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Kevin Christensen

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LIGHT AND PERSPECTIVE: ESSAYS FROM THE MORMON THEOLOGY SEMINAR ON 1 NEPHI 1 AND JACOB 7

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Abstract: The Mormon Theology Seminar has produced two volumes of essays exploring 1 Nephi 1 on Lehi's initial visions, and Jacob 7 on the encounter with Sherem. These essays provide valuable insights from a range of perspectives and raise questions for further discussion both of issues raised and regarding different paradigms in which scholars operate that readers must navigate.

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[I]t would be foolish to ignore an avenue that could potentially provide new insights into the Book of Mormon narrative.³

The Maxwell Institute recently published two new volumes of scripture studies, each based on the proceedings of the Mormon Theology Seminar. These events bring together groups of Latter-day Saint scholars for close readings of scripture, in these cases of 1 Nephi 1 on Lehi's initial visions and first public preaching; and Jacob 7, on the encounter with Sherem. The volumes each contain an introduction, an essay

1. In-text citations from this book are noted as "M, page number."

2. In-text citations from this book are noted as "M&S, page number."

3. Julie M. Smith, "Huldah's Long Shadow" in *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1*, 12.

summarizing the findings of that seminar, and essays by contributors. *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1* contains seven essays on Lehi's initial visions. *Christ and Antichrist: Reading Jacob 7* contains eight essays on Jacob 7 and the encounter with Sherem.

We get different perspectives from male and female authors who draw on a range of backgrounds — including biblical studies, philosophy, humanities, and mathematics — offering fresh and interesting observations. For instance, the volume on 1 Nephi 1 includes essays by New Testament scholar Julie M. Smith on the possible influence of Huldah's encounter with the Book of the Law on Lehi's experience with the heavenly book, and Joe Spencer's investigation of what Messianism might mean for Lehi in Jerusalem circa 600 BCE. Adam Miller writes on "how it is possible to see many afflictions *and* still be highly favored" (M, 29). George Handley offers a philosophical meditation on the mediation of the sacred through imperfect and indirect human transmission and interpretation. Miranda Wilcox provides a historical walking tour on the expression "tender mercies" through a wide range of scriptural texts and translations. Michael Ulrich explores the experience of "joining the heavenly chorus" (M, 111). Benjamin Peters ponders the significance of the Book of Mormon as a text encountered in the absence of the original medium.

The volume on Jacob 7 includes Jana Riess examining the Sherem story in light of René Girard's theories of the scapegoat, as well as Adam Miller on Jacob as defending "the doctrine of Christ against the letter of the Mosaic law in a way that, in itself, seems in lockstep with the letter of the law" (M, 22). Kimberly Berkley looks at the implications of Jacob's two prayers compared to the Lord's prayer. Jacob Renamaker looks at how Jacob has a dreamlike view of time, compared to Sherem's orientation toward the past. Jeremy Walker suggests that Jacob's treatment of time "suggests a form of salvation available now in lived experience, a form of salvation that is recursive rather than linear and that, as a result, is capable of addressing the vicissitudes of human experience" (M, 59). Joseph Spencer offers an essay on "Weeping for Zion" as "consecrated melancholy" (M, 82). Sharon Harris writes on "Covenant Obligation to Scripture as Covenant Obligation to Family" (M, 111). Jenny Webb writes on how "Jacob 7 is haunted in unacknowledged ways by Jacob's own family" (M, 127) and makes fresh and notable observations that tie Jacob 7 to 2 Nephi 4. (M, 135–36). The volumes are attractively produced, and each is about the size and price of an issue of *BYU Studies*. The series overall looks to be a valuable resource.

Huldah and Lehi in Jerusalem

Regardless of whether or not a person agrees with every author or everything in the essays, the books have value both in themselves and as a sampling of what is going on among a significant group of Latter-day Saint scholars. For instance, in the volume on 1 Nephi 1, *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire*, Julie Smith provides an essay on Huldah, the prophetess mentioned in 2 Kings 22:14-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:22-28.

And the king [Josiah] commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.

Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again. (2 Kings 22:12-20)

Smith discusses the account in the context of the discovery of the Book of the Law as reported in 2 Kings, and Josiah's response to reading that book, Huldah's status and prophecy. Smith raises the possibility that "Lehi was one of the people present at King Josiah's covenant renewal ceremony" and comments that "it only makes sense to consider how this event would have shaped the background to 1 Nephi 1; it would be foolish to ignore an avenue that could potentially provide new insights into the Book of Mormon narrative" (M, 12). She even postulates that Lehi and Huldah might have known one another, though I expect he would have been quite young and obscure when Huldah spoke, still decades from his own call as a prophet, while she, given her evident social status, had considerable maturity. Josiah became king at age eight, and in 2 Kings 22:3 "in the eighteenth year of King Josiah," he began repairing the temple, with the discovery of the Book of the Law that led to the purge. It is not clear whether that is the 18th year of his age or of his reign. The 2 Chronicles 34 account has Josiah beginning a purge in the 12th year of his reign, and the discovery of the Book of the Law in the 18th year of his reign.⁴

Temporally, the Book of Mormon account we have begins in the "first year of the reign of Zedekiah [a son of Josiah, installed as King by Babylon], ... Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days" (1 Nephi 1:4). At that point Lehi was old enough to have three sons older than the young but "large in stature" Nephi (2 Nephi 2:5), who could wear the armor of the adult Laban. So Lehi would not be the frail graybeard depicted in the Friberg paintings of the discovery of the Liahona. Lehi and Sariah must be young enough at the start of 1 Nephi to be able to parent Jacob and Joseph shortly before departing from Bountiful by sea after eight years in the wilderness (1 Nephi 18:7, 18). That leaves us a prime-of-life Lehi old enough to have married and sired at least four sons and possibly daughters (2 Nephi 5:6) before the reign of Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, who had been installed as king by the Egyptians who

4. For a study of the differences between the Kings and Chronicles accounts and their implications, see Margaret Barker, "The Hidden Temple in 1 Kings" (paper, Temple Studies Group, July 2, 2011), http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Papers/2Jul11_TempleHiddenInKings.pdf. See, also, Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord: Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple* (New York and London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 5-7.

had killed Josiah (2 Kings 23:34). Put it all together, and we have Lehi married and with at least four sons born some years before the 31-year reign of Josiah ended (2 Kings 22:1) and who grew to adolescence and manhood during Jehoiakim's 11-year reign. On her page 2 footnote 4, Smith cites evidence that Lehi lived in the same part of Jerusalem that was home to many who had previously migrated from the north and therefore in Huldah's neighborhood. So Lehi probably witnessed parts of the reforms, probably as a small child, possibly participated in the Passover, and perhaps knew Huldah.

Smith discusses Huldah's reading of the Book of the Law and her prophecies concerning Jerusalem and the King, the difficulties presented by both in light of subsequent events, and the nature of mercy. And she compares this with Lehi's later experience in reading the heavenly book and preaching in Jerusalem. This is all worth doing; her essay sheds valuable light and is recommended reading. Julie Smith has produced important work in the past (for example, a notable reading of the anointing scene in Mark,⁵ a well-reviewed book on the gospels,⁶ and an award winning *Interpreter* essay⁷), and I trust she will continue to do so in the future.

Given my own background and interests, I do have some concerns and questions. For instance, she discusses the report in Jeremiah 44:15-18 concerning debate whether the judgments on Jerusalem came as "the result of people's wicked idolatry or whether God was punishing people for getting rid of their idols." Here is a key section of the Jeremiah 44 passage in question, *which does not specify idolatry or idols*.

As for the word that thou [Jeremiah] hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee.

But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

5. Julie M. Smith "She Hath Wrought a Good Work: The Anointing of Jesus in Mark's Gospel" in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 5 (2013): 31-46, https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/studies/5/Studies5_1_Smith.pdf.

6. Julie M. Smith, *Search, Ponder, and Pray: A Guide to the Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).

7. Julie M. Smith, "A Redemptive Reading of Mark 5:25-34," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015) 96-105.

But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine.

And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? (Jeremiah 44:16-19)

Smith comments that “this viewpoint — quoted disapprovingly in Jeremiah — has been making a comeback among Latter-day Saints under the influence of Margaret Barker, who argues that Josiah’s reforms negated earlier, more correct, worship practices” (M, 5n13). Her comment, offered without any details or supporting references, does not cast light on Margaret Barker’s arguments and significance nor on the views of many Latter-day Saint scholars who have explored her work. The lack of any reference is surprising, because one of her footnotes cites *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, which includes Barker’s important 2003 essay “What King Josiah Reformed,” and my own “The Temple, Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker” (M, 2n4). Smith also overlooks the importance and influence of Raphael Patai’s *The Hebrew Goddess* and William Dever’s *Did God Have a Wife?*, the most conspicuous among many others who have also explored the textual and archeological evidence for the Hebrew Queen of Heaven. For instance, Daniel Peterson reports that the catalyst for “Nephi and His Asherah” was the work of Biblical scholar Mark Smith, though he later acknowledged the convergence with and the importance of Barker’s work.⁸ Important essays comparing the Latter-day Saint teachings about a Heavenly Mother with scripture and archeological findings appeared before Margaret Barker’s work became known among Latter-day Saint scholars, including a FAIR essay by Kevin Barney, which cites a range of Biblical scholarship and archeology and provides close reading of the Hebrew.⁹ For the Latter-day Saint tradition, Barney

8. Daniel Peterson, “A Divine Mother in the Book of Mormon?” in *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, ed. Gary Anderson (Academy for Temple Studies, Logan, 2013), 109-26, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>.

9. Kevin Barney, “Do We Have a Mother in Heaven?” (2001), <https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Kevin-Barney-MotherInHeaven.pdf>.

cites Linda Wilcox's earlier essay on "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven."¹⁰

All this demonstrates that Barker is not responsible for Latter-day Saint interest in a Hebrew Goddess. Rather, our interests converge in unexpectedly complex and interesting ways. Indeed, for most Latter-day Saints, the interest in a Heavenly Mother goes back, not to Barker's recent books, or Patai, or Dever, or even to Latter-day Saint scholars like Barney, Peterson, Wilcox, or Carol Lynn Pearson's performances of her play *Mother Wove the Morning*, or to Janice Allred's untethered theological speculations, but rather to Eliza Snow's famous hymn *Oh, My Father*, and the approving comments of orthodox Latter-day Saint leadership.¹¹

Readers looking for light on Margaret Barker's case should look to her most extensive commentary on Josiah and Jeremiah in *The Mother of the Lord, Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple*.¹² Barker shows that the book of Jeremiah itself was subject to editorial battles, and the Jeremiah texts we have contain much more to consider about Jeremiah's relationship to both the reform and Lady Wisdom than is or can be illuminated by this single proof-text.

I have published on the significance of Barker's work for the Book of Mormon¹³ and have read the work of many other Latter-day Saint scholars who draw on her work, ranging from Daniel Peterson to M. Catherine Thomas, from Kevin Barney to Jon Hall, and Alyson Skalbund Von Feldt and D. John Butler and Eugene Seach, from John Tvedtnes and Frederich Huchel to Zina Peterson, from Brant Gardner and John Welch to Fiona Givens and Neal Rappleye, from Jeffrey Bradshaw, Noel Reynolds, David Larsen, Barry Bickmore, Martin Tanner, and LeGrand Baker, to Stephen Ricks, David Paulson, Hal Boyd, Val Larsen, Jeff Lindsay, Don Bradley, and several others. It is true that many of these scholars, including me, have been intrigued by Barker's approach to Josiah, but who among us and where have any of us suggested that we ought to burn incense and

10. Linda Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven" in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, eds. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1992).

11. See Warren Aston, "The Other Half of Heaven: Debunking Myths about Heavenly Mother," *Meridian Magazine*, November 29, 2012, <https://ldsmag.com/article-1-11842/>; and David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There: Historical Teachings and Sacred Silence," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2011): 70-97, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/mother-there-survey-historical-teachings-about-mother-heaven>.

12. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 32-75.

13. "Kevin Christensen on the scholarship of Margaret Barker," *Thinly Veiled* (website), updated May 4, 2011, <http://www.thinlyveiled.com/kchristensen.htm>.

pour drink offerings to the queen of heaven in order to secure peace and plenty of victuals, let alone to practice idolatry?

For my part, when I published on Jeremiah 44, I wrote this:

When Jeremiah reproves those in Egypt who were “baking cakes to the Queen of Heaven” in Jeremiah 44, we should compare that with his complaints about those who trusted in the temple without taking care to “thoroughly amend your ways and your doings,” that is, trusting ritual without repentance and sacrifices without personal obedience. Jeremiah does look forward to valid worship in the house of the Lord (Jeremiah 33:11). Despite describing its status then as a “den of robbers” (Jeremiah 7:11), he is not anti-temple. He is against those who would forsake “the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”¹⁴ (Jeremiah 2:13)

Indeed, Kevin Barney states directly, “I will not suggest pouring out drink offerings to Asherah poles or any such observance,”¹⁵ but rather concludes by stating, “I can think of no finer, or profound way to worship our Mother in Heaven than to participate in temple worship.”¹⁶ One reason Smith does not cite specific authors and texts on this point is that matching specific publications and claims to support her general charge against Latter-day Saint scholars like myself would be difficult.

Different Grounds for Dismissing or Exploring Barker’s Claims

Smith comments that “there are solid reasons to dispute Barker’s thesis [regarding Josiah’s reform], not the least of which is that it requires taking the position that a vast portion of the Hebrew Bible advocates false religion” (M, 5n13). Again, Smith does not divulge any details of Barker’s case by mention or citation.¹⁷ In a talk given at the Joseph Smith

14. Kevin Christensen, “Prophets and Kings in Lehi’s Jerusalem,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 4 (2013): 185, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology/>.

15. Kevin Barney, “How to Worship Our Mother in Heaven (Without Getting Excommunicated),” *Dialogue* 41, no. 2 (2008): 132-33, https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V41N04_133.pdf.

16. *Ibid.*, 139.

17. Smith did briefly comment in a series of guest posts about Barker. See Julie M. Smith, September 27, 2008, comment on Ronan Head, “Barker Part 2,” *By Common Consent* (blog), September 28, 2008, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2008/09/28/barker-part-2/>. She expresses suspicion regarding Barker’s “canonization” by some

Conference in Washington, DC, in 2005, Barker commented that “one of the great moments of my own journey of discovery was reading an article published in 1980, showing that the religion of Abraham must have survived until the reign of King Josiah because that is part of what he purged from his kingdom.”¹⁸ That is, important portions of the Bible as we have it advocate religious practices that Josiah overthrew. The evidence of conflict between different writers, editors, interpreters, and portions of the Bible does not go away by treating the question of difference as unthinkable. Barker asks:

Is it possible that almost all the kings in Jerusalem were misguided apostates, as the Deuteronomists claim, who permitted and even encouraged alien cults in their kingdom? And what would those kings have considered alien? And who has the right to make the judgement? History, as it is well known, is written, and rewritten by the winners, especially if they are also the publishers.

Almost all that Josiah swept away can be found in the older religion, even as it is described in the current Hebrew Scriptures. *It was the religion of the patriarchs and prophets, not the alien cults of Canaan* — if they really were alien.¹⁹

While both Jeremiah and Lehi quote Deuteronomy,²⁰ which shows they knew and respected a version of it, they both contradict Deuteronomy

Latter-day Saint in light of her judgment of speculative aspects, which suggests that it is speculation emerging from a different paradigm (Barker’s Temple Theology approach), rather than speculation per se (for example, that Lehi knew Huldah), that is the issue. For links the entire series, see <https://bycommonconsent.com/2008/10/02/barker-part-4/>.

18. Margaret Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Religion,” *BYU Studies*, 44, no. 4 (2005): 80, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/joseph-smith-and-preexilic-israelite-religion>. For original article referenced, see John Van Seeters, “The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis,” *Biblica* 61 (1980) 220–33.

19. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 77.

20. See Noel Reynolds, “Lehi as Moses,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1403&index=4>. This essay predates Reynolds’s reading of *The Great Angel* in 2002. After he read that and soon learned about my recently published “Paradigms Regained,” he asked me for contact information, and that eventually led to him visiting Barker at her home, which in turn led to her invitation to spend a week lecturing at BYU in 2003, and that in turn produced a great deal more ongoing contact, interaction, and collaboration with Latter-day Saint scholars. Reynolds also informed me that my writing “Paradigms Regained” had saved him the trouble of doing so.

on the issues that Barker identifies as key to her understanding of the reform.²¹ In *The Great Angel*, she writes,

First, they were to have the Law instead of Wisdom (Deut. 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 (Deut. 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 title Yahweh of Hosts was not used by the Deuteronomists. What happened to the hosts, the angels?²²

In *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, she added these points: that the Jews were not to “enquire after secret things which belonged only to the Lord (Deut. 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 (Deut. 30:11).”²³ It should be obvious that these features also appear in Jeremiah and the Book of Mormon and do so despite their affinity for a version of Deuteronomy.²⁴

A central point of Richard Elliot Friedman’s *Who Wrote the Bible?* was to demonstrate that an edition of the Deuteronomist History (that is, Joshua, Judges, and the books of Samuel and Kings) was written and edited during Josiah’s lifetime to honor him and justify his actions. After his unexpected death, additions were made to describe subsequent events and to assign blame for what went wrong. Much of Barker’s work has cast light on how the state of the biblical texts and translations and editions that we have, in relation to both archeology and nonbiblical

21. Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies,” *Occasional Papers* 2 (2001), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/periodical/occasional-papers-2/>.

22. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 13.

23. 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* (T&T Clarke, Edinburgh, 200), 17.

24. Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Regained.”

texts, is also part of the story.²⁵ She draws on sources outside the canon, such as the Damascus Document, *1 Enoch*, and Baruch to give a broader picture,²⁶ and to supplement her close reading of Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah. Barker's willingness to consider such noncanonical sources in considering Josiah and Jeremiah is one important factor that distinguishes her approach from Richard Elliot Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?* and Marvin Sweeney's *King Josiah of Judah: Lost Messiah of Israel*. She also considers many key passages from scripture that they *do not cite or discuss*, such as those in which Jeremiah and Lehi contradict their stated agenda and Jeremiah 1:19 on his call as a prophet, the year after the reform began against the kings, the social elites who implemented the reform, and the people of the land who installed the eight-year-old Josiah as king.²⁷

Important parts of her case involve the tensions between different books and even different sections in the same book, for example, Third Isaiah's condemnation of the returning exiles.²⁸ But these parts of the story can be recognized only if we explore the evidence rather than place the question as out-of-bounds. Barker calls attention to significant book selection and book suppression,²⁹ differing versions of books (Masoretic Hebrew, Aramaic Targums, Greek, and Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew), tensions between the Kings and Chronicles accounts,³⁰ variant passages, alternate readings, and the presence of opaque texts (that is, unreadable in the Hebrew), not as random occurrences, but in passages that were important to the Christians.³¹

The MT has changed "sons of God" to "servants," and removed all explicit references to the heavenly beings who were to be judged. It is important to remember that the changes in the

25. For a concentrated summary, see Margaret Barker, "Text and Context" in *The Great High Priest: Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 294-315, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/TextAndContext.pdf>.

26. For her own summary of her approach, see Margaret Baker, "Temple Theology," accessed Nov. 23, 2018, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Temple/default.htm>.

27. See Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 57.

28. See Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Early Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1987), 205-06.

29. See Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988), and Barker, "The Secret Tradition" in *The Great High Priest*, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/SecretTradition.pdf>.

30. For example, Barker, "The Hidden Temple in 1 Kings."

31. See Barker, "Text and Context," 309; and Barker, *The Older Testament*, generally.

MT always follow the same pattern, and that this pattern distinguishes it from much at Qumran, and also from much in the New Testament.³²

That is, there is a pattern of selection, editing within the canon, suppression of texts like *1 Enoch*, and corruption in Bible passages that also happen to resonate with the themes of 1 Nephi 1.

Texts dealing with Holy Ones and the Holy One have significant elements in common: theophany, judgement, triumph for Yahweh, triumph for his anointed son, ascent to a throne in heaven, conflict with beasts, and with angel princes caught up in the destinies of earthly kingdoms. Many of these texts are corrupted; much of their subject matter is that of the “lost” tradition thought to underlie the apocalyptic texts. The textual corruption and the lost tradition are aspects of the same question.³³

The closer I look at how Barker explores the issues surrounding the controversies from the time of the reform, as reflected in the state and themes of the Bible texts, the more clearly the themes of 1 Nephi 1 emerge. Indeed, I think it remarkable that the first chapter of the Book of Mormon takes us directly into the world that she worked to recover via sources that were unavailable to anyone in Joseph Smith’s day.

Barker also considers shifts in the contexts applied to text by Bible readers:

All the texts in the chosen canon would have had an original context, which presupposed a certain pattern of shared beliefs within which the text was set. *The context was as much a part of the meaning as the words themselves.* Set in a new context, the same text would soon acquire a new meaning.³⁴

She has explored the trends and fashions and ideologies at work in the history of the Bible and in Biblical scholarship, and how that affects what is read, not read, which questions are asked, which questions are not asked, what is assumed, what is explored, and what is overlooked and therefore dismissed without question.³⁵

32. Barker, *The Older Testament*, 211.

33. *Ibid.*, 119.

34. Barker, “Text and Context,” 12.

35. See Margaret Barker, “Reflections on Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century” (paper, Society of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 2000), <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/ReflectionsOnBiblicalStudies.pdf>.

Any form of faith commitment in biblical scholarship, any attempt to work within a theological framework can be suspect. One ploy is to keep one's biblical study in a separate compartment of one's life, to pursue the most radically destructive investigations of biblical texts and then go to evensong. People of commitment often take refuge in safe areas like Hebrew, or archaeology, although that is no longer "safe" as I shall show in a moment. Let me quote now from the introduction to Francis Watson's recent book *Text and Truth* 1997, "It is believed that theological concerns have an inevitable tendency to distort the autonomous processes of biblical exegesis, a prejudice so strong that to identify a theological motivation underlying an exegetical position is often held to be sufficient refutation."³⁶

Barker explores tensions within the Bible on basic questions such as whether it was possible to see God.³⁷

Deuteronomy denies emphatically that the Lord was seen by Moses at Sinai: 'You heard the sound of words but you saw no form' (Deut.4:12). The earlier account in Exodus 24 says that Moses and the elders *did* see the God of Israel. We assume that the Deuteronomists would also have denied Isaiah's claim that he had *seen* the Lord in the temple, and disagreed with Jesus when he said that the pure in heart would see God.³⁸

One of the secrets of the priesthood must have been experiencing theophany, something described in the ancient priestly blessing: "May the LORD make his face/presence shine on you" (Numbers 6:25-26). At the end of the second temple period, this was one of the forbidden texts, which could be read in public, but not explained. (*m. Megillah* 4:10)³⁹

It should be of interest that this priestly blessing in Numbers turns up in "Excavations in the late 1970s" of "First Temple period tombs at Ketef Hinnom, near Jerusalem. Among the artifacts discovered in this dig were two small silver plates dating to the seventh century BC, containing the priestly benedictions found in Numbers 6:24-26 and representing the

36. Barker, "Reflections on Biblical Studies the Twentieth Century," 6.

37. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 30, and Barker, *Temple Mysticism: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011), 54-55.

38. Barker, "The Temple Hidden in 1 Kings," 2.

39. Barker, "The Secret Tradition," 16.

‘earliest fragments of the biblical text known up to the present.’⁴⁰ That is, the oldest Biblical text known not only turns out to be writing on metal dating to Lehi’s day and quoting from a Book of Moses (making it relevant to the story of the Brass Plates), but it also contains a passage central to a key controversy from that time, faithfully reflected in 1 Nephi 1:8, and relevant to a climactic moment of the Book of Mormon as a whole in 3 Nephi 19:25, 30 when Jesus as Lord is present and shining at the temple.

Barker explores many conflicting Bible passages, versions, and textual corruption in key verses; and even shows patterns hidden underneath the pointing of the Hebrew.⁴¹

Here we come across one of the methods used to hide the temple in the Hebrew Scriptures: repointing. In Hebrew, the vowels were not written in the text but supplied by the reader, and so by choosing to pronounce the consonants differently, it was possible to change the meaning of a word and so of a whole text. The “prostitutes” that Josiah removed from the temple, with a change of vowel, become holy ones, angels: *qedeshim* are prostitutes, *qedoshim* are holy ones. The angels vanished from the text, and so reading the text according to the later vowels does not reveal what Josiah actually did.⁴²

She shows how the Hebrew Bible we have now is different from what the earliest Christians used and provides historical and textual evidence that the Masoretic Hebrew text was selected and edited in response to the rise of Christianity.⁴³ The state of the texts, the selection of texts, and their contextualization are part of the story, and that story can be read, contextualized, and carefully considered in the same way as the surface narrative. Barker’s complex argument ought to be recognized and referenced as such. A name drop and blanket dismissal is not enough. At least it is not enough for me. Obviously a different school of thought can have different interests and values.

The Book of Mormon itself in 1 Nephi 13:23-41 offers its own view of what happened to Bible texts in transmission but also on the significance of other texts that have emerged since the publication of

40. William Hamblin, “Sacred Writing on Metal Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean,” *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1461&index=7>.

41. See Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 144-49.

42. Barker, “The Temple Hidden in 1 Kings,” 2.

43. See Barker, “Text and Context,” 294-315, especially 298.

the Book of Mormon. It happens that Barker's essay "Text and Context" on the transmission of Biblical texts and 1 Nephi 13:23-42 tell the same story, including not only the importance of nonbiblical texts emerging after the publication of the Book of Mormon, but also the convergence in Nephi's declaration that the other texts would restore plain and precious truths, including the specific claim that "the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father," which happens to be the overall argument of Barker's *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*, and *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, that Yahweh was seen as not only the Son of El Elyon but also the servant and lamb. I've made a case that Barker's work fulfills prophesy in 1 Nephi 13 on the restoration of plain and precious things relevant to Lehi's preaching what he "saw and heard" concerning "a messiah and the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19).⁴⁴ In contrast to what Lehi "saw and heard," and expressed plainly, I take Jacob 4:14 on "blindness" and "looking beyond the mark" in Jerusalem as a direct comment on the reform, and I read the encounter with Sherem as an important echo of the main issues.

In her next sentence after her citationless dismissal of Barker, Julie Smith does offer some balance by saying, "At the same time, it is worth noting that one of the items specifically mentioned as being destroyed in Josiah's purging of idols is a tree that symbolized the divine feminine" (see 2 Kings 23:6 on the Asherah, and she refers to Daniel Peterson's groundbreaking essay "Nephi and His Asherah"⁴⁵). Smith continues, "So it may be that Josiah's reforms were fundamentally sound but slightly excessive, and Lehi's experience offers a recorection of Josiah's over correction."⁴⁶

Some prominent Latter-day Saint scholars who appreciate Barker's work can and do agree with Smith's favorable approach to Josiah and the reform. The Latter-day Saint Old Testament manuals that mention Josiah accept the story at face value and do not discuss the controversy at all. William Hamblin, a Latter-day Saint scholar who approves of much in Barker's work, published an essay "Vindicating Josiah" in *Interpreter*.⁴⁷

44. See Christensen, *Paradigms Regained*, 86-87.

45. Daniel Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 1:8-23" in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 191-243.

46. Smith, "Huldah's Long Shadow", 5-6n13.

47. William Hamblin, "Vindicating Josiah," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2014): 165-76, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/vindicating-josiah/#more-2652>.

John Gee, for another, has blogged favorably on Hamblin's efforts to defend Josiah, though like Hamblin he finds much of value in Barker's work overall.⁴⁸ Aaron P. Schade's essay in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* accepts a favorable view of Josiah's reform.⁴⁹ For that matter, when I wrote "Paradigms Regained" I largely followed Richard Elliot Friedman's picture of the reform occurring in waves of activity as new kings arrived and political and social upheavals occurred. In that light I supposed that the later waves of activity by the Deuteronomists accounted for most of the differences with the Book of Mormon. I did so because I was relatively new even to thinking about Josiah. Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?*, rather than Latter-day Saint background, was my entry point before I encountered Barker's *The Great Angel* in 1999. (I cannot remember Josiah ever being discussed in any Latter-day Saint classroom, book, or sermon before that time.) To defend her view of Josiah to a Latter-day Saint audience familiar with Barker's work, Smith could at least have referenced Hamblin's essay rather than leave the argument to mostly unspecified "good reasons."

My views on Josiah changed as I have examined the question in more detail, as my subsequent essays demonstrate, including the one in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, which precedes and introduces Barker's "What King Josiah Reformed" in that volume. I later wrote a defense of my updated perspectives on the reform in *Interpreter* as a counterpoint to Hamblin's case.⁵⁰ Among other things, I note that Jeremiah was called in response to the reform the year after it began and against the kings, the princes, the priests, and the people of the land who had installed Josiah as King (Jeremiah 1:2, 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 34:3). Compare that list of groups with those in Ezekiel's tirade that includes details of their misbehavior in Ezekiel 22:6-31. Zephaniah also called in the days of Josiah (Zephaniah 1:1), mentions the blindness (Zephaniah 1:17), describes the princes as wolves, the prophets as treacherous, priests as having "polluted the sanctuary and done violence to the law" (Zephaniah 3-4), and speaks of "gathering her who was driven out" (Zephaniah 3: 14, 19).

48. John Gee, "Was Josiah Evil?" *Forn Spoll Fira* (blog), December 10, 2012, <http://fornspollfira.blogspot.com/search/label/Margaret%20Barker>.

49. Aaron P. Schade, "The Kingdom of Judah: Prophets, Politics, and Scribes in the Late Preexilic Period" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, eds. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 299-336, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=10>.

50. See Kevin Christensen, "Prophets and Kings in Lehi's Jerusalem," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 4 (2014): 177-93, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology>.

I have read a variety of books about Josiah by a range of non-Latter-day Saint scholars, including those by Friedman, Doorly, Sweeny, Barrick, and others, and I have concluded that in comparison, *The Mother of the Lord* offers by far the most wide-ranging, insightful, powerful, relevant, and persuasive case regarding Josiah, Jeremiah, and the reform. And beyond this, there is the inescapable fact that the Book of Mormon agrees with Barker's findings in unexpected, elaborate, interconnected, meaningful convergences that extend far beyond the presence of a tree in Lehi's dream.⁵¹ It is not just that Latter-day Saint scholars have noticed an elaborate convergence between Barker's approach and the Book of Mormon but that Barker has also publicly acknowledged and extended that case in her 2005 talk on the Book of Mormon published in *BYU Studies*.⁵² So Lehi's vision of the Asherah is just the most obvious bit of low-hanging fruit on one branch of a beautiful, fruitful, lush, dense, deeply rooted, and still growing tree. To dismiss Barker as "not mainstream" misses the point that she deliberately and consciously offers her approach as an alternative to the mainstream. It does not acknowledge the interest in her work by such notables as the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, and others.

It also does nothing to account for or explain the elaborate convergence between her approach and the Book of Mormon.

In evaluating Huldah's story we should not ignore the nature of that reform relative to Jeremiah and Lehi. If the violence and upheaval of the reform is directed by God, then Huldah's comments have that context. On the other hand, if the violence and upheaval of the reform is what Jeremiah was called against (Jeremiah 1:2, 18) and involved the answer to his question "Hath a nation changed their Gods?" and his declaration that "my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:11, 13), then that too provides context. In either case, it was not Huldah's reform, not Jeremiah's, not Lehi's, not Zephaniah's, and not even Hilkiah's, but King Josiah's, whether we follow the version in 2 Kings 22, where the discovery of the book leads to the reform; or the version in 2 Chronicles 34, where the reform leads to the discovery of the book. It is clear that (1) by delivering uncompromisingly

51. See, for instance, my *Paradigms Regained*. I've learned a lot since I wrote it.

52. Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion." Also see Margaret Barker and Kevin Christensen, "Seeking the Face of the Lord: Joseph Smith and the First Temple Tradition" in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, eds. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 143-72.

bad news that Huldah spoke in defiance of the desires and expectations for Jerusalem of those who came to see her regarding the book, and (2), what she said regarding Josiah's death is problematic, given that he died in battle, not at peace.⁵³ And (3), part of the context for the reports we have includes the agenda of the people who reported Huldah's story. They were not dispassionate reporters.⁵⁴ Indeed, the willingness of the Deuteronomist writers to include unflattering information should not be taken as de facto evidence of their dispassionate objectivity and honesty.

Whoever wrote [the Deuteronomic Histories] was clearly setting out to discredit what had existed in Jerusalem in the time of the first temple: it was the voice of a new regime. Their description of the temple does not include items such as the veil and chariot throne, which appear in the Chronicler's account and were important elements of priestly theology. Other sources are mentioned, but they have not survived. Isaiah is the only one of the latter prophets who appears in this account.⁵⁵

I think that Josiah and Huldah did what they understood to be best, given their upbringing and circumstances. A person can be sincere and mistaken at the same time.⁵⁶ (That is something I have to consider personally every time I see a mirror, and broadly whenever I think about contemporary American politics.) I think Josiah's upbringing from age

53. Consider Lisa B. Hawkins and David Warby, "The Crime of False Prophecy Under Ancient Israelite Law" (Provo, UT: FARMS Preliminary Report, 1983); and Kevin Christensen, "Biblical Keys for Discerning True and False Prophets," FairMormon (website), https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Biblical_Keys_for_Discerning_True_and_False_Prophets/Tests/Prophecy.

54. Compare, for instance, Robert M. Price, "Joseph Smith: Inspired Author of the Book of Mormon," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, eds. Dan Vogel, and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Signature Books, Salt Lake City, 2002), 323-24. Price, who asserts that just as "virtually all critical scholars" agree that Hilkiah, Huldah, and Jeremiah created Deuteronomy to "win the impressionable young king to their religious agenda," just as Joseph Smith created, rather than discovered, the Book of Mormon. When Price says, "They penned the book in secret," one wonders what specific evidence, beyond his ideological suspicion, let Price in on the secret that ties Huldah and Jeremiah and Hilkiah together in a conspiracy to manipulate the young king. He does not share the evidence with his readers.

55. Barker, *Text and Context*, 308.

56. See D&C 1:24-28. And consider Joseph Smith's famous comment that it "don't prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine," Joseph Smith, "Discourse, 8 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton-A," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed November 23, 2018, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-8-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-a/1>.

eight after the assassination of his father Amon⁵⁷ had a great deal to do with the set of values he acquired that underlies his reform, itself an echo of an earlier reform attempted by Hezekiah.⁵⁸ Friedman discusses rival priestly families whose influence rose and ebbed, depending on the favor of the Kings.⁵⁹ And the Book of Mormon makes the point that God is more merciful and tolerant with respect to the circumstances of our upbringing than we care to notice (e.g., Jacob 3:7). Still, there were many during the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 5:21) and Nephi (1 Nephi 13:32) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:2) who had eyes but did not see, and ears that did not hear what the prophets were saying. Margaret Barker often refers to passages in the Book of Enoch that describe a condition of blindness that prevailed in Jerusalem at that time.

And after that in the fifth week, at its close, The house of glory and dominion shall be built for ever.

And after that in the sixth week all who live in it shall be *blinded*, And the hearts of all of them shall godlessly *forsake wisdom*. And in it a man shall ascend; And at its close the house of dominion shall be burnt with fire, And the whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed. (1 Enoch 93:7-8, emphasis added)

Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Nephi, and Jacob all report that many in Jerusalem were blind and that blindness and loss of wisdom are always contrasted with “seeing” and prophetic theophany. As a consequence of that blindness, according to Jacob, those at Jerusalem “looked beyond the mark.” The nature of that mark leads me to a second essay that deserves further discussion.

Messiah as Political King or as Atoning High Priest

This is Joe Spencer’s essay, “Potent Messianism: Textual, Historical, and Theological Notes on 1 Nephi 1:18–20.” Like Julie Smith, Spencer has published significant, even path-breaking work, and like her, he has become a scholar to watch in Latter-day Saint circles. His *An Other*

57. 2 Kings 21:23–24 and for a sense of possibility, read the assassination story in Alma 47:23–27 and consider that Ammon is an important Book of Mormon name, whereas Josiah is not.

58. See Margaret Barker, “The Original Setting of the Fourth Servant Song,” *Margaret Baker* (website), 2000, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/FourthServantSong.pdf>.

59. For example, Richard Elliot Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 48.

Testament is a brilliant reading of the Book of Mormon. In that book, he identifies an important structure that underlies Nephi's writing.⁶⁰

Creation: (1 Nephi 1-18), that is, up to the arrival in the land of promise.

Fall: (1 Nephi 19 to 2 Nephi 5), that is, up to the division into Nephites and Lamanites.

Atonement: (2 Nephi 6-30), that is, from Jacob's Day of Atonement discourse to the gathering of Israel.

Veil: 2 Nephi 31-33, culminating with speaking with the tongues of angels, that is, to be able to participate in the same manner as Lehi and Alma amid the numberless concourses of angels.

Spencer discerns this overall pattern as being prefigured in the first verse of the Book of Mormon:

[Creation]: I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father;

[Fall]: and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days,

[Atonement]: nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days;

[Veil]: yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

This is a profound illumination and just one of many notable insights in this and others of his books. Spencer himself reports being surprised and impressed, after working on this structure for years, to read Barker's *Temple Theology* and to find her chapters organized as "creation, (broken) covenant, atonement, (divine) wisdom."⁶¹ Personally, I don't think the convergence of themes centered on the Temple is accidental; rather the fruit of common inspiration toward convergent insight. So I came to Spencer's essay with great respect and high hopes for new light.

60. Joe Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2016), 42.

61. *Ibid.*, 49, 65n18.

Spencer's title in *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire* is "Potent Messianism: Textual, Historical, and Theological Notes on 1 Nephi 1:18-20" and the topic of Lehi's public discourse on "a messiah, and the redemption of the world" in 1 Nephi 1:19. After discussing the Old World backgrounds and the Book of Mormon narrative, Spencer eventually says that "Nephite Christology does not appear from the beginning of the Book of Mormon as a full blown phenomenon more or less borrowed from the clear writings of Old World prophets. Rather, it is presented as slowly developed from a number of distinct sources distinguished from what can be found in today's Hebrew Bible" (M, 61).

It is true that one of Spencer's insights in his *An Other Testament* involves his case that Nephi and Abinadi offered somewhat different views of the Messiah, and that in 3 Nephi, Jesus reconciles those differences. In arguing for slow development relevant to his case in "Potent Messianism," Spencer mentions but does not explore the discourse in 1 Nephi 10 as it pertains to the politically centered Davidic model he offers (M, 61). Lehi's words in 1 Nephi 10 come subsequent to his obtaining the brass plates (which, to be fair, includes sources distinguished from what became the Hebrew Bible) and also subsequent to Lehi's having his vision of the tree of life (an authentically ancient Wisdom/Temple symbol meaningful in Lehi's Jerusalem). Still, chronologically the 1 Nephi 10 account seems to me to come within a year of the end of Lehi's public preaching in Jerusalem,⁶² and that has implications for whether or not Lehite teaching developed slowly over the course of the Book of Mormon account, and from what beginnings. In 1 Nephi 10 Lehi himself adds other significant titles that ought to contextualize what he, very early in the Book of Mormon account, understood as "a messiah."

However, in casting about for reliable light on the subject, at least with the purpose of building a case regarding how Lehi's listeners would have thought about a messiah, Spencer says, "I think it best to trust secular historians of the ancient world about what messianic belief in Lehi's day would have looked like, rather than to interpret the text solely according to our own received expectations" (M, 62). I agree

62. Lehi waits in the Valley of Lemuel while Nephi makes two trips to Jerusalem and back, bringing first the brass plates (1 Nephi 5:6-7) and then Ishmael and the brides (1 Nephi 7:5). The longer Lehi preaches in Jerusalem before leaving, the older he has to be after the eight years in the wilderness, and the older Sariah has to be when giving birth to Joseph and Jacob shortly before the ocean voyage (1 Nephi 18:7, 19). So if Nephi is around 14, Laman must be nearly 20 at the start, which would put Sariah around 35 at the youngest, with nearly eight years to go before Joseph and Jacob arrive shortly before the ocean voyage. There is some room, but not a lot.

that we ought to challenge our “received expectations” as part of what Jesus calls casting out “the beam out of thine own eye” (Matt 7:3-5), a necessary prelude to seeing clearly. This is consistent with Nephi’s comments on the implications of being taught “after the manner” of the Jews (2 Nephi 25:1-5) to understand how they did. But why suppose the secular historians would have clearest vision regarding a messiah? Spencer argues that the ten words from verse 19 sound more like a secular reconstruction of seventh and sixth century views of what “a messiah” involved, in which “the redemption of the world” involves political and military prowess as expected of a Davidic king. I think the reflex to turn to a secular approach for light is part of why Spencer overlooks the implications of 1 Nephi 10, despite the close proximity in time to Lehi’s preaching in 1 Nephi 1:19. It happens that Kings of Israel shared the titles Lehi uses in 1 Nephi 10, although not in their political or military roles but specifically when they acted in their roles as anointed Melchizedek High Priests in the temple.⁶³ Spencer’s attempt here to cast light on the meaning of a messiah via politics and secular scholarship overlooks any discussion of the anointed Melchizedek priesthood of the first temple.⁶⁴

Spencer claims that the “sort of messianism that would have been known to Lehi’s Jerusalem would have focused much more intensely on the then-still-existent Davidic dynasty than on anything else”; that is, according to Spencer’s reading here, a messiah had to do with Davidic Kings and politics because *messiah* means “anointed,” and Kings were anointed, and we can trust this thesis based on the objectivity and insight of secular historians. That premise, I think, can be tested and questioned. Lehi descended from the Northern Kingdom (2 Nephi 5:14, Alma 10:3), and one of the distinguishing traits of that tradition is a diminished concern and respect for David and the Davidic covenant.⁶⁵ Spencer cites

63. Margaret Barker, “The High Priesthood” in *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007). Also see LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend Unto the Hill of the Lord? The Psalms in Israel’s Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011).

64. This distinction between political and priesthood approaches to a messiah also appears in comparing Marvin Sweeny’s *King Josiah: Lost Messiah of Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) to Barker’s *The Mother of the Lord*. Spencer refers to one of Sweeny’s earlier books; see Marvin Alan Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996).

65. See John L. Sorenson, “The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship” in *Nephite Culture and Society* (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 32. Also, Steven St. Clair,

Brueggman on Isaiah 1-39 on a Davidic and political approach and refers to Isaiah 9:6-7 as describing “a new king ascending to the throne and being adopted by the Lord as he fulfills the hopes the Davidic dynasty” (M, 64). This is the famous passage on the “wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace” as well as “the throne of David, and his kingdom.” Barker, who has also published formidable commentaries on Isaiah,⁶⁶ observes that in the Septuagint, these four throne names are replaced with one, “the Angel of Great Counsel.”⁶⁷ She shows that the four titles Isaiah uses were equivalent to the meanings of the angel names Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel, each title and name representing an aspect or role of the Lord.⁶⁸ The “Angel of Great Counsel” title converges with the implications of Lehi’s council vision in 1 Nephi 1 and also leads directly to all the divine titles Lehi uses in 1 Nephi 10, given a First Temple and priesthood context. The political interpretation Spencer cites does not.

In 1 Nephi 10, Lehi gives us “a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4), “this Redeemer of the world” (10:5) and “the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world” (10:10), who would be “slain” by the Jews and then would “rise from the dead” (10:11) and the true Messiah would be “their Lord and their Redeemer” (10:14), that “the Son of God was the Messiah who should come” (10:17). All of this points directly to the Temple and the Day of Atonement ritual as the dramatic enactment of the redemption of the world and ties directly and profoundly to the

“The Stick of Joseph: The Book of Mormon and the Northern Traditions of Israel,” accessed November 23, 2018, http://members.tripod.com/~osher_2/StickJoseph.html. “The northern tradition tended to disparage — or ignore — Judah, Aaron, and David. None of the Biblical stories of Judah that give him a personality are found in the northern ‘E’ source. Aaron does receive some notice in ‘E,’ but it is uniformly negative; he is given full blame, for example, for the golden calf incident. A modern scholar notes that ‘only in E do we notice the propensity to find fault with Aaron.’ As important as he is in the Bible, Samaritan writings pay little attention to Aaron, other than grudgingly allowing that he is the brother of Moses and the start of their line of High Priests. As would be expected, the northern tradition had little interest in the line of David or the covenant with David, since his descendants after Solomon were kings exclusively of the southern kingdom.”

66. See Barker, *The Older Testament*, and Margaret Barker, “Isaiah” in *Eerdman’s Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman’s Publishing Co, 2003), and Margaret Barker, “The Original Setting of the Fourth Servant Song,” (paper, 2000), <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/FourthServantSong.pdf>.

67. Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, 26.

68. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 36.

First Temple theology Margaret Barker has worked to recover.⁶⁹ The Day of Atonement has everything to do with theological redemption of the world, the Everlasting Covenant,⁷⁰ and not primarily with politics and secular deliverance. So the question is not only “which interpretation is better?” but also “How do we go about measuring better?” In making and defending a decision, we simultaneously expose our ideological and evidential basis for deciding.

Spencer argues that on the basis of a political context, what Lehi’s hearers would “have heard in his preaching would most likely have been heard in his preaching a hope that Zedekiah would be replaced by a miraculous Judean king who would lead the Jews in a successful revolt that would mark the beginning of political independence — or even political ascendancy. To many, it would likely have seemed better that one such wild-eyed prophet should perish than that the whole Judean nation should dwindle and perish in a sustained Babylonian siege” (M, 66). Spencer grants that “Lehi seems to have been in the earliest stages of developing a fully Christian messianism, but his listeners likely could make little sense of his message” (M, 66). So to the degree that Spencer talks about why some of Lehi’s listeners may have misunderstood what he said, there are also grounds for considering the difference between those who see and hear and understand, and those who are blind.⁷¹

However, to me, the negative response to Lehi’s first public discourse on “a messiah and the redemption of the world” makes the most sense in light of Barker’s elaborate and well-supported case that the reformers, however sincere, zealous, and well-intended, had recently changed the role of the high priest so that he was no longer anointed, literally no longer “a messiah” and that they had removed the Day of Atonement from the sacred calendar in Deuteronomy 16. (Barker observes that in Zechariah 3, Joshua the High Priest is clothed but not anointed, and she points to Rabbinic tradition that the second temple priests were clothed but not anointed, since the oil had been lost with the first temple.) On the Day of Atonement, the anointed high priest of the First Temple ritually

69. See, for example, Margaret Barker, “The Great High Priest”, *BYU Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3&4 (2003): 65-84, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/great-high-priest>.

70. See, for example, Margaret Barker, “The Everlasting Covenant Between God and Every Living Creature” (paper, 2014), <http://ecocongregationireland.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Everlasting-Covenant-Margaret-Barker-DD.pdf>.

71. And consider the theme of vision and blindness regarding Jesus as Messiah that runs through the Gospels, John 9, for example. Not coincidentally, this is an important theme in Barker’s *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John’s Gospel* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 2014).

enacted the redemption of the world by representing Yahweh offering his life to heal the creation.⁷² The reformers had violently removed these aspects of worship in Jerusalem, and Lehi, by stating that they would return, immediately, and understandably in this context became a target. In discussing the Book of Mormon, Barker states that

the original temple tradition was that Yahweh, the Lord, was the Son of God Most High, and present on earth as the Messiah. This means that the older religion in Israel would have taught about the Messiah. Thus finding Christ in the Old Testament is exactly what we should expect. This is, I suggest, one aspect of the restoration of “the plain and precious things, which would have been taken away from them” (1 Nephi 13:40). The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Christ [that is, the Messiah, literally, the “anointed”] of the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 3:8; 3 Nephi 15:5).⁷³

Ezekiel 9 discusses “a mark upon the foreheads” of certain men and his contemporary, fellow exiled temple priests; Jacob also discusses the “mark” (Jacob 4:14) and what had been “manifest plainly” (a direct allusion to that which ties the content of Lehi’s first public discourses in 1 Nephi 1:19 to Jacob’s own statements in Jacob 4: 4-12 on his foreknowledge of Christ). However, Spencer defers to the anointing of Davidic kings without considering their priestly roles⁷⁴ and refers to discussion points offered by secular historians who focus on politics. Barker characteristically looks at the temple priesthood in a way that illuminates the significance of Jacob’s mark as the anointing behind the title of Messiah:

An angel was sent to mark the faithful: “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who groan and sigh over all the abominations that are committed in it” (Ezekiel 9:4). The Lord then spoke to the other six angels: “Pass through the city after him and smite ...

72. See Margaret Barker, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing” in *The Great High Priest*, 42-55, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/Atonement.pdf> and “The Original Context of the Fourth Servant Song.”

73. Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” 79-80.

74. Spencer, “Potent Messianism,” in *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1*, 63-64. For the priestly aspects of Davidic Kingship, also consider LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *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*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011). Many of the Psalms were temple liturgy, texts to be performed during the temple rituals.

but touch no one upon whom is the mark. . . . “ (Ezekiel 9.5-6). The mark on the forehead was protection against the wrath. “Mark,” however conceals what that mark was. The Hebrew says that the angel marked the foreheads with the letter *tau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the ancient Hebrew script Ezekiel would have used, this letter was a diagonal cross, and the significance of this becomes apparent from the much later tradition about the high priests. The rabbis remembered that the oil for anointing the high priest had been lost when the first temple was destroyed and that the high priests of the second temple were only “priests of many garments,” a reference to the eight garments worn on the Day of Atonement. The rabbis also remembered that the anointed high priests of the first temple had been anointed on the forehead with the sign of a diagonal cross. This diagonal cross was the sign of the Name on their foreheads, the mark which Ezekiel described as the letter *tau*.⁷⁵

Like Ezekiel, his exact contemporary Jacob is a consecrated temple priest in exile (2 Nephi 6:2). It seems to me this high priestly anointing that designated some as a messiah gives the clear meaning of Jacob’s mark in a passage that I take as a direct comment on the reform:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came from looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them.⁷⁶

As we have seen, Jeremiah, Nephi, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and 1 Enoch also describe the blindness in Jerusalem in Lehi’s day and do so in express contrast to the seeing and hearing that came with their own theophanies. When Jacob attempts to cast light on the meaning of Messiah, he adds other titles, affirming that “the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, should manifest himself unto them in the flesh,” and they shall “crucify him” (2 Nephi 6:9). Jacob’s discourse, as Professor Hamblin has observed, contains themes

75. Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 162.

76. Jacob 4:14, and note that the reference to *plainness* alludes to 1 Nephi 1:19 concerning what Lehi saw and heard as “*manifested plainly*” concerning a “Messiah,” that is, the “anointed” and the redemption of the world, that is, the day of atonement.

consistent with the Day of Atonement.⁷⁷ In 2 Nephi 9: 5, the Creator will show himself to those at Jerusalem and die and provide an infinite atonement (2 Nephi 6:7). In the passages in Jacob 4 leading up to the discussion of the mark and the blindness in Jerusalem, Jacob's themes also happen to resonate with the wisdom tradition that Barker works to recover.⁷⁸

The First Temple High Priests were quite literally anointed with the name, and the symbolism of this act was so profound that “older texts suggest that before the reform, the Name had been simply a synonym for the presence of Yahweh, and not a substitute.”⁷⁹ Barker cites Isaiah 30:27 as an example:

Behold the Name of Yahweh cometh from far,
Burning in his anger and thick rising smoke;
His lips are full of indignation
and his tongue is like a devouring fire.

And this context has implications for how we ought to understand Jacob's report in 2 Nephi 10:3, 7:

Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ — for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name — should come among the Jews ... and they shall crucify him, ... and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.

... But behold, thus saith the Lord God: When ... they shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then I have covenanted with their fathers.

Here is the equivalence of the anointed [the Christ] and the Name as the visible presence of the Lord God who had covenanted with the Jews. Notice that this contextual reading does not require us to explain that this is the first time an angel explained to Jacob that Christ is his personal name while skipping over the fact that *Christ*, like *Messiah*, means “anointed one,” and is *not* a personal name. Notice too that

77. See The Interpreter Foundation, “William Hamblin on ‘Jacob's Sermon and the Day of Atonement,’” YouTube video, 26:17, September 22, 2012, <http://interpreterfoundation.org/william-hamblin-on-jacobs-sermon-2-nephi-6-10-and-the-day-of-atonement/>.

78. See Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, The Monarchy and Wisdom: Lehi's World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker” in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, eds. John Welch, David Rolph Seely and Jo Ann Seely (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 502-04, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=15>.

79. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel*, 97.

John Welch and Terrence Szink have compared Benjamin's discourse to the Day of Atonement rituals, observing that the expanded name *Lord God* is used seven times as an equivalent to the sacred name YHWH and that Christ is also used exactly seven times.⁸⁰

There is a reason why Nephi says, "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 Jew" (2 Nephi 25:5). There is a reason why, in reference to the parable of the sower, the same seeds (words) can generate vastly differing yields, depending on soil, nurture, and time. Jesus says, "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?" (Mark 4:13). And there is a reason why Barker herself explains that *we seek to stand where they stood, to look where they looked so as to glimpse what they saw.*⁸¹

Human Personality in Revelation and in Scholarship

And this leads me to a third essay to discuss, George B. Handley's "Dreams, Visions, and Foolish Imaginations: Alternative History as Sacred History in the Book of Mormon." He addresses the common assumption that "a revealed text is believed to be distinguished from a secular one because it descends upon us, originating in an absolute sense from outside and above the context of human language" (M, 30). This would be a plenary view of scripture: that it is complete, inerrant, and sufficient, inherently transcendent of human taint, and not requiring any effort at contextualization, just harmonization and elucidation. In contrast to this, Handley observes that not only has the "Bible ... been tainted by the fingerprints of humanity, human culture, time, language, politics, bias, and so on" (M, 33), but also that the Book of Mormon "wants to directly confront the fact of human personality, culture, and language and how it relates to revelation. Its radical message appears to be that our humanity is not the obstacle but rather the very medium of revelation" (M, 32). Overall, Handley provides a provocative and interesting mediation, shedding valuable light along the way.

80. Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals" in *King Benjamin's Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom*, eds. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 179, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1087&index=8>.

81. Barker, "Reflections on Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century," 2, emphasis in original.

In passing, when discussing the response to the Book of Mormon by believers and critics, he compares those who seek to “authenticate the foundational narrative of the religion by means of historicizing the text” (M, 31) to critics who want to “debunk the book’s sacred status by reducing it to the psychology and life and times of Joseph Smith” (M, 32n1), suggesting that both groups operate under the “same methodology” (M, 32n1). After an interesting mediation on the humanity of the text, drawing on some William Faulkner for perspective, he finally observes that “our only escape from conflict and tribalism is to learn to read with enough charity to understand and extend a revelation’s universal relevance beyond our own small set of circumstances” (M, 46).

In setting himself up in opposition to the those mostly unnamed apologists who risk “painting themselves into ... corners” (M, 32n1) with their reductionism, he does not accurately represent why we all do what we do. The labeling of trying to authenticate and then saying we are the mirror image of skeptics, and risk painting ourselves “into similar corners” (M, 32n1) feels to me more like a tribal dismissal than an enlightening insight. We’re not trying to authenticate but to understand and defend. Most of us acquired testimonies long before we involved ourselves with scholarship. Most of us have learned that anyone can easily dismiss anything and everything we produce, so the notion of “proof” is far less meaningful than “cause to believe” (Alma 32:18-19), which cannot coerce but may invite. What we want is not repetition and reinforcement and static, approved thinking, but expansion, puzzle solving, testing, enlightenment, enlargement, more growth, the taste of more delicious fruit, and to discover promising questions to explore (see Alma 32). As Barker so aptly put it, “We seek to stand where they stood, to look where they looked so as to glimpse what they saw.” The interesting thing about “standing where they stood” is that we can’t predict in advance of doing so the difference that it may make — what we might see that we did not see before.

Jacob 7 and the Paths Explored and the Potential for Type-Scenes

Christ and Antichrist: Reading Jacob 7 offers a range of essays that strive to shed light, and they successfully do so in a range of interesting ways, generally through close reading and commentary rather than attempts at any larger contextualization. I do notice a few roads not taken, questions not explored. That is, I notice a number of essays mentioning that Sherem is “defender of the received tradition” (M&S, 23), which

are both accurate and important, but not one essay mentions the Deuteronomist Reforms, even though a few footnotes mention *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, where Margaret Barker and I both raise the issue of their obvious and crucial influence. And while a few essays mention John Welch's "The Case of Sherem" in his important book on *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon*, no one builds on his insights. Whereas Welch's detailed and insightful essay focuses on the legal aspects of the encounter, Riess, Miller, and Berkey focus on the intensely personal aspects. As one who has read both, I can synthesize both, and I appreciate how the different approaches increase the definition and depth and resonance of my understanding and appreciation. Each author in this volume stakes out an approach and lays claim to a bit of territory, but the tendency here neglects the context of a broader, inclusive picture. This is not necessarily a bad thing but just a notable observation, a consequence of exclusion due to focus elsewhere, of selection and emphasis, notice and value, and the boundaries of attention and interest.

A few authors mention the notion of Sherem as an outsider, but none explore the potential Mesoamerican social developments and historical contextualization that would provide Sherem with a motive for confronting Jacob, other than theological disagreement with Sherem as "a watchman over public piety" (M&S, 6). Brant Gardner had suggested that Sherem represented economic interests who wanted to eliminate Jacob's interference in trade.⁸² Kimberly Berkley mentions the frequent thematic grouping of Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor and mentions studies by B. H. Roberts, Mark Thomas, and John W. Welch (M&S, 28n1). She also observes with this footnoted context that Jacob 7 becomes a "kind of type-scene for subsequent portions of Nephite history" (M&S, 28). However, the insights regarding Jacob's prayers that she pursues in her interesting essay do not elaborate on the notion of type-scenes. I've elsewhere cited this passage on type-scenes from Robert Alter:

Since biblical narrative characteristically catches its protagonists only at the critical and revealing points in their lives, the biblical type-scene occurs not in the rituals of daily existence but at the crucial junctures in the lives of the heroes. ... Some of the most commonly repeated biblical type-scenes I have been able to identify are the following: the annunciation ... of the birth of the hero to his barren mother; the encounter

82. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Textual Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Volume Two Second Nephite through Jacob* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 565-77, especially 567.

with the future betrothed at a well; the epiphany in the field; the initiatory trial; danger in the desert and the discovery of a well or other source of sustenance; the testament of the dying hero.⁸³

Alter observes that not only the individual type-scenes, but also the set of available type-scenes “are the lineaments of a purposefully deployed literary convention,” where “the variations in parallel episodes are not at all *random*” but purposeful.⁸⁴ Alter explains that “the type-scene is not merely a way of formally recognizing a particular kind of narrative moment; it is also a means of attaching that moment to a larger pattern of historical and theological meaning.”⁸⁵ And as Alter explains, the way the biblical writers attach meaning is not just in repetition but in the variations and how they provide the basis for mutual comparison and contrast that reveal character and provide implicit commentary. We should consider “what is done in each individual application of the scheme to give it a sudden tilt of innovation or even to refashion it radically for the imaginative purposes at hand.”⁸⁶

In his *Digging in Cumorah*, Mark Thomas (following Brodie and B. H. Roberts), while grouping Sherem with Korihor and Nehor, titles his discussion “Dying Heretics.” He concludes his chapter by saying that “from aesthetic, religious, and logical perspectives, the dying heretic is the weakest narrative form in the Book of Mormon.”⁸⁷ The reason he reaches that conclusion is that despite citing Alter, he focuses on similarities rather than the telling variations.

For a contrasting approach that does pay attention to variation, John Welch introduces a legal context neither Roberts nor Thomas had (or could have) considered, and concludes:

Thus, on careful inspection, the accounts of the cases of Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor differ in many respects; and given their time and circumstances, they differ in precisely the ways one could expect them to differ. Each proceeding was tailored to the individual facts and circumstances of the case. Some

83. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 51. Compare discussion of Book of Mormon type-scenes on these themes in Kevin and Shauna Christensen, “Nephite Feminism Revisited,” *FARMS Review of Books* 10, no.2 (1998): 19.

84. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 50.

85. *Ibid.*, 60.

86. *Ibid.*, 52.

87. Mark D. Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 170.

surprising and unique twists and turns occurred and different legal issues were encountered in each case. Above all, the historical or jurisprudential value of each case was to establish different results: each proceeding raised legal problems of first impression that were of pressing importance for that particular moment in Nephite legal and religious history.⁸⁸

So Welch discovers much of interest in variations and significance in the ancient legal context. However, if we consider Alter and the notion of the variations in type-scene as important and telling, why not also consider the variant Book of Mormon narratives in which *the heretic does not die*? For example, Alma the Elder was a wicked priest, Alma the Younger sought to destroy the church, and Zeezrom sought to discredit Alma and Amulek, but they do not die, even though all three came close. They recover and convert. And there are variations among converts, where Alma the Elder and Zeezrom repent in response to oral testimony, and Alma the younger encountered an angel and famously described himself as being born again while “nigh unto death” (Mosiah 27:28). And in considering the encounter with an angel that led to Alma’s repentance, why not consider the variant story in which Laman and Lemuel see an angel but do not fully repent nor do they die? If we compare the angel stories, the differences in response turn out to be crucially telling. We ought to notice that what makes the difference in Alma’s full conversion and Laman and Lemuel’s recurrent lapses and eventual complete apostasy is not the angel but the life review. Whereas Alma looks to his own sins (Alma 36:12-17), as Zeezrom had done without an angel (Alma 12:1, 14:6-7), Laman and Lemuel look to their own fears (1 Nephi 3:31) and resentments (1 Nephi 7:16, 16:35-38). And that lines up with the insights of 12 Step Recovery, noting the importance of a “searching and fearless” personal inventory (where Alma’s NDE life review also corresponds to the fourth step in recovery) and the importance of “dismantling the grievance story,” to stop using fear and resentment as Laman and Lemuel do to justify their actions.

So if we permit ourselves to pay attention to variations and to notice how different stories provide telling contrasts and points of comparison, we might conclude that an organizing notion of “dying heretics” too narrowly restricts our inquiry.

88. John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press and The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2008), 308-309.

There is always danger of a metaphor once adopted becoming the master instead of the servant.⁸⁹

We could examine the varied responses to “Liminal Encounter” as the more appropriate type-scene, rather than just dying heretics, and explore how different people in the Book of Mormon respond when confronted with some form of testimony and witness. How do people react on the threshold of a potentially life-changing invitation from God? And that reframing opens up the whole of the Book of Mormon as not just separate incidents that can be fully studied in isolation but invites us to consider how the stories holographically comment on one another by means of pattern and variation. In every dictionary, words are defined by means of comparison and contrast, what they are like and not like. The roots and contrasts and comparisons produce definition and therefore distinct meaning.

Reiss using Alter and Girard to Explore Sherem’s Encounter with Jacob

And it is not just different Book of Mormon accounts that provide room to consider how different Book of Mormon stories reflect on one another but also how different scholars do the same thing. Consider, for instance, how Jana Riess’s fascinating essay “There Came a Man: Sherem, Scapegoating, and the Inversion of Prophetic Tradition” implicitly follows Alter’s type-scene and allusion approach (without mentioning Alter) and tellingly applies René Girard’s theory of the scapegoat. This not only resonates effectively with the essays by Miller and Berkley in *Christ and Antichrist* but also happens to intersect with the approaches of Welch and Gardner.

Riess begins by looking at different Bible narratives “where similar language is used and similar situations become apparent” (M&S, 2). She offers readings of a story of Eli’s sons, an account of a man of God who confronted Jeroboam, and another who confronted Ahab. She notes how these stories concern “wrong worship committed by people who inherited their responsibilities and were not directly called by God” (M&S, 4-5). These stories are introduced by the phrase “there came a man of God,” whereas in Jacob, when Sherem appears, the

89. E. A. Payne, “The Modern Expansion of the Church: Some Reflections on Dr. Latourette’s Conclusions,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1946):151, quoted in Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 4:194n2.

phrase “there came a man.” Riess notes the foreshadowing and allusive significance of the “of God” not appearing “even though the story bears many of the external trappings of other man-of-God tales in which the outsider speaks truth to power. By choosing to craft his story in this way, Jacob not only highlights the fact that the stranger is a heretic but also calls attention to his own diminished and religious position. ... Jacob’s sermonizing has fallen on deaf ears” (M&S, 8).

In a section aptly titled “Sherem and the Inversion of the Prophetic Tradition,” Riess notes that “Sherem does not accuse Jacob of being *non-religious*, but *wrong-religious*. Jacob forsakes the religion of the past, the one based on Mosaic law, in favor of some unknown, unproven deity. ... When Sherem says there will be no Christ, he has logic and tradition *and religion* on his side” (M&S, 7). This is where some discussion of the Deuteronomists and First Temple could cast some light on whose religion and whose past and whose tradition are being invoked, but here those issues remain in the shade. The insights on type-scene, allusion, and ironic reversal are brilliant and notable, but I think we could have had more on the historical background of the traditions that Sherem and Jacob represent. Even so, Riess concludes the section with another astute insight based on type-scene comparison when she observes that “Sherem reveals that he is not a true ‘man of God’ when he asks Jacob for a sign rather than delivering one himself” (M&S, 9).

From here she introduces René Girard’s theory of the scapegoat, a fresh and telling framework for examining the Sherem story which intensifies the sense of ironic reversal so evident in her type-scene comparisons. As Riess explains, according to Girard,

When one person or group claims an object or privilege, suddenly the other wants it too, imitating the first person’s desire. It’s called mimetic desire because of this imitative function; if someone else values the thing, the thing itself must be valuable, and therefore we should want it too. The only way to restore order is if a third party functions as a scapegoat to end the conflict. ... Girard’s five necessary steps of scapegoating intersect in interesting ways in the story of Sherem. (M&S, 10)

The first of the five steps is (1) a social crisis, involving political instability, social chaos and looming danger, and “a blurring of boundaries of the boundaries and identity markers between people and groups,” perhaps intensified when Jacob claimed that in some ways, the Lamanites were more righteous, would scourge the Nephites, and would find favor and blessing from the Lord (M&S, 11-12).

In step (2), “the scapegoat must be slandered and accused” (M&S, 12-13), and Riess makes the case that this is what Jacob does, going so far as to observe that Jacob declares that Sherem is “under ‘the power of the devil’” (M&S, 13). Riess also says that “Sherem never launches the same accusation back at Jacob,” arguing that “Sherem believes Jacob has misunderstood the law” but does not “anathematize his interlocutor” (M&S, 13). On this last point I am not so sure, and that is because I come to her reading with my awareness of Welch and Gardner’s observations. Welch explains in great detail that Sherem’s accusations were to prove that Jacob was “violating the laws of God,” an order to remove Jacob from his High Priestly role, “since he would be denounced, removed, and punished.”⁹⁰ Welch explains that Sherem’s accusations involved the three crimes of (1) public apostasy, (2) blasphemy, and (3) false prophecy,” all capital crimes.⁹¹ As Gardner observes, “Assuming that Sherem was the ‘hired gun’ for the powerful Nephites, the result of this confrontation might have done more than discredit Jacob. It could have legally put him to death.”⁹² Riess’s points about the scapegoat patterns are correct and valuable, but I think we ought to recognize that both Jacob and Sherem are potential scapegoats, depending on the outcome of the confrontation.

Riess walks through Girard’s remaining steps, (3) the trial and guilt of the scapegoat (M&S, 14), and (4) the scapegoat being killed or banned (M&S, 14-16), and the result, (5) where social order is restored (M&S, 16-17). Overall, this is a notable use of Girard to cast light on a Book of Mormon account. Others have done so in the past,⁹³ and this successful application should encourage more. And in the *Christ and Antichrist* volume, the subsequent essays by Miller and Berkey shed more light on Jacob’s personality and intimate concerns and on the ironies involved in the confrontation with Sherem. Collectively, these essays intensify and deepen the insights of one another.

90. Welch, *The Legal Cases of the Book of Mormon*, 115.

91. *Ibid.*, 117.

92. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 571.

93. See Eugene England, “A Second Witness for the *Logos*: The Book of Mormon and Contemporary Literary Criticism,” in *By Study and By Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, vol 2., eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 91-125, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1129&index=4>.

Thoughts on Swimmers and Different Streams

I find the most valuable scholarship to be the kind that expands my mind and offers insights on important topics and issues I would not have considered if left to myself. Such enlightening experiences renew the scriptures in a way that repetition of the conventional and obvious simply does not provide. It leaves me excited by both the new insight and the rekindled awareness that there may be more to find in texts I thought I knew well. Both these books provide this expansive experience, and the overall series seems committed to doing so. So there is light. And diverging interpretations and interests are displayed, and that, I think, is partly due to the effects of the social networks involved, mine included. Whom do we trust and why? How do we measure the value or reliability of what we see and hear from different sources that claim to cast valuable light? On the one hand, the authors of the essays in these books and I have a lot in common as scholars, as believing Latter-day Saints, and as people who value the Book of Mormon. So in that sense, we belong to the same community.

Men [and women] whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science.⁹⁴

On the other hand, we also have some clear differences and work in somewhat different communities.

No wonder, then, that in the early stages of the development of any science different men [and women] confronting the same range of phenomena, but not usually all the same particular phenomena, describe and interpret them in different ways.⁹⁵

Why do Julie Smith and I have such very different views of the value of Margaret Barker's scholarship? And why did the community of scholars who discussed her work for the seminar accept her one sentence dismissal of Barker without asking her to provide so much as a footnote in explanation or defense? Clearly, the larger Latter-day Saint communities to which we primarily belong have subdivisions as well as overlap. And of course, when people point to mainstream scholarship as the standard against which to measure Barker, it turns out that closer observation will

94. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 11.

95. *Ibid.*, 17.

reveal deep subdivisions and controversy there as well.⁹⁶ The available facts do not and cannot by themselves force everyone into a uniform conformity and unanimous interpretation. Paradigms, which we define by our selection of the standard examples scholarship that we follow, provide the controlling frameworks in which we subsequently order and interpret our experiences. A different standard example, say of Latter-day Saint apologetics following Nibley⁹⁷ or Sorenson, or of religious studies approaches that seeks acceptance within secular university academia,⁹⁸ or Barker writing as a Christian believer, will lead not only to the formation of different communities but also to different scholarship.

Paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but with some of the directions essential for map-making. In learning a paradigm the scientist acquires theory, methods, and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture. Therefore, when paradigms change, there are usually significant shifts in the criteria for determining the legitimacy both of problems and of proposed solutions.⁹⁹

In politics, this is “controlling the narrative.” It turns out to be akin, as Barker explains, to one of the meanings of the word *mašal*, translated as *parable*:

The Hebrew lexicon lists three apparently distinct meanings for this word: to rule or have dominion; to be like, or cause to be like; and to speak in parables or poetry—the two latter clearly aspects of the same meaning. But in fact all three are

96. See John McDade, “Jesus in Recent Research,” *The Month* (December 1998) 495–505. I’m particularly fond of this essay because he surveys a wide range of approaches to Jesus, all notable, all involving rigorous scholarship, but with different contextualization of both foreground and background assumptions, all leading to very different pictures of Jesus, most assuming the historical Jesus was quite different from the Jesus of Faith and thus view Christianity as a creation of the faith communities rather than emerging from the person of Jesus. McDade also cites scholarship by Ben Myer, N.T. Wright and Margaret Barker as providing promising alternative approaches that see a consonance between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith.

97. Hugh Nibley, “New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley Volume 8* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1112&index=5>.

98. See M. Gerald Bradford, “The Study of Mormonism: A Growing Interest in Academia” in *The FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1461&index=10>.

99. Kuhn, 109.

the same: the one who “rules” in this sense is the one who determines how and what things are, and does this by making or maintaining the correspondences.¹⁰⁰

Joseph Campbell had explained that one of the functions of a mythology is “supporting and validating a certain social order.”¹⁰¹ The exemplary stories told by a community model the ways things ought to be done, the acceptable thoughts and questions, the basis for addressing and resolving conflicts; and for exploring unanswered questions, and defining what we can ask, and what we should not ask.

The scientist, by virtue of an accepted paradigm, knew what a datum was, what instruments might be used to retrieve it, and what concepts were relevant to its interpretation.¹⁰²

So the people and work and stories and exemplary texts or standard textbooks provide the models that define a community’s methods and social boundaries. While some may be compatible or have significant overlap or applicability within different communities, others may define very different communities.

Like the choice between competing political institutions, that between competing paradigms proves to be a choice between incompatible modes of community life. ... When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its own paradigm to argue in that paradigm’s defense.¹⁰³

The differences in approach between different communities and within a community is not necessarily always a bad thing. Kuhn explains that

if all members of a scientific community responded to each new anomaly as a source of crisis or embraced each new theory advanced by a colleague, science would cease. If, on the other hand, no one reacted to anomalies or to brand-new theories in high risk ways, there would be few or no revolutions. In matters like these the resort to shared values rather than to shared rules governing individual choice may

100. Margaret Barker, *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 45.

101. Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 31.

102. Kuhn, 122.

103. *Ibid.*, 94.

be the community's way of distributing risk and assuring the long-term success of its enterprise.¹⁰⁴

When people dismiss Barker as “not mainstream,” my response includes my recognition that this is her point: she deliberately offers her work as an alternative to the mainstream and makes a serious effort to explain and justify that alternative.¹⁰⁵ A part of my own response is that Mormonism is not mainstream either. If just being part of the mainstream, being orthodox, is the first and great value upon which all judgments ought to be made, then it's hard to justify my covenant adherence to a community that is unpopular, demanding, restrictive, controversial, expensive, and a minority. Yet I can at least argue on other grounds besides popular acceptance that my choice of faith communities has a reasonable substance beyond my heritage, prejudice, naivety, and tribalism.¹⁰⁶ And I can also argue the same for my currently favored sources of academic enlightenment, including Margaret Barker, John Sorenson, Hugh Nibley, Ninian Smart, René Girard, Thomas Kuhn, Alan Goff, Ian Barbour, Robert Alter, Brant Gardner, and Terryl Givens, to name a few whose work I take as paradigmatic.

One issue for both individuals and groups is how we deal with information that does not come from our in-group, not from the teachers and traditions with which we are more familiar and that we already trust.

But there are two very different phenomena at play here, each of which subverts the flow of information in very distinct ways. Let's call them *echo chambers* and *epistemic bubbles*. Both are social structures that systematically exclude sources of information. Both exaggerate their members' confidence in their beliefs. But they work in entirely different ways, and they require very different modes of intervention. An epistemic bubble is when you don't *hear* people from the other side. An

104. Ibid., 186.

105. Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, 32-33. Also see Margaret Barker, “Being and Independent Scholar,” *Providence, Divine Action and the Church* (blog), 17 November, 2012, <http://christpantokrator.blogspot.com/search/label/Barker%3A%20%27Being%20an%20Independent%20Scholar%27>.

106. For example, Kevin Christensen, “Sophic Box and Mantic Vista,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): 113-179, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/sophic-box-and-mantic-vista-a-review-of-deconstructing-mormonism/>.

echo chamber is what happens when you don't *trust* people from the other side.¹⁰⁷

I will never forget a moment at the Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium in 2002 when I spotted an acquaintance passing down the hall. I greeted her, and she asked what I was doing there. For an answer, I held up a copy of my newly published *Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies*. She said, "Before you say anything, the Book of Mormon is a 19th century fiction, and nothing you say could ever change my mind. I never read anything from FARMS. It makes me mad." Taken aback, I asked if my *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* essay on Near Death Experience research and the Book of Mormon had made her mad, and she admitted that it hadn't, but then she had no more to say. It was obvious that the only way she could judge material she refused to read on grounds that it "made her mad" is via the opinions drawn from her trusted social network, that is, secondhand gossip rather than firsthand exploration. It happens that this person, a lifetime member and a professional lawyer who ought to know about witness and testimony and evidence, had also once reported that she had never personally read the Book of Mormon. And though I had been an acquaintance for more than ten years, clearly I was not part of that trusted network.

In another case, I recall a scholar on a Latter-day Saint blog commenting that he was not inclined to join the growing enthusiasm for Barker's work among other Latter-day Saint scholars on the grounds that "no one I know takes her seriously." Given that people like Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew take her seriously, we can conclude that they were not part of this student's trusted network.

Jesus observed that "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better" (Luke 5:39). Alma encourages his listeners to "arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words" even if "Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection" (Alma 32:26-27). Both teachers emphasize that what should matter most is not the initial skepticism and resistance to what is new and contrary to preconception, but the nature and results of subsequent experiments upon the word.

In dealing with differing opinions, I want to evaluate persons and arguments fairly rather than settle for tribal dismissals, arguments that

107. C Thi Nguyen, "Escape the Echo Chamber", *Aeon*, April 9, 2018, <https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult>.

really amount to saying, “Not us,” not the “orthodox religion,” not the in-group to which I belong or aspire. This can be overt, as simple as applying a label such as “Fake News” or “Witch Hunt” or “Apologist” rather than “honest and objective” or “faith-promoting” or “doctrinally sound.”¹⁰⁸ It can be covert, where the judgment comes in the form of a paradigm-dependent argument and ideologically driven sources as “each group uses its own paradigm in that paradigm’s defense.”¹⁰⁹

This approach has the form of scholarship, but it avoids the power thereof by avoiding genuine risk, offering a dismissal as “Not us!” rather than framing the investigation in terms of “Why us?” A “Why us?” approach, a search for greater light and knowledge beyond current orthodoxy, invites risk and comes in the form of a fair comparison that acknowledges the influence of its own ideology and human limitations. It consciously strives to apply values not completely paradigm dependent; that is, testability, accuracy of key predictions, comprehensiveness and coherence, fruitfulness, simplicity and aesthetics, and future promise. It recognizes that paradigm choice always involves deciding which problems are more significant to have solved, that any decision about which paradigm is better also involves decisions about the standards chosen and applied to measure better.

So if trust in social networks is a key issue here, how can we go about encouraging trust among different scholars operating under different assumptions, using different methods, and wanting to appeal to different audiences? According to Nguyen, whereas epistemic bubbles can be broken simply by adding new information, the challenge with echo chambers involves encouraging trust. That takes time and involves an effort to follow Brigham Young’s advice to “understand men and women as they are, and not understand them as you are.”¹¹⁰ To at least start in

108. Hugh Nibley observes that “nothing is easier than to identify one’s own favorite political, economic, historical, and moral convictions with the gospel. That gives one a neat, convenient, but altogether too easy advantage over one’s fellows. If my ideas are the true ones — and I certainly will not entertain them if I suspect for a moment that they are false! — then, all truth being one, they are also the gospel, and to oppose them is to play the role of Satan. This is simply insisting that our way is God’s way and therefore, the only way. It is the height of impertinence.” Hugh Nibley, “Beyond Politics” in *Nibley on the Timely and Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh Nibley*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 320–21.

109. Kuhn, 94.

110. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: George Q. Cannon, 1881), 8:37, <http://jod.mrm.org/8/37>.

a meaningful way, Ian Barbour observes that adherents “of rival theories can seek a common core of overlap ... to which both can retreat.”¹¹¹

One approach to reconciling at least some differences in Smith and Barker would be to compare Barker’s 1994 essay “Atonement: The Rite of Healing”¹¹² and Julie Smith’s 2009 essay “Lessons from Leviticus: Point our Souls to Christ.”¹¹³ Both authors draw not only on Leviticus, but specifically on the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas. Indeed, Barker reports,

I had the great privilege of knowing the late great Mary Douglas, the anthropologist and a wonderful, wonderful lady. She has been dead for some six or seven years now. But she was just an experience. She was at that stage of writing about atonement in Leviticus. When I was listening to her talking about atonement, all sorts of things clicked into place for me. That’s when the characteristic treatment I had of atonement came about.¹¹⁴

Smith explains how she will draw on Douglas’s work:

In recent years, the study of Leviticus has been galvanized by the late Mary Douglas, an anthropologist. Douglas’s central insight was that Leviticus relies on analogical thinking, which means that each part of the law cannot be understood on its own but only by comparing it with other parts of the law of Moses. ... Analogical reading helps us make sense of a document that, relative to the rest of the Old Testament, has very few imperatives or commandments. Herein I will employ an analogical reading of Leviticus to demonstrate what the Book of Mormon prophets already knew: that the Law of Moses, even in its details, points our souls to Christ.¹¹⁵

In the case of these two essays, Barker and Smith employ different techniques, but the overall conclusions complement and reinforce one another. Smith relies on close reading of Leviticus and pays attention to

111. Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study of Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 113.

112. Margaret Barker, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing.”

113. Julie M. Smith, “Point Our Souls to Christ: Lessons from Leviticus,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 1 (2009):67-82, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1468&index=5>.

114. Margaret Barker in *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, ed. Gary Anderson (Logan, UT: Academy for Temple Studies, 2013), 12, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>.

115. Smith, “Point Our Souls to Christ,” 67-68.

literary techniques such as chiasmus, all in light of Douglas’s analogical reading, “which means that each part of the law cannot be understood on its own but only by comparing it with other parts of the law of Moses.”¹¹⁶ For example, Smith looks at the first three chapters in Leviticus on offerings in three categories, meat, cereal, and peace, each with three subcategories. She discusses how the structure focuses attention on how the key offering is made only when the high priest is anointed: “A perceptive reader realizes that the role of the high priest — which is, fundamentally, to make atonement — is central to worship in ancient Israel.”¹¹⁷

Smith also discusses how “we can arrange the holy days in the following chiasmic structure”:

A Sabbath Day (23:3)
 B Passover (23:5-8)
 C Firstfruits (23:10-14)
 D Festival of Weeks (23:15-22)
 E Horn Blasts (23:24-25)
 E’ Day of Atonement (23:27-32)¹¹⁸
 D’ Festival of Tabernacles (23:34-43)
 C’ Perpetual Fire/Bread (24:2-9)
 B’ Sabbath Year (25:2...7)
 A’ Jubilee Year (25:8-55)¹¹⁹

All of this points to the centrality of the atonement and the importance of the role of the anointed high priest. This turns out to be consistent with Barker’s work overall, not just in her essay on atonement. Whereas Smith attempts a close reading of Leviticus in light of Mary Douglas’s scholarship, Barker’s approach characteristically offers a wider range of sources, including not only Douglas on atonement but also Milgrom on Leviticus, Robert Murray on *The Cosmic Covenant*, and discussion of the significance of *1 Enoch*, Isaiah 53, and the Qumran Melchizedek texts.

These six are the bases for any investigation of atonement: first, that it could be illuminated by the Enoch texts; second, that the

116. Ibid., 67.

117. Ibid., 68.

118. Barker also discusses the significance of the absence of the Day of Atonement from the calendar in Deuteronomy 16.

119. Smith, “Point Our Souls to Christ,” 80.

atonement was associated with the eternal covenant; third, that the temple service was the service of heaven; fourth, that the temple represented the entire system of heaven and earth; fifth, that the blood was life; and sixth, that it was the places within the temple complex that were “repaired” to remove the effects of sin.¹²⁰

Before considering the differences in approaches, notice the common ground as both scholars focus on the role of the high priest in the atonement rituals. Some critics complain that Barker uses late sources, though not often considering her arguments about why some sources popularly regarded as late might actually be quite early and why other sources represent memories of very old traditions as confirmed by earlier sources.¹²¹ For example in the case of *1 Enoch* as casting light on the atonement rituals, Barker writes that “we do not date the biblical texts on the basis of either their actual MS remains, or of the latest redaction or allusion discernible within them. Such a procedure would be recognized as ludicrous, yet it is the one scholars employ to decide the date of the Enochic material.”¹²² The oldest manuscripts of both *1 Enoch* and Isaiah come from Qumran. She observes that in *1 Enoch* we have “clear evidence of prophetic and wisdom forms used together within the framework of the angel mythology, in conflict with Deuteronomic ideology, indicating a deep-rooted dispute among the heirs to the traditions of Israel.”¹²³ Among other things, she notices that “before Hezekiah built the tunnel that brought [the Gihon’s water] into the city (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:20), the water of the Gihon created a real stream in the Kidron Valley. It is interesting that Enoch’s journey [*1 Enoch* 26:1-2] describes accurately the geography of Jerusalem before the time of Hezekiah, that is, in the ministry of Isaiah.”¹²⁴ In her atonement essay, and at greater length and detail in *The Older Testament*, Barker also explores ties between *1 Enoch* and Isaiah. All this contributes to Barker’s assertion that

120. Barker, “Atonement: Rite of Healing,” 48.

121. Compare Hugh Nibley, “The Enoch Figure,” *Enoch the Prophet: The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986), 2:19-65, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1102&index=3>.

122. Barker, *The Older Testament*, 64.

123. *Ibid.*, 63.

124. Margaret Barker, “The Fragrant Tree”, in *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity*, eds. John W. Welch and Donald J. Parry (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2011), 59.

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. Since Enoch was a high priest figure, and Jesus was declared to be “a great high priest” (Hebrews 4.14), we should also concern ourselves with the high priesthood.¹²⁵

If Barker is correct, then we should also find these themes in the Book of Mormon and the revelations to Joseph Smith. This is at least an experiment worth doing, and the basic shared assumption can be a starting point in exploring the importance of the high priest and the meaning of atonement.

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125. Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, 33.

