
Third Convention

Other Stories

Thomas W Murphy, PhD
Mormonism Live!
November 23, 2022

<https://edcc.academia.edu/ThomasMurphy>



Mormonism Live 101

Episode 101 included a good overview of some of the history relating to the Third Convention (a schism in the LDS Church in Mexico in 1937).

F. LaMond Tullis (one of your key sources) tells a story of rupture and healing. To make this story work, the Third Convention needed to fade away.

There is an “other” story or better yet, multiple stories, Indigenous ones, in which the Third Convention and the issues it raised are still with us today.

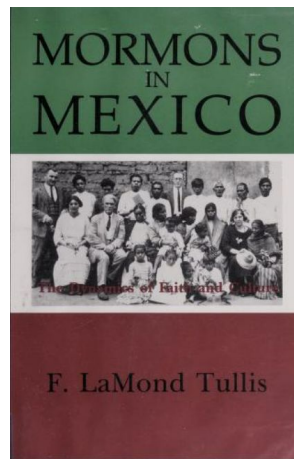
A key issue is whether or not the Book of Mormon is more of a settler colonial or a decolonizing text?



A Shepherd to Mexico's Saints: Arwell L. Pierce and the Third Convention

*National pride, local suspicion, and
perceptions of insensitivity were overcome as a
group of Mexican Saints were lovingly returned to the fold.*

F. LaMond Tullis



Review of F. LaMond Tullis (JMH 28.1, 2002: 282-3)

While Tullis makes an effort to present a balanced portrait of ethnic conflict in the LDS Church in Mexico, he occasionally deviates from this objective. Tullis emphasizes the inexperience, development, and progress of Mexican leaders (110) but not the corresponding inexperience, development, and progress of Anglo-American missionaries in Mexico. For example, by 1913 some Mormons in central Mexico may have had as many as twenty-five years of experience in the Church. In a church in which most leadership is inexperienced, it seems a bit unfair to single out the development of Mexican leadership and ignore the similar inexperience of Anglo-American missionaries, several of whom had been adults for less time than many Mexicans had been members of the Church. In a more balanced moment, Tullis criticizes the missionaries for their zealous focus on record-keeping while overlooking the Mexican leadership's ability to effectively construct buildings, conduct meetings, and attend to the spiritual needs of their members (112).

Tullis perpetuates American ethnocentrism even when he attempts to challenge it. His analysis of the contribution of Mexican nationalism to the ethnic conflict that culminated in the formation of a schismatic group known as the Third Convention (1937-46) needs to be balanced by similar attention to the impact of nationalism and racism in the United States upon the attitudes of Church leaders and missionaries. In his discussion of the first of three conventions that eventually led to a schism, Tullis notes that the Mexicans' request for a mission president of their own nationality amid laws disfranchising foreign clerics "seemed rational." Yet "beneath the surface ran a strong current of emotion . . . that made Mexican saints sensitive—one might even say touchy" (117). He refers to the Mexicans' "wounded pride" (119), calls them "defensive . . . insensitive . . . rebellious and angry" and depicts them as "pricked by ethnic pride and their own declining leadership opportunities" (137). Meanwhile, Tullis characterizes Anglo-American Harold W. Pratt's "severe trials as mission president"

(1934-38) as "both unfortunate and unjust" (119). Tullis not only overlooks the impact of American racism and nationalism, he even appears to deny any nationalistic attitudes among North American Mormons (125). The missionaries from the United States who were reportedly unfamiliar with nationalism had to overcome the "suspicion, distrust, and prejudice" of Mexican Saints. A more balanced perspective would have considered the equally urgent need for inexperienced missionaries to overcome their own suspicion and prejudice against Mexicans as they developed and progressed as missionaries.

Instead of forthrightly addressing North American prejudice against Mexicans Tullis says the First Presidency was reluctant to select Mexican leadership for the mission in 1936 because the Mexican church was comparatively youthful. Tullis suggests that Isaías Juárez, president of the mission's Mexican district who allied himself with Harold W. Pratt over the Third Convention, "probably also understood the church's traditional position of sending in 'outsiders' where the faith is young" (138). This might seem like a logical explanation until one takes a closer look. Fifty-seven years (1879-1936) of local practice and growth in central Mexico amid tremendous challenges like the insufficient translation of scriptures, minimal support for building construction, multiple withdrawals of missionaries, the Mexican Revolution, and the Cristero rebellion made the Mexican Saints stalwart and seasoned practitioners of the gospel. Even Tullis acknowledges later that the leaders of the Third Convention "were experienced and dedicated former Mormon officials" (147). The charges of paternalism and second-class treatment in the Church advanced by *convencionistas* remain far better explanations for the conflict than Tullis's suggestion that the faith was young in Mexico.

My Story

I first read F. LaMond Tullis' *Mormons in Mexico* (USU Press, 1987) while conducting ethnographic research with Latter-day Saints in Antigua, Guatemala during the summer of 1993.

Guatemalan saints called Anglos *gentiles* and asserted direct descent from Abraham, a claim echoing the "apostasy" of the Third Convention and George P. Lee (Navajo).

Published a comparative analysis of latter-day ethnic identities in: [*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29.1 \(1996\): 177-92.](#)

Reinventing Mormonism: Guatemala as Harbinger of the Future?

Thomas W. Murphy

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF HER FAMILY, Marta Angelica Solizo forms and paints incredibly detailed ceramic Nativity scenes. A standard set consists of fourteen pieces: three sheep, a bull, four donkeys laden with corn, squash, flowers, firewood, three wise men with a flute, a ceramic pot, and a colorful bag; and, of course, José, María, and the baby Jesus lying in a manger. The appeal of this assortment derives from its local character exemplified in the brightly colored, hand-woven textiles adorning the Mayan figurines.¹

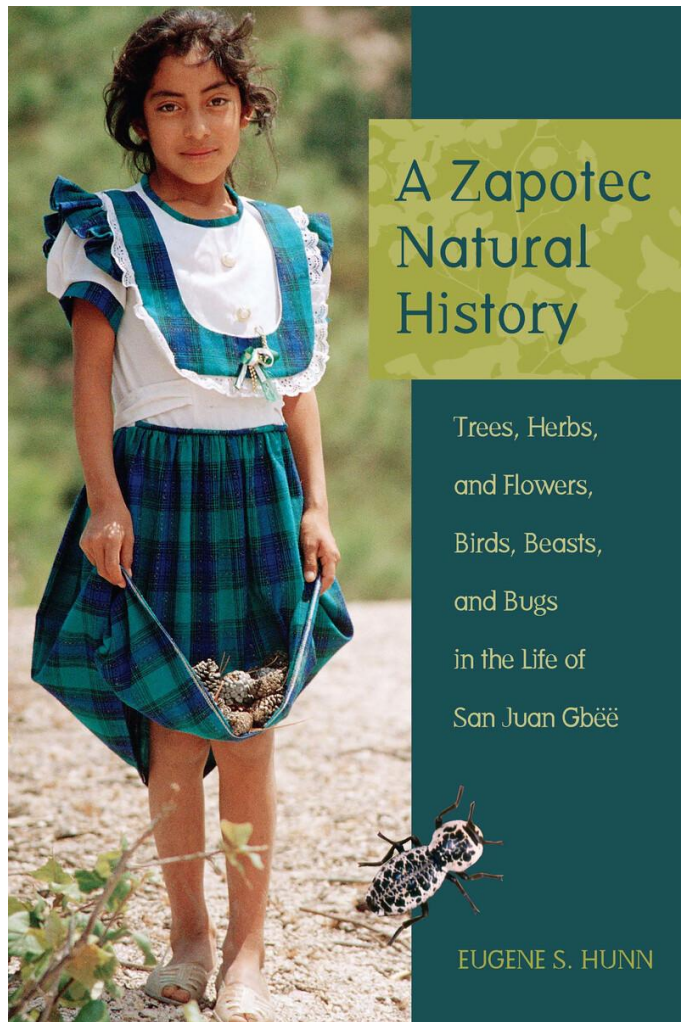
Oaxaca

I was an undergraduate at the University of Iowa during the 1993 research project in Guatemala.

I enrolled in a PhD program in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Washington in 1994.

I had a longstanding interest in Mexico spurred by stories of my paternal grandfather and great grandparents who had settled in Oaxaca, Mexico during the Porfiriato (1876-80, 1884-1911) and left during the Mexican Revolution (1910-20).

During the summer of 1996 I had the opportunity to work in Oaxaca on the Zapotec Ethnobiology Project as a research assistant under the leadership of Dr. Eugene S. Hunn. This was a study of the relationship between people, plants, and animals in a remote Zapotec community in Sierra Madre mountains of southern Mexico.



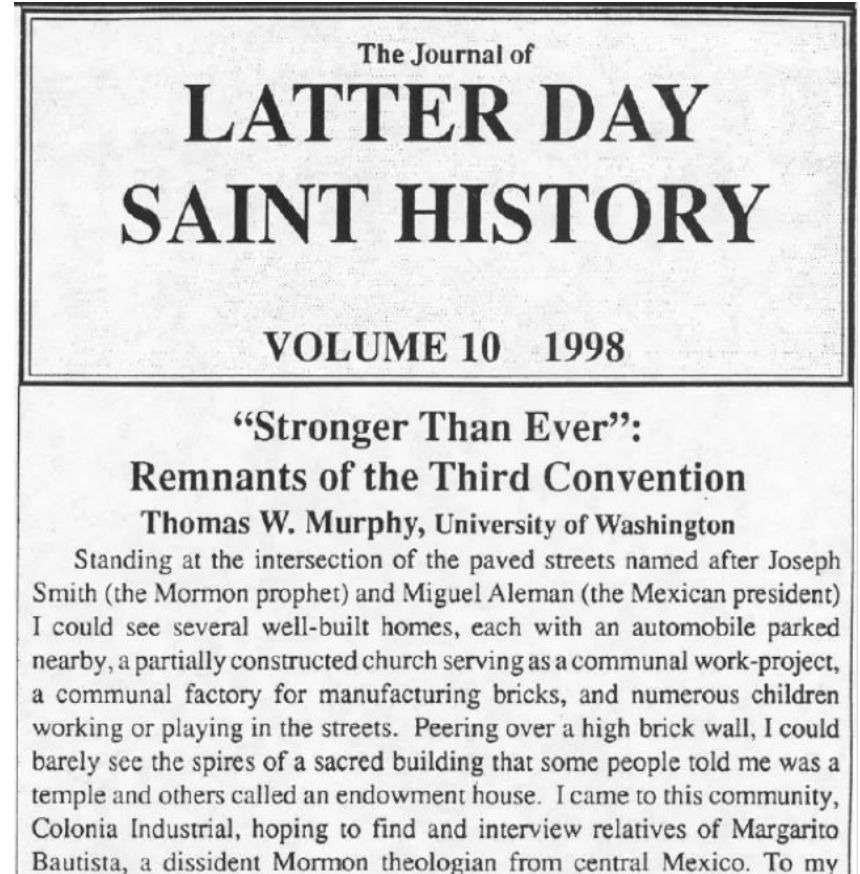
Remnants in Ozumba?

I visited Ozumba, Mexico during the summer of 1996 while on break from the Zapotec Ethnobiology Project.

Tullis had told me in 1994 that he didn't think that Bautista's community still existed. Mexican historian Agrícola Lozano Herrera had claimed that the colony had almost disappeared after Margarito Bautista's death in 1961.

I returned in winter, summer, and fall of 1997 to mark fiftieth anniversary, while studying at *El Colegio de México*, and attending the American Society for Ethnohistory meeting in Mexico City.

[Journal of Latter-day Saint History 10 \(1998\): 1, 8-11.](#)



An Other Story

A thriving community in Colonia Industrial in Ozumba told a different story than Tullis.

They described themselves as “stronger than ever,” took pride in living plural marriage and the United Order. They had even built their own temple or endowment house.

[Sunstone 20.3 \(1997\): 50.](#)

S U N S T O N E

FIFTY YEARS OF UNITED ORDER IN MEXICO



In the center of Colonia Industrial, on the street named for Joseph Smith, stands an endowment house, a product of community efforts.

By Thomas Murphy

THE HISTORY of Mormonism in Mexico reached a new landmark early in 1997 when Colonia

By 1937, the LDS church in Mexico split in two after efforts by Mexican Mormons to obtain greater access to education, translated materials, and temple

Industrial in 1947 as a place of gathering for Mexican Mormons who desired to live the fullness of the gospel, i.e., the United Order and plural marriage.

Bautista and his followers continued to call themselves Mormons, but for legal purposes, they established a church now known as El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud (The Kingdom of God in its Fullness). Sought out by other polygamists, Bautista associated

coordinate financial and labor contributions to the community.

The people of Colonia Industrial have faced considerable challenges, but their successes demonstrate that the communitarian spirit still lives and thrives in places far from the Great Basin. Beautifully decorated and well-built brick and wooden homes have replaced the small huts that pioneering peasants with minimal resources constructed amidst prejudice and discrimination from both Catholics and Latter-day Saints in Ozumba. Regular harvests of corn and wheat exemplify the success of communally managed agricultural lands. In the center of Colonia Industrial, on the street named for Joseph Smith, stands an ornate temple, or endowment house, a product of the community efforts. Next to the temple, members have begun constructing a large new chapel supported by donations of money and labor.

his small community with fundamentalist leader Joseph W. Musser. Musser's appointment of Bautista as an apostle of the Council and his promotion of

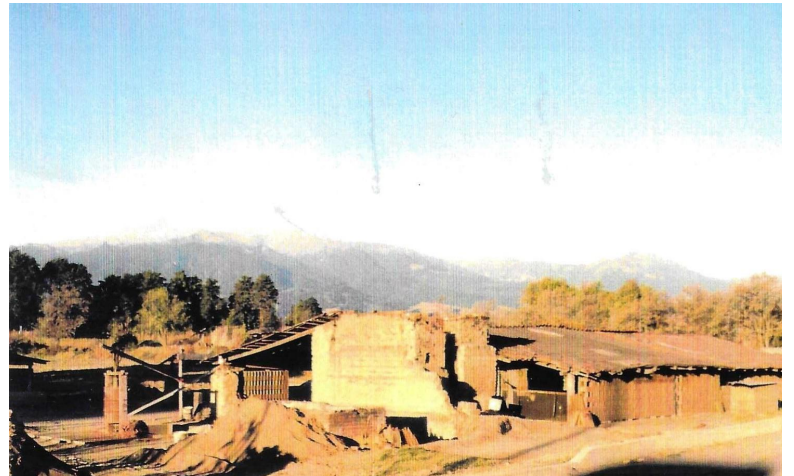
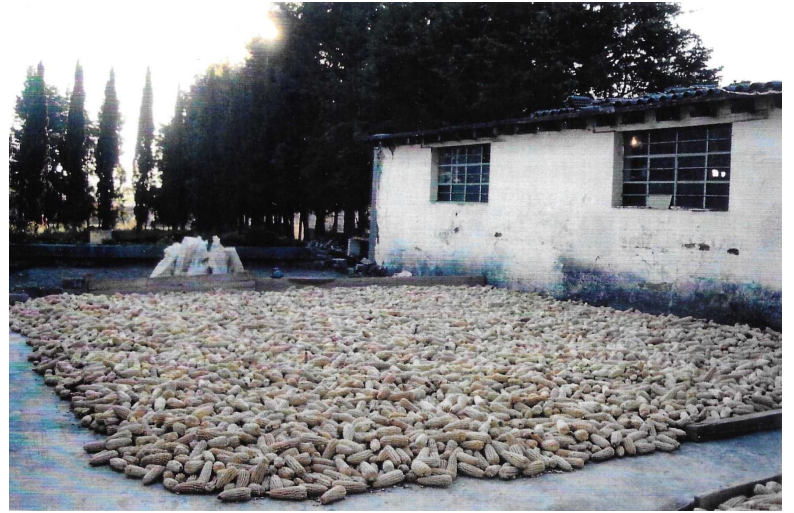
Temple & address (Photos by K. Murphy, Jan. 1997)



Nice homes in Colonia Industrial



Communal Industry



Communal Farms

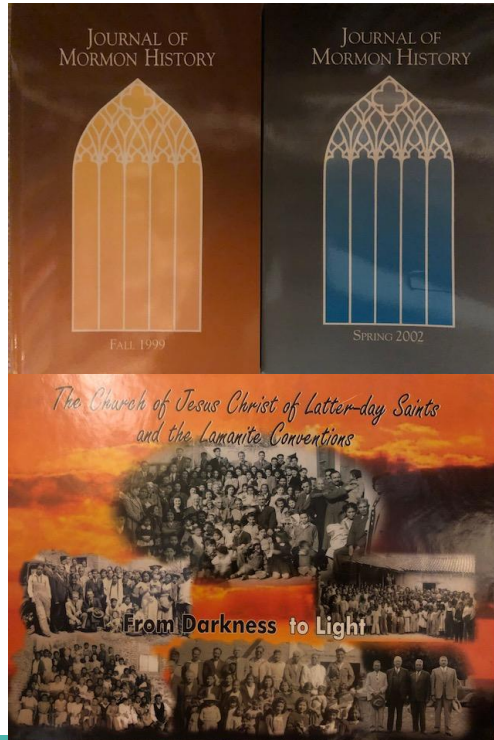


Museum of Mormon History in Mexico/of the Americas

Museums founded by Fernando Gomez and Sergio Pagaza collected historical documents and published accounts of Third Convention from a Mexican perspective.

I reviewed their early publications (mostly in Spanish) in the [Journal of Mormon History](#).

I encourage listeners to visit and support their museum in Provo, UT (across the street from BYU).



MUSEUM'S 25 YEAR ANNIVERSARY
– UNIQUE – HISTORIC – EDUCATIONAL –
– SPIRITUAL –



Ethnic Identity

The Third Convention became a case-study for how the LDS Church can attract people of color while teaching that a dark skin is a curse from God.

Latter-day Saints employ racial and ethnic imagery instrumentally, to serve particular needs at specific times and places.

Mexican Mormons reinterpreted racial doctrines in self-affirming manners, claiming a Lamanite identity and centering the church's past, present, and future in Mexico.

Euro-american church leaders tolerate diffuse interpretations as long as members don't challenge their authority.

[Ethnohistory 46.3 \(1999\): 451-480.](#)

From Racist Stereotype to Ethnic Identity: Instrumental Uses of Mormon Racial Doctrine

Thomas W. Murphy, *University of Washington*

Abstract. This essay examines the ability of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to attract people of color in Mexico in the early twentieth century despite central teachings that associated a dark skin with a curse from God. Although Mormon theology is imbued with colonial metaphors and racially charged symbolism, the meanings that Mormons apply to those shared symbols are not predetermined by church leaders or sacred texts. Instead, they reflect the instrumental needs of individual Mormons in particular times and places. Euro-American Mormons in the United States in the nineteenth century found rhetorical ammunition to condemn Indians during attacks, justify colonization, promote evangelization, chastise slackers, legitimate prosperity, and make attractive promises to potential American Indian and Mexican converts. Mexican converts to Mormonism have reinterpreted Mormon racial doctrine in self-affirming manners. They found a fountain of imagery that made sense out of present difficulties, glorified ancient Mexico, promised a greater future, and justified challenges to religious authorities from Utah. Euro-American church leaders in Utah tolerated diffuse interpretations of Mormon racial doctrine only to the extent that such claims did not undermine their own positions of power.

Other Histories

The Third Convention became a case-study of colonial bias in Mormon historiography.

New Mormon History struggles with writings of Agrícol Lozano Herrera and Margarito Bautista Valencia, Nahua Mormons writing history in their own terms.

Lamanites, the others of the Book of Mormon, became selves in their writings. Lozano internalized LDS racism, while Bautista reversed it back upon Gentiles.

[Journal of Mormon History 26.2 \(2000\): 179-214](#)
& ["Imagining Lamanites: Native Americans and the Book of Mormon"](#) (PhD dissertation, 2003).

OTHER MORMON HISTORIES: LAMANITE SUBJECTIVITY IN MEXICO

Thomas W. Murphy

[A] Mormon who was a national Church authority in Mexico attended an academic event on "minority religious groups." In order to rebut a Marxist anthropologist who asserted that the "sects" erode indigenous cultures, he stood before the public and stated, "I am a Nahua, I have always been and I will not stop being so because anthropologists determine that I am not."¹

Agrícol Lozano Herrera, president of the LDS temple in Mexico

THOMAS W. MURPHY <tmurphy@edcc.edu> is chair of the Department of Anthropology at Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, Washington, and a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Washington.

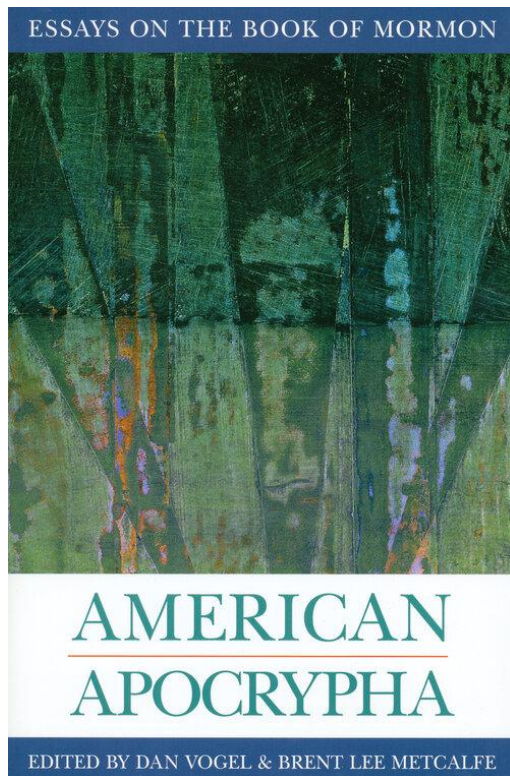
Funding Challenges

Initial research trips funded by Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships and conducted at my own expense.

My funding applications to National Science Foundation, Wenner Gren Foundation, and Social Science Research Council for longer ethnographic fieldwork were unsuccessful.

An unsolicited offer of funding in 2001 to write an article on DNA and the Book of Mormon took my career in a very different direction.

Thanksgiving eve (today) marks the twentieth anniversary of the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against me for publication of ["Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics"](#) in [*American Apocrypha* \(2002\)](#).



3. Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics

Thomas W. Murphy

IN MARCH 2000 SCOTT WOODWARD, A PROFESSOR OF MICROBIOLOGY at Brigham Young University, launched a multi-million dollar study funded by philanthropists Ira Fulton and James Sorenson.¹ Their Molecular Genealogy Research Group (MGRG) is compiling a database of DNA and genealogical records that can be used to identify connections between present and past human beings. Applying data from DNA to trace family histories and linkages between populations offers considerable promise to Latter-day Saint genealogists.² It also constitutes a boost to broader scientific research into the history and geography of genes, as well as to global migration and world population histories.³ While the embrace of molecular research at an LDS-owned university may be a welcome development for many well-educated Mormons, this burgeoning interest may also provoke reconsideration of assumptions that have been long held by many, if not most, Mormons.

Some optimism was expressed by church members that such research would vindicate the Book of Mormon as an ancient document. The hope was that DNA would link Native Americans to ancient Israelites, buttressing LDS beliefs in a way that has not been forthcoming from archaeological, linguistic, historical, or morphological research. For those who held such an expectation, the data collected by MGRG and results of similar research projects have been disappointing.⁴ So

A decade long break from Mormon Studies

A job at Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, WA took my career in yet another direction. From about 2005 - 2015 I took a long break from Mormon Studies.

With ample funding from Learn and Serve America, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency, tribes, and others I focused my scholarship and attention on an environmental anthropology field school, founded in partnership with Coast Salish nations of Western Washington and British Columbia, Canada.

We evaluated and restored salmon and shellfish habitat, revitalized traditional foods, tracked and monitored wildlife, built ethnobotanical gardens and trails, hosted salmon festivals and powwows, and traveled on Tribal Canoe Journey.

Meanwhile scholarship on the Third Convention proceeded apace without me. Story of my return to Mormon Studies appears in [Decolonizing Mormonism](#) (2018).



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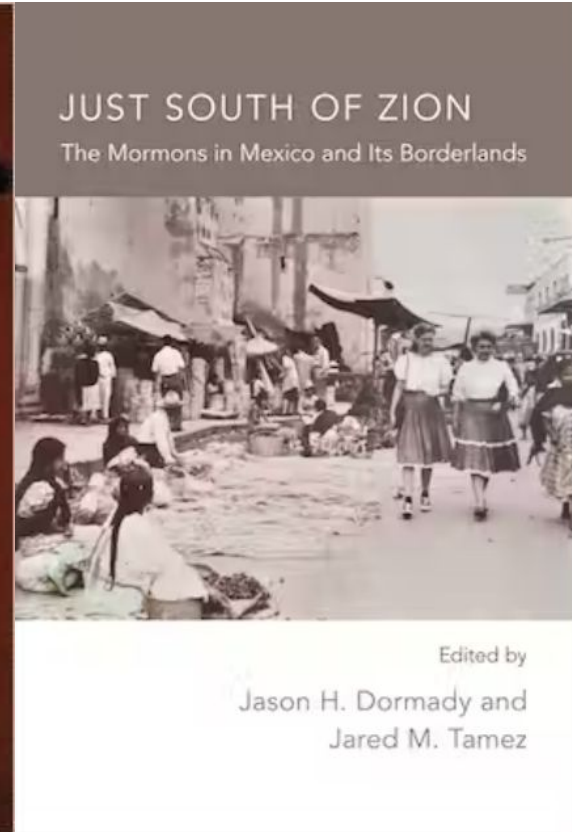
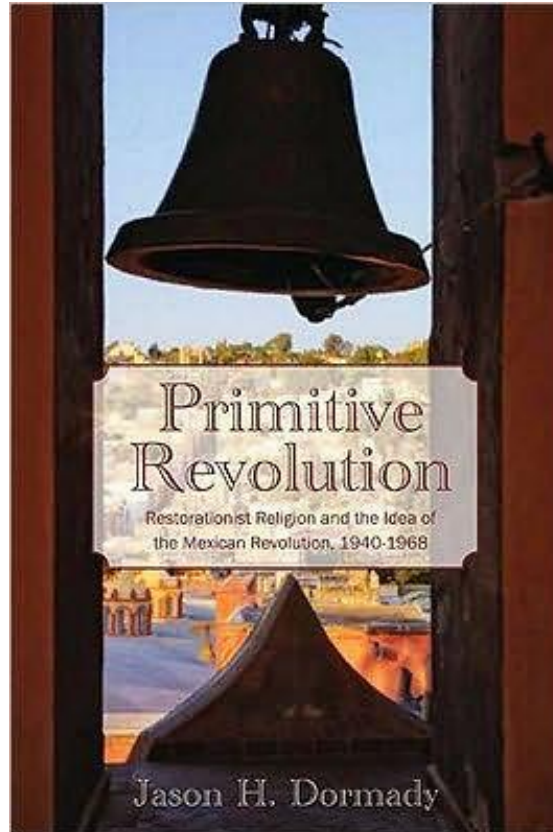


Primitive Religion & Just South of Zion

Dr. Jason Dormady, Professor of History at Central Washington University, has written and co-edited books that include chapters focusing on the Third Convention.

In [*Primitive Revolution*](#) Dormady (2011) examines *El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud* within the context of the Mexican revolution and church/state conflicts over the creation of a New Jerusalem in the state of Mexico.

[*Just South of Zion*](#) includes articles by Dr. Elisa Pulido and Dr. Stuart Parker (2015) examining the role of women in the Third Convention and a comparative intellectual history of Margarito Bautista and José Vasconcelos.

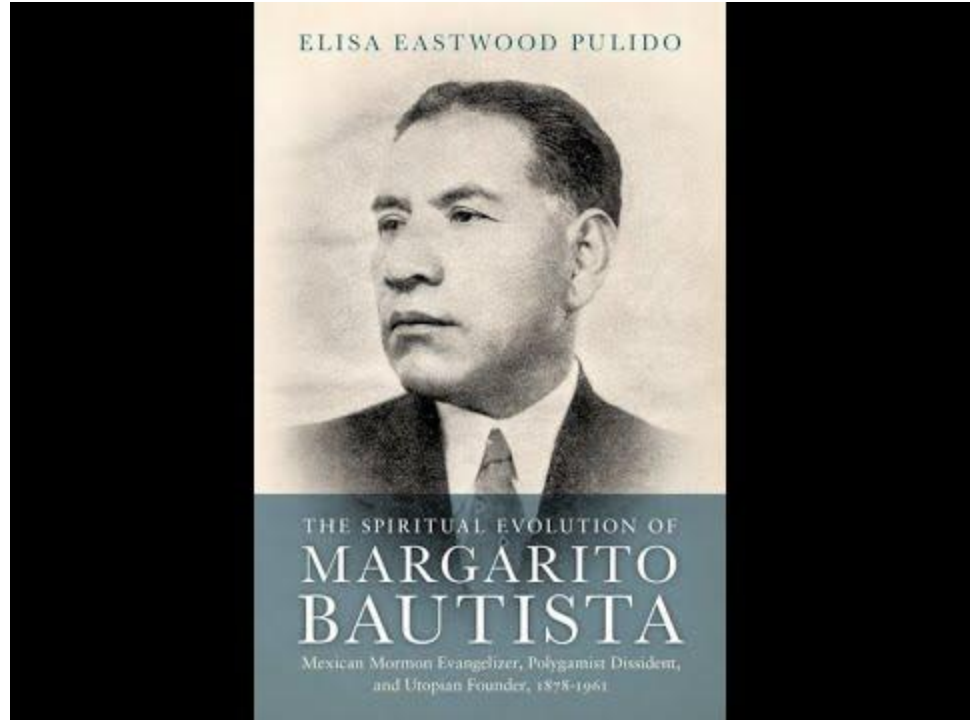


Biography of Margarito Bautista

Dr. Elisa Pulido who completed a PhD in religions of North America at Claremont Graduate University wrote a fascinating biography, [The Spiritual Evolution of Margarito Bautista: Mexican Mormon Evangelizer, Polygamist Dissident, and Utopian Founder \(2020\)](#).

The biography does an excellent job of placing Bautista and the Third Convention within an historical and cultural context of Central Mexico and Hispanic Utah. Highly recommended.

I interviewed Dr. Pulido for the Mormon History Association. The interview, available on [YouTube](#) and [Academia](#), includes a discount code for the purchase of the book.



Dr. Moroni Spencer Hernández de Olarte

History professor at Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM).
Published widely, mostly in Spanish, on the Mexican Revolution and Mormons, especially in the Ozumba/Amecameca/Atlautla or “Volcanos” region (central to the Third Convention).

Co-authored: [“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mexico,”](#) in [The Palgrave Handbook of Global Mormonism](#).



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MORONI SPENCER HERNÁNDEZ DE OLARTE
COORDINADOR



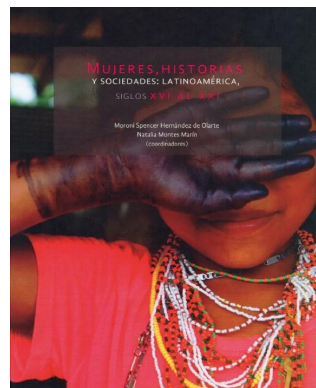
Entre la patria y el pueblo:
un acercamiento al proceso
revolucionario mexicano
en Amecameca

MORONI SPENCER HERNÁNDEZ DE OLARTE



Hechos y nombres:
Atlautla en el tiempo

MORONI SPENCER HERNÁNDEZ DE OLARTE



MUJERES, HISTORIAS
Y SOCIEDADES: LATINOAMÉRICA,
SIGLOS XVI-XXI

Moroni Spencer Hernández de Olarte
Patricia Montes Marín
(coautoras)



UNA AMISTAD
QUE FORJÓ
LA REVOLUCIÓN

Everardo González Vergara y Julia Córdova Cárdena

MORONI SPENCER HERNÁNDEZ DE OLARTE

Moroni's Analysis

logical teachings had handicapped them. Pratt brought in missionaries from the northern Anglo colonies, who arrived with overflowing enthusiasm. He began taking away some roles from native branch presidents and delegated these instead to the new missionaries. He also informed the district presidency that from that point on he would take charge of all important matters pertaining to the branches. These actions produced feelings of resentment toward Pratt and his young missionaries. Pratt and the Anglo missionaries seemed oblivious to the need to take into consideration Mexican culture and the fact that during years of essentially acting autonomously, local leaders had developed effective ways of filling their callings.

This administrative difficulty was exacerbated by the increasing force of what might be termed "Mexican religious nationalism." This nationalism extolled such general values and terms as homeland, flag, family, and "blood" (or Mexican racial identity) and was manifested in part by prohibition against foreign religious ministers being involved in Mexican religious affairs. Among some ethnic Mexican members of the LDS Church, Mexican religious nationalism took a particular form of viewing themselves as a particularly chosen people of the Lord. This view was forcefully set forth in a book written by Margarito Bautista, a highly intelligent Mexican member of the LDS Church. Using passages from the Book of Mormon, Bautista built the case that the Mexican people were what the Book of Mormon termed "Lamanites," a remnant of the Covenant House of Israel to whom it was prophesied Gentiles (in

378 R. E. COOPER AND M. S. H. DE OLARTE

the form of Anglo-Mormons) were to bring the gospel after which they would flourish and prosper.

Not appearing to appreciate these issues, Pratt's actions deepened a crack that would lead to a full-blown break. During 1934 and 1935, the division between portions of the local Mexican leadership/membership and the mission presidency became increasingly apparent. For Pratt, the changes he had made were necessary for the proper functioning of the mission. For local leaders—particularly for those in the Volcanoes Region—the changes were perceived as hurting the development of the church in Mexico.²³ Antoine W. Ivins had seemingly wanted to do nothing as a nominal mission president, and now Harold Pratt wanted to do it all. In both cases, local Mexican church leaders and members felt relegated and humiliated. The social conditions were now conducive for a much more radical movement to erupt than had occurred in the first two conventions five years earlier.

The event that triggered this

Note the colonial versus decolonizing readings of the Book of Mormon.

NEH Seminar on Mormonism and Mexico at Claremont GU

Fernando and Enriqueta Gomez donated their [Mormon Mexican History Collection](#), previously housed at the museum in Provo, to Claremont Graduate University (CGU).

CGU hosted a [National Endowment for Humanities Seminar](#) this past summer introducing a team of mostly young Chicano and Mormon Studies scholars to the collection, including the documentary history of the Third Convention.

CGU graduate student Stephanie Griswold and Dr. Christina Rosetti from Utah Tech are producing new research on Fundamentalist perspectives on Bautista and the Third Convention.

The poster is for an exhibit titled "Unboxing the Fernando R. & Enriqueta Gomez Mormon Mexican History Collection" at The Claremont Colleges Library. It features a blue header with the library's name and a logo. Below the header, there is a paragraph describing the collection's contents, including congregational and mission records, poetry, and personal narratives. A second paragraph states that the collection is the most extensive and publicly accessible in the world of Mormon history among Spanish-speaking Latter-day Saints in the Americas. The poster includes an "EXHIBIT DETAILS" section with dates (July 5, 2022 - September 2, 2022) and times (Monday - Friday, 8:00am - 6:00pm; Saturday, 11:00am - 6:00pm). It also provides the location: North Lobby Gallery, The Claremont Colleges Library, 800 N. Dartmouth Ave, Claremont, CA 91711. A "LEARN MORE" section includes two QR codes and text encouraging visitors to review exhibit information, make an appointment, and explore digitized materials. The bottom of the poster features a collage of historical photographs and documents, including a group of people, a woman in a long dress, and a building.

Confirmar THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES LIBRARY
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES PRESENTS

Unboxing the Fernando R. & Enriqueta Gomez Mormon Mexican History Collection

This collection holds a wide range of materials on the history of various Mormon churches in Mexico, including congregational and mission records, poetry and personal narratives, photos, published materials and more. Much of the materials are in Spanish, and most date from between the 1870s to the 1950s.

The collection, to the best of our knowledge, is the **most extensive, publicly accessible collection in the world** of Mormon history among Spanish-speaking Latter-day Saints in the Americas. This exhibit offers a glimpse into the collection which is now available for research.

EXHIBIT DETAILS

July 5, 2022 – September 2, 2022
Monday - Friday, 8:00am – 6:00pm
Saturday, 11:00am – 6:00pm

North Lobby Gallery
The Claremont Colleges Library
800 N. Dartmouth Ave
Claremont, CA 91711

LEARN MORE

Review exhibit information and make an appointment to visit.

Visit the Claremont Colleges Digital Library, Claremont Mormon Studies collection to explore digitized materials.

Indigenous Perspectives on Lamanite Identity

The Mormon Studies program at the University of Utah hosted a seminar on [Indigenous Perspectives on Lamanite Identity](#) that included a keynote talk by Ignacio Garcia, "My Search for a Lamanite Identity: the Mexican Revolution, Rama Mexican, Margarito, Eduardo, Aztlán, and the San Antonio 4th Ward."



KEYNOTE TALK &
PANEL DISCUSSION

OPEN TO
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PUBLIC

REFLECTIONS ON DISCOURSES ABOUT "LAMANITES"

FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 2022

10:30 AM-11:45 AM MT (US/CANADA):

KEYNOTE TALK BY DR. IGNACIO GARCIA



1:30 PM-2:45 PM:

PANEL FEATURING DR. ROBERT JOSEPH,

DR. AMANDA HENDRIX-KOMOTO,

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IN-PERSON
OR
VIRTUAL

Amerindian Apocalypse

One of the most intriguing responses to my early scholarship on the Third Convention and Indigenous reception histories of the Book of Mormon more generally was an article by Dr. Jared Hickman, Associate Professor of English at John Hopkins University, published in 2014.

Hickman conducted a literary analysis of the Book of Mormon, demonstrating a textual basis for the recurrent Indigenous readings of the Book of Mormon prophesying an apocalyptic collapse of settler society and return of the land to Indigenous communities who will lead a millennial restoration.

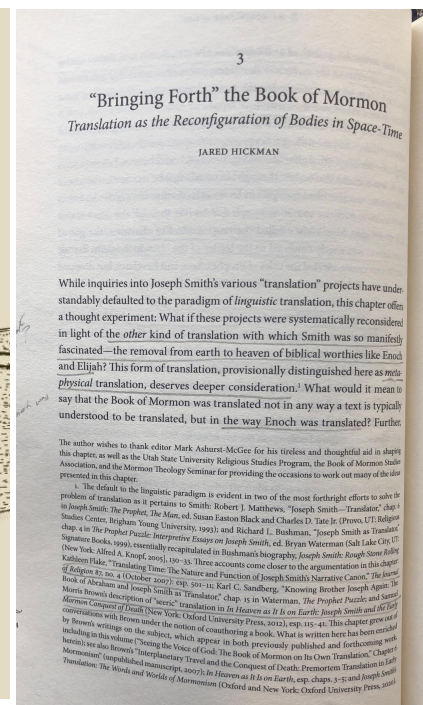
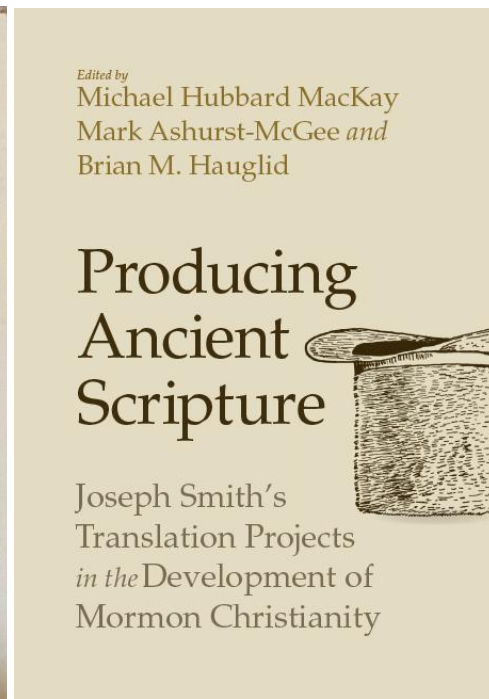
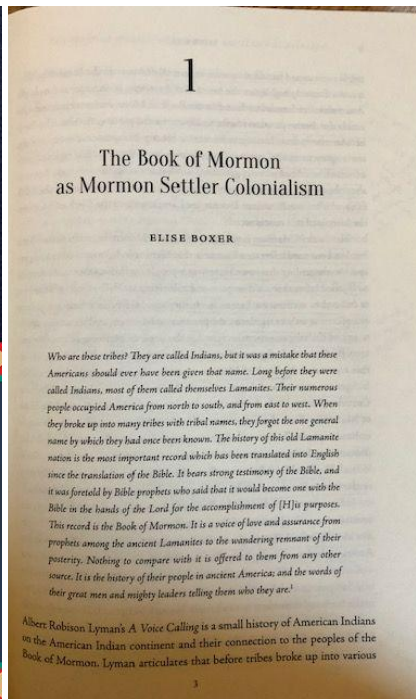
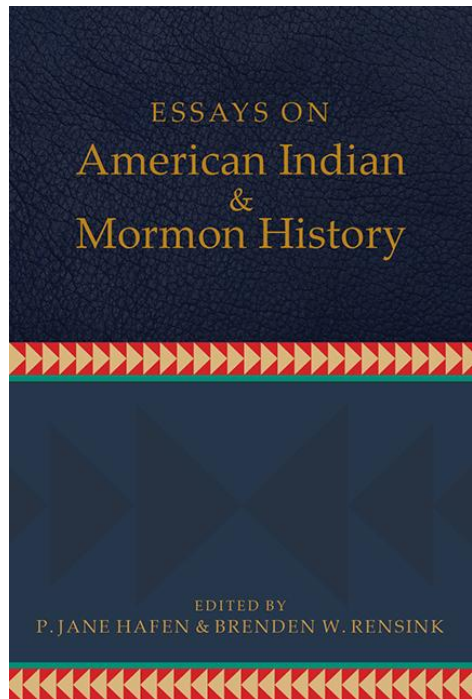
[American Literature 86.3 \(2014\): 429-61.](#)

Jared
Hickman

The Book of Mormon
as Amerindian Apocalypse

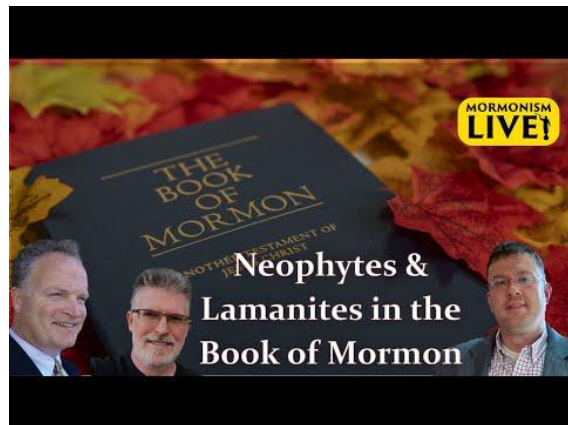
In October 1830, just months after he published *The Book of Mormon* in Palmyra, New York, new prophet Joseph Smith commanded Parley P. Pratt and others to light out for Indian Territory to share the new scripture (Givens and Grow 2011, 44–48). The reason they felt compelled to undertake this task, despite the youthful fragility of their movement and the physical dangers and legal difficulties that stood in their way: early Mormons considered *The Book of Mormon* to be a “the record of [Amerindians’] forefathers,” a group of Israelites led by the patriarch Lehi, who fled Jerusalem around 600 BCE before the Babylonian invasion (Pratt 1972, 51, 54–55; Smith 1981, cited hereafter by book, chapter, and verse in the text). According to the narra-

Settler Colonial text or Decolonizing Potential?



Neophytes and Lamanites

Mormon Social
Science Association
session on "[Settler
Colonialism and the
Book of Mormon.](#)"



Journal
of
Northwest
Anthropology

Science and Fiction: Kennewick Man/Ancient One in Latter-day Saint Discourse

Thomas W Murphy, Simon G. Southerton, and Angelo Baca (Diné/Hopi)

Affiliation
Edmonds College
Independent
Rhode Island School of Design

Correspondence
thomaswmurphy90@gmail.com
simon.southerton11@gmail.com
abaca@risd.edu

Abstract In June of 1997 Orson Scott Card, a popular science fiction author and prominent Latter-day Saint, seized upon the news of the erosion of an ancient skeleton out of a river bank along the Columbia River in eastern Washington during the previous summer. Card prematurely suggested to a Mormon audience that this Kennewick Man represented an ancient founding Caucasoid population displaced by ancestors of American Indians. Indigenous peoples called this ancestor the Ancient One and participated in a long and contentious struggle between a team of scientists and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over repatriation. This article critically examines the deployment and evolution of images of Kennewick Man in Latter-day Saint discourse about Native Americans, DNA, and the Book of Mormon. Despite cautionary warnings from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Latter-day Saint scientists, the latest pseudoscientific resurrection of a Latter-day settler colonial narrative about ancient America appears as David Read's Face of a Nephite (2020) featuring a racialized and creationist distortion of the scientific analysis and facial reconstructions of Kennewick Man. Read's book feeds into a larger discourse advocating a Heartland setting for the Book of Mormon in North America advocated by Rodney Meldrum's misnamed Foundation for Indigenous Research and Mormonism (FIRM). These authors anachronistically racialize both scripture and human DNA, misrepresent archaeological and genetic science, draw from fraudulent and looted materials, and disregard Indigenous perspectives on the Ancient One, now firmly established as ancestral to American Indians.

Keywords Ancient One, anthropology, Book of Mormon, DNA, Kennewick Man, Mormonism, Native American, racism, repatriation.

AN INSUFFICIENT CANON: THE POPOL WUJ, BOOK OF MORMON, AND OTHER SCRIPTURES

Thomas W Murphy

AS WE SAT IN THE COZY LIVING ROOM of his modest home in Antigua, Guatemala, in July 1993, an ecclesiastical authority from a local ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) declared his belief that the Popol Wuj (also called Pop Wuj and Popol Vuh)¹ was one of the "other scriptures" that Jesus spoke about in the Book of Mormon (3 Ne 23:6). As an undergraduate student of anthropology at the University of Iowa, I had come to the former colonial capital of Guatemala for language study and a small research project under the guidance of the esteemed linguist, Dr. Nora England. The focus of the research project, funded by the Stanley Foundation, was on health and religious conversion, not scripture.² Yet, throughout four

THOMAS WMURPHY is chair of the anthropology department at Edmonds College in Lynnwood, Washington. He has conducted anthropological fieldwork in Guatemala, Mexico, Southwest Asia, United States, and Canada. He is the 2011 Washington State Conservation Educator of the Year.

¹In my narrative I am following the spelling conventions proposed by the *Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala*. See Edward F. Fischer and R. McKenna Brown, eds., *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 16. I have also opted not to italicize Popol Wuj, thus granting it the same conventions as the Bible and Book of Mormon. When citing other authors, I use their variant spellings and italics in relevant quotations.

²Thomas W Murphy, "Guatemalan Hot/Cold Medicine and Mormon Words of Wisdom: Intercultural Negotiation of Meaning," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 2 (June 1997).

Summary

The Third Convention and the underlying issues of ethnic representation and Indigenous reception histories of the Book of Mormon that it invoked are still with us today! They were not resolved by reunification in 1946.

There are “other stories” that were not included in F. Lamond Tullis’ foundational book on *Mormons in Mexico* (1987). *El Museo* and the scholars they have helped are adding important stories to the mix.

El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud remains a thriving reminder of Margarito Bautista and the brand of Mexican Mormonism that he represented. The remnants of the Third Convention did not wither away, as I had been told in the early 1990s, but continued to grow while embracing a fullness of the Latter-day gospel that includes the United Order, plural marriage, and apocalyptic readings of the Book of Mormon.

Subsequent scholarship has begun to address the many stories of Mormonism in Mexico and Indigenous perspectives on Lamanite identity. Important work has been launched by Indigenous and Chicano scholars and will shape future scholarship in Mormon Studies. A robust discussion of the Book of Mormon as either a settler colonial text and/or a decolonizing narrative has just begun.