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Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?

Zina Petersen

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WHERE SHALL WISDOM BE FOUND?

Zina Petersen

Review of *The Mother of the Lord, volume 1: The Lady in the Temple* by Margaret Barker, 2012, London: Bloomsbury.

Mormons who know about her are usually fans of Margaret Barker. Disclosure: I am one of them (Mormon who knows about her, and fan). For further disclosure, she paid attention and respect to the writings of Hugh Nibley, to whom I was and am filially devoted. So it isn't as if I am unbiased in appreciating Barker's work. I am also not alone; there are quite a few of us who read and love her. Indeed it may be said we love her because she first loved us—or at least unwittingly agreed with us. With her 2012 book, *The Mother of the Lord, volume 1: The Lady in the Temple*, she has once again written about ancient biblical events in ways that can cast Mormon scriptural claims as possible, if not consciously validated or proven. Barker is no Mormon apologist, after all, though she is sympathetic. Her Protestant views understandably color her writing, as do classical training and sympathies with Roman Catholic sensibilities, particularly about Mary. Of course it is not her book's project to engage Latter-day Saints and our issues specifically, even if we are enthusiastic about what Barker finds. Her discoveries and claims have a place for Mormon teachings, but the fit we see is many times an odd one, unexpected, sometimes uncomfortably not on our terms. My friend compared reading Barker to having a non-Mormon archaeologist discover absolute proof of New World Book of

Mormon cultures: a beautifully preserved city in the heart of, say, Guatemala, with road signs and a legible library of all the civic records of Zarahemlah—and having the discovery include copious affidavits describing the Dineh People’s tribulations crossing the Kamchatka Peninsula and down the Rockies. Topping it off, the documents are signed by Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Catherine of Sienna and are notarized by John Wesley. “Great! See, we were—wait, what?” My friend’s example is a little extreme, but the comparison works on the chuckle level.

A Bible scholar and Methodist minister who has been the president of *The Society for Old Testament Study* (1998), Barker studied at Cambridge and has written fourteen scholarly books on the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, including half a dozen on the Messiah’s role in ancient Israelite religions and more than that about ancient temple worship. She is frighteningly well-read, and her vast complex of source material is mind-boggling. Barker’s views are not always appreciated in all circles, and there might be a bit of an edge detected in some scholars’ pointing out that her doctor of divinity is a degree bestowed by the Archbishop of Canterbury instead of by an academic administrator.¹ But there is no question that she has an audience and a message both for that audience and for her detractors. And as messages go, hers are fascinating and important enough not to be ignored.

In her scholarship as a whole, Rev. Barker works from the assumption that the oldest biblical religions were different in type and degree from the ways in which they have been taught subsequently but that traces of the original ideas remain, revealed in textual and extra-textual clues. What those specific differences are is the subject of her books; the object is the evidence she finds in texts available from the Hebrew Bible, the

1 <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1241/archbishop-of-canterbury-awards-lambeth-degrees>

Christian Testaments, and any extra-canonical contemporary accounts she can use to explore such a remote complex of cultures. Barker's interpretation assumes a dynamic, developing religion, beginning with Abraham's prophetic call and his rejection of Ugaritic traditions and evolving over centuries into the monotheism recognizable in most interpretations of the Old Testament.

Barker's Thesis for *The Mother of the Lord*

The Mother of the Lord builds on themes from Barker's previous work in *The Great High Priest* (2003) and *Temple Theology* (2004).² Her thesis for this volume is that worship in the first temple venerated not a monotheistic supreme Creator God, but a Family of divine beings within an even larger Council of Gods. This Family consisted of the Father, called the Highest; the Mother, identified with the consort-Goddess Asherah and known as the personification of Wisdom; and the Son, who was named the Lord. She presents arguments to show how the Son and Father were collapsed and convoluted into the One God of the Hebrew Bible we read now, and Wisdom the Mother was banished entirely, surviving only in clues and fragments. According to Barker, Abraham's earliest version of temple worship was deliberately changed, "purified" by King Josiah in the sixth century BCE, to align with *The Book of the Law*. This book, which was discovered as the temple was renovated, is arguably either a version of Deuteronomy or an extracanonical law code. Its adherents, aligned with Josiah's reform efforts or he with theirs, are referred to as the Deuteronomists. Their temple and worship overhaul caused the loss of what were likely many plain and precious things. Among these were the older ideas, symbols, possibly entire rituals, and

2 Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003); Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004).

forms of words from the temple as its adherents had known it, including the Lady Wisdom. At the time of the purge, Barker notes, groups of traditionalist believers (we may think of Lehi and his family) left or were driven from Jerusalem, and in their exile they continued the older forms of Abrahamic worship (Barker, 75).

It is Barker's assertion that these older beliefs are discoverable both in the Bible and in texts such as *The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach*, *The Book of Weeks* and *The Apocalypse of Enoch* (and LDS can see echoes in the Book of Mormon as well). In addition to extra-biblical texts recording descriptions of the Lady in the temple, Barker offers close readings and re-readings of the Bible itself, finding evidence for the older traditions in Ezekiel, Psalms, Micah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, and parts of Isaiah. Many of the prophets are condemning not just foreigners, enemies, or invaders from without the kingdom but also the changes they saw from the religion of Abraham to that of Moses, and his Law.

One of Barker's tools for examining Bible texts involves suggesting alternate orthography for certain words and explaining possible scribal emendations to show how a few pen strokes could disguise one word as something subtly—or drastically—different from its original form or spelling. Sometimes a different reading is possible simply by applying different vowel values to the words, which is one of the ways Hebrew exploits its rich possibility for punning and polysemy, an integral feature of the written language and its literature. This interpretive methodology has been questioned by readers like Michael Heiser and Paul Owen as being too speculative.³ Certainly if cast in terms of a conspiracy-theorist style

3 See Michael Heiser, "Margaret Barker Manufactures a Goddess in Isaiah 7," *PaleoBabble*, October 31, 2008, <http://michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/2008/10/margaret-barker-manufacturing-a-goddess-in-isaiah-7/> (accessed September 27, 2013); Paul Owen, "Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness," in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the*

proof-texting, it's easy to see how that objection arises. If I selectively changed the word "whale" into the word "world" and "ship" into "shop" (they look and sound alike, after all) in Herman Melville's proof-copy of *Moby Dick*, I could create some fascinating readings myself and alter the history of American literature forever. But it isn't as simple as that.

To a non-specialist reader like me, the problems with the critics' rejecting out-of-hand what Barker has found are first, the sheer number of "speculations" that support her conclusions; second, the consistency and sensibleness of the patterns they reveal; and third, that there are extra-biblical texts and archeological evidence to support her claims. To refute a single word-change as fanciful is reasonable; to refute *all* of them and then reject the textual and archaeological external witnesses as well seems overwhelming and even a bit petulant. In *The Mother of the Lord*, Barker uses her methods of emendation and multiplying examples to show that the Deuteronomic and Josiah reforms resulted in the rejection of the council of gods idea and the expulsion of the divine family in favor of the One God, in an effort to maintain (or retroactively create) a "history" of consistent, correlated monotheism. To me, four hundred pages of example and explanation (*of volume 1!*) are convincing.

Though the specifics of Barker's methodology are challenging for some, especially traditionalist religious teachers preaching the orthodox tenets of their heritage, scholars of the ancient world are largely in agreement that religion of the Hebrews in its earliest iteration was closer to the polytheistic religion of the Canaanites and other neighbors/rivals than the Bible-as-received has allowed. They also acknowledge that

female deities, specifically Wisdom as expressed by Asherah, the Mother of the Lord, were lost after the sixth century BCE.⁴

Implications for Abrahamic Religions

This was an enormous change for the religion of Abraham. It was nothing less than the recasting of an entire cultural world view that had been based on belief in a divine multiplicity into a rejection of that multiplicity *per se*, including erasing the relationships among divine beings. If God is always and only One, then “other” gods are not only blasphemous but worthless, being newly nonexistent, and if God is always and only One, then God is not part of a Family. Thus, in its initial narration, the Bible recorded a society in transition, elevating one God above the other gods. But far more important, in its canonization with Deuteronomist editing, the Bible elevates that particular God to a supremacy resulting in the *obliteration* of all the other divine persons. This results in a complex collection of cultural and social changes, probably the most severe of which was the gendering of God.

MonoGod = Male God

For many readers, Barker’s description of worship of the Mother Goddess is one of her most radical claims (“radical” in the sense of “rootedness”—it is a “deep” claim). Historically, one of the most problematic sociocultural aspects of all the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—has been their identification of a *single* and singular God with a

4 See William G. Dever, *Did God have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005); Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and biblical Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1998); Mark S. Smith *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002); David E. Bokovoy, *Yahweh as a Sexual Deity in J’s Prehistory* (PhD dissertation, Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University, 2012).

necessarily and immutably *male* God. Western culture has been breathing this air for so many millennia it seems outrageous to suggest any alternatives, but that sensibility is the very legacy Barker is exposing.

It is a truism among modern monotheistic religions that “primitive” or “unsophisticated” religions are too anthropomorphic, casting divine persons as far too human, including somehow enfleshed bodies with attendant drives and appetites. This is one reason polytheism and primitivism are usually coupled. In creedal Christianities, proper theology rejects the scandals of physicality and multiplicity and describes instead the One God as an impossibly remote, wholly Other, different-species, utterly-not-us, and ironically male but sexless divinity (see Bokovoy, 2012).⁵ Joseph Smith suggested a return (restoration) to a family model with a physicalized and thus sexualized model of God, God as a Father along with a Mother. At this point, some LDS may holler loudly and polysyllabically about our claims to her, about our exclusive, deeply ecclesiastically problematic and schizophrenic recognition/avoidance of a “Mother in Heaven.” They will quote from Doctrine and Covenants 10 and sing Eliza Snow—all four verses; others will mutter and change the subject. Quickly. Though I would love nothing better than to count myself among the hollers, I must save that for later; Barker’s identification of the temple goddess is quite independent from our own intranecine squabbles.

One of the Gods of the Council was the female figure of Asherah. There are archeological as well as textual references to her throughout the geographical area claimed by biblical history, datable to the times before Josiah’s purge (Barker, 154 ff.). Asherah was known mostly as either a consort of the Highest or of the Lord, or she was the Mother of the Lord;

5 See Bokovoy, *Yahweh as a Sexual Deity in J’s Prehistory*.

Barker argues for her role as Mother of the Lord (hence the title of the book). From thence Barker makes a case for Mary the Virgin as Wisdom's manifestation in the mystery of the Incarnation. As Wisdom, the goddess was the female element of divine nurturance, and when Old Testament prophets reference Wisdom, it is almost always a reference to her (Barker, 234). Without Wisdom, worshippers were left in the hands of the Law without consideration, without mercy or understanding (Barker, 364-65). She was the recognizable sign of God's presence among the people, though her identity was obscured by her many manifestations; she was Wisdom, *Khokhmah*; she was the presence of God, *Shekinah*, Pillar and Shadow; her iconic symbols were indicative of her being the *Mater*-matter of life: the Breath of God; the Spirit; Holy Fire (she speaks to Moses from a burning, unconsumed fruit bush); fertile fields; high places (mountains or hills; the proto-temples of Abraham, Moses, etc.); the abundance and faithful generosity of fruit-bearing trees (including their derivatives, wooden totems); and the vessel that bears the Lord, sometimes represented as a dish or bowl but often symbolized as the Throne (see chapter 5).

These symbols are named as idolatrous in Josiah's reforms, and they were cast out of the temple (Barker, 7) and identified with "the Harlot." But according to Barker's postscript, the actual "harlot," the usurping imposter, was the religion that replaced the Lady: "Jerusalem was burned by the Romans in 70 CE, and the heavens rejoiced that she had been destroyed with fire, the prescribed punishment for a priestly harlot (Rev. 19:1-5; Lev. 21:9). Only when the harlot had gone could the Lady of Jerusalem return. The Bride of the Lamb appeared, the heavens opened, and the Warrior came forth to bring judgement on evil and to establish His kingdom" (375). This Lady is identified in John's Revelation as both the oldest temple Asherah *and* the Blessed Virgin Mary; both are allegorically tied to the covenant of the True Church, and both retain feminine grammatical

forms as well as personified feminine divinity. In the Revelation, there is no way to interpret the Lady with the Child as anything other than godly, honored for herself as well as her child. The allegorical depth of the imagery and symbolism is striking, and no single interpretation can dismiss others. Barker sees the polyvalence of John's imagery as complementary: she is Mary, she is the Holy Covenant; she is God's Wisdom and Presence and Spirit; she is the Mother.

We need to be open to seeing the overlap of such ideas and symbols, of entertaining many names for the Heavenly Family to whom we have always belonged. They are not far from us, but we foolish mortals have drifted far from them. Barker says "It has become customary to translate and read the Hebrew Scriptures as an account of one male deity, and the feminine presence is not made clear. Had it been the custom to read of a female Spirit or to find Wisdom capitalized, it would have been easier to make the link between the older faith in Jerusalem and later developments outside the stream represented by the canonical texts. At the beginning of Genesis, there would have been, and *should be*, 'the Spirit of God, she was fluttering over the face of the deep' (Gen. 1:2) and in the Psalms, that the Lord made all his works with Wisdom (Ps. 104:24). The problem is not just one of the modern translations; there are gender ambiguities even in the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch" (Barker, 331-332; emphasis Barker's).

Aside from (yet rooted to) religious understanding of the nature of the divine, the cultural heritage of these changes has been harsh. To muddy even symbolic representations of the feminine deity (all the way down to confusing grammatical gender of the nouns) into debatable forms and further to disparage the feminine divine to the designation of harlot is reductive and damaging. And then further still to purge the temple of female-associated iconography and restrict the Lady from the realms of the divinely possible is to reject the potential

goodness of anything female and the femaleness of anything good. And despite efforts to counteract the harm, this has been the result of a solely male God for hundreds of years of Western history.

An exclusively male God-idea assigns gender to the qualities of humanity that differentiate mortal (male) men from everything Other and places males on the side of God, which is now ontologically *opposed* to the side where mortal women find themselves. In a structuralist sense, the masculinization of God implies and inevitably assigns females down its slippery slope either to earthly realms, to “natural” realms, or to some equivalent of Hell, Gehenna, or Sheol. God is in the image of Man, rather than the other way around, and again in a structuralist configuration, “man” does *not* include all humans. Rather, “man” becomes what he is by contrast to all that is not “man”; this includes the inanimate world, the “natural” world, or brute reality, the state of childhood (a “man” is not a “boy”) and of course the “female.”

Fortunately, the universe is not necessarily structuralist.

Unfortunately, that doesn’t matter.

The preponderance of human civilizations have developed codified expectations of gendered behavior, and rarely (never) are the expectations “fair” to the actual individual persons trying to meet them. Ancient Judaism is no exception. Bringing religion into this mix—or bringing this mix into religion; they are usually inseparable—always adds fuel to all fires set by such unfairness, and no one living on this planet is spared the repercussions of the resulting imbalances. (For far too many examples, see thousands of years of commentary on the Adam and Eve story.)

[Urgent aside: This is the point in the essay where we pretend to have already had the “battle-of-the-sexes” conversation. We did it brilliantly and courteously, using well-supported claims and not insisting on our own anecdotes as data but also not

dismissing others' personal experience as irrelevant, raising salient points and disagreeing with respect nigh unto reverence for each others' viewpoints, life stories, and opinions. Not a single logical fallacy was committed, no harsh words were exchanged, no guilt trips or traps laid or sprung, no names called and no offense meant or received. It was breathtaking, really, how intelligently our difficult but sensitive and nuanced conversation about problematic non-absolute biological sexual dimorphism, Cartesian dualism, and gendered socialization unfolded, and we all came out of it enlightened, refreshed, and feeling all the more fond of each other, affectionate, heard, understood, and loved. Because we are amazing like that. Practically *Saints*.]

The Mediterranean ancient world was undeniably sexist, with advantages accruing disproportionately to the men and the disadvantages to the women (see: all of human history). Judaism was far from alone in either its antifeminism (the belief that women cannot and should not be equal in legal status or standing to men) or its misogyny (the belief that females as females are ontologically inferior to males and possibly irredeemably evil). Most all civilizations have had varying degrees of power imbalances based on questions of sex (biological morphology) and gender (social codes of expected behavior). Historically there have been long, tedious arguments as to whether and how much of this difference-produced philosophical quandary is legitimate, including the perennial question of women having souls (I am not making this up). Since the answer is "none of it," and we have already sorted the problem ourselves (so well!), we'll not revisit the generalities but consider where Barker's observations contribute.

Typical readings of the Books of Moses set God's religion as monotheist and the Children of Israel as reformed polytheists who keep backsliding into old traditions with other gods. The Deuteronomist system is absolute. Since other gods are not the

One God, then recognition of all other gods must be sinful. The equation becomes this: if not the One God, then polytheist; if polytheist, then pagan; if pagan, then condemned/condemnable. Then: if *not* pagan, then monotheist. If monotheist, then the One God; if the One God, then no Goddess. These are all dualist propositions; in this syllogism there are no options “C.”

But if Barker (and, coincidentally, Joseph Smith) is correct, there is an option “C.” If the non-pagan, respectable divine can possibly include a variety rather than a singularity, the problem of half of humanity as intrinsically less than the other half simply doesn’t exist as such, and we can toss out the horrible debates of pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim philosophers about “whether” women have souls or not and get right down to the far more serious theological question of whether they can or should wear trousers to church.

I kid. I wink, I try to lighten the mood. Because the Barker thesis is a light in darkness, irrespective of trivial mortal concerns (like clothing-in-context), this is Woman being “returned” to the Heavens. The fact that Barker’s compelling description of Mother Goddess coincides (once again) with one of the more outrageous propositions of LDS thought gives us pause as well as hope. I am not quite sure what to do with such an idea coming from Barker’s studies because, in the absence of latter-day prophetic instruction on the matter, I am also not quite sure what is to be done with our own LDS version of it. Our version is not Catholic. The Protestant version is not Catholic. But the two not-Catholics are not-Catholic in slightly different ways.

Catholics venerate Mary as the Mother of God and therefore holy, so she can be an intercessor with God. Though not God herself, Mary is blessed among women and holds a unique place in the religion. Veneration of Mary is unacceptable to Protestants, because they see Mary as merely a human whom God chose to be the mortal mother of Jesus;

worshipping her or praying to her (or any intercessory other than Christ) is somewhere on the spectrum from useless to blasphemous. Though Catholic and Protestant understanding of trinitarianism settles the problem of polytheism by making the three persons into One God, some Protestants see Catholicism's veneration of Saints, and particularly of Mary, as creeping polytheism. Mormonism does not venerate Mary, and the reasons given are usually the same as those in Protestantism but for different reasons. LDS objection to venerating Mary is not a rejection of polytheism in the guise of Mary since we do not accept trinitarianism. And it is not a rejection of the female possibilities of the divine since we do continue to admit to "Heavenly Parents" even publicly. It may simply be that, absent a prophetic revelation in this dispensation, we do not know the identity of our Mother in Heaven. Speculation does not help because it leads in very uncomfortable directions: toward Joseph Smith's polygamy ("We don't know who 'she' is because there are many mothers"), or Brigham Young's Adam-God theory (which does make Eve the Mother of all living, but also makes Adam God.) Without more information about either, both are more than problematic. Barker's proposition that Mary does not merely represent an older Goddess but is, as the mother of Jesus, the true Mother of the Lord and as such a Goddess in her own right, confounds both trinitarianism and traditionalist monotheism. Even the part Mormonism has become comfortable with.

Implications for Latter-day Saints

The ways of ancient Abrahamic temple worship and modern Mormon temple worship, for all their apparent or reputed similarities, are also substantially different. And when it comes to Mother in Heaven and the temple, if she is correct in claiming the Goddess of Israel a place of veneration in temples of antiquity, then Barker's book widens that gap, rather

than narrowing it. There is no cause for anyone inside the LDS Church or out of it to claim that our temples are places where we consciously, communally worship any female deities as Barker describes the oldest Israelites doing. Though LDS doctrine allows and even requires a Heavenly Mother, the American Christian context Mormonism was born into included anti-pagan, anti-polytheist, and anti-woman implicit and explicit assumptions. In America at the time of the Restoration of the Gospel, the bickering Protestant communities were in agreement about one thing at least: they were all pleased not to be Catholic. Roman Catholicism is the only one of the mainstream Western descendants of Abrahamic religions to make a place for a woman to be revered, in the person of Mary, Mother of Jesus. For many early Protestants, Catholic veneration of Mary was one of the reasons to protest (Calvin rejected any praise for anyone other than God; Luther called a belief in intercessory saints idolatry). “Popery” as the early Protestants called the Catholic church, tipped into idolatry (polytheism) in its inclusion of the intercessory powers of patron saints, and none was more to be feared than the Saint whose Motherhood threatened monotheism and whose femaleness was not male.

That Barker and other scholars have had to defend the possibility of an ancient Abrahamic religion with a Goddess is telling. Like a paranoid dream coming true, it seems that Josiah’s redactions and insistence on absolute male monotheism as *de rigueur*, rather than being a scandal itself, has *worked!* It succeeded in creating a history and subsequently an entrenched tradition of reverence for its monotheist status quo wherein any polytheist counter-thought is heresy and our Mother is the scandal: No! A God, a God; we have a God and there can be no more God.

Centuries of theologizing God have removed the divine impossibly far from us, yet we would not want to return to God if there were not something in common between God’s “good”

and our mortal experience of “good.” Which always, always, includes love. In their book *The God Who Weeps*, Fiona and Terryl Givens say, “God’s nature and and life are the simple extension of that which is most elemental, and most worthwhile, about our life here on earth. However rapturous or imperfect, fulsome or shattered, our knowledge of love has been, we sense it is the very basis and purpose of our existence.”⁶ Heaven is not joyless, and joy is not solitary, exclusive, exclusively male, or even aspirationally male (sorry, Paul; sorry, Phillip; sorry, Timaeus). Joseph Smith had the audacity to suggest a re-anthropomorphized God who is (blasphemously, for the creeds) like us in more ways than even we, Joseph’s followers, are comfortable admitting. The history of religion informing social constructs is almost the entire history of history, so when religion split humanity along gender lines, elevating half and discarding the other half, the results were tragic. When our lives are controlled not by striving to conform to God’s will but to conform to a seriously flawed social expectation, there is something fundamentally broken, fallen, wrong with all of us, requiring enlightenment, repentance, and Atonement. Joseph Smith wanted Zion, where the Last shall be First. He wanted Zion, where there are no poor (no class divisions based on *anything*) among us. Where “all are alike unto God, black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Ne. 26:33). Zion is not a solitary place of stark silent sterility or a shame-based hierarchy of good and better but an ever-expanding community of sloppy, sentimental joy, where “they will fall upon our necks, and we shall fall upon their necks, and we shall kiss each other” (Moses 7:63)

One other important tenet of the Protestant Reformation was to reject overt priestly and papal interference with the sacred bond of God and mortal child, a sentiment the LDS

6 Terry Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (Ensign Peak, 2012), 109.

can certainly sympathize with. In Barker's English Protestant heritage is the poet-preacher George Herbert, who writes not on a stone altar but offers himself as the locus of worship, makes of his own heart a temple altar.⁷ If Josiah's changes can so harshly throw the Mother of the Lord—our Mother—out of the temple and out of the religions that descended from it, perhaps we can quietly, defiantly strike back. Taking a leaf from the Protestants who so graciously blessed us with the likes of Margaret Barker, we Mormons could each carry our Mother back into the temple, giving her back her place, beside Father, on the altars of our hearts.

Zina Petersen teaches courses in early British literature and language at BYU. She received her graduate degrees from The Catholic University of America in 1992 and 1997. Her research interests include the literary history of Christianity, mysticism, women's religious and spiritual writings, Chaucer, Malory and King Arthur traditions.

7 George Herbert, "The Altar," in *George Herbert: The Country Parson, the Temple*, John N. Wall, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 139.

