

# THE DEUTERONOMIST DE-CHRISTIANIZING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Kevin Christensen

*Kevin Christensen (BA, San Jose State University) is a technical writer based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

What is recognisable in temple theology is what we know as Christianity.

Margaret Barker<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after I completed a study of Margaret Barker's first seven books of biblical scholarship, titled "Paradigms Regained,"<sup>2</sup> I read an article by Melodie Moench Charles called "The Mormon Christianizing of the Old Testament." It first appeared in *Sunstone* in 1980 and was reprinted in 1990 in *The Word of God*. Charles observes that Latter-day Saint commentaries on the Old Testament tend to rely on an overlay of modern revelation rather than reading the text as it is. She contends that the "differences between Old Testament thought and later Mormon reinterpretations are fundamental and not easily

---

1. Margaret Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1995), 80.

2. Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies," *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001).

Review of Melodie Moench Charles. "The Mormon Christianizing of the Old Testament." In *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel, 131–42. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990. ix + 271 pp. \$11.95.

explained away. Much of the core of Old Testament belief is destroyed when Mormon/Christian ideas are imposed upon it” (p. 136). She objects to the “conspiracy theory” of 1 Nephi 13, which “tells us that designing and wicked people systematically removed parts of the scriptures which were ‘plain and precious’” (p. 136). She urges the Saints to “understand the Old Testament as Israelites themselves would have understood it” rather than imposing a Latter-day Saint revision on it. Her assumptions are that there is a substantially single, static Israelite understanding and that this reading was preserved in the received Old Testament text.

Charles raises questions that deserve consideration. She highlights issues that have confronted the Saints from the time of Alexander Campbell’s “Delusions” published in 1831.<sup>3</sup> Campbell protested the Book of Mormon depiction of preexilic temple worship and knowledge of Christ, seemingly anachronistic “Christian” practices, and the priesthood as Melchizedek-related rather than Levitical. On these issues in particular, the Book of Mormon seemed to Campbell to violate both common knowledge and well-known scripture.

Starting with a book published in 1987, Old Testament scholar Margaret Barker makes the case that, during Josiah’s reform and the exile, the Deuteronomist reformers edited the scriptures in their care, suppressing several key teachings and practices associated with the First Temple and the monarchy.<sup>4</sup> Who were the Deuteronomist reformers? They are the ones often credited with shaping the books of Deuteronomy, Judges, Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, which collectively comprise the Deuteronomist history. Noted biblical scholar Robert Alter has observed that the Deuteronomists are the one editorial school upon whose existence everyone agrees.<sup>5</sup> Surveys of their activities can be found in books by Richard Elliott Friedman

---

3. Alexander Campbell, “Delusions,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 7 February 1831, 85–95.

4. She also describes a sequel, when, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, as the Christian message moved from the Palestinian world to the Greek world, certain key texts and teachings related to the temple were lost from Christianity. See Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: Clark, 2003), 18, 43, and 294–95.

5. See Robert J. Alter, “The Genius of [ ],” review of *The Hidden Book in the Bible*, by Richard Elliott Friedman, *New York Times*, Sunday Book Review Desk, 15 November 1998.

and William Doorly.<sup>6</sup> From such surveys, we learn that they apparently produced a history of the kings to celebrate King Josiah, and they produced later editions of the books in their care to record and respond to the destruction of the temple and the monarchy and the experience of the exile. They reshaped the records in their care and revised the history of Israel. While also advocating that we read the Old Testament as it is,<sup>7</sup> Barker argues that

the restructuring of Israel's traditions and writings during the exile and the years which followed must always be borne in mind when reading the Old Testament. So too must the fact that many traces of the older ways survived, as can be seen in Dan. 7, and *were still being removed at the beginning of the Christian era*, as can be seen from the significant differences between the Qumran versions of certain Hebrew texts and those we now use. Such traces of the older ways as escaped the ancient scribes are often removed by modern readers as they read, since we have all been steeped in one particular view of the Old Testament and its monotheism.<sup>8</sup>

The "one particular view" Barker says "[that] we have all been steeped in" is the view that Charles describes. Regarding the dominant schools of interpretation of the Bible today, Barker claims:

The reforming Deuteronomists with their emphasis on history and law have evoked a sympathetic response in many modern scholars who have found there a religion after their own heart.<sup>9</sup> Thus we have inherited a double distortion; the reformers edited much of what we now read in the Hebrew

---

6. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); and William J. Doorly, *Obsession with Justice: The Story of the Deuteronomists* (New York: Paulist, 1994).

7. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 28.

8. *Ibid.*, 26, emphasis in original. Compare Margaret Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1996), 58.

9. Compare this passage with: "For the first time, Yahweh . . . spoke to his people through *writings on a scroll*. Previously Yahweh had spoken in other ways." Doorly, *Story of the Deuteronomists*, 1. See Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret

Bible, and modern interpreters with a similar cast of mind have told us what the whole of that Hebrew Bible was saying. The fact that most ancient readers of the texts read them very differently is seen as a puzzle.<sup>10</sup>

Barker attempts to solve the puzzle of the difference in reading by recovering the context in which the ancient readers lived and thought. One of the most important elements of the preexilic religion that the Deuteronomists changed involved the role of the high priest.

The anointed high priest of the first temple cult was remembered as having been different than the high priest of the second temple cult since the latter was described simply as the priest who “wears many garments,” a reference to the eight garments worn by him on Yom Kippur: “And who is the anointed [high priest]? He that is anointed with the oil of unction, but not he that is dedicated with many garments.” It was also remembered that the roles of the anointed high priest and the priest of the many garments differed in some respects at Yom Kippur when the rituals of atonement were performed. The anointed high priest, they believed, would be restored to Israel at the end of time, in the last days.<sup>11</sup>

Why does this matter? We will recall that the Hebrew *Messiah* and the Greek *Christ* both mean “anointed one.” The implication is that during the exile after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, the role of the anointed one was changed as part of a Deuteronomist reform. And this justifies my title. The Deuteronomists changed the role of the “anointed one”—that is, the “Messiah.” Recall that David Wright, in a *Sunstone* article critiquing the Book of Mormon’s historicity, once asked, “Why would the messianic view of atoning sacrifice

---

Book and FARMS, 1986), 138–54. Nibley argues for a long-standing tradition of preserving and transmitting records by burying and hiding them to come forth in their purity. For further accounts, also see John A. Tvedtnes, *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 9–25.

10. Barker, *Great Angel*, 28.

11. *Ibid.*, 15.

be removed when the Hebrew Bible speaks quite openly of a messianic figure?"<sup>12</sup> For Wright, the question is rhetorical, brooking no further discussion. Barker's work reverses Wright's intended rhetorical effect by answering his question.<sup>13</sup> In ten books and several journal articles, she identifies the perpetrators, describes their motivations and the circumstances of just such a removal, and lays out the evidence they left behind. Beginning with Josiah's reform, which was soon followed by the destruction of Jerusalem, the loss of the temple, the destruction of the monarchy, and the experience of the exile, the Deuteronomists had the motives, the means, the opportunity, and a method to make a change in Israel's religion.

Texts that give any indication of when the rift occurred in the priesthood all point to the same period. The Qumran texts are unanimous in identifying this as the time when Israel went astray. 1 Enoch (1 Enoch 89.73; 93.9), the Community Rule (1QS V), and the Damascus Document (CD III) all record different aspects of the disaster: an apostate generation with polluted bread on their altar, people under the dominion of Belial whose deeds were a defilement in the age of wrath. *They had gone astray in the secret things, presumably the teachings of the priesthood.*<sup>14</sup>

That the Deuteronomists specifically targeted the atoning messiah is clear from several convergent lines of evidence that Barker discusses. For example, their histories systematically discredited almost all the kings,<sup>15</sup> the calendar in Deuteronomy did not include the Day

---

12. David Wright, "Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," *Sunstone*, September 1992, 36 n. 12. I responded in an essay that I originally submitted to *Sunstone*, but which was published as "A Response to David Wright on Historical Criticism" in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 74–93.

13. For example, see Barker's "Atonement: The Rite of Healing," in *Great High Priest*, 42–55.

14. Barker, *Great High Priest*, 152, emphasis in original.

15. "Is it likely that almost all the kings of Jerusalem were misguided apostates who permitted and encouraged alien cults in their kingdom? . . . Our major source judges all the kings by standards set out in Deuteronomy whose very name means 'the second Law.'" Barker, *Great High Priest*, 148, 308.

of Atonement,<sup>16</sup> and the reforming actions of their hero, King Josiah, targeted the objects kept in the holy of holies, which was the exclusive domain of the anointed high priest.<sup>17</sup>

In short, Barker's work describes an ongoing scribal effort, a conspiracy if you will, that not only affected writings that eventually became our Old Testament, but that to this day affects how it is read. Second Kings describes how the eight-year-old Josiah came to the throne: "And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead" (2 Kings 21:24).

In *King Josiah of Judah: Lost Messiah of Israel*, Marvin Sweeny observes:

Josiah was the first King of Judah to be placed on the throne by the people of the land. Insofar as the Deuteronomic Torah protects the rights of family lines, it protects the rights of family inheritance and possession of land. Furthermore, the various measures pertaining to debt and slavery make it easier for those who find themselves in economic trouble to get out of it and to have a basis on which to rebuild their lives. It would appear that the Deuteronomic Torah addresses the needs of the people of the land, the very group that put Josiah in power after the assassination of his father Amon. This would suggest that the Deuteronomic Torah played a role in supporting Josiah's reign and reform program.<sup>18</sup>

None of the commentaries I have read have noted that Jeremiah appears to have been called against the very people who put Josiah in power, and thus against the very people and institutions who would have been implementing the reforms at the time of his call. The ac-

---

16. "The Deuteronomic version of the calendar does not mention the Day of Atonement, only Passover, Weeks and Tabernacles (Deut 16)." Barker, *Great High Priest*, 309.

17. See Margaret Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 526.

18. Marvin K. Sweeny, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 166.

count in 2 Chronicles 34:3 has the reform start in the twelfth year of Josiah's reign, and Jeremiah 1:2 says that Jeremiah's call came in the thirteenth year. "For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land" (Jeremiah 1:18).

The keynote of the Deuteronomists is their regard for written law. Deuteronomy 4 depicts Moses as informing Israel: "Keep therefore and do *them* [that is, the statutes and judgments of the law]; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deuteronomy 4:6).

Jeremiah seems to be commenting on this very passage:

How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.

The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them? (Jeremiah 8:8–9)<sup>19</sup>

With respect to the law and those who had charge of it, Jeremiah comments that "they that handle the law knew me not" (Jeremiah 2:8).

Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. (Jeremiah 23:30)

And the burden of the Lord shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God. (Jeremiah 23:36)

---

19. Richard Elliott Friedman's translation is stronger: "How do you say, 'We are wise, and Yahweh's *torah* is with us'? In fact, here it was made for a lie, the lying pen of scribes." See Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 209. Interestingly, Friedman argues that Jeremiah was the Deuteronomist. I now find this unpersuasive in light of passages such as these, and other First Temple imagery and concerns in Jeremiah.

Deuteronomy relates the following: “And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice” (Deuteronomy 4:12). Barker notes the direct contradiction with the account in Exodus 24:9–11, which reports that Moses, Aaron, and seventy elders of Israel “saw the God of Israel.” Jeremiah speaks as one who has seen:

For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? (Jeremiah 23:18; compare theophanies in Isaiah 6 and 1 Enoch)

But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (Jeremiah 23:22)

Deuteronomy says that “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29). Further, it explains that “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?” (Deuteronomy 30:11–12).

Against this, Jeremiah speaks as one who has been invited to learn and declare the secret things: “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Jeremiah, like Lehi, shows a thorough knowledge of Deuteronomy, citing it over two hundred times.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Jeremiah’s points of direct contradiction to the current form of Deuteronomy should be telling, particularly when considering his conflicts with the institutions and people who implemented the reforms. Like Lehi, Jeremiah contradicts Deuteronomy on issues that Barker describes as defining the reform.

---

20. Norman Podhoretz, *The Prophets: Who They Were, What They Are* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 219.

Intriguingly, Lehi must have witnessed the beginnings of the revisionist effort during Josiah's reform. Lehi himself begins his own ministry in Jerusalem by prophesying of "a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19). This clearly points to the anointed and to the Day of Atonement and puts Lehi in direct opposition to the reformers. Later, Lehi's son Jacob describes Jews at Jerusalem who "look[ed] beyond the mark," and "despised the words of plainness" (Jacob 4:14). The mark in question must be the same as that referred to by Ezekiel, another temple priest and an exact contemporary. Barker explains what Ezekiel saw in a vision of the angels of destruction summoned to the temple:

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" (Ezek. 9.4). The Lord then spoke to the other six angels: "pass through the city after him and smite . . . but touch no one upon whom is the mark . . ." (Ezek. 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 that 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 remember 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*.<sup>21</sup>

---

21. Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Which God Gave Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1)* (Edinburgh: Clark, 2000), 162.

This must be the meaning of Jacob's mark; therefore, it quite literally meant for Book of Mormon peoples to take upon themselves the name of Christ—that is, the name of the anointed.

The plainness that Jacob discusses in his fourth chapter emphasizes point for point what Barker argues was lost at just that time.<sup>22</sup> And the “conspiracy theory” regarding the transmission of scripture in 1 Nephi 13 predicts further loss of significant teachings after the death of the Old World apostles and also includes a prophecy that those lost teachings would be restored in writings to be discovered after the coming of the Book of Mormon and published via the Gentiles. Barker describes how she constructed her picture of the Deuteronomist reform and her reconstruction of the Older Testament based on writings that “would have been lost but for the accidents of archaeological discovery.”<sup>23</sup> Natural curiosity should lead us to compare Barker's view of the Old Testament, as she reconstructs it, with what we have in the Book of Mormon, and I have offered a survey of the potentials for such a comparison in “Paradigms Regained.”

I want to focus particularly on the final portion of Charles's article. In it she describes several “distinguishing features of Old Testament theology” that, she says, are “relatively consistent and are irreconcilable with Mormon commentary on the Old Testament” (p. 136).

### The Conception of God

“The conception of God,” according to Charles, “is the most significant difference between Old Testament thought and Mormon representations of it. The Israelite deity was single, not multiple. . . . eventually all their theology displayed complete monotheism (Is. 40–55)” (p. 136). When does the “eventually” that Charles takes for granted occur? Barker makes a case that a strict monotheism came about during the

---

22. Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi's World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker,” in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, 502–4.

23. Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987), 6–7. Also compare “Text and Context” in Barker's *Great High Priest*, 294–315, with 1 Nephi 13:24–26, 39–41.

exile, in response to the destruction of the temple and the monarchy. She finds evidence of this in the efforts of the Deuteronomists and as a result of the interpretations of what is often called the Second Isaiah by biblical scholars.<sup>24</sup> For example, Barker observes that

the climax of two passages (Isa. 43.13; 46.9), and the emphasis elsewhere at Isa. 40.18 and 45.14, shows that the other great shift which formed the theology of the Second Isaiah was that Yahweh the Holy One of Israel was also El. Israel was therefore no longer at the mercy of contending angelic forces, of which her Yahweh was but one. If Yahweh was El, the others were nothing.

In contrast to these passages, we find one other, Isa. 43.16–19, which follows upon the court scene where the gods are declared to be nothing. Here, and only here, the prophet exhorts to forget the former things, and a whole new understanding of Yahweh is outlined.<sup>25</sup>

The same passages in Isaiah and Deuteronomy that are often used as proof texts for the strict monotheism of the Old Testament turn out to be for Barker evidence for a shift in Israelite theology during the exile.<sup>26</sup> While the Book of Mormon quotes several Isaiah chapters that many scholars believe were written during the exile, I find it significant that the seven chapters containing arguments for monotheism and

---

24. However, many Latter-day Saint scholars maintain a belief in a unified Isaiah; see, for example, David Rolph Seely, "Exploring the Isaiah Code: Ascending the Seven Steps on the Stairway to Heaven," in this number of the *FARMS Review*, pages 383–97. Also, Barker is the religion editor for Ashgate Publishing, which in 2004 published Michael Golder, *Isaiah as Liturgy*; there he argues that the eight sections of Isaiah correspond with the sequence for the annual festival in the Psalms.

25. Barker, *Older Testament*, 166.

26. For example, Paul Owen, "Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness," in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 272–75. See also George D. Smith, "Isaiah Updated" in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 119. Compare John A. Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon" (*FARMS*, 1981), 129–35.

for the identification of El with Yahweh do not appear in the Book of Mormon.<sup>27</sup> In *Since Cumorah*, Nibley suggests that perhaps the verses included in the Book of Mormon consisted of the Isaiah writings up to that time.<sup>28</sup>

## El and Jehovah

Charles explains her understanding of the use of divine titles in the Old Testament: “Israel’s one God was called Elohim (or God), Yahweh (or the Lord—Jehovah in the KJV), Yahweh Elohim (or the Lord God), or other interchangeable titles. There is no support in the Old Testament for the idea that the titles referred to different beings” (p. 137).

Barker examines the theology behind the use of various divine titles in the text and, by so doing, finds that the titles were not originally interchangeable. In her book *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God*, Barker surveys the existing “sons of God” passages in the Bible:

All the texts in the Hebrew Bible distinguish clearly between the divine sons of Elohim/Elyon and those human beings who are called sons of Yahweh. This must be significant. It must mean that the terms originated at a time when

---

27. See Christensen, “Paradigms Regained,” 77–81, which contains many citations from Donald W. Parry and John Welch, eds., *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998). See also Kevin L. Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” *Dialogue* 33/1 (2000): 74 n. 68. Also, I find it interesting in this context that the Book of Mormon does not quote Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.”

28. Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 125: “It is further significant that the main passages from Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon are chapters 2–14 and 48–54. This corresponds surprisingly to the major divisions of Isaiah on which the scholars have most widely agreed as the original Isaiah collection and as the authentic Deutero-Isaiah. Why does Nephi, the passionate devotee, as he proclaims himself, of the writings of Isaiah, quote almost exclusively from these two blocks of those writings? Can it be that they represent what pretty well *was* the writing of Isaiah in Lehi’s time? The failure to quote from the first chapter, the most famous of all, suggests the theory of some scholars that that chapter is actually a general summary of the whole work and may have been added after.” Compare also William Hamblin, “‘Isaiah Update’ Challenged,” *Dialogue* 17/1 (1984): 4–7.

Yahweh was distinguished from whatever was meant by El/Elohim/Elyon. A large number of texts continued to distinguish between El Elyon and Yahweh, Father and Son, and to express this distinction in similar ways with the symbolism of the temple and the royal cult. By tracing these patterns through a great variety of material and over several centuries, Israel's second God can be recovered.<sup>29</sup>

One of the key texts on this topic is Deuteronomy 32:8–9, which has a most significant variation in both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint, as compared to the Masoretic text underlying the King James Version of the Bible. Alternatively, here is the translation from the Revised Standard Version.

When the Most High [that is, El Elyon] gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God [KJV, "children of Israel"].

For the Lord's portion [that is, Yahweh's portion] is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.<sup>30</sup>

---

29. Barker, *Great Angel*, 10, emphasis deleted. Also, "This distinction is important for at least two reasons; Yahweh was one of the sons of El Elyon; and Jesus in the Gospels was described as a Son of El Elyon, God Most High." Barker, *Great Angel*, 4. Note also that, in the Book of Mormon, "unmistakable El (E source) names do occur in the *Book of Mormon*, notably 'Most High God' (Hebrew 'El Elyon') and 'Almighty God' (the Septuagint's term for 'El Shaddai'), the former six times and the latter eleven." John L. Sorenson, "The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship," in *Nephite Culture and Society* (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 33.

30. John Tvedtnes, e-mail correspondence, 10 June 2002, raises some issues based on Bart D. Ehrman's study *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) of the second-century AD practice of replacing divine names and New Testament quotations of Old Testament scriptures as though Jehovah is addressing Jesus (Psalm 110, the most frequently quoted text in the New Testament is the most conspicuous example). However, if the context for this issue is that of the First Temple period (as Barker argues), in which the high priest/king represents the visible presence of Jehovah, and Jesus was seen as the Great High Priest, then the Old Testament passages would be describing situations wherein Jehovah is addressing the priest/king who represents Jehovah. In such a ritual context, rather than a theological context, it becomes reasonable to ask, whom does Jehovah represent when addressing the high priest who represents him?

Barker notes that the Deuteronomist theology, at least in the exilic school, was strictly monotheistic. She cites the application of Deuteronomy 4:19 in rejecting the hosts of heaven and also refers to parallel passages in Isaiah 37:17 and 2 Kings 19:15 as an example of the “relationship between Isaiah and the Deuteronomic editors” where “the D passage omits the title ‘Lord of Hosts.’”<sup>31</sup> According to Barker, “*the idea of a procreator God with sons seems to have fallen out of favour among those who equated Yahweh and El.* (Those who retained a belief in the sons of God, e.g. the Christians, as we shall see, were those who continued to distinguish between El and Yahweh, Father and Son. This cannot be coincidence.)”<sup>32</sup>

### The Source of Evil

Charles describes a strict monotheism that necessarily blames evil on God: “The one God was responsible for everything, both good and evil. As Amos (3:6) said, ‘Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it’ (see also Job 2:10). There is no room here for the Christian view of Satan as the prince of the earth, the father of lies . . . the being responsible for evil in the world” (pp. 136–37). Her view of evil here differs from the ancient concept behind the Hebrew word translated that way. In general it refers to anything unpleasant, and specifically, it refers to unpleasant consequences embodied in covenant curses, in contrast to the covenant blessings.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, such passages originally did not rule out a role for Satan, a figure always associated with accounts of fallen angels. Barker has used the Enoch literature as a key to find evidence of the fallen angel stories in the Old Testament

---

One possible answer would be that Jehovah represents his Father, El. Another possibility, which Barry Bickmore explores, involves evidence that shows that the divine names are occasionally used as interchangeable titles. See Barry R. Bickmore, “Of Simplicity, Oversimplification, and Monotheism,” *FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003): 220–28.

31. Barker, *Older Testament*, 138 n. 11.

32. Barker, *Great Angel*, 19, emphasis in original.

33. Tvedtnes, in personal correspondence, observes that “evil” in this context is not abstract but specifically something bad or unpleasant. Avraham Gileadi, in “Isaiah: Four Latter-day Keys to an Ancient Book,” in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*, ed. Monte S. Nyman (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 123–24, specifically associates the term with covenant curses, rather than abstract or personal evil.

in portions rooted in the First Temple tradition, rather than the Deuteronomic portions. In Isaiah 1, for example:

The first poem opens with a clear reference to the fallen angels, *the sons of God*: "Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me." . . . The LXX of v. 2 differs from the MT: "sons have I begotten and exalted," as in Ps 89:19, which gives an even clearer picture of the sons in question. Given the other allusions in this passage, these "sons of God" must be the fallen angels who appear briefly in Gen 6:2 but are fundamental to *1 Enoch*, where they rebel against the Great Holy One, marry human wives, and produce children who corrupt the creation. Thus in v. 4 we meet "the offspring of the evildoers, corrupting sons," perhaps originally "sons of the corrupters," who have forsaken the Lord and despised the Holy One.<sup>34</sup>

Comparisons to the Enoch literature help Barker illuminate more direct references to the Satan figure in Isaiah.

1.31 is a *cryptic fragment about Azazel*. "The strong ones and their work shall burn together" is the reading of 1QIs<sup>a</sup>. The MT has singular forms here and is probably original. The word translated "strong one" occurs nowhere else in the OT even though related words and the LXX confirm the meaning. In *1 Enoch*, the leader of the fallen angels is named Azazel, which means, "the strong one." He was to be burned on the Day of Judgement (*1 Enoch* 10:7; cf. Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10).<sup>35</sup>

Barker sketches the presence of the old ways in the Book of Job:

The friends know of the heavenly council, of a claim to true wisdom, and of the attempt to ascend into heaven. The way in which these are used suggests that they were a part of Job's own view, being turned against him. The friends claim for

34. Margaret Barker, "Isaiah," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 497.

35. *Ibid.*, 498.

themselves another wisdom, and an ancient tradition, in a manner which shows that Job accepted neither.

The heart of Job's dilemma is that there is only one God. He has been asked by the friends to reconcile the all too obvious evil in creation with his confidence in a God who will punish evil. The Job dialogue thus represents the struggles of a man coming to terms with monotheism, and being deprived of the more ancient polytheistic view.<sup>36</sup>

The point is that the Bible as we have it is a selection from the writings of ancient Israel, and that this selection has undergone significant editing and contextual reframing. Barker discusses significant losses from the Old Testament with respect to the origins of evil:

The question we cannot answer is: How is it that Jubilees and Job have an account of the creation which includes the angels, which Genesis does not mention, even though it does have an evil serpent figure of whose origin we are told nothing? Later traditions knew that an elaborate heavenly world had been created before the material world and this heaven was totally integrated with the earth.<sup>37</sup>

In his forthcoming *Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, John Tvedtnes writes that:

The concept of a spiritual creation that preceded the physical creation of the earth is confirmed in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 4QTanhumim (4Q176), which says, "Because he created every [spirit] of the eternal generations, [and with] his commandment [he established] all the paths. The earth he created [with his right] (hand) before it existed."<sup>38</sup>

---

36. Barker, *Older Testament*, 266–67.

37. Barker, *Great Angel*, 7; Nibley, in *Enoch the Prophet*, also touches on the fallen angel stories in Enoch and related traditions (pp. 71–79, 172–74, 183–84) and traditions about a spirit creation before the physical creation (pp. 242–43).

38. Tvedtnes, personal correspondence, 10 June 2002.

The very things that Barker claims are missing from Genesis, including the accounts of fallen angels and the council in heaven, appear in the Latter-day Saint scriptures (see 2 Nephi 2; Moses 4:1–4, Abraham 3–4).

### The Law

Charles shares her understanding of the law of Moses: “According to the Israelite view, the Law was not an inferior replacement for a gospel they were unworthy to live” (p. 137). This view may have become predominant after the exile, but it was not the only Israelite view. Eugene Seach points out that “4 Ezra 14:4–6 also claims that two sets of Torah were given to Moses, a higher set for himself, and a lower set for the masses. The latter of course became the subject of the written Torah, but the former was secretly handed down to become the apocryphal literature of the inter-testamental period.”<sup>39</sup> He further writes:

According to Jeremiah 31:32, . . . it was a lesser law that was now in effect, one that was to be replaced by a “new” and “everlasting Covenant” (31:31; 37:26), i.e. by a return to the original (cf. Gal. 3:8; Mt. 19:8). . . . Compare also D&C 84:25–29, and JST Ex. 34:1–2, which both state that the Mosaic Law was a lesser Law which had temporarily replaced the Law of the patriarchs (D&C 84:6–17), though Jewish tradition was naturally obliged to defend it as a “complete” and “ideal” revelation.<sup>40</sup>

While Charles’s view no doubt was held by many Israelites, it was not the only Israelite tradition.

---

39. Eugene Seach, *Ancient Texts and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Sounds of Zion, 1983), 61.

40. Seach, personal e-mail correspondence, 2 October 2001, quoting from his unpublished expanded version of *Ancient Texts and Mormonism*, 670 n. 74. See John A. Tvedtnes, “The Higher and Lesser Laws,” in *Reason, Revelation, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 383–406.

## Baptism

Charles also writes on baptism: “There is no indication that any kind of baptism was ever a part of the Law” (p. 137). Noting that Lehi claims descent from Joseph and Manasseh, which have ties to the northern kingdom, Steve St. Clair observes:

Given the interest in ritual purity expressed in the Law of Moses, and the importance of water in preserving that purity both for priests and laymen, it would be expected that any biblical religion would have analogous practices. In fact, we find that the northern Israelite sources indeed present a people with an almost obsessive interest in washings, lustrations, and baptisms as part of their religious ritual. This included groups that were in existence long before, and quite independent of, Christianity, whose baptism appeared later.

Both the Samaritans and the Qumran sectarians were well-known for their baptismal [or lustration] facilities. Numerous related sects were also characterized by the practice.<sup>41</sup>

## The Messiah

In her article, Charles shares her understanding of the Messiah:

The idea of a messiah was not very prominent in the Old Testament, appearing only in the later books. The prophecies about him are vague. (p. 137)

This messiah was *never* described as the creator of the world. No Jew expected his messiah to atone for anyone’s sins or to be crucified and resurrected. (p. 138)

There is no indication that . . . sacrifices [of the law] pre-figured Jesus Christ. (p. 138)

---

41. See Steve St. Clair, “The Stick of Joseph: The Book of Mormon and the Literary Tradition of Northern Israel,” unpublished manuscript in my possession. Compare also John A. Tvedtnes, *The Church of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 5–9, and Stephen D. Ricks, “*Miqvaot*: Ritual Immersion Baths in the Second Temple (Intertestamental) Jewish History,” *BYU Studies* 36/3 (1996–97): 277–86.

Her comments collide in an interesting way with Barker's work on some of the key puzzles for understanding Christian origins.

Closely linked with the question of Jesus' self-consciousness must be the question of soteriology. Put in simple terms: If he knew who he was he must have known what he was doing. How, then, did Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension come to be seen by the early church as the great atonement? And how did it come about that someone declared to be the Son of God made this atonement? Where in the traditions available to the original disciples in Palestine do we find a belief or a hope that it was a divine being or even the Lord himself who was the atonement sacrifice? . . . it is a very big step indeed from the goats and lambs in the temple to the human sacrifice of one declared to be the Lord, the Son of God. *This step is unacknowledged in any account I have read of atonement in the New Testament.*<sup>42</sup>

Barker's *Risen Lord* attempts to answer these questions and to show in the traditions of first-century Palestine how this all makes sense. If, as Charles claims, "No Jew expected a messiah like Jesus," how do we explain Christianity? Why did a Jewish rabbi from Nazareth come to be identified as the Messiah by many Jews? Addressing this question, Barker writes:

As with so many other familiar words in the New Testament, we have tended to give "Messiah" our own meaning, often forgetting that Jesus was called Messiah because people of his time knew what they meant by a Messiah. The Christian teaching modified the traditional view, but it was only a modification, not a completely new departure. Messiah, and its Greek equivalent Christ, means the "anointed one."<sup>43</sup>

A quotation from Barker given earlier shows that the high priest in the First Temple period was the anointed one. Who was the high

---

42. Barker, *Risen Lord*, 8–9.

43. Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988), 45.

priest? Barker shows that at times during that period, the king was also the high priest. Evidently, the king not only acted in the role of the high priest in the temple, but in that role, represented the visible presence of Yahweh, the son of the Most High God, El. She continues:

Central to the myths was belief in the human manifestation of God. A human figure occupied the divine throne and came to bring judgement. The presence of the figure also brought renewed life and fertility. The human figure was probably once the king who was also the high priest.<sup>44</sup>

For the temple rituals, the high priest/king wore a turban on his head, and on the turban he wore a metal plate with the four letters of the tetragrammaton to make it clear just whom he represented while performing the rites on the Day of Atonement.<sup>45</sup> That is, the king—the anointed high priest, representing Jehovah who, in turn, was originally understood to be the Son of the Most High—performed the atonement sacrifice. Barker, speaking of the anointed one, notes:

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained to the two disciples that it was necessary for the Anointed One to suffer and enter

---

44. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 180; see 134, 145–54, especially 147, where she quotes psalms that seem to point to the year rite in the autumn of the new year, in which “the Lord was enthroned as King. . . . The question is: Did someone represent the Lord in these ceremonies? The most likely answer is that it was the king.” In Barker, *Older Testament*, 28, she observes that, in several of the Psalms, “We also find a king who is more than a mere mortal (Psalms 2; 79; 82; 110), one who had a role in both worlds, to protect his people from heavenly powers which manifested themselves as foreign rulers and other threats to the well being of his people.” See also Barker, *Older Testament*, 118: “Philo describes Moses as god and king whose ascent of Sinai was an ascent to heaven. Samaritan traditions are similar. These texts do not just refer to a man who became king; they refer to a man who became *divine*. There was therefore a pattern in some traditions, widely attested (and this is important, since it argues against this being a minority or sectarian view) of a divine royal figure who ascended to meet God.” Contrast Smith, “Isaiah Updated,” 127 n. 16. “The messiah sought after in the Old Testament was a just king who would bring peace and prosperity, a righteous man who served God, not a deity himself.”

45. See William J. Hamblin, “Sacred Writings on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean” (FARMS, 1994).

his glory (Luke 24.26); this must refer to the Qumran version of the fourth Servant Song [Isaiah 53], *since there is no other passage in the Hebrew Scriptures which speaks of a suffering Anointed One.*<sup>46</sup>

It makes a great deal of difference to our picture of the Messiah in the New Testament, if the name had formerly meant the anointed one who enjoyed the presence of God and had the status of an angel. In the pattern beginning to emerge, the vision of God was linked to knowledge, to the judgement, to ascent, and to angelic status, and all these were linked to the anointed one. All these also come through as a pattern in early Christian thought.

The ascent visions were associated with the temple and its rituals.<sup>47</sup>

Barker examines key titles associated with the anointed one in the context of the First Temple. Those she finds most important are the Holy One, the Lord of Hosts, the Servant/Lamb, and Melchizedek. Regarding the Holy One, she surveys passages in Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and the Psalms, and concludes:

There is a pattern clearly associated with the title *Holy One*. Many of its elements are those of the later apocalypses, such as visions, heavenly tablets, theophany and angelic judgement, but the royal figure is also prominent, dependent for his power upon the might of the Holy One. The royal figure faces threats and enemies, but, we assume, overcomes them. Judgement upon foreign nations is also part of the pattern, and there are associations with the Temple.<sup>48</sup>

Barker makes use of nonbiblical writings that have been rediscovered, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the apocalyptic writings to show the appropriate expectations for the anointed one in the Palestinian

---

46. Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 136, emphasis in original.

47. Barker, *Lost Prophet*, 54.

48. Barker, *Older Testament*, 106, emphasis in original.

background. For example, in an essay called “Atonement: The Rite of Healing,” she discusses passages from Deuteronomy, the *Assumption of Moses*, and the Melchizedek text (the Qumran Melchizedek) that are “mutually consistent, and show that the heavenly high priest was the Lord who came from his holy place on the Day of Atonement in order to save his people from the power of the fallen angels, to punish their enemies and to *kpr* [Heb. “atone”] the land.”<sup>49</sup>

That creation rituals should be performed by the Lord is hardly surprising. If the Lord had bound the creation at the beginning with the great covenant which kept the forces of chaos in their place and gave security to his people, any covenant renewal ceremony must have involved the Lord performing these acts. Atonement rituals repaired the damage to the created order caused by sin which “wrath” could have broken in with such disastrous consequences. Again, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* makes an interesting observation: “But while, according to Scripture, the high priest made atonement, *tradition transferred the atoning power to God.*”<sup>50</sup>

Of particular interest to Latter-day Saint studies is Barker’s assertion that the traditions that do account for the appropriate messianic expectations go back to the First Temple in preexilic Israel. This roots the Book of Mormon in the key time and place. What is more, the vagueness that Charles correctly attributes to the Old Testament descriptions of a messiah should be considered given Barker’s observation that the “distribution of unreadable Hebrew texts is not random; *they are texts which bear upon the Christian tradition.*”<sup>51</sup> And, it turns out, “Scholars seem not to consider the major implications for Christian origins of the Qumran readings in, say Deuteronomy and Isaiah, which are not in the MT. The original assumption had been that the

---

49. Barker, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing” in *Great High Priest*, 51.

50. Ibid., 47. For further evidence on this topic, see John A. Tvedtnes, “The Messiah, Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Book of Mormon,” in *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone, 1999), 327–43, which blends well with Barker’s picture.

51. Barker, *Great High Priest*, 309, emphasis in original.

Qumran evidence represented sectarian or vulgar versions of the Hebrew text, but scribes updating texts and producing uniformity must mean that some things were being altered, some things were being removed."<sup>52</sup> The MT (Masoretic Text, on which the King James Version is based), it seems, does not represent the scripture that was used by the authors of the New Testament, but does, in fact, seem to have become the standard in response to the rise of Christianity.

### Melchizedek

In looking to establish the background context for the origins of Christianity, Barker observes that, since "Psalm 110, the Melchizedek Psalm, is the most frequently used text in the New Testament, it seemed an obvious place to start."<sup>53</sup> She also remarks that the Qumran Melchizedek text exemplifies a set of ideas regarding "a heavenly priest figure from the cult of the first temple who would bring salvation and atonement in the last days."<sup>54</sup> Despite his being mentioned only briefly in the Old Testament, Barker explores the figure of Melchizedek:

Melchizedek was central to the old royal cult. We do not know what the name means, but it is quite clear that this priesthood operated within the mythology of the sons of Elyon, and the triumph of the royal son of God in Jerusalem. We should expect later references to Melchizedek to retain some memory of the cult of Elyon. . . . The role of the ancient kings was that of the Melchizedek figure in 11QMelch. This accounts for the Melchizedek material in Hebrews, and the early Church's association of Melchizedek and the Messiah. The arguments of Hebrews presuppose a knowledge of the angel mythology which we no longer have.<sup>55</sup>

David Wright argues that the Melchizedek material in Alma 13 is anachronistically derived from Hebrews:

---

52. Ibid., 304.

53. Barker, *Risen Lord*, xii.

54. Ibid.

55. Barker, *Older Testament*, 257.

Scholarship recognizes that Hebrews does not create all of its argument by itself but relies on tradition and perhaps even on some unknown written sources (in addition to the Bible) in some of the places where we have seen the epistle parallel elements in Alma 12–13. But these traditions and sources are in general relatively recent developments for the author of Hebrews, not traditions going back 700 years. Moreover, the traditions and sources found or supposed by scholars for the passages in Hebrews relevant to Alma 12–13 are diverse; . . . They are not likely to be found in one traditional source.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to Wright’s conclusion, Barker’s work connects the Melchizedek traditions to the First Temple, which not only moves them back seven hundred years earlier than Hebrews but also argues for the source of unity in those traditions behind Hebrews as being those of the temple.<sup>57</sup>

With respect to the Melchizedek passages in the Book of Mormon,<sup>58</sup> we should note that the Alma 13 discussion is crowded with themes that recur in Barker’s books as signs of the preexilic tradition—the

---

56. David Wright, “In Plain Terms that We May Understand’: Joseph Smith’s Transformation of Hebrews in Alma 12–13,” in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 205.

57. “The Book of Revelation has many similarities to the prophecies of Ezekiel, not because there was a conscious imitation of the earlier prophet, but because both books were the product of temple priests and stood in the same tradition.” Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 67. On Jesus as Melchizedek, see Barker, *Great High Priest*, 34–41.

58. The most important discussions are John W. Welch, “The Melchizedek Material in Alma 13:13–19,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:238–72, and Wright’s skeptical reading, “In Plain Terms that We May Understand,” 165–230. Two significant responses to Wright are John A. Tvedtnes, review of “‘In Plain Terms that We May Understand’: Joseph Smith’s Transformation of Hebrews in Alma 12–13,” by David P. Wright, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 19–23, and John W. Welch, “Approaching New Approaches,” review of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 168–81. Other recent approaches to Melchizedek can be found at [www.marquette.edu/maqom/](http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/) (accessed 23 September 2004).

Father God (Alma 13:9),<sup>59</sup> his Begotten Son as the atoning one (Alma 13:5),<sup>60</sup> the council in heaven at the foundation of the world (Alma 13:3),<sup>61</sup> the Day of Atonement imagery of garments being "washed white through the blood of the Lamb" (Alma 13:11),<sup>62</sup> angels being sent to "all nations" (Alma 13:22),<sup>63</sup> judgment (Alma 13:29–30),<sup>64</sup> hell, and the second death (Alma 13:29–30).<sup>65</sup> This puts the Melchizedek passage in the Book of Mormon in tune with the angel mythology presupposed by Hebrews. None of these themes elicited any notice in Wright's article.

### The Afterlife and the Redeemer

The nature of life after this existence and the need for a redeemer are further topics Charles explores: "The inhabitants of Sheol were thought to be outside the interest and care of the Lord. Because the afterlife was a dismal half-existence, Israelites expected to be rewarded for their righteousness or punished for their wickedness here and now. The idea of a redeemer who would facilitate salvation in the post-mortal realm is alien to this view" (p. 139).

Taking into account what we have seen of the activities of the Deuteronomists, it may not be wise to suppose that the received traditions of the afterlife provide the whole story. Indeed, Charles's own summary here has a recognizable Deuteronomist flavor. In an important book called *Otherworld Journeys*, Harvard-educated Carol Zaleski has described near-death experience literature as appearing in a sine wave fashion through history—at times accepted, at other times dismissed and suppressed.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, there is evidence that deliberate suppression of teachings about the afterlife has occurred in the literatures of

---

59. Compare Barker, *Great Angel*, 4–8.

60. Compare *ibid.*, 3, 219.

61. Compare *ibid.*, 6–7.

62. Compare Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 113–14.

63. Compare Barker, *Great Angel*, 6.

64. Compare *ibid.*, 44–45.

65. Compare Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 312–13.

66. Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 184.

ancient Israel. For example, in an article on “Jeremiah’s Prophecies of Jesus Christ,” Tvedtnes cites an early Christian passage from Justin Martyr: “And again, from the sayings of the same Jeremiah these have been cut out [by the Jews]: ‘The Lord God remembered His dead people of Israel who lay in the graves; and He descended to preach to them His own salvation.’”<sup>67</sup>

My own essay “Nigh unto Death: NDE Research and the Book of Mormon” shows that Book of Mormon teachings of the afterlife come from Alma and that Alma teaches from experience, not from tradition.<sup>68</sup> If Alma’s experiences are not comparable to any reported in the current Old Testament, this in no way affects the validity of his own original teachings. His experiences can be tested in comparison to other reports.

### The Fall of Adam

In describing the fall and its relation to sin, Charles clarifies her view: “In the Old Testament the Fall is never referred to after its first telling. Adam’s fall is *not* an explanation for humanity’s sinful state because in the Old Testament men and women are not inherently sinful” (p. 139). In this case, Barker would agree with Charles. Indeed, in *The Lost Prophet*, she takes pains to criticize the Adam and Eve story for depicting humanity in general and Eve (woman) in particular as the cause of evil.<sup>69</sup> She contrasts the story of the fall with the Enoch accounts of the fallen angels, which make humanity the victims of demonic forces rather than the source of evil.

Bruce Pritchett, a Latter-day Saint, sheds some light on literary traditions of the fall:

Cassuto notes three important indications of a literary tradition of the fall, predating the Pentateuch: (1) there were Israelite epic poems about the fall in circulation before the Torah was ever written; (2) the definite articles used before certain

---

67. Tvedtnes, *Most Correct Book*, 101.

68. Kevin Christensen, “Nigh unto Death: NDE Research and the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/1 (1993): 1–20.

69. Barker, *Lost Prophet*, 36–39.

words in Genesis 3 point to an earlier version, since the text mentions without prior introduction *the* tree of life and *the* sword-flame which turned every way, as if the audience were already quite familiar with the particular tree and sword-flame mentioned; and (3) Ezekiel 28:11–19 and 31:8–18 point to an earlier interpretation of Adam's fall which Ezekiel knew of, different from the Priestly interpretation of Genesis 3. Interestingly, Lehi's reinterpretation of the fall account can also be dated to roughly the time of Ezekiel. As we shall see below, new interpretations of old Israelite traditions were a hallmark of Lehi's and Ezekiel's time. . . .

Though there are numerous biblical passages that mention Adam, Eden, or various doctrinal points deriving from the Paradise narrative, four biblical passages refer to the fall account in ways that particularly illuminate Lehi's doctrine: Psalm 82:7, Hosea 6:7, Job 31:33, and Ezekiel 28:11–19.

As we shall see, three of these four scriptures (not Hosea 6:7) mention the fall of Adam in close connection with the fall of Satan. Lehi's discourse on the fall also notes this connection: "And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God . . . had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, . . . [and] he said unto Eve, . . . Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (2 Nephi 2:17–18). However, many translators have tended to downplay this connection and, indeed, any significance Adam's fall may have had in the Old Testament. That position, however, does not appear to be justified.

There may be more references to Adam in the Old Testament than are commonly noticed. Since, in Hebrew, *ʾādām* can mean either "man" or the proper noun *Adam*, depending on context, passages that may originally have had clear reference to Adam may have been translated as referring only to man.<sup>70</sup>

---

70. Bruce M. Pritchett, "Lehi's Theology of the Fall in Its Preexilic/Exilic Context," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/2 (1994): 55, 58.

Notice that in her recent book *Temple Theology*, Barker makes a new argument that “it may be that the familiar story of Eden originally described how the older priesthood had been expelled from their Eden temple, and lost access to their tree of life. Adam was remembered as the first high priest, and Jesus was described as the new Adam.”<sup>71</sup>

### The Need for Atonement

In accordance with the notion that people were not inherently sinful, Charles asks, “What need then had this people for an atoner to take away the effects of Adam’s sin or their own?” (p. 139). This is a good question, but a strange one to ask about a people whose central temple rite was called the Day of Atonement. But as Barker has shown, the Deuteronomists targeted the whole notion of atonement. And in regard to the need for atonement, according to Barker’s reading, the “role of the priest/the Lord was to hold his people together; this would have been done by the priest absorbing the effects of sin and repairing the covenant bonds.”<sup>72</sup>

### Sherem as a Deuteronomist

Familiarity with Margaret Barker’s view of the Deuteronomist reforms may solve another puzzle in the Book of Mormon. John L. Sorenson presents a number of textual indications that Sherem was an outsider to the Nephite community over which Jacob presided.<sup>73</sup> The text emphasizes that Sherem “came among” the Nephites (Jacob 7:1), that he was “learned, [and] that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people” (Jacob 7:4). Additionally, within the young community, with Jacob being a first-generation immigrant and temple priest, Sherem and Jacob should have known each other had there been no other people, yet the text shows plainly that they did not.<sup>74</sup>

---

71. Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004), 4.

72. Margaret Barker, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing,” in *Great High Priest*, 17.

73. See John Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 4.

74. *Ibid.*, citing Jacob 7:6.

On the other hand, John W. Welch has shown that Sherem preaches the law of Moses, "which is the right way," and accuses Jacob of blasphemy.<sup>75</sup> Why would an outsider be advocating adherence to the law of Moses? But notice other specific charges that Sherem makes: that Jacob converts the law "into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence" (Jacob 7:7), that "no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come" (Jacob 7:7), and finally "that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be" (Jacob 7:9). In response, Jacob emphasizes the scriptures concerning the Christ to come, his own revelations on the subject, and the need for an atonement (Jacob 7:11–12). Clearly, Sherem talks like a Deuteronomist,<sup>76</sup> just as Jacob talks like a First Temple priest.<sup>77</sup> Barker has shown that even from the Bible the Deuteronomists favored the law (Deuteronomy 4:6), they denounced the idea that anyone could know the future, they explicitly rejected the notion of a Christ, an anointed one, and they removed the Day of Atonement from the sacred calendar.<sup>78</sup> Brant Gardner has shown that the evils that Jacob preaches against—acquisition of wealth, social inequality, and polygamy, and "captivity of the daughters of my people"—all make excellent sense in the context of Mesoamerican trade practices.<sup>79</sup>

Where might we expect to find a Deuteronomist in Mesoamerica? My suggestion is that Sherem may have been a Mulekite trader. The distance between the Nephite and Mulekite communities is reasonable. As one of the party who had accompanied Mulek from Jerusalem, Sherem could easily have had direct knowledge of the Deuteronomist theology. Being a first-generation Hebrew and being very learned, with "a perfect knowledge of the language of the people" (Jacob 7:4),

---

75. John W. Welch, "Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts's Questions and an Unparallel" (FARMS paper, 1985), 16. Welch cites Jacob 7:7.

76. Alyson Von Feldt, a participant in the Barker seminar at BYU, independently noticed in 2004 that Sherem could be a Deuteronomist.

77. See Christensen, "The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom," esp. 502–4.

78. Margaret Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, 533.

79. See Brant Gardner, "A Social History of the Early Nephites" at [www.fairlds.org/pubs/conf/2001GarB.html](http://www.fairlds.org/pubs/conf/2001GarB.html) (accessed 30 September 2004), discussing Jacob 1–2.

he could have been much in demand in trade negotiations with the Nephites. As a trader, Sherem would have wanted to undermine Jacob's opposition to trade, and if he was a Deuteronomist, he would have been even more opposed to Jacob's theology.

## Conclusion

If Margaret Barker is correct, there was a revolution in the understanding of the ancient Israelites. Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* features an intriguing chapter called "The Invisibility of Revolutions." He outlines the factors of pedagogy and reframing that would render the full implications of the Deuteronomist reforms invisible to Charles and to those responsible for her indoctrination.

For reasons that are both obvious and highly functional, science textbooks (and too many of the older histories of science) refer only to that part of the work of past scientists that can easily be viewed as contributions to the statement and solution of the texts' paradigm problems. Partly by selection and partly by distortion, the scientists of earlier ages are implicitly represented as having worked upon the same set of fixed problems and in accordance with the same set of fixed canons that the most recent revolution in scientific theory and method has made seem scientific. No wonder that textbooks and the historical tradition they imply have to be rewritten after each scientific revolution. And no wonder that, as they are rewritten, science once again comes to seem largely cumulative.<sup>80</sup>

In *The Risen Lord*, Barker reports an example of this process in Judaism:

J. Neusner, *Incarnation*, says that when the Jerusalem Talmud had taken shape within the Palestinian community it had been addressing the threat of Christianity in the fourth

---

80. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 138.

century. The Judaic response to the Christian way of reading the Old Testament was "a counterpart exegesis," p. 107. The Jewish sages adapted the Scripture to their new situation. When they "read and expounded Scripture it was to spell out how one thing stood for something else. . . . The as-if frame of mind brought to the Scripture renews Scripture with the sage seeing everything with fresh eyes," p. 125. Such studies should make us less confident that it was the *Christians* who were "re-reading" the Old Testament.<sup>81</sup>

In light of Barker's work, the Latter-day Saint reading of the Old Testament turns out to be rather remarkable. If Barker's thesis is correct, then Charles was misinformed. On exactly those points on which Charles asserts that Mormonism is irreconcilable with the Old Testament, Barker finds shifts in Israelite thought during the exile and beyond. At every point, the original picture corresponds to what we have in the Book of Mormon. One might be so bold as to suggest that the Latter-day Saint reading actually seems inspired. In making this suggestion, however, we must not forget that Charles's experience raises another serious question. Is it enough to have been taught correct doctrines if you have not been prepared to defend those doctrines? Granted, we have to do the best we can with the materials available at any given time. If Charles ought not to be blamed for not having had access to Barker, neither should those she criticized be blamed for doing the best they could according to their light. Nevertheless, if Mormon pedagogy fails to prepare some of our best students for what they encounter in the universities, part of the blame may lie with Mormon pedagogy. Our institutional teaching materials should be valued, not solely according to whether they fit a committee's current notion of preaching the orthodox religion, but also for how they provide the light and knowledge that our students need to make their way through the world. Charles had correctly claimed that the Latter-day Saint commentaries on the Old Testament had relied on an overlay of modern revelation rather than on reading the text as it is. In the first

---

81. Barker, *Risen Lord*, 58 n. 2.

number of the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, Louis Midgley complained about the tendency of many Latter-day Saint scholars to rely on authoritative statements about scripture in ways that “divert attention away from the message and meaning in the text under consideration, and back towards what we already know. Such efforts do not enhance our understanding; they tend to make the very teachings they celebrate seem merely sentimental and insubstantial. Such endeavors also tend to close the door on the untapped possibilities within the scriptures.”<sup>82</sup>

Barker’s approaches take us deeper into biblical texts and contexts and providentially open doors to untapped possibilities in Latter-day Saint scriptures, not only enhancing our understanding of them, but also encouraging the ongoing process of exploration and rediscovery.

---

82. Louis Midgley, “Prophetic Messages or Dogmatic Theology? Commenting on the Book of Mormon: A Review Essay,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 95.