

## Wisdom in action; transforming knowledge into Wisdom

Report of a visit to the English theologian Dr Margaret Barker from Friday 6 to Monday 9 August 2010 by Dr Annine van der Meer.

**Who is Dr Margaret Barker?** She is an independent scholar and author and a former President of the 'Society for Old Testament Study' in Great Britain. She is the spiritual mother of the 'Temple Theology' from the period of *the first Temple* in Jerusalem (968-596 B.C.). This theology is characterized by *Partnership of the divine male and female*, then called Wisdom. This is also found in the Older Testament, which precedes the exclusively male Old Testament of the second Temple.

### ***Spiritual mother and driving force behind the Temple School.***

Barker is cofounder of the 'Temple Studies Group', which aims at rediscovering and spreading the knowledge of the Temple Theology of *the first Temple*. In this theology the Mother of the Lord plays an important part; she has been removed purposefully from the Hebrew texts and damned by the priest scribes from the second Temple period, after 586 B.C. The theology of the first Temple is the foundation of



later Jewish and gnostic Christianity and several mystical and ritual traditions in present day Eastern and Western Christianity. The Temple School organizes internationally much frequented symposia in London, twice a year; during such a symposium on Saturday 6 speakers give information about a theme from the Temple theology. Margaret is always the first speaker and takes the lead with an integral basic speech, in which the next speakers each are discussed separately; several people from the US especially come over to visit for a weekend. The Temple School also organizes a Summer School. The next one will take place from 8 to 12 August 2011 in Margaret's

home town, Borrowash in Derby, one and a half hour by train, Northeast of London. The small airport East Midlands is a 20 minute drive from her home town.

**Her work.** She has published 15 books, among which *The Older Testament* (1987), *The Lost Prophet* (1998), *The Gate of Heaven* (1991), *The Great Angel* (1992), *On Earth as it is in Heaven* (1995), *The Risen Lord* (1996); *Commentary on Isaiah* (1996), *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (2000), *The Great High Priest* (2003), *Temple Theology* (2004), *An Extraordinary Gathering of Angels* (2004), *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom* (2007), *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (2008), *Christmas, the original story* 2008 and *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (2009). Her beautifully illustrated book *The complete Angel book* about Angels from 2004 has been translated into 6 languages, among which is Dutch and this is entitled *Het complete Engelenboek*. Besides she has written countless articles; 24 of these can be found on her website [www.margaretbarker.com](http://www.margaretbarker.com) under the heading 'papers' and can be downloaded from there.

**Geognosis and Ecotheology.** Since 1997 Margaret Barker has functioned as a Biblical Scholar in the team of His All Holiness, the ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of 300 million orthodox Christians worldwide and has given her biblical vision on Earth and the environment. The Patriarch is the 270th successor of the apostle Andrew and head of the Patriarchate in Istanbul. He is also called 'the green Patriarch', as he is the first Christian leader who devotes himself to clean waters and who is on a spiritual mission to save the planet as God's creation. In 1988 the movement 'Religion, Science and Environment' was founded on Patmos, see website [www.rsesympopsia.com](http://www.rsesympopsia.com). Since that time the green Patriarch and his staff have organized sailing symposia. He then travels on the oceans and large rivers with his staff, ca 200

experts and journalists, to draw attention to the need for clean waters - the water of life is an important symbol for Wisdom or Sophia in the Temple Theology. In 1995 they sailed across the Aegean Sea, in 1997 the Black Sea, in 1999 the Danube, in 2002 the Adriatic, in 2003 the Baltic Sea, in 2006 the Amazon, in 2007 the Arctic Sea, and in 2009 the Mississippi. The Patriarch prayed for pure water, blessed it and sang sanctifying psalms across these same waters, accompanied by a beautiful choir. In passing many sordid environmental scandals were revealed, and due to the world press attention, they were quickly addressed and cleared by the local authorities. Before long they hope to go to the Lake Victoria in Africa.

***Distinguished.*** On a very hot day in July 2008 it pleased Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth to create Margaret a Lambeth Doctor of Divinity in an impressive ceremony in Lambeth Palace, the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Anglican Church.

Henny let op: volgend plaatje moet hier staan... springt weg....

### **Friday 9 October.**

***The Arrival.*** On 9.55 English time I am landing in East Midlands Airport, one and a half hours travel by train north-east of London.

Margaret Barker and her husband Richard are waiting for me. Margaret had told me that she could be recognized by the stick she was leaning on. This because she is being confined to her home at present because of a forthcoming hip operation, which she hopes to undergo before long. She is making a virtue of necessity and carries on with writing her new book *The Mother of the Lord* undismayed. I have been invited to their house for this 'long weekend' and am amazed at the cordiality and hospitality of both of them. We don't know each other, except for having exchanged some emails and me having read several books by her about the Lost Lady, the Mother of the Lord from Israel, and the connection between her and Mary. But that will change quickly ....

***'Lost Lady Wisdom'.*** We drive to their house through a lovely hilly, green and undulating landscape. After a two year search I finally got in touch with her digitally via one of her publishers. I want to personally bring her my book *From Sophia to Maria. The rebirth of the hidden Mother in the 21st century* (2008) and show her how much I have been indebted to her work in my writing, with the help of quotations and references to her work in this book. I have come at the right moment, as she has just been homing in on the subject-



matter at hand for her new book *The Mother of the Lord* and in the manuscript she has just included the material about the Mother who was discredited and written out of the Older and the Old Testament. For four days I am being taught how the Lost Lady was eliminated from the written texts and how she therefore got lost altogether. There appears to have been a conspiracy against her of a magnitude I hadn't suspected until now. She was purposefully and intentionally removed from the written texts by the priest scribes of the Second Temple. They often needed only to change a quarter of a Hebrew letter in order to denigrate and suppress her (*Van Sophia tot Maria*, 120 n8, 144 n 156, M. Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 162, 204-205). It is much worse than I had ever suspected. Margaret's extensive knowledge of both the canonical and the apocryphal Old Testament Scripture-texts, which she keeps comparing to each other,

enables her to penetrate through the text-layers and recover and reconstruct the older texts in which the Lady is still present in all her radiance. I realize how terrible it must have been when Wisdom as a unifying power within the whole of the creation of the cosmos and the Earth was wiped away from the consciousness and life of ordinary people. As a result knowledge became specialised, fragmented and monopolized. When Wisdom disappeared, the creation got out of balance. Integrated wisdom

degenerated into mere intellectual knowledge. Together with Lady Wisdom respect for the Earth, the feminine and the physical disappeared. Respect for Mother Nature and Mother Cosmos got lost. The Lady went into hiding.

***The Lady returns.*** I am impressed by her story of being present on Saturday 27 June at the solemn ceremony of the entry of the Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God into the Kremlin in Moscow. In my guestroom - above a Sophia icon - stands the icon of the Mother, a crowned Queen, with the child on her arm; friends brought the Tikhvin icon with them for her. During the destruction of the Russian Revolution in 1917, The Madonna of Tikhvin was hidden and smuggled abroad, where - concealed in a double-walled wardrobe - she remained invisible and so was preserved. In 2004 she is brought in a grand procession into the recently rebuilt cathedral of Christ the Redeemer at the Kremlin in Moscow, which was consecrated in August 2000. Although Margaret has a ticket of admission, she could not be present at the ceremony in the church itself, because of the enormous crowds and she has to stay outside and watch the long procession enter the cathedral. But she is there, when the Lost Lady makes her entrance again; how symbolic. The icon has now returned to the monastery in the north of Russia, where this icon of Mother of God originally comes from.

***Wisdom gives insight into the whole.*** This story is symbolic for what is happening to me this weekend. Margaret demonstrates to me how the Lost Lady gets lost in Ancient Israel but can be found again in archaic Hebrew texts, the pseudepigraphs and apocrypha of the Old Testament and the canonical Hebrew texts of a later date, which only much later have been admitted into the Old Testament. 'She is not gone, she is waving at me' she keeps repeating time and again, during the four days in which we are carrying on a conversation. A prominent place in the dining room is accorded to the tree of life, an important symbol for Wisdom or the Mother, that used to have pride of place in the first Temple in Jerusalem. On high-days the seven candles of the tree are lit here; for a seven branched fiery tree of life gives light, insight and wisdom in the first Temple. The tree also gives fragrant oil, with which a person was anointed to son and daughter of God and Wisdom, to someone who knows, someone with gnosis. This person then receives a clear insight and an integrated knowledge into the origin and the secrets of creation and life, into eternity. Hence many visions and a great deal of mysticism in the first Temple and later with Jewish and gnostic Christians. Hence also the big clairvoyant eyes of the Ashera-figurines. They often have a red face, like Wisdom was painted red too on Russian icons. The tree of life was ablaze with light and fire and gave light and insight. Margaret insists that there were two trees in the paradise garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the traditional Bible story Adam and Eve ate from the wrong tree and that's when it all was supposed to have gone wrong .... The rest of the days I am sitting in the dining room, often straight opposite Margaret, who has the tree on her right side. As I am sitting diagonally opposite the tree, Margaret and the tree granting light, life and wisdom almost constantly keep my eyes arrested. New pieces of the puzzle of the lost whole are unfolding. And I marvel at it and am amazed and grateful.



tekst er naast lukt niet

### **Saturday 10 August.**

Just like on Friday we do nothing but talking about the Lost Lady of Israel. I fill my notebook with examples of how she was removed from the scene in the written texts. Both the dining room table and her adjacent study are filled with piles of reference works on the basis of which she reveals to me the conspiracy against the Lady. Time and again she is printing out different articles for me and she doesn't hesitate to give me parts from her new book in the making. Again and again she brings me books containing evidence, while in the meantime she goes on talking to me, does the cooking, accepts phone calls from her Temple school staff and co-workers of the green Patriarch and in between is also answering emails. Someone from Australia applies by email for the one week Summer School course. This is organized by Temple School fellow-workers in August 2011 and given by Margaret. I strain my ears and immediately apply for this course myself. She asks if I will be content with an improvised bed in her over-crowded study, this because the house has already been fully booked. I consider myself fortunate for where can you sleep better than here? After this she immediately takes action to stimulate the people of her organization and her church to start mobilizing the bed- and breakfast addresses in her home-town. You can find information about the Summer School under this report and on her website.

***A black cake for a black Madonna, the Mother.*** Margaret appears to be a great housewife and hostess, running her household with an iron discipline, according to a fixed time scheme. She also appears to be a wonderful grandmother - according to a video film shown on Saturday night - who stages small plays like Peter Pan with her two grandchildren James aged six and a half and Sophie aged three. Both grandchildren are playing hilarious double-roles for lack of more actors. She is the narrator. When she appears on the video from behind the curtains, she is holding the script written by her in her hand, which she has just been reading. She makes things with her grandchildren and plays with them. Straight after my departure, on Wednesday 10 August, to their great joy, they are going to visit their grandparents again.

Around lunch and dinner time the house is filled with lovely smells from the kitchen, for the great English Wisdom-expert appears to be a fantastic cook, who conjures up all kinds of creative dishes, made from vegetables and fruit from the garden. When she hears that I am working on a manuscript about the Black Madonna, she this time doesn't bend her knees for her bookcase, but for her kitchen-cupboard, in spite of her painful hip. She is interested in the connection between food, motherland culture and (hidden) matriarchal history. She keeps searching, until she finds a separate recipe from one of her many cookery-books, which contains the recipe of the spicy black cake of the black Madonna of Tindari on Sicily: almonds form the basis and they are mixed with chocolate, coffee and orange. According to Margaret other recipes

from a book entitled 'The cooking of Greece and Turkey' prove to her that the Madonna is still connected to oval shaped almonds and cake. She observes with pleasure that in many recipes the almond or amygdala has been used up to the present day. The tree of life is supposed to be an almond-tree, pruned into having seven branches. The Hebrew word for almond means 'great mother'. Almond shaped eyes of Ashera-figurines symbolize clear vision (Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 244 n 65; *From Sophia to Maria*, 155).



**Baking cakes for the Queen of Heaven and Earth.** There is nothing new under the sun, for as early as 600 B.C. Jewish women in Jerusalem were already baking cakes for their Queen of Heaven, the Mother of the Lord (*Jer. 7:17-18, From Venus to Madonna*, 429). And they continued to bake cakes, which were sweetened with raisins and honey, when they fled from Jerusalem into Egypt in the diaspora, where they continued their motherland practices. (*Jer.44:15-19, From Venus to Madonna*,430). Church-father Epiphanius mentions with disapproval how Christian women's groups in Arabia practiced baking (sweet) cakes for Mary up to the 4th and 5th century AD. Why not, it had after all been their custom for such a long time. (*From Sophia to Maria*, 400-02). And in countries around the Mediterranean it is still happening, as is witnessed by Margaret's cookery-books. Margaret's black almond cake for the Madonna from Sicily is so delicious, that - contrary to my sugarless custom - I eat even the last piece of cake.

**Sunday 11 August.**

**Going to church.** At 10.30 we are going to church in her Methodist Church at the end of the street. It is an impressive service; afterwards, during the coffee, I hear that she has been functioning as an experienced



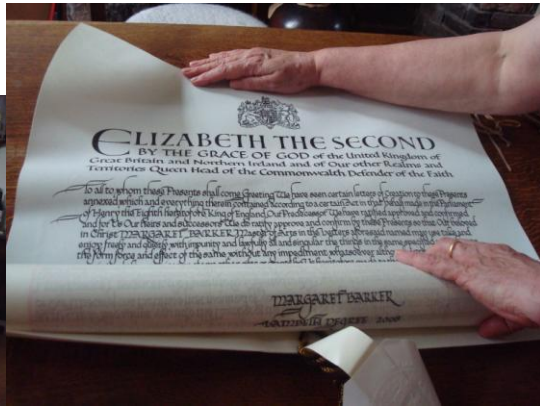
preacher in her region for many years and acts as a substitute during an illness. Besides she organizes 3 year training- courses for future preachers to be in her own church and the Anglican church. These aspirant-teachers get a thorough education, that also entails a lot of correction and clerical work. I am amazed at the energy and dedication of this centipede-like lady, who is writing a great deal of substantial articles and books in the mean time.

**Lecture in the Augustine convent.** On Sunday afternoon she gives a lecture in a nearby women's convent of the Convent of the Holy Name about her work for the green Patriarch. Since 1997 she has travelled across all the seas with him and has held lectures for the international and environmental experts and journalists present about the holy relationship between Creator/Creatrix and their Creation. ( See her book *Creation*, 2008). In her impressive and hopeful lecture she is revealed as an enthusiastic activist. In the work of the Patriarch she sees 'Wisdom in action'.

### **Monday 12 August.**

**Interpretation of symbols of Wisdom.** When on Monday I show her the Power Point presentations 'On Wisdom' that I brought with me , she is impressed and enthusiastic about the beauty of the images of the lost feminine divine. She interprets the female imagery on certain ritual objects, like the cultic Ta'anach standard with the four panels on top of each other, in a completely personal, unconventional, but extremely brilliant way (*Venus is not a vamp*, 307). In the lowest panel Wisdom receives people in her Temple with open arms, while she is standing between lions. Affectionately, lovingly and above all joyfully. Above that there is the throne of cherubs on which a person - man or woman - sits down, when he/she receives her wisdom in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Above it two goats feed on her fiery and fragrant tree of life, which gives wisdom and eternal life. Above that again you can see her as the illuminating solar disc with the big wings, while she is taking the young bull-calf under her wings and initiating it. According to her the standard shows the successive stages of being initiated into Wisdom in the (first) Temple. I became so enthusiastic that I embraced her spontaneously and kissed her on the right cheek while saying: 'Margaret, you are brilliant'. In passing she corrects the wrong translations - according to her - of the Hebrew texts recently discovered at Kuntillet Arjud in the Sinai and Chirbet el Qom at Hebron. (*From Venus to Madonna*, 398-400; *From Sophia to Maria*, 142; *Venus is not a vamp*,271). In her opinion it is not about Yahweh and his Ashera in the sense of her being a help-mate and auxiliary; no, it is about Ashera the Mother and her son Yahweh, but this is not recognized by modern translators. One only needs to look at the many symbols around the Mother-cow and her beloved (golden) bull-calf. (*compare Ex. 32:3-6, From Venus to Madonna*, 410). All the lost pieces seem to fit together. She reads the imagery of the Mother as if it is her native tongue and thereby corrects the already existing interpretations, like those about the Ta'anach standard. How amazing.

**Time to say goodbye.** Immediately after this our time has run out, for two English theologians arrive for lunch and the discussion changes. But then, around two o'clock, it's time to take leave and go home. When I'm leaving the house, I say - with my two year search for Margaret still fresh in my memory - feeling intensely grateful and on an impulse : 'Margaret, you are my Lost Lady and I will keep waving at you'. May her work be communicated to future generations , even though until now it has been excluded from and ignored by the established bastions of traditional theology at universities like Oxford and Cambridge. Although she doesn't consider herself to be a feminist - the word feminism evokes resistance in present-day Great Britain - she nonetheless repeatedly speaks about 'the blinkers of Patriarchy' or the 'patriarchal mindset'. Margaret Barker herself is the living manifestation of how integrated knowledge can become wisdom. She is getting national and international recognition at the moment. In witness whereof she was solemnly honoured by Queen Elizabeth.



Besides she received from the Patriarch an icon representing the tree of life or Wisdom, the Mother, as a token of great appreciation for ten years of disinterested dedication and support. Thus the tree of life is flowering in Margaret Barker's house. Thus the inspiration or breath or wind of the Holy Spirit is blowing in Margaret Barker's study. That's why she received the PanSophia-dove. This silver dove carries the round circle of the divine mother between both legs and has especially been made in India in the neighborhood of the temple of the Mother (Matrimandir). May Spirit and Wisdom give her the health and the power to continue her important work. May she be and remain to others a living manifestation of a flowering and illuminating tree of life.



Dr. Annine van der Meer (report).  
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 Founder and president of the Academy PanSophia, where she also teaches.

The Academy PanSophia is a knowledge centre for matriarchy and oneness consciousness whose focus includes the rediscovery of the female side of God, female values and the contribution of women in ancient and contemporary cultures. [www.academiepansofia.nl](http://www.academiepansofia.nl) and [www.anninevandermeer.nl](http://www.anninevandermeer.nl)

**SUMMER SCHOOL NEXT YEAR**  
**Temple Theology** led by Margaret Barker

Temple Theology is a fast growing new way of doing biblical study, rediscovering the roots of Christianity in the world of the Jerusalem temple. In this one week non-residential school we shall explore how temple symbolism, belief and practice shaped Christian faith and culture. Temple Theology is changing how we understand Christian origins and the Christian relationship to Judaism.

**Dates:** 8th–12th August 2011, 10am–4pm each day. Four sessions each day.

**Venue:** Borrowash Methodist Church, near Derby (3 miles west of Junction 25 of the M1). There is ample parking nearby.

**Cost:** £12.00 per day or £50.00 for the complete week. In aid of Borrowash Methodist Church.

**Booking:** Places are limited. Please book via the 'email Margaret Barker' link on this website and pay on the first day.

You will need to bring a Bible and a packed lunch. Hot and cold drinks will be provided.

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Margaret Barker (and others) have established a [Temple Studies Group](#) to convene symposia on Temple themes. The first was on 8 November 2008, at Stephen's House, Oxford: 'Melchizedek in Scripture, Tradition and Liturgy'.

Further information can be found on the [Temple Studies Group](#) website and <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Teaching/default.htm>

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