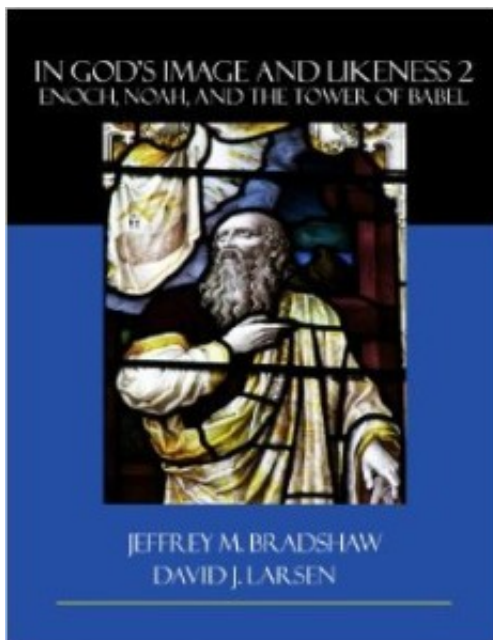


AUTHOR ARCHIVES: [STEPHEN SMOOT](#)

## “Taking the Stories of Primeval History Seriously”: A Review of *In God’s Image and Likeness 2*



[Cross posted from [Ploni Almoni: Mr. So-and-So's Mormon Blog.](#)]

The Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price has been the attention of considerable Latter-day Saint scholarship. Beginning with the pioneering work of Hugh Nibley, much work has been done on understanding the history, nature, and teachings of the Book of Moses. [1] Next to Nibley, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw stands out as one of the giants among Latter-day Saint scholars who have looked carefully at the Book of Moses. In his excellent 2010 commentary *In God's Image and Likeness* Bradshaw delved deep into the text of the first half of the Book of Moses to unlock fresh insights and provide intriguing links between the Book of Moses with the temple and other ancient Near Eastern texts and traditions.[2]

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However, Bradshaw's first book only covered up to Moses 6. So then what about the rest of the Book of Moses, including the accounts of Enoch and Noah? With David J. Larsen as a co-author, Bradshaw has now completed his commentary on the Book of Moses with *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, co-published by the Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books.

If one could summarize the purpose of this sequel, it would have to be that Bradshaw and Larsen are “taking the stories of the primeval history seriously” (p. 4) and attempting to show the richness, beauty, and power of these accounts.

*Given their status as targets of humor and caricature, the well-worn stories of Adam, Eve, and Noah are sometimes difficult to take seriously. However, a thoughtful examination of the scriptural record of these characters will reveal not simply tales of “piety or inspiring adventures” but rather carefully crafted narratives from a highly sophisticated culture that preserve “deep memories” of revealed understanding. We do an injustice both to these marvelous records and to ourselves when we fail to pursue an appreciation of scripture beyond the initial level of cartoon cut-outs inculcated upon the minds of young children. (pp. 4–5, internal notes removed)*

Bradshaw and Larsen pick up exactly where *In God's Image and Likeness* finished. They begin by discussing how the Book of Moses presents the prophet Enoch, and compare the Book of Moses' depiction of Enoch with the depiction of him found in a corpus of pseudepigraphal Enochic literature. Their discussion of Enoch both compares and contrasts the Book of Moses with the pseudepigraphal texts that bear Enoch's name, and Bradshaw and Larsen are careful not to engage in the sort of parallelomania that one could easily fall into when comparing the Book of Moses with this literature.**[3]**

After their discussion of Enoch, Bradshaw and Larsen then comment on Noah, the ark, and the flood. They discuss the events preceding and following the flood, in addition to the flood itself. Besides doctrinal discussions, their commentary on the flood also tactfully includes a brief discussion of how to reconcile the flood account with evidence from geological science that strongly contradicts belief in a global catastrophic flood. Instead, Bradshaw and Larsen posit the likelihood of a local flood that was possibly mythologized in the Genesis account to carry specific theological significance and symbolism (esp. pp. 267–271). This symbolism is actually quite interesting, as Bradshaw and Larsen point out that the Genesis flood symbolically throws the earth back into its pre-created chaotic state, when the waters of chaos reigned before the formation of the earth (see Genesis 1:1–3; cf. Abraham 4:1–2). With the emergence of a new earth from out of the waters of the flood, the account presents Noah as a type of Adam (pp. 256–259, 267, 277–279).

Finally, Bradshaw and Larsen include a discussion of the Tower of Babel. Bradshaw and Larsen begin by helpfully providing the Mesopotamian background to the Tower of Babel pericope (pp. 382–388). They also (rightly) urge caution about reading too much into the account of the confounding of languages that contradicts scriptural and scientific evidence (pp. 398–402).

Of course, as might be expected in a tome covering the Book of Moses and Genesis, Bradshaw and Larsen

make no small effort to draw our attention to the many links between these stories and the temple. There are simply too many wonderful insights concerning the temple in this book for me to fully describe in this review. Suffice it to say that nobody can walk away from reading this book without coming to more fully appreciate the importance and centrality of the temple and temple symbolism in the scriptures, including in the stories of Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel.

In addition to their commentary on the text, Bradshaw and Larsen include what they term “Gleanings,” or reproductions of quotes by various General Authorities or scholars on topics relating to the subject being discussed in each chapter. Bradshaw and Larsen also provide numerous paintings, photos, and charts to help the reader visualize the stories they’re reading. In this regard, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2* follows in the steps of its predecessor, which also stands out for its wonderful artistic reproductions.

There wasn’t much that I found in this book to criticize, and there was only one part that I really disagreed with. In their commentary on the story involving Noah and his sons in Genesis 9, Bradshaw and Larsen speculate that Noah didn’t actually get drunk from the wine that he made from a vineyard he had planted (Genesis 9:20–21), but had participated in “a ritual drinking of wine” that preceded a vision (p. 300). They base this argument on a statement attributed to Joseph Smith and an excerpt from the *Genesis Apocryphon*. The evidence presented by Bradshaw and Larsen is, however, tenuous. First, the statement attributed to Joseph Smith that Noah “was not drunk, but in a vision” is late and thirdhand.<sup>[4]</sup> A contemporary (and preferably firsthand) statement on this by the Prophet would be stronger evidence for their claim. Second, their appeal to the *Genesis Apocryphon*, while interesting, doesn’t do much to mitigate against the plain reading of the text in Genesis—Noah got a little too carried away with his wine. It would seem that the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* was trying to do the same thing that Bradshaw and Larsen are doing, that is, exonerate Noah from any wrongdoing.

Likewise, Bradshaw and Larsen’s speculation that the “sin of Ham” was that Noah’s son “was neither qualified nor authorized to enter a place of divine glory” (p. 305) is also tenuous. Their evidence, while also interesting, is not definitive, and is also derived in part from their reading of later biblical and pseudepigraphal texts and drawing parallels with the pericope in Genesis 9. While they’re reading of Genesis 9 is plausible, it is far from certain.

But my hesitancy to agree with Bradshaw and Larsen on this point doesn’t severely detract from my overall appreciation for the effort and thoughtfulness that they put into this marvelous book. In the end, I wholeheartedly agree with this statement made by Bradshaw and Larsen at the beginning of their impressive volume.

*The acceptance of the book of Moses as part of the LDS scriptural canon and, more generally, the premise that the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible may contain something more than naïve personal speculations on passages that perplexed the Prophet has not only been grounds for amusement for many non-Mormons*

*but also has drawn criticism from some within the tradition of the Restoration. . . . It is our firm witness that the book of Moses is a priceless prophetic reworking of the book of Genesis, made with painstaking effort under divine direction. Although neither “complete” nor “inerrant,” it is a text of inestimable value that should be one of the centerpieces of our gospel study. (pp. 17–18)*

To that end, any Latter-day Saint interested in an informative and engaging scriptural commentary on the Book of Moses would greatly benefit from both volumes 1 and 2 of *In God's Image and Likeness*.

[The book can be purchased at the [FairMormon Bookstore](#) or [amazon.com](#).]

**Addendum:** Jeffrey Bradshaw has responded to my brief comments on Genesis 9. My review here was meant to be quick and limited, so I may not have done justice to Bradshaw and Larsen's argument. Below are Bradshaw's comments.

*David and I qualify our explorations of an alternative interpretation of Genesis 9 as an “admittedly tentative” effort to “account for its many anomalies.” Many other respected scholars have remarked on the odd inconsistency of the Noah portrayed in Genesis 8 and Genesis 9, leading to conclusions such as that of Gordon Wenham that “the two traditions are completely incompatible and must be of independent origin.” In addition, it might be helpful to readers if you could note that the purported statement of Joseph Smith is not a completely isolated phenomenon. For example, drawing their conclusions from the Hebrew text of Genesis 9 alone (i.e., not considering the Genesis Apocryphon), Koler and Greenspahn concur with the opinion that Noah was enwrapped in a vision while in the tent, and that Ham's sin was looking at Noah while the latter was in the course of revelation.[5]*

## Notes

**[1]:** See Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Volume 2 (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986).

**[2]:** Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God's Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Eborn Books, 2010). See also Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Eborn Books, 2010); *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Eborn Books, 2012). Bradshaw has published numerous articles and has presented at a number of symposia on various Latter-day Saint scriptural topics. For a complete look at his publications and presentations,

see [here](#).

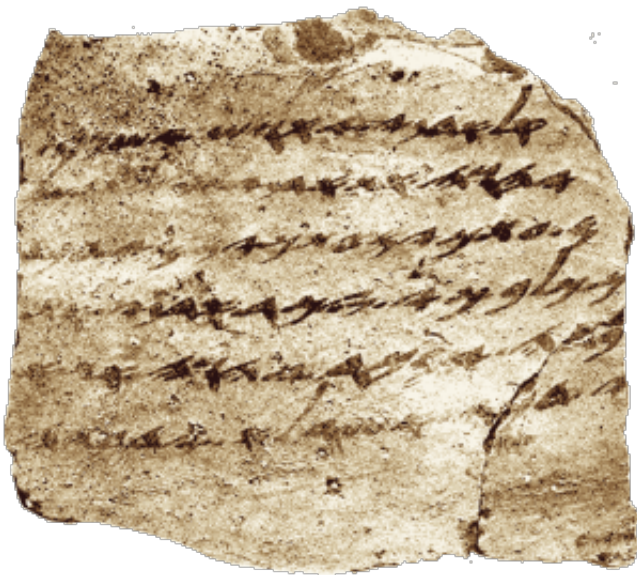
**[3]:** For those unaware of or otherwise unfamiliar with the corpus of Enochic pseudepigrapha, my good friend Colby Townsend provides an overview of this literature in an appendix.

**[4]:** Bradshaw and Larsen (p. 300, n. 35) cite Charles Walker's 1881 diary entry of a conversation he had with William Allen where Allen attributed the quote to Joseph Smith.

**[5]:** E-mail from Jeffrey Bradshaw to Stephen Smoot, sent on January 27, 2014.

This entry was posted in Book of Moses, Book reviews, LDS Scriptures and tagged Book of Moses, David J. Larsen, Enoch, In God's Image and Likeness, In God's Image and Likeness 2, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Noah, Pearl of Great Price, Tower of Babel on 26 January 2014 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2014/01/26/taking-the-stories-of-primeval-history-seriously-a-review-of-in-gods-image-and-likeness-2/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## Archaic Hebrew in the Old Testament (And What It Means for the Book of Mormon)



*One of the Lachish ostraca (7th century BCE), written in paleo-Hebrew script.*

Some time ago I posted a [blog entry](#) at *Interpreter* on the atheist polemicist Richard Dawkins' argument that the Book of Mormon is a fraud because Joseph Smith rendered his translation into Jacobean English. Dawkins' argument is (and I'm not making this up) that "[the Book of Mormon] was a 19th century book written in 16th century English. That's not the way people talked in the 19th century - it's a fake. So it's not beautiful, it's a work of charlatany." [Continue reading](#) →

This entry was posted in Anti-Mormon critics, Atheism, Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, LDS Scriptures, Uncate-

gorized on 2 January 2014 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2014/01/02/archaic-hebrew-in-the-old-testament-and-what-it-means-for-the-book-of-mormon/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## Apologetics and Falsifiability



*Brian D. Birch, director of the Religious Studies Program at Utah Valley University.*

The new edition of the *Mormon Studies Review* features a roundtable discussion between various scholars on the question of the state of Mormon studies. The roundtable kicks off with a thoughtful piece by Brian D. Birch, whose argument has two components. “On the one hand, I seek to argue that Mormon studies absent theological and apologetic voices is artificially exclusionary and unproductive. On the other hand, I argue that the appeal to religious authority in deflecting critical arguments can be equally inappropriate and detrimental.”<sup>[1]</sup> It is an aspect of Birch’s first point that I shall pay attention to in this blog post. His second point will have to wait for another day. [Continue reading →](#)

This entry was posted in Apologetics, General, Uncategorized and tagged apologetics, Brian D. Birch, FARMS, Mormon Studies Review, review on 14 December 2013 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2013/12/14/apologetics-and-falsifiability/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## “By His Own Hand, Upon Papyrus”: Another Look

When the Book of Abraham was first published in March 1842, the title of the work, as it appeared in the *Times and Seasons*, read thusly: “A TRANSLATION Of some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands, from the Catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt, called the BOOK OF ABRAHAM, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.”<sup>[1]</sup> A look at the manuscripts of the Book of Abraham shows that this explanatory “title,” as it were, for the Book of Abraham dates to the earliest stages of the book’s production. Our earliest (surviving) manuscript for the Book of Abraham, which Brian Hauglid designates Ab1,



*Detail from "Abraham Casting Out Hagar and Ishmael"  
(1657) by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri.*

and which the scholars at the Joseph Smith Papers Project date to "Summer–Fall 1835," reads: "Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the CataCombs of Egypt."**[2]** [Continue reading →](#)

This entry was posted in Book of Abraham, LDS Scriptures and tagged Abraham, Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith Papyri on 17 November 2013 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2013/11/17/by-his-own-hand-upon-papyrus-another-look/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## Egyptology and the Book of Abraham: An Interview with Egyptologist Kerry Muhlestein



*Kerry Muhlestein, associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.*

Mormon fascination with the ancient world stems largely from an exotic corpus of writings found in the canon of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. One book in the Church's canon, the Book of Abraham, which Joseph Smith claimed to be an inspired translation of some ancient Egyptian papyri, has captured Mormon imagination with a vibrant narrative involving the eponymous biblical patriarch, human sacrifice, far-off lands, divine encounters and a grand cosmology.

One BYU professor, Kerry Muhlestein, has devoted a good portion of his academic career (over a decade) investigating the saga of the Book of Abraham. Muhlestein, who holds a PhD in Egyptology from UCLA, is an associate professor of ancient scripture at BYU. According to his faculty bio on the BYU Religious Education website, Muhlestein "is the director of the BYU

Egypt Excavation Project,” which has led successful archaeological digs in Egypt, and has academic expertise in fields including “Ancient Egypt, Hebrew Bible, [and the] Pearl of Great Price.” [Continue reading →](#)

This entry was posted in Book of Abraham, LDS History, LDS Scriptures and tagged Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith Papyri, Kerry Muhlestein on 14 November 2013 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2013/11/14/egyptology-and-the-book-of-abraham-an-interview-with-egyptologist-kerry-muhlestein/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## Joseph Smith, Richard Dawkins, and the Language of Translation

The atheist controversialist Richard Dawkins has, on a few occasions, centered Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon in his polemical crosshairs. When he does speak about Mormonism, Mr. Dawkins typically brings up the Jacobean English of the Book of Mormon as evidence against its authenticity. In his aggressively anti-religious book *The God Delusion*, for example, Mr. Dawkins dismisses Joseph Smith as the “enterprisingly mendacious inventor” of the Book of Mormon, which Mr. Dawkins sneeringly writes off as “a whole new bogus American history, written in bogus seventeenth-century English.”<sup>1</sup>

This line of argumentation has been repeated by Mr. Dawkins on a number of occasions. When he ambushed the Latter-day Saint rock star Brandon Flowers on Swedish television, Mr. Dawkins once again repeated his favorite criticism against the Book of Mormon. “I have to say that when I read the book of Mormon recently, what impressed me was that this was an obvious fake,” he informed an unsuspecting Flowers. But what made it as such an obvious fake to Mr. Dawkins? “This was a 19th century book written in 16th century English. That’s not the way people talked in the 19th century – it’s a fake. So it’s not beautiful, it’s a work of charlatany.”<sup>2</sup>

Finally, as he addressed a group of unknown size, Mr. Dawkins, who could hardly contain his bewildered disdain, exhaustedly complained that people in this day and age still believe the “mountebank” Joseph Smith, “who wrote a bogus book---the Book of Mormon---[and] although he was writing in the 19th century chose to write it in 17th century English.” “Why don’t people see through that?” Mr. Dawkins asked in perplexity.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, for Mr. Dawkins, the King James idiom in the Book of Mormon somehow disproves it’s a translation of an ancient document.<sup>4</sup> Although Mr. Dawkins has not afforded us a thorough explanation backed with evidence and logic as to why he subscribes to this belief, and has offered nothing more than dogmatic assertions, he’s made his opinions very clear.<sup>5</sup>



I've always found this criticism amusing, if for no other reason than it betrays the fact that Mr. Dawkins doesn't seem to have much experience translating languages (if he has, I'd be happy to be corrected). There is a very simple explanation for why Joseph Smith would have rendered his translation of the Book of Mormon into Jacobean English, which has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> But all amusement aside, and instead of focusing on the question of *why* the Book of Mormon was translated into early modern English, which has been more than adequately explained by others, I want instead to draw attention to biblical scholar E. A. Speiser's translation of the celebrated Akkadian creation myth *Enuma Elish*, and ask Mr. Dawkins a few questions.

Speiser, who has also provided us a valuable translation of the book of Genesis,<sup>7</sup> published his translation of the *Enuma Elish* in 1958 with Princeton University Press.<sup>8</sup> What follows are a few pertinent excerpts.<sup>9</sup>

Speiser's translation contained in Pritchard's abridgement begins at the call of the god Marduk to be the champion of the divine council against the evil chaos monster Tiamat.

*Thou art the most honored of the great gods,*

*Thy decree is unrivaled, thy command is Anu.*

*Thou, Marduk, art the most honored of the great gods,*

*Thy decree is unrivaled, thy word is Anu.*

...

*O Marduk, thou art indeed our avenger.*

*We have granted thee kingship over the universe entire.*

*When in the Assembly thou sittest, thy word shall be supreme.*

When the gods praise Marduk, they speak as follows.

*Lord, truly thy decree is first among gods.*

*Say but to wreck or create; it shall be.*

*Open thy mouth: the cloth will vanish.*

Later we read of the terrible battle between Marduk and Tiamat, wherein the angry chaos goddess lets forth a cry.

*Too important art thou for the lord of the gods*

*to rise up against thee!*

*Is it in their place that they have gathered, or in thy place?*

An impatient Marduk returns Tiamat's insult with his own.

*Why art thou risen, art haughtily exalted,*

*Thou hast charged thine own heart to stir up conflict,*

*. . . sons reject their own fathers,*

*Whilst thou, who has born them,*

*hast foresworn love!*

...

*Stand thou up, that I and thou meet in single combat!*

Marduk eventually defeats Tiamat and from her spoiled carcass fashions the cosmos. Addressing the moon, Marduk gives his orders to the heavens.

*Thou shalt have luminous horns to signify six days,*

...

*When the sun overtakes thee at the base of heaven,*

*Diminish thy crown and retrogress to light.*

*At the time of disappearance approach thou the course of the sun,*

*And on the twenty-ninth thou shalt again stand in opposition to the sun.*

The myth concludes with Marduk being exalted and praised in the divine council for his majesty and power in defeating Tiamat and establishing the cosmos.

With the preceding in mind, my questions for Mr. Dawkins are as follows:

1. If we're to reject the Book of Mormon as a fabrication because it's a purported translation that reads in Jacobean English, what are we to do with Speiser's translation of the *Enuma Elish*?
2. Does Speiser's Jacobean English translation of the *Enuma Elish* bring into doubt the antiquity of the text, as Joseph Smith's Jacobean English translation of the Book of Mormon supposedly does? Indeed, is Speiser's translation "a work of charlatantry" because he produced it in the 20th century and yet wrote it in 17th century English, which is "not the way people talk" these days?<sup>10</sup> (Incidentally, as it turns out people actually did "talk like that" in the 19th century, both in religious and non-religious discourse.)<sup>11</sup>
3. Why would Princeton University publish a translation of an ancient text rendered in Jacobean English if such was an illegitimate maneuver?
4. Do you allow Speiser to utilize Jacobean English in his translation because he's translating an indisputably ancient text, whereas you do not grant Joseph Smith the same courtesy because he claimed to translate a text of disputed authenticity? If so, why? On what rational grounds do you create this exception?

There are more questions that come to mind, but these four should be sufficient for now. I hope the point of this brief article is clear. If we're to allow Speiser to render his translation of an ancient text into King James id-

iom in the 1950s (!), then surely we must also allow Joseph Smith to do such in the 19th century. Not to do so is to employ a tremendous double standard.

There are legitimate questions one can raise about the provenance of the Book of Mormon, including questions about Joseph Smith's method of translation, but Mr. Dawkins' naïve and uninformed criticism on this point is not one of them.<sup>12</sup> Those looking for a rigorous analysis of the translation and language of the Book of Mormon would do well to look elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

\*This entry also appears at [Interpreter](#).

1. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2nd. ed. (Great Britain: Mariner Books, 2008), 234. [[↔](#)]
2. Katherine Weber, "Brandon Flowers of 'The Killers' Defends Mormon Faith Against Richard Dawkins," online at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/rock-star-brandon-flowers-defends-mormon-faith-to-richard-dawkins-81826/>.
3. See "Richard Dawkins talking about Mormonism and Joseph Smith," online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d95M8jk3mv0>.
4. Actually, I genuinely wonder if Mr. Dawkins is aware of the fact that the Book of Mormon purports to be a translation. His routinely slip-shod comments on the book have only shown he's aware that it was published in the 19th century, but not much more.
5. That Mr. Dawkins would hold to such dogmatism is odd, considering how much he esteems himself to be a man of science and reason.
6. See generally Brant Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), *passim*, but especially 302 ([available here](#)); Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 212–218 ([available here](#)); Daniel L. Belnap, "The King James Bible and the Book of Mormon," in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 162–81. On the English of the Book of Mormon, see also Royal Skousen, "The Archaic Vocabulary of the Book of Mormon," *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 25, no. 5 (2005): 2–6. If Mr. Dawkins wants to be taken seriously, I'd advise he quickly brush up on this literature.
7. E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964).
8. James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: Volume 1, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), 31-39. As the copyright page indicates, Speiser's translation in this volume is an abridgement found in another Princeton publication, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, published in 1950.
9. I have, for the sake of readability, silently omitted Speiser's critical notations of the text.
10. Incidentally, Speiser is not the only modern translator to render his translation of an ancient text into Jacobean English. See Matthew Roper, "A Black Hole That's Not So Black," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/2 (1994): 165–67; John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper, "Joseph Smith's Use of the Apocrypha:

Shadow or Reality?" *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 334–37; Nibley, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 217–218. John A. Tvedtnes, "Answering Mormon Scholars," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/2 (1994): 235–37, also shows how the language of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was influenced by Jacobean (KJV) English. We might ask Mr. Dawkins if he considers Abraham Lincoln a faker because "people didn't talk like that" in the 19th century.

11. Eran Shalev, "'Written in the Style of Antiquity': Pseudo-Biblicism and the Early American Republic, 1770–1830," *Church History* 79/4 (2010): 800–826. Shalev devotes a few words on the Book of Mormon. "The tradition of writing in biblical style [in the early 19th century] paved the way for the Book of Mormon by conditioning Americans to reading American texts, and texts about America, in biblical language. Yet the Book of Mormon, an American narrative told in the English of the King James Bible, has thrived long after Americans abandoned the practice of recounting their affairs in biblical language. It has thus been able to survive and flourish for almost two centuries, not because, but in spite of the literary ecology of the mid-nineteenth century and after. The Book of Mormon became a testament to a widespread cultural practice of writing in biblical English that could not accommodate to the monumental transformations America endured in the first half of nineteenth century." Shalev, "'Written in the Style of Antiquity,'" 826, footnotes silently removed.
12. The careful reader will note that Mr. Dawkins is not claiming the Book of Mormon is false because of apparent textual dependency on the KJV for the Book of Mormon's biblical citations. (I'd be surprised if his understanding of the Book of Mormon was informed enough to even recognize such.) Rather, he's arguing that it's false by the mere fact that it's imitating KJV language. There is a world of difference between these two criticisms. One is legitimate and worthy of careful analysis. The other is bogus, and is perpetuated only by those who are ignorant of how translations work.
13. I suggest that the reader begin (but not end) with the work of Royal Skousen, which can be conveniently accessed online here: <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/authors/?authorID=57>. Other useful material by Skousen can be accessed here: <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/25-years-of-research-what-we-have-learned-about-the-book-of-mormon-text/>. Since he has made himself a commentator on the language of the Book of Mormon, I am particularly interested if Mr. Dawkins could address the information uncovered in Skousen's research concerning non-English Hebraisms. See Royal Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 38. "What is important here is to realize that the original text of the Book of Mormon apparently contains expressions that are not characteristic of English at any place or time, in particular neither Joseph Smith's upstate New York dialect nor the King James Bible. . . . [T]he potential Hebraisms found in the original text are consistent with the belief, but do not prove, that the source text is related to the language of the Hebrew Bible."

This entry was posted in Anti-Mormon critics, Apologetics, Atheism, Book of Mormon on 28 August 2013 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2013/08/28/joseph-smith-richard-dawkins-and-the-language-of-translation/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## New Research on the Book of Abraham

Fascinating new research regarding the Book of Abraham has been published in the most recent edition of the *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture*, published by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. The two articles are by Egyptologists Kerry Muhlestein (PhD, UCLA) and John Gee (PhD, Yale). [Continue reading →](#)

This entry was posted in Book of Abraham, LDS Scriptures and tagged Book of Abraham, critics, Joseph Smith Papyri, Pearl of Great Price on 8 August 2013 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2013/08/08/new-research-on-the-book-of-abraham/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## Reports of the Death of the Church are Greatly Exaggerated

There has been a bit of buzz (mostly amongst ex- and anti-Mormons) recently over some remarks of Elder Marlin K. Jensen, an emeritus member of the 1st Quorum of the Seventy and former Church Historian and Recorder, who is alleged to have said that, thanks to Google, the omniscient fount of all knowledge, members of the Church are leaving “in droves”. A titanic exodus of members, the likes of which have never before been seen, are leaving the Church, Elder Jensen is reported by many on the Internet to have said. This, the claim on the Internet goes, is because the seedy truth of Mormon history and doctrine, kept secret by a conniving leadership, has been exposed by intrepid researchers on the web. [Continue reading →](#)

This entry was posted in Anti-Mormon critics, Apologetics, General, LDS History, News stories and tagged apologetics, Church membership, Internet, Marlin K. Jensen, members on 15 January 2013 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2013/01/15/reports-of-the-death-of-the-church-are-greatly-exaggerated/>] by Stephen Smoot.

## Book Review: Shaken Faith Syndrome

### **Shaken Faith Syndrome and the Case for Faith**

*Stephen O. Smoot*

*Abstract: Michael R. Ash is a Mormon apologist who has written two thoughtful books and a number of insightful arti-*

*cles exploring a wide range of controversial issues within Mormonism. His recent book Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One's Testimony in the Face of Criticism and Doubt is an outstanding apologetic resource for individuals searching for faith-promoting answers that directly confront anti-Mormon allegations and criticisms. Ash does an excellent job in both succinctly explaining many of the criticisms leveled against The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and articulating compelling answers to these criticisms.*

Review of Michael R. Ash. *Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One's Testimony in the Face of Criticism and Doubt*. Redding, CA: Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, 2008. x + 301 pp., with index. \$19.95 (paperback).

"Wherefore Didst Thou Doubt?"  
([Matthew 14:31](#))

A favorite scripture of Latter-day Saint scholars is [Doctrine and Covenants 88:118](#): "And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith." While it is usually the last phrase ("seek [Page 106]learning, even by study and also by faith") of this scripture that resonates with LDS scholars, the first part of this passage is equally profound. As "all have not faith," or, one might say, have had their faith challenged or shaken, we are to teach each other words of wisdom from the best books. This scripture is a mandate to bolster each other's faith as much as it is an invitation to pursue truth. [Continue reading →](#)

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## The Mormon Moment: A Religion News Service Guide – Review

Much has been said in popular media about the so-called "Mormon Moment". The accuracy and fairness of recent media coverage of Mormonism has been a mixed bag, to say the least. It is sad to admit that there are plenty of media personalities who know next to nothing about Mormonism, and yet feel unconstrained to opine on this or that subject relating to Mormon doctrine or history. Unsurprisingly, those who are the most ignorant of Mormonism usually choose to write about the most complex and controversial aspects of Mor-

monism, such as polygamy, Mormon racial history, and esoteric aspects of Mormon belief and practice best left untouched by non-Mormon novices of Mormon history and doctrine. (Andrew Sullivan, I'm looking at *you*.)

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This entry was posted in Book reviews, Interfaith Dialogue, LDS Culture, News stories, Politics, Racial Issues, Uncategorized and tagged Mitt Romney, Mormon Moment on 4 November 2012 [<http://blog.fairmormon.org/2012/11/04/the-mormon-moment-a-religion-news-service-guide-review/>] by Stephen Smoot.

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