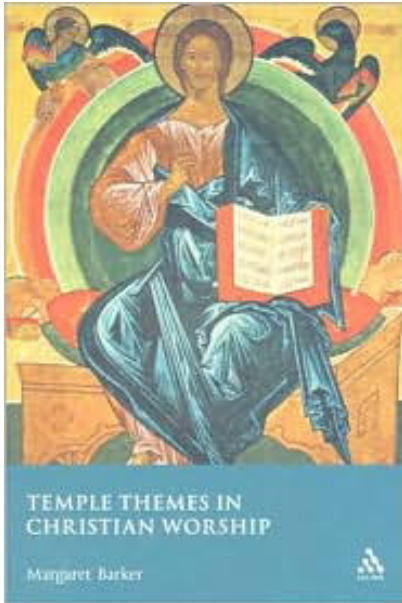


RBL 01/2009



Barker, Margaret

Temple Themes in Christian Worship

London: T&T Clark, 2007. Pp. xi + 286. Paper. \$29.95.
ISBN 0567032760.

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Margaret Barker has written a number of studies on the temple and the influence of its imagery and rituals on the development of early Christianity. She brings to her writing a breadth of research in ancient Israelite institutions and temple practice as well as early rabbinic materials. In *Temple Themes* this is further expanded by a broad range of references to early Christian writings in the first five centuries. As the title suggests, Barker's research sets out to demonstrate that early Christian worship draws significantly on the Jerusalem temple and its practices. When speaking of the temple, Barker refers back in time to the Solomonic Temple rather than the rebuilt temple after the exile. As Barker comments, "there was something seriously wrong with the second Temple," and "messianic hope was rooted in another, earlier temple" (53).

The book elaborates on nine themes that are not always clear from the chapter titles. The first chapter, "The Temple Traditions," has its main focus on "mysteries" made known only to the temple priests and hinted at in Christian writings in references to secret or private teachings passed on by Jesus to his inner circle. This theme reiterates the approach Barker took in her earlier publication, *The Great High Priest* (T&T Clark, 2003). In making her case, Barker looks well beyond the canonical Gospels to other Jewish and Christian writings, as well as Qumran and gnostic literature. I was unconvinced. The next

chapter, "Temple and Synagogue," addresses the usual understanding that Christian liturgy developed from the synagogue. Barker puts greater emphasis on the temple rather than the synagogue, particularly the understanding of the Christian community as a living temple. Chapter 3, "Son and Heirs," further develops the theme of the community as a living temple and the community as the rightful heirs of Israel. This chapter describes some early buildings for Christian worship and argues that these were modeled on Solomon's Temple: "Sixth-century texts show that temple tradition, in all its aspects, was still important for Christian understanding of their church buildings" (69). The fourth chapter examines the early Christian designation of Jesus as Lord and Christ, thus ascribing to him divine status. In this chapter Barker distinguishes between the Old Testament God (the Father) and Yahweh his Son.

The following chapter, "Baptism and Resurrection," proposes that "the little that can be recovered about the initiation of the ancient royal high priests suggests that this was the origin of Christian baptism" (105). In this Barker gives greater emphasis to the rite of anointing and clothing. Chapter 6, "Transformation and Transfiguration," examines the phenomenon of theophany associated with the temple and the hope that worshipers, like Moses, would experience the revelation of God's face. In this chapter Barker understands the expression "to see the face of God" as "to see as a visionary" (140). Barker suggests that this hope lies behind the prayer "Maranatha" and the Lord's Prayer, "thy kingdom come." Chapter 7, "Cup and Covenant," raises many intriguing issues about the origins of Eucharist: Was it based on a Passover meal or the rites of the Day of Atonement?

I have only briefly described the chapters in this book because, while there are many rich insights into temple worship in Israel, overall I found myself quite dissatisfied with this work. Barker's process lacks solid argumentation, evidence, and a clear methodology. The work progresses by inference and an accumulation of text references without establishing the necessity that these texts be read intertextually. Statements are simply made without providing sufficient, and sometimes any, evidence in support. The accumulation of texts certainly suggests what Barker is proposing, but suggestion is not the same as evidence.

While I find Barker's conclusions questionable due to lack of methodological argument and evidence, nonetheless this work would provide a fascinating starting point for any potential doctoral student in Old or New Testament studies or early Christian writings. In particular, her chapter entitled "Cup and Covenant" is worthy of more critical study. Barker's suggestions about temple themes open up possible lines of further research to test the validity of her claims. It may be that her insights are well-founded, but this book leads me to describe these as intuitions rather than solid conclusions.