2 Kings 22 reports that the discovery of this book prodded Josiah to launch his reform. The account in 2 Chronicles 34: 3, 8, 14 reports that the book was discovered during a renovation of the temple as part of reforms Josiah had already begun. Both accounts emphasize that Josiah held a notable Passover (2 Kings 23:22 and 2 Chronicles 35:18). Both accounts depict Josiah as a uniquely good king, which led to some issues in trying to account for his unexpected death at the hands of the Egyptians when righteousness is supposed to lead to prosperity, as well accounting for Josiah dying in battle when Huldah had prophesied that he would die in peace (2 Kings 22:14–20). 2 Kings 23:20 describes Josiah’s reforms as openly violent, including his slaying “all the priests of the high places” as well as Josiah sending the high priest into the temple to the Holy of Holies to remove and destroy the Asherah, the tree of life, then in the form of a Menorah (2 Kings 23:6). The account of Josiah’s death in 2 Chronicles 35 differs from the one in 2 Kings 23 in that it includes a type-scene with a “disguise” narrative. “These biblical narratives typically depict a contest or conflict between God and an earthly king, and in each

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91. Lehi would not likely have been an adult at the start of Josiah’s 31-year reign because Nephi is probably around 14 at the start of Zedekiah’s reign, which comes after Jehoiakim’s 11-year reign. And Lehi and Sarah must be young enough to have Joseph and Jacob after eight years in the wilderness before setting out on the ocean voyage (1 Nephi 18:7, 19). I see Lehi as coming of age and marrying and having his first four sons during the last few years of Josiah’s reign.

92. See 1 Nephi 1:4; 2:12.

93. A famous example is Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper Row, 1987), 101.

case, they don't end well for the king. As explained by Alan Goff, 'All of the kings or their heirs in the biblical disguise stories meet with brutal deaths, and in each case the dynasty fails.'<sup>94</sup> That is, while the 2 Kings account idealizes Josiah, the disguise scene in 2 Chronicles 35 allusively associates Josiah with Saul, Jeroboam, and Ahab, which at the very least demonstrates an unresolved tension.

While Jeremiah was called as a prophet during Josiah's reign, the relationship of between Jeremiah and the reform is not as straightforward as we might expect. The accounts we have make it clear that it was King Josiah's reform, not Jeremiah's, and that Jeremiah was called the year after the reform began.<sup>95</sup> Notably, Jeremiah is called "against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land" (Jeremiah 1:18), that is, against the very people who installed the eight year old Josiah as king — and who doubtless saw to his upbringing and education from that point — and against the people who were at the time advancing the reform.<sup>96</sup>

Before I read *The Great Angel*, everything I knew about King Josiah and Deuteronomists had come from reading Richard Elliott Friedman's popular explanation of the Documentary Hypothesis, *Who Wrote the Bible?* Friedman and other biblical scholars have shown how crucial Josiah's reign was for the construction of much of the Old Testament as we have it, showing that an edition of what is called the Deuteronomist History, the books of Joshua through 2 Kings, was compiled and edited to honor Josiah during his lifetime.<sup>97</sup> Then after the calamities of Josiah's defeat and death and the subsequent destruction of the temple and the experience of the exile, additions were made to report events

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94. As quoted in "Book of Mormon Evidence: Abinadi's Disguise," *Evidence Central*, <https://evidencecentral.org/recency/evidence/abinadis-disguise>, from "Abinadi's Disguise and the Fate of King Noah" (article based on research done by Alan Goff), *Insights* 20/12 (2000): 2, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/insights-vol-20-no-12-december-2000>.

95. See 2 Chronicles 34:3 on Josiah beginning his purge in the twelfth year of his reign (at age 20) and Jeremiah being called in the thirteenth year in Jeremiah 1:2. Margaret Barker's *The Mother of the Lord*, vol. 1, *The Lady in the Temple*, 54–75, provides her most extensive commentary on Jeremiah and the reform.

96. Ezekiel 22:6–21 is an extended diatribe against these same groups. Zephaniah 1 also comments. Also consider Gerald Smith's insightful discussion of the account of Jeremiah and the Rechabites, "Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Lesson 1: 'The Keystone of Our Religion,'" *Joel's Monastery*, (blog), December 12, 2011, <https://joelsmonastery.blogspot.com/2011/12/book-of-mormon-gospel-doctrine-lesson-1.html>

97. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 130–32.



and assign blame for what went wrong.<sup>98</sup> Friedman can show social connections between Jeremiah and key figures in the accounts of the reform and discovery of the book of the law, and he shows that Jeremiah and Deuteronomy both use very similar language in places.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Friedman suggests that Jeremiah, perhaps with help of his scribe Baruch, was the Deuteronomist historian. Friedman reports that Jeremiah favored Josiah,<sup>100</sup> although I noticed that of sixteen verses naming Josiah in Jeremiah, most are prefaced by "son of" and refer to Josiah's sons, Jehoiakim, Shallum, and Zedekiah. Only Jeremiah 22:15–16 contains a clear positive reference to Josiah as a contrast to his third son, Shallum (also known as Jehoahaz), as doing "justice and judgement" and having "judged the cause of the poor and needy." Due to those specific qualities, Jeremiah says of Josiah, "then it was well with him." Even that passage leaves an unresolved question as to what happened with Josiah in other areas of concern that ultimately caused things to not go well with him.

Friedman had declared that Jeremiah agrees with the Deuteronomic history on "practically every important point"<sup>101</sup> and agrees with Deuteronomy "on virtually every major point."<sup>102</sup> Such statements contain a hidden assumption that we do not have to think any further about what is most important. In *The Great Angel*, Barker observed of the reformers that

First, they were to have the Law instead of Wisdom (Deuteronomy 4:6). ... What was the Wisdom which the Law replaced? Second, they were to think only of the formless voice of God sounding from the fire and giving the Law (Deuteronomy 19:12). Israel had long had a belief in the vision of God, when the glory had been visible on the throne in human form, surrounded by the heavenly hosts. What happened to the visions of God? And third, they were to leave the veneration of the host of heaven to peoples not chosen by Yahweh (Deuteronomy 4:19–20). Israel had long regarded Yahweh as the Lord of the hosts of heaven, but the

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98. *Ibid.*, 114–16.

99. *Ibid.*, 125–27.

100. *Ibid.*, 125. Friedman emphasizes that Chronicles notes that Jeremiah "composed a lamentation for Josiah when he was killed."

101. *Ibid.*, 146.

102. *Ibid.*, 209.

title Yahweh of Hosts was not used by the Deuteronomists.  
What happened to the hosts, the angels?<sup>103</sup>

In *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Barker added references to two other Deuteronomic proscriptions. The Jews were not to “enquire after secret things which belonged only to the Lord (Deuteronomy 29:29). Their duty was to obey the commandments brought down from Sinai and not to seek someone who would ascend to heaven for them to discover remote and hidden things (Deuteronomy 30:11).”<sup>104</sup>

Regardless of how often Jeremiah cited Deuteronomy and agreed with the Deuteronomistic History, he disagreed on these crucial points, *which Barker sees as key to the nature of Josiah’s Reform*.<sup>105</sup> And so did Lehi and Nephi disagree on these same crucial points, regardless of how often they agreed with or quoted Deuteronomy.<sup>106</sup> That should be telling. But none of the other dozen or so books by other scholars that I have read on the Reform have commented on either these specific passages in Deuteronomy or on the notable absence of the Day of Atonement from the sacred calendar in Deuteronomy 16.<sup>107</sup>

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103. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 13.

104. Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1)* (London: T&T Clark, 2000).

105. Kevin Christensen, “Prophets and Kings in Lehi’s Jerusalem and Margaret Barker’s Temple Theology,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013), 177–93, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology/>. Also see Barker’s most detailed examination of Jeremiah in *The Mother of the Lord*, 54–75.

106. For agreement, see Noel Reynolds, “Lehi as Moses,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 35, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol9/iss2/5/>. Reynolds had not yet read *The Great Angel*.

107. For the Day of Atonement, compare Deuteronomy 16 and Leviticus 23:27–32. It is important that D. John Butler mapped the content of Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 to the Day of Atonement, that Professor William Hamblin mapped the content of Jacob’s discourse in 2 Nephi 6–11 to the Day of Atonement rituals, and that John Welch and Terrence Szink mapped King Benjamin’s temple discourse to the Day of Atonement, with Benjamin acting in the role of high priest. See D. John Butler, *Plain and Precious Things: The Temple Religion of the Book of Mormon’s Visionary Men*, (self-published, 2012), 133–54. See also “William Hamblin on ‘Jacob’s Sermon and the Day of Atonement,’” The Interpreter Foundation, YouTube video at 26:17, September 22, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls4Pt5S25xk>; John W. Welch, Terrence L. Szink, “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” *King Benjamin’s Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom*, eds. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/45/>. I have



After I finished *The Great Angel* and started collecting Barker’s books and essays, for broader perspective and balance I found other books, such as William Doorly’s *Obsession with Justice: The Story of the Deuteronomists*, John Bright’s Anchor volume on Jeremiah, and others, and read them as well. Excited by what I was learning, and how that changed what I was seeing in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon while using Barker’s paradigm, I approached Daniel Peterson after a talk he gave during the St. Louis Temple open house, preceding the temple dedication. I asked him if he knew whether anyone had been doing anything with Barker’s work. Already a fan of *The Great Angel*, he encouraged me to contact William Hamblin, who had by then started the FARMS *Occasional papers* series. I spent the next year working on a paper, and after Hamblin critiqued an early draft, I spent another year working to improve it.

### First Contact

In the fall of 1999, Margaret Barker received and answered a letter from an obscure English major and technical writer in Lawrence, Kansas (that is, me) who had, as an introduction, sent her a copy of Hugh Nibley’s *Enoch the Prophet*, which I thought she might find of interest, due to her own publications on Enoch. I also sent a copy of Nibley’s essay on “The Forty Day Mission of Christ,”<sup>108</sup> since it was comparable in themes and sources to her essay on “The Secret Tradition,” published in *The Journal of Higher Criticism*.<sup>109</sup> She asked what I was working on, and I wrote that I intended to compare her work to the Book of Mormon. This was her first contact, as far as she knew, with a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The next important contact came in early 2002 when I got a box of author’s copies and sent her a copy of

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argued that Lehi’s first public discourse in 1 Nephi 1:19, on the “Messiah, and also the redemption of the world,” addresses the implications of the absence of the Day of Atonement from Deuteronomy. See my “Prophets and Kings in Lehi’s Jerusalem and Margaret Barker’s Temple Theology,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 177–93, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology/>.

108. Hugh Nibley, “Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: The Forty-day Mission of Christ — The Forgotten Heritage,” reprinted in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, eds. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, UT: FARMS, 1987), 10–44.

109. Margaret Barker, “The Secret Tradition” in *The Journal of Higher Criticism* 2, no. 1 (1995): 31–67, reprinted in Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 1–33. Also online at her website, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/SecretTradition.pdf>.

“Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies.”

She emailed back, “It came about five hours ago. I have read it already. ... I HAD NO IDEA that my work would be of such significance for Mormon Studies. Thank you for sending me a copy, and for that matter, thank you for writing the book.”<sup>110</sup>

I would soon notice that if I went to Amazon books and looked at “What other books have readers of this book purchased” sections for *The Great Angel*, and others of her books, prominent among the titles were things like Terryl Givens’s *By the Hand of Mormon*, Richard Bushman’s *Rough Stone Rolling*, and Hugh Nibley’s *Temple and Cosmos*. The opposite was true as well. Those who read Givens, Nibley and Bushman were also buying *The Great Angel* and *The Lost Prophet* and others. This conspicuous Latter-day Saint association continued for well over a decade. The pattern is not as evident in the past few years, I believe, not because Latter-day Saint interest has diminished, but because broader interest in Barker has substantially increased.

In early 2002, Professor Noel Reynolds of BYU had been working on a project at the Vatican Library in Rome, and on the flight home, had decided to read *The Great Angel*. Profoundly impressed, he went to the FARMS offices and asked Louis Midgley if anyone had heard of her. Midgley responded that they had just published *Paradigms Regained*. Reynolds read it and contacted me and asked if I had been in touch with Barker. I said yes and provided him with her email and address. He soon contacted her and arranged for an in-person visit in her Derbyshire home. He spent about five hours with her, discussing her work and her interest in the temple. One of the direct outcomes of that visit was that she was invited to come to BYU for a week-long seminar in May of 2003. Reynolds informed me that the Dean of Religion at BYU had given copies of my book to most of his faculty. Reynolds also told me that my writing *Paradigms Regained* had saved him the trouble of doing so.

I have mentioned that by the mid-1990s, a few Latter-day Saint scholars, such as Barry Bickmore, David Baron, Martin Tanner, John Tvedtnes, Eugene Seaich and Daniel Peterson had begun quoting *The Great Angel*. Some of our critics took enough notice of a few of those quotes, especially those by Barry Bickmore, that in *The New Mormon Challenge*, a 2002 collection of essays by Evangelical scholars responding to Latter-day Saint claims, Paul Owen spent a fifth of his essay attempting

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110. Margaret Barker, e-mail message to author in early 2002.

to debunk her work.<sup>111</sup> Several Latter-day Saint scholars responded to the book in volumes of *The FARMS Review*,<sup>112</sup> and I was invited to respond to Owen. While I was working on the essay, she sent me an email with some useful advice. I asked if she minded if I quoted her, and she replied that I could quote anything I wanted. We included her response as an appendix in my response to Owen’s essay.<sup>113</sup> This was the first time she was published in a Latter-day Saint journal. In a subsequent edition of *The FARMS Review* in 2003, Barry Bickmore offered another wide-ranging and more detailed response to Owen, citing Barker, along with many others, in defending Latter-day Saint theology and our use of Barker’s books.<sup>114</sup>

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111. Paul Owen, “Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness” *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, eds. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, Paul Owen, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002) 301–08.

112. See *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 14, no. 1–2, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol14/iss1/> and *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 15/1, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol15/iss1/>.

113. Kevin Christensen, “A Response to Paul Owen’s Comments on Margaret Barker,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 14, no. 1–(2002): 193–221, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol14/iss1/1-2/>.

114. Barry Bickmore, “Of Simplicity, Oversimplification, and Monotheism” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 51, no. 1 (2003): 215–58, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol15/iss1/14/>. Another offshoot of Bickmore quoting from *The Great Angel* occurred in 2002 when second-generation Japanese American student Andrei Ishii, who had been researching Mormonism for a personal study and encountered Barry Bickmore’s “Early Christianity and Mormonism Page,” which included several articles on similarities “between [Latter-day Saint] doctrines and practices and those of the Early Christian Church.” Bickmore’s quotation from *The Great Angel* led Ishii to Barker’s books. Speaking of himself in third person, he writes: “One of the things he began to notice as he continued to read Barker’s research was that many of the elements Barker writes in her books regarding ancient Israelite Temple not only fit decently with many of the ancient Japanese traditions and religion, but also solved some of the problems he had in making sense of the theory as presented by some of the researchers of this subject. The world knows of it as the ‘Japanese-Jews Common Origin Theory.’ It is a theory proposed by some that in ancient times, there was a migration (or series of migrations) of Israelites on the vast Eurasian continent — from Western Asia to the Japanese archipelago at the other side of the Silk Road — who ultimately became the Japanese people.” Andrei Ishii, “Shinto-Judaism Common Origin Theory in Light of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship,” 2004, 80 pages, p 3. Unpublished paper in my possession, courtesy of Andrei Ishii. For a time, Ishii’s work led him to attempt to translate *The Great Angel* into Japanese.

Shortly before the seminar, I got an email from BYU Professor M. Catherine Thomas, wanting to know about a Barker source for a paper she was writing. She commented on the circumstance that Barker had spent years working against tides of opinion and established thinking in order to gain respect and acceptance, making the climb from obscure housewife and math teacher to President of the Society for Old Testament Study, and at that moment when she had “arrived,” we show up. How would she react? Would she treat the possible association with the Latter-day Saints as a threat to her career and reputation? When John Welch first discovered chiasmus in the Book of Mormon while on his mission in Germany in 1967, he also reported that he had gone and asked the scholar who had given the lecture on chiasmus the previous week whether the example he discovered in Mosiah was valid. That man had first read the chiastic passage, commented that it was very good, then realized that it was in the Book of Mormon, closed the book and would not say another word. When Hugh Nibley showed Matthew Black the Book of Moses Mahujah/Enoch story, paralleling the one that Black had found in the Qumran Enoch, Black refused to comment, except to say “Someday we will find out the source that Joseph Smith used.”<sup>115</sup> In contrast, Barker’s open response clearly stands out. Despite some critics fretting over the Latter-day Saint connection, as Paul Owen had done, she has never shied away from it. And as is demonstrated by her subsequent Lambeth Doctor of Divinity Degree and ongoing publications and more invitations to speak than she can possibly accept, the connection has not hurt her scholarly career. It is a simple but convincing demonstration that she does not fear man more than God.

### **Barker Comes to BYU in 2003**

In May 2003, Barker arrived in Provo for a five-day seminar which she presented to a room full of Latter-day Saint scholars, mostly from BYU, but also including Alyson Von Feldt, Brant Gardner, and myself. She used a Hebrew Bible that she translated on the fly, the two volumes of Charlesworth’s *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* which she navigated with notable facility, and a brief outline for the topics she wanted to cover in each session.

Before the seminar came, I had been invited to write an essay on Barker’s work for the upcoming *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem* volume, edited by David and Jo Ann Seely and John W. Welch. On the first day

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115. See *Hugh Nibley Observed*, eds. Jeffery M. Bradshaw, Shirley S. Ricks, Stephen T. Whitlock (Orem, UT: Eborn Books, 2021), 426.

of the seminar, I met with Professor Welch to discuss edits to an essay I had in the volume. On that first occasion, Welch seemed to be reserving judgement about Barker. On the third day of the seminar, she went through the material on the transmission of Hebrew scripture akin to her “Text and Context” essay, included in *The Great High Priest*.<sup>116</sup> At the end of her presentation, he bounded down from the back row, opened her monogrammed Triple Combination to 1 Nephi 13, and excitedly asked if she had seen this. (1 Nephi 13 and “Text and Context” tell essentially the same story regarding the transmission of scripture and the loss and restoration of plain and precious things.) He reported that she wanted to talk with him about the Narrative of Zosimus. In a presentation almost ten years later, in Logan for the Academy for Temple Studies, Welch recalled another important moment during Barker’s first visit to Provo:

She came here ten years ago to give a seminar at BYU, and I had the pleasure of driving her through Utah County. As we drove by Mount Timpanogos, we started talking about mountains and the mountain of the Lord, and she started making connections. Then I told her I had done a lot of work on the Sermon on the Mount as a temple text. She wouldn’t let me stop talking about it. We corresponded about it, and eventually I received an invitation to present the topic at Temple Studies Group in London and elsewhere in London. The book was published by Ashgate in 2009.<sup>117</sup> You’ll see that it is in the series Society for Old Testament Studies, and Margaret was the head of that series at the time. I’m grateful that she encouraged me through all of this.<sup>118</sup>

Besides encouraging Welch to write *The Sermon on the Mount in Light of the Temple* for the larger Christian community, Welch later

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116. Barker, “Text and Context,” <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/TextAndContext.pdf>.

117. John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

118. John W. Welch, “The Temple, The Sermon on the Mount, and the Gospel of Matthew,” *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Tradition*, ed. Gary N. Anderson (Logan, UT: Academy for Temple Studies, 2013), 61, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>. For more details of their discussion, see John W. Welch, “The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple,” interview by Alan Taylor Farnes, *Religious Educator* 12, no. 1 (2011): 21–37, <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-12-no-1-2011/sermon-mount-light-temple>.



told me that Barker had insisted that he mention in that book that the temple-context thesis had originally come from the Book of Mormon.<sup>119</sup> Welch has compared Barker's impact on his life and scholarship to that of Hugh Nibley.<sup>120</sup>

During the seminar, attendee Alyson Von Feldt heard BYU Professor C. Wilfred Griggs say, "She puts our scholarship to shame." As part of her time at BYU, for lunches and dinners, Barker met with small groups, to give people a chance for more intimate conversations than was possible in the seminars. John Tvedtnes later told me that during his dinner with her, she told him that one of the things that turned her towards the temple when she was at Cambridge was her reading an essay in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, "Christian Envy of the Temple," by one Hugh Nibley.<sup>121</sup> During that first visit to Provo, Barker also began a close friendship with Professor John F. Hall and his wife that led to Hall's repeated participation in her London-based Temple Studies group.<sup>122</sup>

She gave two public talks while at BYU in 2003. For a devotional, she spoke on "What King Josiah Reformed." This talk was later included in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*. Brant Gardner told me that listening to that one talk caused one of the most important paradigm shifts in his life. Gardner incorporated many of Barker's notions in his 2003 FAIR presentation on "Monotheism, Messiah, and Mormon's Book,"<sup>123</sup> and he refers to her work often in his important six-volume commentary on the Book of Mormon, *Second Witness*.<sup>124</sup> The talk also changed my thinking on Josiah. In *Paradigms Regained*, influenced by Friedman, I approached the Deuteronomist Reform as occurring in layers and waves over time,

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119. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, xii, 220–21.

120. Welch, "Welcome and Opening Comments by the Presenters," *Mormonism and the Temple*, 17, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>.

121. Also see Louis Midgley's report of the same information: Louis Midgley, "The Nibley Legacy" *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*, 20, no. 2 (2008): 294n3, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1758&context=msr>.

122. For example, see Hall's presentation at the Temple Studies Group's Symposium VII Mary and the Temple, "The Lady in the Temple before the Hebrews: Hathor of Egypt," June 15, 2013, <http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Symposia/Symposium7.htm>.

123. Brant Gardner, "Monotheism, Messiah, and Mormon's Book," paper delivered at FAIR Conference, August 2003, Orem, Utah, <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2003/monotheism-messiah-and-mormons-book>.

124. See the publisher's description of the first of six volumes of *Second Witness*, <https://gregkofford.com/collections/scripture/products/second-witness-volume-1>.

as different kings and events occurred up to the exile and return. In her “What Did King Josiah Reform?” talk I was struck by her crucial insight that “Josiah’s changes concerned the high priests, and were thus changes at the very heart of the temple.”<sup>125</sup> I began rereading Jeremiah and the Book of Mormon in that light, and my subsequent Barker essays reflect a changed perspective.<sup>126</sup> On Friday evening, she spoke to a smaller audience on Jesus as “The Great High Priest.” This talk was later published in *BYU Studies*.<sup>127</sup> While she was not able to meet Hugh Nibley due to his ill health at the time of her visit, she encountered Tom Nibley in the audience after her talk, and spoke to him of her admiration for Hugh Nibley’s scholarship.

### Ripples after BYU

Periodically, I would hear that this or that Latter-day Saint scholar had contacted Barker. For instance, Kevin Barney sent her a copy of his *BYU Studies* article on “Examining Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith’s Understanding of Genesis 1:1.”<sup>128</sup> He reported that she approved and commented that “The key to everything is in what is missing from Genesis.”

As the 2004 publication process for *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem* progressed, I sent Barker a near-final draft of my essay for the volume, “The Temple, The Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker.” She read it and reported that doing so led to her deciding to read the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, all in one day. She described it as a “big job,” and commented, “I was amazed at how much I recognized.”<sup>129</sup>

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125. Margaret Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?,” *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, eds. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 526, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/what-did-king-josiah-reform>.

126. Christensen, “Prophets and Kings,” <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology/#fn2-2695>. I wrote my essay in response to William Hamblin’s “Vindicating Josiah” in same volume of the *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/vindicating-josiah/>.

127. See Margaret Barker “The Great High Priest” (lecture given at Brigham Young University, May 9, 2003), *BYU Studies* 42, no. 3–4 (2003): 65–84, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-great-high-priest/>.

128. Kevin L. Barney, “Examining Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith’s Understanding of Genesis 1:1,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 107–24, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol39/iss3/7/>.

129. Margaret Barker, e-mail message to author, 2004.



In 2004, I also published another essay in the *FARMS Review*, “The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament,”<sup>130</sup> as a response to my reading an essay by Melodie Moench Charles called “The Mormon Christianizing of the Old Testament.”<sup>131</sup> Her essay charged that Latter day Saint commentaries on the Old Testament tended to rely on an overlay of modern revelation, rather than “reading the text as it is.” Barker’s first book, *The Older Testament*, began making her case that “a fundamental misreading of the Old Testament” had been forced upon present readers “by those who transmitted the texts.”<sup>132</sup> I was able to show that “on exactly those points on which Charles asserts that Mormonism is irreconcilable with the Old Testament, Barker finds shifts in Israelite thought during the exile and beyond. At every point, the original picture corresponds to what we have in the Book of Mormon.”<sup>133</sup>

Incidentally, the same issue of *The FARMS Review* that contained my “The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament” included a review of *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem* by Terrence L. Szink that disputed Barker’s take on Josiah and defending a traditional view and asserting that Jeremiah and Lehi supported the reform. Though I did not see his essay in advance, my essay happened to include arguments that both Jeremiah and Lehi were opposed to the reform. Readers can compare and weigh arguments for themselves.<sup>134</sup>

### **Barker and the 2005 Joseph Smith Conference**

In 2005, Margaret was invited to the planned Joseph Smith Conference to be held at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The conference would include Latter-day Saint scholars and those from a range of backgrounds, exploring the life of Joseph Smith on the bicentennial of his birth. Barker would be responding to a talk by Terryl Givens on

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130. Kevin Christensen, “The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 16, no. 2 (2004): 59–90, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol16/iss2/5/>.

131. Melodie Moench Charles, “The Mormon Christianizing of the Old Testament” in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 131–42.

132. Barker, *The Older Testament*, 1.

133. Christensen, “Deuteronomist De-Christianizing,” 89.

134. See Terrence L. Szink, “Jerusalem in Lehi’s Day” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 16, no. 2 (2004): 149–59, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol16/iss2/10/>.

“Joseph Smith: Prophecy, Process, and Plentitude.”<sup>135</sup> For her visit to Washington, John Welch talks about how

I picked Margaret up at the airport; she was hobbling because she was in great pain, so we put her in a wheelchair and brought her to the hotel. That kind of dedication is the sign of a dedicated life, ... I appreciate that Margaret would have come under those conditions. I picked her up the next morning when we were on the way right over to the Library of Congress to have her speak, and one of the parts of her paper dealt with the tree of life and the white fruit mentioned in 1 Nephi 8 in Lehi’s vision. True to form, Margaret had been up early in the morning rereading 1 Nephi 8 to be sure she had all of this fresh in mind. As we were going over to the Library of Congress, she said, “I saw something very interesting I’d never seen before as I read through this. There it talks about an iron rod that leads to the tree of life. And all of a sudden it connected in my mind that in Psalms 2:9, the King James says that God will there ‘[beat people] with a rod of iron,’ but the Hebrew can just as well be ‘leads people with a rod of iron.’”<sup>136</sup>

My wife and I arrived at the conference hall early and found reasonable seats.<sup>137</sup> I spotted Margaret and introduced her to my wife. Shauna greeted Margaret with the comment that it seemed that this was going to be the “start of something important,” and both she and Margaret teared up in a moment of spiritual connection. We had no idea what she would say before she spoke. She spoke on the Book of Mormon in a talk that remains by far the single most insightful and appreciative talk by any non-LDS scholar.<sup>138</sup>

What I offer can only be the reactions of an Old Testament scholar: are the revelations to Joseph Smith consistent with the situation in Jerusalem in about 600 BCE? Do the revelations to

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135. Terry L. Givens, “Joseph Smith: Prophecy, Process, and Plentitude,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol44/iss4/8/>.

136. Welch, “Opening Comments,” 17.

137. In 2004, my family had relocated from Lawrence, Kansas, to a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which meant that we could conveniently drive to Washington, DC, to attend Margaret’s talk.

138. Compare papers on the Book of Mormon by James H. Charlesworth and Krister Stendahl in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaean-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen, (Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978).

Joseph Smith fit in that context, the reign of King Zedekiah, who is mentioned at the beginning of the First Book of Nephi, which begins in the “first year of the reign of Zedekiah” (1 Nephi 1:4)? Zedekiah was installed as king in Jerusalem in 597 BCE.<sup>139</sup>

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The divine Son, the priest of the order of Melchizedek, was born in the glory of these “holy ones,” or so it seems. Psalm 110 is an enigmatic text, but it seems to describe the birth of an angel priest after the order of Melchizedek in the Holy of Holies of the temple, which represented heaven, which evokes related ideas in Alma 13:1–16 in the Book of Mormon.

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The tree of life made one happy, according to the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 3:8), but for detailed descriptions of the tree we have to rely on the noncanonical texts. Enoch described it as perfumed, with fruit like grapes (1 Enoch 32:5), and a text discovered in Egypt in 1945 described the tree as beautiful, fiery, and with fruit like white grapes. I do not know of any other source that describes the fruit as *white* grapes. Imagine my surprise when I read the account of Lehi’s vision of the tree whose *white fruit* made one happy, and the interpretation that the Virgin in Nazareth was the mother of the Son of God after the manner of the flesh (1 Nephi 11:14–23). This is the Heavenly Mother, represented by the tree of life, and then Mary and her Son on earth. This revelation to Joseph Smith was the ancient Wisdom symbolism, intact, and almost certainly as it was known in 600 BCE.<sup>140</sup>

During a question-and-answer period after the four-speaker session, it became evident that all the questions were directed to Barker. Speaking in her direct and unassuming way, she had electrified the large audience in a way that few scholars ever do. For instance, in a 2013 interview, Latter-day Saint scholar Fiona Givens talked about the impact that talk had on her:

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139. Margaret Barker, “Joseph Smith and the Pre-exilic Religion of Israel,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005) 69, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol44/iss4/9/>.

140. *Ibid.*, 76.

Barker has probably had the most powerful impact on my theological evolution. It would take me too long to go into detail, so I shall enumerate some areas as briefly as I can (yes, I know I’m sounding like Polonius).

- 1) I was first introduced to her at the Joseph Smith Bicentennial Conference in Washington, D.C. I was enthralled by the paper she delivered on whether it was possible that *The Book of Mormon* could, in fact, be a 600 BCE text. Barker’s fascinating explication of Lehi’s vision illustrated that *The Book of Mormon* could be just that. I bought all her books and started ploughing through them.
- 2) I am impressed, foremost, by her honesty as a scholar. She is careful to presage her works by admitting that it is a challenge to support her claims, given the paucity and the quality of the manuscripts with which she is working.
- 3) I find her argument, that an earlier Hebrew faith tradition that revolved around the Temple and the Atonement was replaced by the Deuteronomist focus on Moses and the law during King Josiah’s reform, compelling. “Reform” is a two-edged sword — great if you are on the “right” side of it, disastrous if you are not. The “Temple Priesthood” which espoused a belief in a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Son was ousted in favour of monotheism. The Book of Mormon introduces the prophet, Lehi, during this reform. The fact that he was being hunted strongly suggests that he was on the wrong side of the reform movement. When I read the first few chapters of the Book of Mormon I now see historical figures depicted rather than mythical ones.
- 4) I find Barker’s extra-canonical research on the Feminine Divine in the First Temple tradition fascinating. I am currently reading her two-volume work: *The Mother of the Lord*, which is both rich with detail and resonant.<sup>141</sup>

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141. Fiona Givens, “Nothing Can Separate Us From the Love of God: An Interview with Fiona Givens, co-author of *The God Who Weeps*” interview by William Morris, *A Motley Vision*, April 7, 2013, [https://motleyvision.org/2013/04/07/nothing-can-separate-us-from-the-love-of-god-an-interview-with-fiona-givens-co-author-of-the-god-who-weeps\\_/](https://motleyvision.org/2013/04/07/nothing-can-separate-us-from-the-love-of-god-an-interview-with-fiona-givens-co-author-of-the-god-who-weeps_/).

Gary Anderson, later an organizer of the Academy for Temple Studies group in Logan, reported, “My interest increased when she spoke at the Worlds of Joseph Smith Symposium in 2005 at the Library of Congress. Through some friends, I started sending emails to her on items about temple studies.”<sup>142</sup>

### A Widening Influence, Interest and Collaborations

Also in 2005, Orson Scott Card connected with me Katherine Kidd, then an editor at *Meridian* magazine. Thanks to Card’s introduction, and Katherine Kidd’s editorship, *Meridian* published twelve essays from me, seven of which discussed Barker’s work and books.<sup>143</sup> Latter-day Saint biblical scholar David Larsen later told me that these essays were his first introduction to her work.<sup>144</sup> He then published on Barker’s work, responding to a Barker talk on “The Lord is One” in *BYU Studies*.<sup>145</sup>

In 2006, Barker wrote a paper for a Tree of Life conference at BYU. This was published as “The Fragrant Tree” and published in *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity*.<sup>146</sup>

In 2006, Dean Collingwood and James R. McConkie reviewed Barker’s *Temple Theology: An Introduction* for *BYU Studies*.

In the past two decades, Margaret Barker has managed a miracle: in a prodigious output of a dozen scholarly books and book chapters, as well as numerous articles and conference addresses, Barker, a Cambridge-educated independent scholar, Methodist lay preacher, and former president of the Society for Old Testament Study, has successfully shaken the very foundations of Old Testament and early Christian

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142. Gary Anderson, “Welcome and Opening Comments by Presenters,” *Mormonism and the Temple*, 10, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>.

143. For example, Kevin Christensen, “Plain and Precious Things Restored: Spiritual Blindness,” *Meridian Magazine*, October 4, 2005, <https://latterdaysaintmag.com/article-1-4165/>.

144. Larsen studied with Andre Orlov at Marquette, who uses Barker’s work, and completed his Ph.D. in Biblical Studies at St. Andrews in Scotland.

145. David J. Larsen, “Response to Margaret Barker’s ‘The Lord is One,’” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2017), <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/response-to-margaret-barkers-the-lord-is-one/>. Other respondents in the same issue included Daniel C. Peterson and Andrew C. Skinner.

146. *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity*, eds. John W. Welch and Donald W. Parry (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, and Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 55–79.

scholarship. Is it not obvious that the Christianity of Jesus’s day and shortly thereafter was heavily influenced by Greek culture? Is it not clear that Jesus’ teachings were a product of the Jewish culture, especially the synagogue culture, of his day? “No,” says Barker to these claims; it is neither obvious nor clear that Christianity had its origin in these influences. A careful reading of noncanonical sources such as the Enoch literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests that Jesus was influenced by something much more ancient than Hellenistic or synagogue culture. He seemed to have in mind the theology and ordinances of the first Jewish temple, the temple as it had existed before the accretions of paganism and the “reforms” of King Josiah in the seventh century BCE. Indeed, if Barker’s thesis holds up to scholarly scrutiny, everyone will be forced to redefine Jesus as a restorer of a religion that had been lost rather than as an inventor of something new.

Such a reworking of centuries of scholarship will not be easy. Think of the scores of German Protestant scholars whose work constituted the academic foundation of intertestamental scholarship throughout the twentieth century and whose labors are now being called into question. Think of the millions of Christians of all stripes who have been taught to believe in a strict trinitarian monotheism — a belief Barker claims is inconsistent with both ancient Jewish religion and the religion Jesus restored. Despite these formidable obstacles, the Germans are diligently reading Barker and are finding much of value, as are the Catholics, the Russian Orthodox, and many others. At least sixty reviews of Barker’s works have already been published (including the lead review in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 2003), and Barker has been asked to speak at conferences and symposia in Europe, Turkey, and the United States, including at a Brigham Young University devotional in 2003 and at the Joseph Smith Conference in Washington, D.C., in 2005.<sup>147</sup>

In 2006 in *BYU Studies*, David Paulsen published a long essay called “Are Christians Mormon? Reassessing Joseph Smith’s Theology in his

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147. Dean W. Collinwood, James W. McConkie, review of “Temple Theology: An Introduction,” by Margaret Barker, *BYU Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 173, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/temple-theology-an-introduction/>.



Bicentennial.” In the section on the rising notice of the divine feminine in Christian thought and Biblical study, Paulsen included a discussion of how “Margaret Barker has explored the issue in depth”; two pages discussed her work.<sup>148</sup>

In 2007, Alyson Von Feldt published two important essays that drew on Barker’s work in places. The first is her review of William Dever’s important book on the evidence for a Heavenly Mother in ancient Israel, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, in which she made fresh observations on “what Dever believes is the most remarkable artifact of ancient Israelite religion found to date. It is an elaborate terra-cotta rectangular pillar from 10<sup>th</sup> century BC Ta<sup>c</sup>anach (p. 154). I believe that Dever’s archaeology and Barker’s reconstruction of wisdom theology come together to elucidate this artifact, also bringing light to our own Latter-day Saint temple tradition.”<sup>149</sup> Von Feldt goes beyond Dever to suggest that “*that Ta<sup>c</sup>anach stand is a plausible model of the creature in Ezekiel’s visions.*”<sup>150</sup>

Her essay included a very good photograph of the offering stand. She continues to explain the importance and implications.

I have suggested that the Ta<sup>c</sup>anach offering stand represents the throne of God. I have discussed its two Asherah icons and possible Yahweh symbol. I have considered that the offerings associated with this stand may have been invocation offerings rather than memorial offerings. I infer that the cherubim wearing the Hathor wigs could be understood to be mortals who have received wisdom and been transformed into angels. So, taken all together and understood in light of the wisdom tradition, *the Ta<sup>c</sup>anach stand may well be physical evidence of a theology of apotheosis.* In the countryside of Israel in family shrines, ordinary men and perhaps women sought heavenly wisdom. They may have believed they could become holy ones, ascend to the throne of Yahweh, and receive cosmic knowledge. They may have understood

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148. David L. Paulsen, “Are Christians Mormon? Reassessing Joseph Smith’s Theology in His Bicentennial” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 1 (2006): 105–107, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/are-christians-mormon-reassessing-joseph-smiths-theology-in-his-bicentennial/>.

149. Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, “Does God Have a Wife?,” review of *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, by William G. Dever, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 19, no. 1 (2007): 100, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol19/iss1/10/>.

150. *Ibid.*, 103.

that the power to bestow this experience was in the hands of Asherah, and their offerings of invocation were symbols of her life-giving essence. If we add a Book of Mormon text to the interpretation, we can see that the stand, like others of its kind, may also have encoded the incarnation of Yahweh. Because the Taʿanach stand is so productively interpreted by Ezekiel’s vision, it is possible that apocalyptic has found new roots — in the ancient religion of the countryside.<sup>151</sup>

Von Feldt’s other 2007 essay was just as groundbreaking and insightful as her review of Dever:

With a goal of identifying instructional wisdom in the Book of Mormon, we will quickly study the composition of Proverbs 1–9, and we will look at the literary forms, terms, and motifs of instructional wisdom in general.

Proverbs 1–9 is composed of ten *instructions*, also known as *lectures*, *discourses*, or *admonitions*, which are interspersed with five *interludes* or *hymns*. The interludes, with the exception of C, elaborate a similar theme: the persistence and excellence of wisdom. The whole collection is introduced by a prologue.

Like Near Eastern instructions in general, most of the instructions of Proverbs have a tripartite structure. They are introduced by (1) an *exordium* in which a father (a) *addresses* his son, (b) *exhorts* him to pay attention, and (c) *motivates* him by emphasizing the value or rewards that will flow from heeding his teachings. Following the *exordium* is (2) a *lesson*, summed up by (3) a *conclusion*.

In almost all cases of both Hebrew and Near Eastern instructional wisdom where the teacher’s gender can be identified, it is male — a father or wise man. In some cases, such as instructions I and IX of Proverbs, the mother who stands behind the teachings is also mentioned. We have no sure indication that the voice is ever hers, but we might imagine that the parents take turns offering the counsel — the father giving the instruction, with the mother speaking the interludes or dramatizing the voice of the wisdom woman. Proverbs 31:1–9 is the only instance in extant wisdom

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151. Ibid., 109–10.

documents where the lesson is clearly taught by a woman, in this case the queen mother of the Old Testament king Lemuel. Instructional lectures are sometimes called *patriarchal admonitions* when the setting is that of a Hebrew patriarch/prophet addressing his sons at the end of his life.<sup>152</sup>

Von Feldt explores the patterns and themes of the ancient wisdom literature, and then demonstrates that the Book of Mormon contains examples and the patterns and themes throughout. For example, after a detailed survey, she can conclude:

So to sum up, the thematic and literary similarities between Mosiah 1–5 and Proverbs 1–9 lend weight to the possibility that Proverbs 1–9 has ritual significance. The instructions, like King Benjamin’s speech, may have been part of a cultic liturgy that was spoken at an ancient temple ceremony. In this scenario, Wisdom is depicted as a high priestess inviting the spiritually famished to partake of a ritual feast at her temple table — a feast of ordinances, knowledge, and blessings.<sup>153</sup>

In both of her essays, Von Feldt refers to Margaret Barker’s work on restoring the ancient wisdom tradition. She was later invited to present at the Academy for Temple Studies at their 2013 Conference on “The Lady of the Temple: Examining the Divine Feminine in the Judeo-Christian Tradition.”<sup>154</sup>

In the wake of Barker’s presentation at the Washington, D.C. Joseph Smith Conference, Terry Givens emailed and told me that he was planning, with Reid L. Neilson, to edit a collection of essays from a broad selection of scholars who offer their reappraisals of Joseph Smith after two centuries. He asked if I thought that Margaret Barker would

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152. Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, “His Secret is with the Righteous: Instructional Wisdom in the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Occasional Papers* #5 (2007): 51–52, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20130701164749/http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/papers/?paperID=9&chapterID=74>. The document is also available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Fg1zuabUj5r156AhrIRIGAfUgBzdQpQL/view>.

153. *Ibid.*, 72.

154. See Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, “Wisdom and the Spirit in Resoration Scripture,” Lady of the Temple 2013 Conference, Academy for Temple Studies, Utah State University, Logan Utah, October 23, 2013, listed here, <http://www.templestudies.org/2013-the-lady-of-the-temple-conference/conference-schedule/>. For a video of Von Feldt’s presentation, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZ0YpXp79h4>.

be interested. I provided contact information. This ended up as a collaborative essay in which Barker wrote on the theme of “Seeing the face of the Lord” in the ancient temple tradition, and I wrote a section on how this related to Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saint scriptures. This was published in 2009 by Oxford University Press in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, as “Seeking the Face of the Lord: Joseph Smith and the First Temple Tradition.”

In 2007, Barker again presented at the Society of Biblical Literature in San Diego, this time on the theme of “Who was Melchizedek and Who was His God?”<sup>155</sup> In the version available on her website, she includes this introductory comment:

The translation history of Melchizedek’s few lines in Genesis raises important issues as to how and why the variants occurred. These need to be evaluated in the light of Melchizedek’s role in early Jewish-Christian debate, and how he is portrayed in the Apocalypse of Abraham, Psalm 110 and Hebrews. This paper was originally written without reference to LDS materials, and I am very grateful to John Welch and Kevin Christensen who showed me how my conclusions were relevant to and found in LDS material.<sup>156</sup>

For example, in this paper on Melchizedek, she writes:

What both the Jewish and the Enochic traditions are saying is that the Melchizedek priesthood was the priesthood of Enoch and the generation before the flood. The Book of Jubilees claims that many of the prescriptions of the Torah were far older than Moses, and had been given to Noah by his ancestors, the ancient priests (Jubilees 7.34–9; 10.13). We cannot just dismiss this as fiction. *These are all claims to a more ancient religion than that of Moses, an ancient religion represented in the biblical texts by the figure of Melchizedek.* The link to the Enoch tradition has to be important, not least because the oldest “history” of Jerusalem in 1 Enoch has no place for Moses. The so-called *Apocalypse of Weeks* describes the law being given, but there is no mention of Egypt or the Exodus (1 Enoch 93.6). There was a vision of the holy and righteous and

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155. Margaret Barker, “Who was Melchizedek and Who was His God?,” transcript at MargaretBarker.com, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/SBLMelchizedek.pdf>.

156. *Ibid.*, 1.

the law was given. Compare here the Joseph Smith Genesis, which has a significantly longer text for the Melchizedek episode, and links him to the covenant with Enoch which is not mentioned in Masoretic Hebrew text. Melchizedek “was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch.” *Who was this Melchizedek? This brief introductory survey shows that claims about him were disputed, and that the evidence is not always easy to evaluate. Earlier Jewish sources described him as a priest and a heavenly being, Christian texts say he was a priest and a heavenly being. Post Christian Jewish texts, however, say he was neither priest nor angel. The most likely explanation of this is the claims made for Jesus: that he was Melchizedek.* Melchizedek, as we shall see, described the spiritual being who appeared in or as various people, a condition that corresponds to the LDS concept of pre-mortal and mortal beings.<sup>157</sup>

Also in 2007, Latter-day Saint scholars William Hamblin and David Rolf Seely produced a book on *Solomon’s Temple: Myth and History*, for Thames and Hudson press, which cited Barker’s *The Gate of Heaven* in the Bibliography and included an appreciative jacket comment by Margaret Barker.

In 2008, Latter-day Saint scholar Ronan Head interviewed me regarding Barker’s work for a four-part series on the *By Common Consent* blog.<sup>158</sup> Parts 2, 3, and 4 include some interesting discussions, with objections, reservations, and appreciation being offered by a handful of Latter-day Saint scholars.

Latter-day Saint scholar Kevin Barney published “How to Worship our Heavenly Mother (Without Getting Excommunicated)” in *Dialogue* in 2008. Barney writes that “what I am going to suggest is that knowledge of Her is available in our canonized scripture, particularly in the Old Testament. Although information about Her is preserved in the Old Testament and associated literature, it is hidden in such a way that it requires scholarship to excavate it. And Mormonism is one of the few traditions, if not the only one, that has the resources within itself to take

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157. Ibid., 4.

158. Kevin Christensen, “Kevin Christensen on Margaret Barker,” interview by Ronan J. Head, *By Common Consent*, (blog) October 2, 2008. Links to part 4 with links to parts 1, 2, and 3, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2008/10/02/barker-part-4/>.

advantage of this knowledge for contemporary religious purposes.”<sup>159</sup> Though he draws on a wide range of biblical scholars, he cites Barker’s *The Great Angel* as having been his introduction to “a more recent trend in the scholarship of ancient Israel of seeing the monotheism we associate with Israelite theology as coming only at the end of a long line of development.”<sup>160</sup>

In 2009, two separate reviews of Barker’s *Temple Theology in Early Christianity* appeared in *The FARMS Review* by Frederick Huchel and John W. Welch. Both Huchel and Welch later presented papers at the London Temple Studies Group. Welch’s article is the transcript of the talk he gave for the London colloquium that was organized for the book’s publication.<sup>161</sup> In his review in that issue, Huchel writes:

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.<sup>162</sup>

He continues,

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

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159. Kevin L. Barney, “How to Worship our Heavenly Mother (Without Getting Excommunicated),” *Dialogue* 41/4 (2008): 122, <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/articles/how-to-worship-our-mother-in-heaven-without-getting-excommunicated/>.

160. *Ibid.*, 123.

161. Margaret Barker Colloquium in London,” *Theology and Temple Studies*, (blog), *T&T Clark*, March 10, 2008 <https://tandtclark.typepad.com/ttc/2008/03/margaret-barker.html>.

162. Frederick M. Huchel, “Antecedents of the Restoration in the Ancient Temple,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 21, no. 1 (2009): 9, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol21/iss1/5/>.



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.” In addition, “Barker paints a picture of the era from the reform of Josiah and Hilkiah to the visions of John the Apostle that is radically different from what we learned in seminary.” Mainstream scholars, it is true, tend not to like the implications of such a radical shift, but they find it difficult to refute her.<sup>163</sup>

In surveying her significant contributions, he continues,

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.<sup>164</sup>

In 2009, LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks published *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord: The Psalms in Israel’s Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon*, citing Barker twenty-one times.<sup>165</sup>

In 2009, John Welch reviewed Barker’s *Christmas: The Original Story*.<sup>166</sup> He notes that

Barker uses two main quarries of building blocks in reconstructing the original Christmas story (or stories). As most New Testament commentators also do, Barker weaves into her analysis a rich array of threads — drawn from evidences about cultural backgrounds, political contexts, and biblical prophecies — as she gives form and sense to the segmented elements contained in the traditional Christmas

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163. Ibid., 11.

164. Ibid., 12.

165. LeGrand L. Baker, Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011).

166. Margaret Barker, “Christmas: The Original Story,” <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Publications/Christmas.htm>.

accounts. But in addition, as she does in all of her signature works, Barker adds information from two distinctive spheres:  
1. Temple Themes ... 2. Temple Readings.<sup>167</sup>

In 2010, for another Society of Biblical Literature Meeting, Margaret Barker wrote a paper on Hugh Nibley’s essay “Christian Envy of the Temple”:

The Temple is an aspect of biblical studies that impacts on the most sensitive issues of our time, and yet when Hugh Nibley wrote his paper ‘Christian Envy of the Temple,’<sup>168</sup> scholars were paying little attention to this topic. The state of Israel was 13 years old at that time and did not include the traditional site of the Temple. We have only to think of the role the Temple plays in contemporary politics to realise, with the wisdom of hindsight, how great was the gap in biblical scholarship when Nibley took up his pen. And the Temple is not only important as the most contested piece of real estate on the planet; it is also the common heritage of all branches of the Christian Church, and the sooner this is realised, the sooner we shall have some real basis for Church unity.

Hugh Nibley’s paper “Christian Envy of the Temple” opened up a new approach to the subject and is far too rich to consider in any detail in this short presentation. He set out to consider three aspects:

- That many Christian writers have expressed the conviction that the Church possesses no adequate substitute for the temple and have yearned for its return. They had a sense of loss without the Temple.
- That determined attempts have been made from time to time to revive in the Church practices peculiar to the Temple. They had a sense of inadequacy without the Temple.
- That the official Christian position, that Church and

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167. John W. Welch, “Christmas Stories” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 21, no. 2 (2009), 34–35, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1774&context=msr>.

168. Hugh W. Nibley, “Christian Envy of the Temple,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 50, no. 2 (October 1959): 97–123. Reprinted in Hugh W. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 391–434.

Temple cannot co-exist and hence the latter has been abolished forever, has always been weakened by the persistent fear that the Temple might be restored. They [the churches] had a sense of misgiving.

Nibley was correct to identify the ambiguity in the Church's relationship with the Temple, and I shall suggest a possible solution to the problem he implied in his paper.<sup>169</sup>

In 2010, I published a response to a 1982 paper by William D. Russell, "A Further Inquiry into the Historicity of the Book of Mormon." My title was "Hindsight on a Book of Mormon Historicity Critique,"<sup>170</sup> and in responding to Russell, I had occasion to cite Barker on a range of issues, including Messianic expectations in pre-exilic Israel and the Isaiah issue. It was here that I called attention to Barker's important essay "The Original Setting of the Fourth Servant Song,"<sup>171</sup> which made the case that Isaiah 53, on the Suffering Servant, was directly inspired by Hezekiah's bout with the plague as interpreted in light of the temple rituals. If Barker's interpretation of the evidence, both archeological and textual, is correct, then Isaiah 53 is pre-exilic and therefore, available to Abinadi via the Brass Plates.

Also in 2010, Jeffery M. Bradshaw published his huge and ambitious book, *In God's Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses*.<sup>172</sup> The jacket comment for this 1100-page commentary was provided by Margaret Barker, who wrote:

This is not just a book for Mormons. Dr. Bradshaw draws on a wide range of material from many cultures and eras: Jewish, Christian, Muslim. He shows how to read and understand the stories of a prephilosophical culture, and reveals them as sophisticated insights into the human condition. He

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169. Margaret Barker, "Christian Envy of the Temple: Revisiting Hugh Nibley's Landmark Paper after 50 Years," SBL (2010), 1. Copy in author's possession, courtesy of Margaret Barker.

170. Kevin Christensen, "Hindsight on a Book of Mormon Historicity Critique," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 22, no. 2 (2010): 155–94, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1828&context=msr>.

171. Margaret Barker, "The Original Setting of the Fourth Servant Song," <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/FourthServantSong.pdf>. Also see Christensen, "Paradigms Regained," the section on "Open Questions and Suggestions Regarding Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 77–81.

172. Jeffery M. Bradshaw, *In God's Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2010).

takes as his starting point the Genesis material in Mormon tradition, and then sets it in a wider context than many would have thought possible, exploring the human and spiritual state of humanity, the nature of our knowledge about the Creation, the nature of revelation itself. He has wise words on the creationism debate. This remarkable book makes an important contribution to understanding not only the material in Genesis, but also the way in which that heritage has been shared among all the Peoples of the Book.<sup>173</sup>

In January of 2012, when Barker spoke at the Orthodox Seminary in Yonkers, New York, my wife and I drove from Pittsburgh to listen. Before the audience was seated, Margaret approached us, saying that “The first thing I said to them when I got here was that if they were serious about studying the temple, they would have to swallow their pride and ask the Mormons, because they have the best scholars on the topic.” The talk she gave, on Jesus as “The Great High Priest,” was very well received by the audience of Orthodox scholars and leaders. The talk needed to be re-recorded for broadcast, and for that recording, the first of two questions Barker was asked concerned Latter-day Saint interest in her work. She noted for the public broadcast, “I have developed a very happy relationship with many top Mormon scholars, really good biblical scholars, who know their temple stuff. And what they come up with and what I’ve come up with is just about identical. So I work with Mormons because, in terms of temple scholarship, they are the best available. Full stop.”<sup>174</sup>

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173. Ibid., back jacket.

174. For the quotation on Latter-day Saint scholars, on February 13, 2012 on the Mormon Dialogue and Discussion Board, William Hamblin posted a portion of the transcript from the version re-recorded for radio broadcast. It occurs in the Q&A at time 59:00:30 and provides the context for the portion I quoted above:

“Q. Why [are] people of the Mormon faith interested in your work? Maybe again you can explain their attraction to temple worship.

“A. Well, you never know whose going read your books. And many years ago now, I was contacted by a leading scholar of the Latter-day Saints and he came to see me when he was in England. And he said when had read this particular book, *The Great Angel*, he couldn’t believe it hadn’t been written by one of their community. And he was intrigued how somebody working outside their community, just using the conventional tools of scholarship, could come up with something very, very similar — usually identical — to their teachings.”

Another aspect of that talk was that though my wife Shauna had put up with my writing about Barker, and years of my dazzling young missionary dinner guests with my promotion of her books, and had sat beside me during Barker's 2005 Washington, D.C. talk on the Book of Mormon, it was this talk that really got through to her. At the end, Shauna tearfully told Margaret, "We have no idea what we have!"

In 2012, Joseph Spencer published the first edition of his close reading of the Book of Mormon, *An Other Testament: On Typology*.<sup>175</sup> He sees the underlying structure of 1 and 2 Nephi as follows:

- Part 1: Creation (1 Nephi 1–18)
- Part 2: Fall (1 Nephi 19–2 Nephi 5)
- Part 3: Atonement (2 Nephi 6–30)
- Part 4: Veil (2 Nephi 31–33)

He says that this structure "effectively reproduces what the Book of Mormon elsewhere calls 'the plan of redemption.' Moreover, it reproduces what Nephi takes to be the basic pattern of his own life, as he summarizes it in the famous first verse of First Nephi."

- Creation: "born of goodly parents"
- Fall: "many afflictions"
- Atonement: "highly favored of the Lord"
- Veil: "a great knowledge of ... the mysteries of God."<sup>176</sup>

A few pages later, Spencer comments that "Margaret Barker's work expresses both the spirit and the letter of Nephi's pattern. In a book simply titled *Temple Theology*, Barker has assembled a definitive introduction to what she divides into a fourfold pattern: creation, (broken) covenant, atonement, and (divine) wisdom. The correspondence between what Margaret Barker describes as temple theology and the pattern Nephi uses to structure his record is striking. This correspondence suggest[s] that Nephi's record might have been written in association with the newly constructed Nephite temple."<sup>177</sup> In a footnote, Spencer comments that this pattern was "all the more striking for me, because I had been working with the creation/fall/atonement/veil interpretation of Nephi's

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<https://www.mormondialogue.org/topic/56779-margaret-barker-in-yonkers-january-29/>.

175. Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2016).

176. *Ibid.*, 42

177. *Ibid.*, 49.

record for several years before I came across Margaret Barker’s work for the first time.”<sup>178</sup>

Also in 2012, D. John Butler published *Plain and Precious Things: The Temple Religion of the Book of Mormon’s Visionary Men*. He makes a detailed case that Lehi’s dream “is set within the temple and expressed in terms of temple architecture and furniture,”<sup>179</sup> and that “the key to understanding 1 Nephi 11:14, and the Day of Atonement teachings of the visionary men, is realizing that this is a visionary account of what a *spectator* would see on the Day of Atonement.”<sup>180</sup> Butler comments that Margaret Barker’s “readings of the Old Testament and ancient Christian books are what inspired me to see the Book of Mormon in this light.”<sup>181</sup> The Academy for Temple Studies website includes an appreciative review by Latter-day Saint scholar David Larsen of this book and of Butler’s follow-up volume, *The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon’s Visionary Men*.<sup>182</sup>

In 2012, Zina Nibley Peterson, an English professor at BYU, reviewed *The Mother of the Lord*:

To a nonspecialist reader like me, the problems with the critics’ rejecting out-of-hand what Barker has found are first, the sheer number of “speculations” that support her conclusions; second, the consistency and sensibleness of the patterns they reveal; and third, that there are extra-biblical texts and archeological evidence to support her claims. To refute a single word-change as fanciful is reasonable; to refute *all* of them and then reject the textual and archaeological external witnesses as well seems overwhelming and even a bit petulant. In *The Mother of the Lord*, Barker uses her methods of emendation and multiplying examples to show that the Deuteronomic and Josiah reforms resulted in the rejection of the council of gods idea and the expulsion of the divine family in favor of the One God, in an effort to maintain

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178. Ibid., 65n19.

179. Butler, *Plain and Precious Things*, 155.

180. Ibid., 134.

181. Ibid., 210.

182. David J. Larsen, “Review of D. John Butler, *Plain and Precious Things* and *The Goodness and the Mysteries*,” Academy for Temple Studies (website), May 13, 2013, <https://www.templestudies.org/review-of-d-john-butler-plain-and-precious-things-and-the-goodness-and-the-mysteries/>. Butler self-published “*The Goodness and the Mysteries*” October 25, 2012.



(or retroactively create) a “history” of consistent, correlated monotheism. To me, four hundred pages of example and explanation (*of volume 1!*) are convincing.

Though the specifics of Barker’s methodology are challenging for some, especially traditionalist religious teachers preaching the orthodox tenets of their heritage, scholars of the ancient world are largely in agreement that religion of the Hebrews in its earliest iteration was closer to the polytheistic religion of the Canaanites and other neighbors/rivals than the Bible-as-received has allowed. They also acknowledge that female deities, specifically Wisdom as expressed by Asherah the Mother of the Lord, were lost after the sixth century BCE.<sup>183</sup>

### The Academy for Temple Studies and FAIR

I have mentioned that Latter-day Saint scholars began participating in Barker’s Temple Studies group in London, from 2008 on, and that in 2012, scholars in Logan formed a sister group. Barker presented several important papers for the Logan group.<sup>184</sup>

In 2013, Barker presented “The Lady Known to Isaiah” at the Temple Studies Group and included a reference to D. John Butler’s *The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon’s Visionary Men*.<sup>185</sup>

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183. Zina Nibley Peterson, “Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?,” review of *Mother of the Lord, Vol 1: The Lady in the Temple* by Margaret Barker, *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): 101–102, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/where-shall-wisdom-be-found/>.

184. For instance, in 2012, she presented on “Restoring Solomon’s Temple.” In 2013, for an Academy for Temple Studies Conference on the theme of “The Lady of the Temple,” Barker presented “The Woman Clothed with the Sun in the Book of Revelation,” and Alyson Von Feldt presented on “Wisdom in Restoration Scripture,” <https://www.templestudies.org/2013-the-lady-of-the-temple-conference/papers/>. Other presenters included William Dever (noted Biblical scholar and author of the important book *Did God Have a Wife?*), John Thompson, and Valerie Hudson. Also see Margaret Barker, “Restoring Solomon’s Temple,” *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, ed. Gary N. Anderson (Logan, UT: Academy for Temple Studies, 2013), 19–30, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/restoring-solomons-temple>, with the video at *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xalAoRGsU7c>. Other videos from the 2013 Conference are available at Conference Videos, Academy for Temple Studies (website), <https://www.templestudies.org/2013-the-lady-of-the-temple-conference/conference-videos/>.

185. Margaret Barker, “The Lady Known to Isaiah,” Academy for Temple Studies (website), [http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Papers/Barker\\_](http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Papers/Barker_)

Also in 2013, William Hamblin and I published essays in the same volume of *Interpreter*, offering differing takes on King Josiah. Hamblin is a good example of how a scholar can differ with Barker’s take on King Josiah while appreciating her overall views. He was my editor for *Paradigms Regained*. Hamblin’s piece was “Vindicating Josiah” and my counterpoint was “Prophets and Kings in Lehi’s Jerusalem and Margaret Barker’s Temple Theology.” Benjamin McGuire provided an introduction.<sup>186</sup>

In 2014, Jeffery Bradshaw and David Larsen published *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*. An imposing follow-up volume to Bradshaw’s earlier volume on the Book of Moses, this one again includes Barker’s works among those of the broad range of scholars listed in their bibliography.

In 2015, she was invited to speak at the FAIR conference in Provo, where she spoke on “The Mother in Heaven and Her Children.”<sup>187</sup> My wife and I were able to attend this one, and I was invited to provide a brief introduction. Many years before, Barker had asked me whether members of the Church were interested in the Divine Feminine. I answered in the affirmative and sent her the text of Eliza R. Snow’s popular hymn “Oh My Father.”

In 2015, Neal Rappleye published an important essay on “The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi’s Family Dynamics.” Drawing on a wide range of Latter-day Saint scholars, as well as on Margaret Barker’s work, Rappleye makes several fresh observations on how the reforms provide a background that fleshes out the personalities of Laman and Lemuel. For instance:

At various points in his narrative, Nephi uses allusions to the conflict between Joseph and his brothers to set himself up as a type of Joseph, a younger brother chosen to rule over his older siblings. The Deuteronomists opposed traditions grounded in the old “wisdom literature,” which portrayed prophets as men

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TheLadyknowntoIsaiah.pdf, citing Butler’s *The Goodness and the Mysteries* on page 7.

186. Benjamin L. McGuire, “Josiah’s Reforms: An Introduction,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 161–63, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/josiahs-reform-an-introduction/>.

187. Barker, “The Mother in Heaven and Her Children,” FAIR Conference, Provo, Utah, August 6, 2015, <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2015/the-mother-in-heaven-and-her-childrenmother-in-heaven-and-her-children>. Also available at *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilF9NXE16Xs>.

of visions and dreams. Joseph is one of two biblical figures (the other is Daniel) most prominently portrayed as “wise men” (the prophets of the wisdom tradition).

That Joseph was a prominent figure in an ideology opposed by the Deuteronomists perhaps adds a layer of subtext to Nephi’s use of Joseph, particularly in the narrative of 1 Nephi 7. Here, parallels are most pronounced during Laman and Lemuel’s first rebellion, in which his older brothers take him and bind him with the intent to kill him and let his body “be devoured by wild beasts” (1 Nephi 7:16). Joseph’s older brothers also bound him with the intent to kill him, and told their father he had been devoured by an “evil beast” (see Genesis 37:20, 33). Thus, in the height of his opposition with his brothers, Nephi portrays himself as a second Joseph, one of the heroes of the old wisdom tradition. Laman’s and Lemuel’s affiliation with the Deuteronomists and their opposition to that tradition heightens the symbolism of Nephi’s allusions and imbues them with further meaning: not only Nephi’s brothers, but the movement which they represent, the Deuteronomic reforms, are likened unto Joseph’s brothers and thus given a negative connotation.<sup>188</sup>

Rappleye concludes:

I have attempted to illustrate how the social context surrounding the Deuteronomic reforms, as reconstructed by Margaret Barker, not only explains the actions of Lehi and Nephi, as other commentators have observed, but also illuminates our understanding of Laman and Lemuel and their interactions with the prophetic duo formed by their father and younger brother. To be clear, it must be remembered that Nephi and Lehi are *not* anti-law nor anti-Deuteronomy nor even anti-Josiah. Rather, they stand in contrast to parts of the *ideological agenda* of the Deuteronomists. Laman and Lemuel appear to have adopted, perhaps deliberately as rebellious and resentful teenagers often do, the very parts of that ideology that

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188. Neal Rappleye. “The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi’s Family Dynamics: A Social Context for the Rebellions of Laman and Lemuel,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015): 94–95, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-deuteronomist-reforms-and-lehis-family-dynamics-a-social-context-for-the-rebellions-of-laman-and-lemuel/>.

their father rejected. Many of the same conflicts going on in Jerusalem at the time emerge as points of tension between the older brothers and their father and obnoxious little brother. The paradigm juxtaposing Lehi and Nephi as “wise men” of the old tradition and Laman and Lemuel as supporters of the Deuteronomic ideology might thus be used to explain some of the dynamics of Lehi’s family. In saying this, I do not wish to justify Laman’s and Lemuel’s actions — Nephi and Lehi, after all, were true, not false, prophets. Yet this view helps make sense of their actions against Nephi and Lehi.<sup>189</sup>

Also in 2015, Val Larsen published an important essay on “Hidden in Plain View: The Mother in Heaven in Scripture” at *Square Two*, the online Latter-day Saint journal edited by Valerie Hudson. Larsen incorporates observations by both Margaret Barker and Daniel Peterson:

While the destruction of the Asherah statue is celebrated by the Deuteronomist authors of 2 Kings, objectively speaking, the fruits of this rejection were disastrous. In the immediate aftermath of its rejection of Mother in Heaven, Israel suffered the greatest calamity of its ancient history — the destruction of the temple and captivity in Babylon. On the other hand, the promise in verse 33 that “whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell in safety, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” seems to have been fulfilled in the lives of Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob, who, as we shall see, rejected the policy and theology changes made by the royal and priestly elites of their day.<sup>190</sup>

He makes a fascinating observation about the implications of the Hebrew traditions behind the English translation we have:

Having read the book, Lehi exclaims “Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty [Yahweh El Shaddai]!” (1 Nephi 1:14). In the King James Old Testament, the word *Almighty*, which occurs forty-eight times, is always a translation of *Shaddai*, a name for God that, in the Bible, is associated with fertility and that may signify breasts, being thus the God with breasts or the divine female. So Lehi seems to open the Book of Mormon by glorifying the divine Son,

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189. Ibid., 98–99.

190. ValLarsen, “Hidden in Plain View: Mother in Heaven in Scripture,” *Square Two* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2015), <https://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleLarsenHeavenlyMother.html#backfrom104>.

Father, and Mother. As he invokes Son Yahweh (the Good Shepherd), Father (El), and Mother (Shaddai), he may have in mind Jacob’s blessing of Joseph, Lehi’s progenitor (1 Nephi 5:14), for all three divine beings are mentioned in Joseph’s patriarchal blessing, which is about to be fulfilled through Lehi: “Joseph is a fruitful bough ... whose branches run over the wall: ... his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel). Even by El אֱל translated *God*] ... who shall help thee; and by Shaddai שַׁדַּי translated *the Almighty*], who shall bless thee with ... blessings of the breasts שִׁדַּיִם, shaddaim in Hebrew], and of the womb” (Genesis 49: 22, 24–25).<sup>191</sup>

In 2016 at a conference of the Academy for Temple Studies, with an impressive range of joint sponsors, Barker spoke on “Theosis and Divinization” in Provo,<sup>192</sup> and on “Entering Sacred Space: Beholding the Wonders of Temple Theology” at the Los Angeles Temple Visitor’s Center;<sup>193</sup> she also participated in a discussion of “Teaching Religion, Living Religion: Religion in a Secular Age in the Academy” in Logan.<sup>194</sup>

The 2016 issue of *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* included an article by David R. Seely on “‘We Believe the Bible to Be the Word of God, as Far as It Is Translated Correctly’: Latter-day Saints and Historical Biblical Criticism.”<sup>195</sup> Seely refers favorably to Barker’s work and its reception among Latter-day Saints in a passage I will quote later.

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191. Ibid.

192. Margaret Barker, “Theosis and Divinization,” (lecture at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, November 9, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOnHDQgIoCU>.

193. Jan Hemming, “Noted Theologian Shares Insights of Ancient Temple Worship at Conference,” *Church News*, November 17, 2016, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/noted-theologian-shares-insights-of-ancient-temple-worship-at-conference>.

194. “Sacred Space Sacred Thread: A Global Conference at USC,” (lecture at Utah State University, November 10, 2016), Academy for Temple Studies (website), <https://www.templestudies.org/conferences/sacred-space-sacred-thread-a-global-conference-at-usc/>.

195. David R. Seely, “‘We Believe the Bible to Be the Word of God, as Far as It Is Translated Correctly’: Latter-day Saints and Historical Biblical Criticism,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 8 (2016): 64–88, [https://www.academia.edu/34550207/Studies\\_in\\_the\\_Bible\\_and\\_Antiquity\\_8\\_2016\\_](https://www.academia.edu/34550207/Studies_in_the_Bible_and_Antiquity_8_2016_).

### Barker in and on Latter-day Saint Temples

In 2017, while the Paris Temple was having its open house before the dedication, John Welch invited Barker to come and have a personal tour with the Temple president and matron. Welch told me that she was tremendously impressed, saying, when they showed the anointing rooms, “You have that too!” As she left the temple, she said, “Everything was ancient except the electric lights.” She was so impressed that later, for the 2019 Rome Temple open house, she asked Welch, if it wasn’t too much of an imposition, could she do it there too? I heard these stories from Welch during a presenter’s lunch during the 2019 Conference on Hebrews.<sup>196</sup>

During the same conference, two different audience members approached me and told me of their experiences attending sessions of Margaret Barker’s summer schools in Derbyshire. One of these was Dianna Webb, who had written a book called *Biblical Lionesses: Protectors of the Covenant*. They said that about a third of the attendees in the classes were Latter-day Saints, and that Barker likes having them because “they know what I am talking about.”

In 2020, the Church-produced *Temples Through Time* video included interviews with a range of scholars, including Margaret Barker.<sup>197</sup> In a *Church News* article discussing the video she also gave her impressions of the Paris Temple open house.<sup>198</sup>

### LDS Scholars Explore in Further Depth

In 2020, Val Larsen published “First Visions and Last Sermons: Affirming Divine Sociality, Rejecting the Greater Apostasy,” in which he details the “kinship between Lehi and Joseph Smith. They are linked to each other by similar first visions, and they faced roughly the same theological problem. Resisted by elites who believe God is a Solitary Sovereign, both prophets affirm the pluralistic religion of Abraham, which features a *sôd ’êlôhim* (Council of Gods) in which the divine Father, Mother, and Son sit.”<sup>199</sup>

Larsen adopts Barker’s view of the Deuteronomist reform:

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196. I gave a presentation on “In and Behind Hebrews: Temple, Atonement, Covenant of Peace,” for which I again had occasion to cite Barker.

197. “Temples Through Time,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6a10hpWeZA>

198. Walker, “Watch: What ancient and present-day temples mean to scholars of other faiths and Latter-day Saints.”

199. Val Larsen, “First Visions and Last Sermons: Affirming Divine Sociality, Rejecting the Greater Apostasy,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and*



In their conception of God and emphasis on the Law, the Deuteronomists exhibited a centralizing, monist impulse at odds with the pluralism inherent in the council ethos. The implementation of their vision required an earthly analogue of their heavenly Solitary Sovereign, a Yahwist monarch. Thus the most important Deuteronomist was Josiah, the king. Without his leadership, the Deuteronomist revolution would have been impossible. Worship of the Abrahamic Gods of the *Sôd* was too entrenched and widespread to be eliminated without a strong monarch leader. This is apparent from the fact that a large number of Asherah figurines have been discovered in and around Jerusalem from the time and just before the time of Josiah and Lehi. But Josiah had attributes that made him the perfect revolutionary: “like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to Yahweh with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him” (2 Kings 23:25). Josiah was precisely the kind of honest, idealistic, incorruptible, energetic, uncompromising, puritanical, relentless, pitiless ideologue that must take the lead if massive social change is to be forced on an unwilling populace in a short period.

In a multidimensional push to centralize theology, ritual, worship, and governance, Josiah took things in hand (2 Kings 23:4-20). The Jerusalem temple was full of things associated with members of the *Sôd*. He destroyed them. He dragged the Asherah statue — in the temple for at least 236 of its 370 years — down into the Kidron valley and burned it. He destroyed all the ancient temples and sacred groves in the high places, Shechem, Bethel, etc., where the patriarchs had worshipped the Gods of the *Sôd*. As Deuteronomy 12:19 required, he centralized all public ritual in one place, Jerusalem, where he could oversee and control it. As Deuteronomy 3:1-11 mandated, he killed all the priests who facilitated the worship of *Sôd* members and all the prophets who taught that there was any God with God. There is a nontrivial possibility that he killed Zenos and Zenock. Zenock taught that there was

a God with God, a ben Elohim who would come down to redeem humanity from its sins (Alma 33:13-16). Zenos taught that and also emphasized the importance of humanity being closely, rather than distantly, connected with the “mother tree” (Jacob 5:54-60). If Josiah didn’t kill Zenos and Zenock, he would have if they had been alive teaching these things during his reign.<sup>200</sup>

The next year, 2021, Larsen produced an insightful follow-up essay, “Josiah to Zoram to Sherem to Jarom and the Big Little Book of Omni,” in which he traced the pattern of thought associated with Josiah’s Reform through generations of Book of Mormon characters who opposed the teaching of the prophets.<sup>201</sup>

In early 2022, *Interpreter* also published Neal Rappleye’s careful study “Serpents of Fire and Brass”:

According to Leslie S. Wilson, “during or just after the period of King Josiah and the Deuteronomist reporter(s),” the “serpentine (*nhš*) traditions became the symbol of all things evil and abhorrent to YHWH.”

In contrast, ancient metallurgists such as Lehi and Nephi — especially given their ties to the northern kingdom of Israel — likely viewed the brazen serpent as a legitimate Yahwistic symbol and an authentic and integral part of Israelite worship. Both serpent symbolism and the metallurgical arts were traits of the ancient “wisdom” tradition — a tradition that the Deuteronomists disapproved of and sought to change. This controversy over the origin and legitimacy of the brazen serpent may very well be lurking in the background of Nephi’s expansion and commentary on the brazen serpent narrative.<sup>202</sup>

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200. *Ibid.*, 52–54.

201. Val Larsen, “Josiah to Zoram to Sherem to Jarom and the Big Little Book of Omni,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 217–64, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/josiah-to-zoram-to-sherem-to-jarom-and-the-big-little-book-of-omni/>.

202. Neal Rappleye, “Serpents of Fire and Brass: A Contextual Study of the Brazen Serpent Tradition in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 228, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/serpents-of-fire-and-brass-a-contextual-study-of-the-brazen-serpent-tradition-in-the-book-of-mormon/#footnote99anc>.

Rappleye's wide-ranging scholarship includes 20 Barker citations in his essay.

In 2022 Victor and Sheri Worth published a 500-page study called *Heavenly Mother: An Initial Compendium of Echoes and Evidences*.<sup>203</sup> This broadly surveys the Old Testament, wisdom literature, the Apocrypha and Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament and writings of various religious movements, including Latter-day Saint scriptures. The Latter-day Saint authors give Barker due credit for inspiring their efforts.

That brings us to 2022. I have not included every detail of either Barker's career, journal and book publications, nor more than some glimpses of her significant editorial work in Biblical studies, nor of every Latter-day Saint interaction with her, but this provides a picture of sufficient detail and resolution as to be broadly instructive and a fair representation. Nibley has commented:

We frankly prefer the Big Picture to the single-shot solution, having found it to be far more foolproof than any little picture. Composed as it is of thousands of little images, the big one can easily dispense with large numbers of them without suffering substantially. It is a huge overall sort of thing, supported by great masses of evidence, but nonetheless presenting a clear and distinct image. No one can be sure of a little picture, on the other hand; at any moment some new discovery from some unexpected direction may wipe it out.<sup>204</sup>

In considering the details of Margaret Barker's career, the big picture is of receiving increasingly close attention from many well-informed and well-placed scholars, beginning with her teachers at Cambridge, then those who accepted her first articles at the *Heythrop Journal*, and the crucial connection with Father Robert Murray, which eventually opened the path for her first book. With additional peer-reviewed journal articles, her presenting papers in conspicuous places, the appearance of her books, and them being reviewed in a range of journals, she was elected President of the Society for Old Testament Studies, and her lectures as such are published in journals. She was invited to head up a research project at Cambridge.<sup>205</sup> A noted scholar like Andrei Orlov at Marquette

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203. Victor and Sheri Worth, *Heavenly Mother: An Initial Compendium of Echoes and Evidence*, Motherinheaven.com, <https://www.motherinheaven.com>.

204. Hugh W. Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Conclusion: Taking Stock," *Improvement Era* 73, no. 5 (May 1970): 86, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/new-look-pearl-great-price-conclusion-taking-stock>.

205. Barker, *The Great High Priest*, xii.

incorporated her journal articles into the syllabus for his classes.<sup>206</sup> She was invited by different professors to speak at different universities in London and Scotland, and her lectures became the basis of books that attracted more attention. The nomination of *Temple Theology: An Introduction* for the Michael Ramsey Prize for best theological writing raised her profile further, and the 2008 publication of *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* leads to not only a colloquium being held to honor the book, but the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen of England bestowed on her a Doctorate. Not only do notable publications and accolades keep coming, but she becomes a person whose knowledge and reputation is such that she was invited to participate on a committee that looked into a potentially important archeological discovery, the Jordan Lead books.<sup>207</sup> Important scholars at Oxford refer to her as their “muse.”<sup>208</sup> One of the most noted theologians in the world, N. T. Wright, refers to her work on the temple worldview as “remarkable.”<sup>209</sup> And she is featured in the *Temples through Time* video produced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, speaking first after a modern apostle, and last before he closes.<sup>210</sup>

This is not the story of a person who has joined the common stream and embraced conformity to orthodox thought as the most reliable path to a successful career. Rather, she has been seeking further light and knowledge. She has created a new stream that has attracted more and more respect and attention. She is not mainstream, relative to the secular universities or Evangelical orthodoxy; she deliberately challenges those streams. She is not alone, a fringe individual, but now has close ties with a wide range of top scholars from several different denominations, and she travels with a significant and substantial stream of collaborators.

And the Latter-day Saint connection with her work has become an arresting and notable phenomenon. She is not just telling us what we already know, she encourages us to see more in what we have. It’s not a light smattering of parallels, but an elaborate and in-depth convergence rooted in Lehi’s time and place, and the first temple before 600 BCE, which Lehi knew firsthand, if he lived at all. And she has not just been giving to us, she has accepted and gratefully learned from us to see things she had

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206. See “Welcome to the interdisciplinary seminar Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism” at <https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/>.

207. See <https://www.leadbookcentre.com/>.

208. Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, xiii-xiv.

209. Wright, *History and Eschatology*, 307n2.

210. “Temples Through Time,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6a10hpWeZA>.

not imagined before. She had encouraged the writing and publication of a book like John W. Welch's *The Sermon on the Mount and the Temple*, not only to share the temple worldview with wider Christianity, but to do so with notice that the notion of seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a temple discourse came originally from the Book of Mormon. It's not just the most conspicuous surface aspects of Latter-day Saint traditions, such as the grand council, Jesus as Yahweh, the son of El/Elyon, God Most High, the Heavenly Mother, and the Melchizedek priesthood — it's the light that comes to smaller details that we have rarely thought about.

Why does Lehi's initial public preaching of "a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19) land him in so much trouble? What was the nature of Jacob's mark (Jacob 4:14)? What tradition does Sherem represent, with his denial of prophecy that a Messiah would come, yet his reverence for the Law and Moses (Jacob 7)? What or who was Wisdom in ancient Israel, and would it cast light on the Book of Mormon? And what are the implications of the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 93:11–17 that Jesus did not receive of the fulness until his baptism? And beyond this, consider the fact that her work, by drawing on discoveries that have mostly come through non-Latter-day Saint scholars after the publication of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 13:39), impressively signals fulfillment of the prophecy of the loss and restoration of specific plain and precious things centered on "the Lamb of God" as "the son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world" (1 Nephi 13:40), which is the exact argument of Barker's *The Great Angel* and *The Risen Lord*.

In dealing with Barker's critics, it will be important not only to have that clear picture in mind, but also to understand what happens during paradigm debates and to understand why new wine seldom fits in old bottles (Luke 5:38–39).

### Conclusion

As we look back on Margaret Barker's impact on scholarship and knowledge in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it seems that she and her work have become more relevant and more significant, not less, compared to the scene 20 years ago during the initial wave of excitement over a noted non-Latter-day Saint scholar seeing connections between her discoveries and the claims of the Restoration. Her appeal is not merely to amateur enthusiasts but also to many solid scholars in the Church and, of course, far beyond. She has made lasting contributions that have gained attention and respect from many scholars. Casual dismissal of her work is unjustified.

There is yet much to learn about what she is unveiling as she explores the early roots of Judaism and Christianity, as well as many additional issues of direct interest to Latter-day Saints, especially with respect to the Temple, the Book of Mormon, the Books of Moses and Enoch, and other aspects of the Restoration.

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