Figure 1. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *The Hill Cumorah,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 80½ × 116 inches, cropped. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

"In Their Promised Canaan Stand"

Outlawry, Landscape, and Memory in C. C. A. Christensen's Mormon Panorama

Jennifer Champoux

Many favorite fictional stories involve characters who transgress boundaries. Robin Hood, for example, gathered his Merry Men in the greenwood where they stole from the rich and gave to the poor while evading the sheriff. Or consider Simba from *The Lion King*, an exile for years who returned to reclaim his kingdom and re-establish order and justice. Even Han Solo was a shady character with a bounty on his head, yet he became a key figure in the Rebel Alliance's struggle against the evil Empire in *Star Wars*. More than just beloved characters from childhood tales, these figures are emblematic of a rich tradition in literature and art of the heroic outlaw.

Were nineteenth-century members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints outlaw heroes? Pioneer artist Carl Christian Anton (C. C. A.) Christensen's famous Mormon Panorama seems to suggest so. This series of paintings based on moments from early Church history emphasizes persecution of the Latter-day Saints by both government officials and local vigilantes. Throughout the images, the Latter-day Saints appear orderly and innocent, in contrast to the disheveled animosity of their tormentors. The Mormon Panorama vividly depicts a narrative in which the Latter-day Saints were forced into an outlaw posture yet continued to fight for justice and ultimately re-established true order.

In medieval Europe, an outlaw was someone cast out of the physical and legal boundaries of society. English, French, German, and Scandinavian governments used outlawry as punishment for those who did not conform. Over time, the stories of actual historical outlaws began to be woven into fictional literature. The most enduring of these outlaw characters is

Figure 2. Daniel Maclise, *Robin Hood and His Merry Men Entertaining Richard the Lionheart in Sherwood Forest,* 1839, oil on canvas, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries.

Robin Hood, whose story is first found in ballad fragments from 1377.[1] Just as the name implies, an outlaw was no longer under the protection of the law—he had no legal or civil rights, and he was seen as more animal than human. However, the trick in the Anglo-Saxon legends about outlaws such as Robin Hood is that the outlaws are deemed outcasts *only* because of some corruption within society or some injustice by a local political or religious leader. The outlaws blurred the lines between right and wrong because they did not simply flout the laws but rather fought nobly against wrongful authority and injustice.[2] Thus, Anglo-Saxon outlaw literature works to flip the narrative, making the outlaw a hero and exposing the flaws in society and government.

Just as the outlaw lives a liminal existence between organized society and animal wildness, his geographical place is in liminal ecological spaces like forests, deserts, and swamps. The outlaw is forced into these environments against his will, yet he also finds refuge in them.[3] There is, then, a tension inherent in the outlaw's landscape because it is both a place of banishment and deprivation *and also* a place of protection

1. J. C. Holt, *Robin Hood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 115.

2. Maurice Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 51.

3. Sarah Harlan-Haughey, *The Ecology of the English Outlaw in Medieval Literature: From Fen to Greenwood* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2, 47; Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 2.

and abundance. Artistic depictions of outlaws tend to emphasize this relationship with the forest. For example, in an 1839 painting by Daniel Maclise of Robin Hood, the lush foliage dominates the image, even providing framing borders and a curtain-like canopy (fig. 2). In the painting, Sherwood Forest creates a safe and idyllic retreat for the outlaws and provides abundantly for their needs, as slain beasts are carried in for a feast. The English forest serves not only as the geographical backdrop for the outlaws' exploits but also as a complicated symbol of freedom, rustic justice, patriotism, pride of place, and divine providence.

In many ways, nineteenth-century American members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a similar relationship to society and to landscape as the Anglo-Saxon outlaw heroes did. The Latter-day Saints considered themselves a people unfairly pushed out of the boundaries of society and, thus, called to gather in a sacred space to establish true justice and law within a divinely provided, unspoiled ecological space. Although their liminal status relative to American society seemed to put them in the position of being outcasts, the Latter-day Saints viewed the local leaders and vigilantes with whom they clashed as the ones truly acting outside the law. As in Anglo-Saxon literature, the Latter-day Saints had a need to flip the narrative and make themselves the heroes. Even though they were the ones jailed as criminals and pushed out of state after state, the Latter-day Saints sought a way to make themselves the good guys.

One way they did this was by painting and displaying their own version of their history. As early as 1844, with the support of Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff, Philo Dibble began codifying the Church's historical narrative in large paintings.[4] Dibble organized artists to paint a series of scenes, including the Battle of Crooked River, the massacre at Hawn's Mill, the surrender at Far West, the Nauvoo Legion, the assassination of Joseph Smith, and the Mormon Battalion. Only the latter three were actually painted, but between 1849 and 1879 Dibble traveled around Missouri and Utah displaying the three canvases and the death masks of Joseph and Hyrum Smith as well as presenting an oral narrative.[5]

Following this pattern, C. C. A. Christensen started painting his own series of Church history scenes in 1878. Christensen was born in Denmark and studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen before joining the Church and then emigrating to Utah in 1856.

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4. R. Devan Jensen, "Philo Dibble's Dream of 'A Gallery in Zion,'" *Journal of Mormon History* 44, no. 4 (October 2018): 19, 28.

5. Jensen, "Philo Dibble's Dream," 30–32.

His Mormon Panorama paintings were completed between 1878 and 1890 as a didactic tool to teach the early history of the people to younger Church members. The huge six-and-a-half-foot by ten-foot canvases were sewn together and rolled into a scroll on wooden dowels, which was then transported to Church settlements in Utah, Idaho, Arizona, and Wyoming in the late 1800s and early 1900s for viewings.[6] As the scroll was unwound to reveal the images, a prepared lecture was delivered—often by Christensen or his son—recounting the experiences of members of the Church. Several versions of this lecture, written down later by Christensen's family members, are extant.[7] The experience was intended to be theatrical, and this effect was enhanced with green curtains around the scrolling images and "kerosene lamps as footlights."[8]

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6. "Biography of C. C. A. Christensen and His Wife: Translated by Their Daughter Mary A. C. Welling and Assisted by Their Granddaughter, Mrs. V. Terry, July 30, 1940" (unpublished typescript), Brigham Young University Museum of Art, 12; Paul L. Anderson and Richard Jensen, "C. C. A. Christensen and the Mormon Panorama," *Ensign* 9, no. 6 (June 1979): 80.

7. These versions include a transcript in the Church History Library which is partially handwritten and partially typed, a typescript "Lectures as Written by C. C. A. Christensen" in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University, and a computer typescript "Abbreviated Script / C. C. A. Christensen's Mormon Panorama," which is at the Brigham Young University Museum of Art and appears to be copied from the Special Collections version (the author is grateful to Nathan Rees and Ashlee Whitaker for assistance in locating these documents). None of these three sources indicate any date or provenance. Jennett Labrum, granddaughter of Seymour Christensen, who donated the Mormon Panorama to BYU, provided the author with a slightly different typed script, but it appears to be of a later creation date as it incorporates the margin notes from the Church History Library version into the text parenthetically, it is missing two of the scenes, and it mentions Seymour at the end. The Museum of Art also has a typescript donated by the Christensen family, "Mormon Panorama Lectures of C. C. A. Christensen (as Written by Charles J. Christensen, Eldest Son of C. C. A. Christensen)," with a written note saying, "Copied from lecture script donated to MOA from Christensen family." This version has the most differences in wording, as compared with all the other versions, although they are mostly minor, and the substance is still mostly similar. All extant versions of the script follow a similar narrative, with only slight differences in details or wording. It may be that C. C. A.'s son Charles, who helped deliver the performances, or other family members such as Seymour wrote down different versions at different times, or wrote new versions building off of older ones. Additionally, Labrum recalls that C. C. A. and Charles used several versions of the script, choosing the most appropriate one depending on their audience (email to author, 22 April 2021). All quotations of the lecture script in this paper are taken from Charles John Christensen, "Lecture and Notes, Undated," MS 3149, folder 2, accessed May 3, 2021, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record?id=e4999a17-7b2c-4e37-a194-239886b8eea5&view=browse.

8. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, *On the Road with C.C.A. Christensen: The Moving Panorama* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Museum of Art, 2003).

The first painting in the series, of Joseph Smith's First Vision, is lost, but the other twenty-two panels are now housed as separate, framed paintings in the collection of the Brigham Young University Museum of Art.

The Mormon Panorama gives an important visual history of how late-nineteenth-century Church members viewed themselves. This is true not only because of Christensen's careful research, interviews with witnesses of the events, and inclusion of historical details, but also because Christensen spent years carting the Mormon Panorama around Western Latter-day Saint settlements to instruct Church members, thus shaping the way they thought about these events. Christensen created a sense of historical accuracy in his images by making visual reference to earlier images and photographs, including narrative details from written remembrances, and using the lecture to talk about specific dates, locations, and individuals. In fact, several times the transcript declares that the images are a "true representation."[9] Moreover, the paintings and presentation were created at a time when Church leaders and members were feeling persecuted by government action opposing polygamy. As historian Steven C. Harper explains, "The saints' major goal in this era was the survival of their distinctive faith amid escalating opposition from the larger culture and its institutions, especially the U.S. government. Saints solidified their sense of exceptional, chosen, persecuted status and transmitted it to converts and especially to the next generation."[10] The Mormon Panorama profoundly influenced and cemented the Latter-day Saints' understanding of their history.

The Mormon Panorama paintings follow patterns found in Anglo-Saxon outlaw literature, particularly ambivalence about the protective power of landscape and about who, exactly, is the criminal. While it is unclear whether Christensen was consciously drawing on Anglo-Saxon outlaw literature, viewing his paintings through this lens reveals that the early Latter-day Saints struggled with similar tensions in both the landscape and the society and were similarly working to shape their historical narrative and institutional memory. The paintings emphasize unjust treatment of the Latter-day Saints, calling into question which group is actually acting outside the law. Furthermore, Christensen's paintings consistently use landscape to help visualize the place of the Church and its members. Trees, rivers, weather, and animals feature prominently and symbolically and are even given a measure of agential

9. "Exterior of Carthage Jail," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

10. Steven C. Harper, *First Vision: Memory and Mormon Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 112.

power in many of the images. While the earlier paintings in the cycle tend toward a more menacing depiction of wilderness, the later images show the Latter-day Saints finding their place in a welcoming, pristine, and divinely provided landscape—their "promised Canaan" as Parley P. Pratt wrote in the 1840 hymn "The Morning Breaks."[11]

Additionally, the Mormon Panorama and the Anglo-Saxon outlaw literature share a thematic reliance on even older stories about sacred spaces, justice, and grappling with "the other." Throughout the paintings and the outlaw literature, there are clear references to Old Testament exodus experiences, including miraculous crossings of bodies of water, destruction of the enemy, and manna from heaven. Even in the very first surviving Mormon Panorama painting, *The Hill Cumorah* (fig. 1), art historian Jane Dillenberger saw the unusual addition of a beard to the angel Moroni (distinct from other denominations' depictions of angels) as underlining "the inevitable parallelism between this event and the Biblical event of Moses receiving the tablets of the Law."[12]

This article examines the Mormon Panorama according to themes of outlawry in Anglo-Saxon literature, seeking to reveal insights into the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint understanding of exile and sacred space, both in terms of their relationship to the landscape and to society at large. Several patterns recur throughout the outlaw legends, including (1) loss of status, (2) loss of land and movement into exile, (3) existence in a "natural" landscape (for example, rustic country as opposed to built-up city), (4) gathering of supporters and other outsiders, (5) companionship of animals, (6) clashes with political and military forces, (7) use of symbolic dress and disguise, and (8) ultimate establishment of true authority.[13] These themes are also prominent throughout the Mormon Panorama. Comparing the outlaw literature with these paintings reveals that Church members saw themselves as unjustly forced into exile and unable to remain in society even though they wanted to. Neither the outlaws of Anglo-Saxon legend nor the nineteenth-century American Latter-day Saints wanted to be outlaws, yet they both managed to create

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11. Parley P. Pratt, "The Morning Breaks," in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 1.

12. Jane Dillenberger, "Mormonism and American Religious Art," *Sunstone* 3, no. 4 (May–June 1978): 13.

13. In developing this list of themes, I have drawn from and elaborated on similar lists found in Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval England,* 23–30, and Harlan-Haughey, *Ecology of the English Outlaw,* 48–54; see also Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of 'Exile' in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Speculum* 30, no. 2 (April 1955): 201.

Figure 3. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Tarring and Feathering the Prophet,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78¼ × 114¼ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

a narrative in which they could find divine providence in exile and ultimately turn it on its head so that being an outsider became a sign of their righteousness and chosenness.

Loss of Status

In the Mormon Panorama, landscape functions variously as a marker of boundaries, a symbol of injustice and oppression, and a sign of divine protection. And in some cases, as in *Tarring and Feathering the Prophet* (fig. 3), it does all three. Coming on the heels of the initial two paintings depicting Joseph Smith's First Vision of God and his receipt of the brass plates from a glorious angel Moroni, the third image abruptly changes mood and depicts a mob tarring and feathering Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon during the night.

The main action of the scene takes place between quaint houses in cleared land on the right side and a cluster of barren, ominous trees on the left side. In fact, the visual rhythm of shapes and lines in the painting pulls the viewer's eye from right to left, starting with the houses on the right, down to Sidney Rigdon's beaten body lying in the street, then to

the man coming forward with hot tar at the ready, on to a group of men holding and abusing Joseph Smith, then to the two mobbers carrying a case of feathers and a wooden rail who lead the group and even point the way left into the woods. The change in landscape from right to left marks the boundary of civilization on one side and the rejection of the rule of law on the other, and at the center Joseph Smith is the victim of this move toward injustice. The claw-like branches of the trees at left are a symbol of the aggressive mobbers and the violence they inflict. The dark forest likewise threatens, as it seems to afford cover to the mobbers. And yet a bright full moon peers out from a small break in the grey clouds to shine directly down on Joseph Smith, as if to signify protection from God that allowed him to survive the brutal attack. To underscore this point, Christensen's lecture script reads, "While Joseph was being beaten, tared [*sic*] and feathered etc. he says that his spirit left his body and stood a few feet above his persecutors in the air and he could see and hear the blows that were inflicted on his body, but felt no pain until afterwards."[14]

Tarring and feathering was meant to be humiliating and dehumanizing, disfiguring the human body to make it look more like an animal. The parallel to outlaw traditions here is striking. In medieval Europe, the bounty on an outlaw was often the same as the price on a wolf's head.[15] Outlaws were seen as no longer human. They were afforded neither the protections of law nor the hospitality of society and could be freely abused or even killed. In the painting, Rigdon and Smith are stripped of their clothes in preparation for the application of sticky tar and feathers, effectively stripping them of their status as humans and as citizens.

Loss of Land and Movement into Exile

In the world of outlaws, loss of status quickly leads to loss of land. The fourth Mormon Panorama image illustrates mobbers attacking a Latter-day Saint settlement in *Saints Driven from Jackson County Missouri* (fig. 4). Here, the violence has moved from beyond just the Church leaders and is now unleashed on all Church members, including an old man engaged in hand-to-hand combat, a woman kneeling and pleading for her husband's life, two women carrying babies, and many terrified children. In their catalog of Christensen's work, Richard L. Jensen and Richard G. Oman point out "doors and fireplaces, powerful symbols of

14. "Tar and Feathering the Prophet," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."
15. Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 9.

Figure 4. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Saints Driven from Jackson County Missouri,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 77¼ × 113 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

home, are being destroyed."[16] Again, the houses on cleared ground on the right are juxtaposed with the dark forest on the left. We see women and children being forced to cross that boundary, leaving domesticity and society behind as they flee into the forest.

There was a question not just among the Latter-day Saints but also among the larger American society about who was truly the outlaw in these skirmishes. Christensen's painting dramatically visualizes this question, by showing the Latter-day Saints being exiled by men clearly acting outside the law and forcing innocent people off their property in the dead of night. In the ensuing years, Latter-day Saint leaders decried the attacks on their people in Missouri. Apostle Parley P. Pratt wrote that he had "a dislike to the out-laws who govern Missouri," and the Prophet Joseph Smith called Missouri "that land of tyranny and oppression."[17] At the

16. Richard L. Jensen and Richard G. Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen, 1831–1912: Mormon Immigrant Artist* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984), 94.

17. Parley P. Pratt to Dear Brethren, March 19, 1843, *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 11 (April 15, 1843): 163; and Joseph Smith, "Extract from the Private Journal of Joseph Smith, Jr., " *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 1 (November 1839): 7, both quoted in David W. Grua, "Memoirs

time of the raids, there were mixed opinions among the broader American society about their legality. Some Missouri citizens supported the attacks on the Latter-day Saints. Reverend Benton Pixley, for example, led a local anti-Mormon meeting and sent a letter to Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin signed by hundreds of Jackson County residents complaining about the Church members' blasphemy and territorial aspirations.[18] But other citizens saw aggressions against the Latter-day Saints as unlawful. The *Missouri Republican* editor said attacks on the Church members and their property were "wholly at war with the genius of our institutions, and as subversive of good order as the conduct of the fanatics themselves."[19] Even looking back later in 1853, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* called the men who pushed the Mormons out of Missouri a "lawless, heartless mob, under the implied sanction of the civil authority."[20] This uncertainty about the validity of mob tactics against the Latter-day Saints continued into their time in Illinois. Josiah Conyers, a resident of Quincy, Illinois, wrote that mob violence there was antithetical to the U.S. Constitution and that "should citizens of Illinois 'resort to forcible banishment, without trial, not only of the guilty, but of the innocent also,' they should admit that either the Constitution was insufficient or that Americans lacked the 'virtue and intelligence' to 'administer their own laws.'"[21]

Like the Anglo-Saxon outlaws, the Latter-day Saints were not seeking outsider status so much as they were forced into it. Another painting in the series, *Leaving Missouri* (fig. 5), shows Church members walking out of Missouri with packed wagons, having been forced from their lands for good. As in the earlier paintings, trees mark a boundary between society and wilderness and also symbolize injustice. Jensen and Oman note, "The menacing tree on the left and the bleak background communicate the hostile environment that they were leaving."[22] Indeed, the landscape becomes progressively greener the further it is from the

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of the Persecuted: Persecution, Memory, and the West as a Mormon Refuge" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2008), 76–77, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/1550.

18. Stephen C. Taysom, *Shakers, Mormons, and Religious Worlds: Conflicting Visions, Contested Boundaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 60.

19. J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 87.

20. "The Mormons," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (April 1853): 612, https://digital.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-lincoln%3A35954.

21. Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People,"* 100.

22. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen*, 101.

Figure 5. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Leaving Missouri,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78⅛ × 114⅛ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

Missouri town left behind in the snow. Church members at the time saw the episode as an injustice of Biblical proportions, with Parley P. Pratt writing that shortly "the indignation of a just God" would make "room for the rights of man and the laws of the Lord to be restored."[23] The sense of injustice lingered and is highlighted in Christensen's accompanying lecture script:

> Here you see the Saints leaving the State of Mo. in the dead of winter about 1200 in number. Seven of the leaders of the Church as we have shown you were confined in the Liberty Jail. . . . Now that the governor of Missouri, issued his exterminating orders, every mormon must leave the state at once. Try to imagine the suffering and sacriface [*sic*]; their properties had been confescated [*sic*], their homes burned, driven from county to county and now expelled in dead of winter in extreme poverty and their leaders in jail. Many died of exposure and were buried by the wayside.[24]

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23. Quoted in Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 101.

24. "Leaving Missouri," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

Existence in a "Natural" Landscape

In *Leaving Missouri*, the wild landscape is already helping to provide for the refugees, as we see two men on the left chopping wood for fuel and a number of people warming themselves around two fires. Similarly, for English outlaws like Robin Hood, the forest turned out to be both a place of physical sustenance and "an asylum from the tyranny of evil lords and a corrupt law."[25] In the outlaw legends, there is a certain rustic charm and higher moral code associated with untamed ecological spaces like the forest, particularly when set against the corruption of the city.

By the same token, spaces that were once inhabited but had gone to ruin were a melancholy "symbol of the failure of civilization and the victory of nature."[26] This trope appears in the Anglo-Saxon legend of outlaw Fouke le Fitz Waryn, when his enemy William the Conqueror stopped to contemplate a ruined castle being overtaken by nature. In the Mormon Panorama, the *Burning of the Temple* (fig. 6) embodies a similar sense of the breakdown of law and civilization, resulting in nature reclaiming the space. This painting depicts a fire ravaging the Nauvoo Temple two years after the Latter-day Saints had evacuated. The night sky is black and ominous, as is the surrounding landscape. The red and orange flames reflect eerily off of the ground and off of the abandoned houses behind the temple. The lecture script further describes the complete return of the space to nature: "Now there is not one stone left upon another to show where this once beautiful and holy building once stood."[27] The sense of loss and injustice is driven home by the contrast of this image with the previous one, *The Nauvoo Temple* (fig. 7), which shows the pristinely white and majestic temple in careful detail under a blue sky.

The Mormon Panorama also includes several instances of the natural elements coming to the aid of Church members. In three cases, weather and water particularly play a major role. First, *Mobbers on the Missouri River* (fig. 8) depicts mobbers who tried to cross the river to attack Zion's Camp in Missouri, but the ferry they crossed on sank. In the painting, violent flashes of lightning fill the sky, one seeming to almost touch the men on the boat. A dark, monochromatic sky swirls with a raging storm, and the rough waves overtake the vessel. The clouds, the sky, and the water all reflect the same unearthly and foreboding dusty red and

25. Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 2.
26. Harlan-Haughey, *Ecology of the English Outlaw,* 114.
27. "Burning of the Temple," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

Figure 6. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Burning of the Temple,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

Figure 7. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *The Nauvoo Temple,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 77 × 113 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

Figure 8. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Mobbers on the Missouri River,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114⅛ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

inky black hues. All of nature seems to have conspired against the mobbers in order to protect the Church members. The lecture script reads: "A very heavy storm arose, which swelled these rivers to the height of 30 and 40 feet so they [Zion's Camp] could not proceed for several days. On the opposite side of the other fishing river was a party of mobbers ambushed and prepared to kill our brethern [*sic*] had not the Lord hindered them in their plans. The storm was very terific [*sic*] but no one was ceriously [*sic*] hurt in the camp of the saints but the camp of the enemy was entirely broken up and their wicked plans frustrated."[28]

The Mormon Panorama presents the sinking of this ferry as evidence of God's protection and of their status as a people chosen by God to fight back against political and economic injustice. Zion's Camp was organized as a sort of Latter-day Saint militia with the purpose of petitioning the governor to help restore lost lands in Jackson County. Historian Stephen Taysom points out that the revelation to Joseph Smith that prompted Zion's Camp includes language about the Latter-day Saints being set apart and protected from their enemies. The 1834 revelation

28. "Zions Camp," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

Figure 9. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Crossing the Mississippi on the Ice,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 77⅞ × 114 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

prophesies that the Latter-day Saints will "begin to prevail against mine enemies from this very hour. . . . They shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet, and the earth is given to the saints, to possess it forever and ever."[29] This kind of chosenness and divine protection, particularly as it relates to dominion over the earth, is illustrated in *Mobbers on the Missouri River*.

The natural elements also come to the aid of the Latter-day Saints in a painting of them leaving Nauvoo in winter, *Crossing the Mississippi on the Ice* (fig. 9). Although the snow and cold made the journey difficult, the frozen river was seen as a sign of divine favor manifested in the natural elements. The lecture script includes both a feeling of injustice *and* a belief in the miraculous protective power of the landscape:

> It was not a matter of choice that about 20,000 american citizens left their homes in the dead of winter. The Governor of Ill. demanded a change in religious attitude of the Mormons or leave the State. Rather

29. "Revelation, 24 February 1834 [D&C 103]," 8, the Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 8, 2021, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-24-february-1834-dc-103/1, quoted in Taysom, *Shakers, Mormons, and Religious Worlds,* 65.

> than deny that which they new [*sic*] was from God they chose the latter, left their homes, farms, beautiful and sacred temple and all earthly things dear to them, many of them to become martys [*sic*] dying from exposure. This Bridge of ice was made by a kind Providence at the time when the lives of our saints were at stake. Think of 20,000 homeless American citizens out on the praries [*sic*] now covered with snow.[30]

Christensen's painting is intended to invoke parallels with the ancient Israelites' miraculous exodus into the wilderness. Jensen and Oman write of this painting, "This is the Latter-day Saint equivalent of the miracle of the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea, since the Mississippi River did not usually freeze over."[31] Christensen used his now-familiar pattern of movement, from society on the right to wilderness on the left. In fact, the wagon trains draw a line that stretches forward from the city in the right background and across the frozen river before heading left into the wild forest.

And finally, the painting *Pioneers Crossing the Plains of Nebraska* (fig. 10) shows the first wagon train leaving Winter Quarters in 1847 and crossing the Platte River. Again the natural elements act miraculously to aid the Latter-day Saints, allowing them to cross a river. The lecture script reads: "In crossing the North Platt [*sic*] River on a quick sand bar which might shift at any moment they humbly asked the Lord to see them safely over this dangerous stream. No sooner had the last wagon pulled off the sand bar and it washed away. One of the brethern [*sic*] tried to return on horse back to see if anything had been forgotten but the ford was gone. The Lord heard and answered their prayers and they went on rejoicing."[32]

Gathering of Supporters and Outsiders

In the Anglo-Saxon outlaw legends, once the outlaw has been banished and moved into a wilderness environment, he gathers supporters and reaches out to other outsiders. In the ballads of Robin Hood, he met a variety of characters in the forest—many of them poachers or spies or outlaws themselves—and won them over to his camp one by one, creating a group of followers that came to be called the Merry Men. Little John, for example, was living in the forest when he met Robin Hood and refused to let him cross a bridge. The two men fought, and Little John

30. "Crossing the Missippi [*sic*] on the Ice," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."
31. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 108.
32. "Pioneers Crossing the Plains of Nebraska," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

Figure 10. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Pioneers Crossing the Plains of Nebraska,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 77 × 113 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

won, yet he agreed to follow Robin Hood. Similarly, Arthur a Bland was poaching in the forest when Robin Hood came upon him, fought him, and convinced Arthur to join with him. And Friar Tuck had been cast out of his monastery for disobedience when he ran into Robin Hood, won a battle of wits against him, and then agreed to join Robin Hood's band. Like other outlaw heroes, Robin Hood created a crew of diverse characters and a blending of social classes with his Merry Men.[33] The people he defended and gathered to his cause came from all classes—the overtaxed peasant, the distressed yeoman, the cheated knight, the wandering friar, and the confined noblewoman.

In the Mormon Panorama, Christensen emphasized the way Latter-day Saints cobbled together a community that mingled social classes, occupations, regions, languages, and nationalities. Despite their diversity of backgrounds, the Latter-day Saints in these paintings are consistently shown as a united group. Persecution from other groups only highlights these communal bonds among the Latter-day Saints. For example, Christensen painted a scene of *Zion's Camp* (fig. 11), representing the men who

33. Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 24, 52.

Figure 11. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Zion's Camp,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

answered a call from Joseph Smith in 1834 to walk from Kirtland, Ohio, to Jackson County, Missouri, to assist fellow Church members there who had been persecuted and driven from their land. The script recounts, "About 200 of our good brethern [*sic*] readily valentered [*sic*] and organized into a company led by the Prophet and started out on this long and tedious journey of about 1000 miles."[34] The painting shows the men arriving in Missouri and facing the same large storm that stopped the mobbers on their river boat. In this painting, the men heroically push and pull their wagons across the rain-soaked land to come to the rescue of people they may not have known personally but felt a kinship with as fellow members of the Church. Two boys on a fence wave a greeting. A woman holding a baby in an open doorway symbolizes the defenseless Latter-day Saints the men have come to aid. There is a feeling of common purpose as the men march along and the white canvases of their wagon train wind rhythmically into the background.

In a later scene of *Winter Quarters* (fig. 12), this sense of gathering and community is even more pronounced. The episode took place in

34. "Zions Camp," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

Figure 12. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Winter Quarters,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 76¾ × 113¾ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

December 1846, when 3,500 Latter-day Saints who had been forced out of Nauvoo spent the winter near Omaha preparing for a spring journey to the Rocky Mountains. The settlement is truly a liminal space, caught between frontier wilderness on the left and a large river on the right. Winter conditions in the cramped and hastily constructed log cabins were miserable and unhealthy. The script tells that "around the brow of the hill here about 600 of our Saints were laid to rest."[35] Christensen's painting exhibits a tension between the community and the individual. On the one hand, orderly rows of identical cabins push into the very front of the picture plane and extend far into the background, creating a sweeping sense of unity. But on the other hand, there are vignettes of individuals and families scattered throughout the image: "people shaking hands at departure, a child rushing to its father, a mother cuddling her baby, a family waving goodbye to their friends as wagons pull out."[36] As Jensen and Oman point out, these vignettes indicate that "these were not merely individuals preparing to move west; it was a religious community emotionally bound

35. "Winter Quarters," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."
36. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 111.

Figure 13. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Joseph Preaching to the Indians,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 76½ × 112¾ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

together. This was the Camp of Israel in the Wilderness."[37] In contrast to the rugged individualism fashionable at the time in America, Christensen emphasizes that the Latter-day Saints had a need for communal action and protection. True to the outlaw-hero motif, the image shows a group of Americans who have been dislocated by mob rule, and yet in their makeshift city they bring to fruition the inclusive promise of American democracy that was not afforded to them.

Joseph Preaching to the Indians (fig. 13) represents one of many times that Joseph Smith taught Native Americans about the Book of Mormon and sought to establish an alliance with them. The script includes, "These hostile tribes became Joseph's warmest friends in times of extreme trial in Mo. and Ill."[38] Joseph appears in formal dress with tails and a waistcoat, while the Native Americans are shown in beige fringe, blue and red robes, feathers, and necklaces. To the right, a group of well-dressed white Latter-day Saints listens to Joseph Smith, including a woman seated in a chair. The men wear hats, and the woman holds a parasol.

37. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 111.
38. "Joseph Presching [*sic*] to the Indians," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

Figure 14. John McGahey, *Joseph Smith / President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints addressing the Chiefs & Braves of several tribes of Indians in the City of Nauvoo, Illinois North America, June, 1843*, lithograph on paper, 192 × 277 mm. The British Museum.

They stand in contrast to the large group of people on the left who stand or sit on the grass with their heads uncovered. The woman in the chair has a small dog beside her. Directly across from her, a Native American kneels beside a dog. Perhaps in this pairing Christensen hoped to portray an affectionate meeting of cultures and their commonalities in spite of cultural differences.

Christensen's efforts to imbue his panorama with an aura of historical accuracy are on display here, as he appears to have based this image on an earlier lithograph of the same subject made during Joseph Smith's lifetime. According to Laura Allred Hurtado and David Grua, this Christensen painting is based on an 1843 lithograph by John McGahey (fig. 14).[39] McGahey was a British artist working at that time in the American West making copies of George Catlin's paintings of Native

39. Laura Allred Hurtado and David G., "Painting the Mythical and the Heroic: *Joseph Preaches to the American Indians,*" Juvenile Instructor (blog), November 19, 2013, https://juvenileinstructor.org/painting-the-mythical-and-the-heroic-joseph-smith-preaches-to-the-american-indians/.

Americans. At Nauvoo in 1844, McGahey exhibited his lithograph of Joseph Smith preaching to Native Americans. It seems very likely that Christensen had access to a print of this image when he painted his Mormon Panorama almost forty years later. There are a number of similarities, including Joseph Smith's dress and position—with right arm raised in a gesture of oration and left hand holding a Book of Mormon—the semicircular shape of the listening crowd, the teepees sticking up behind them, and the tree framing the figure of Joseph Smith. Hurtado points out that Christensen's painting heroizes Joseph Smith and positions "Joseph (and, by extension, the Church of Jesus Christ) as the ultimate champions of marginalized peoples."[40]

Companionship of Animals

In the stories of Robin Hood, the outlaws live peaceably with the animals of the forest but also hunt animals, such as deer, for food. In fact, the ability to hunt for food in the forest lies at the heart of the Anglo-Saxon outlaw legends. Following the Norman Conquest, William, duke of Normandy, claimed large areas of English forest for his personal royal hunting grounds and excluded many farmers and peasants from that right, sometimes even forcing them from their homes and villages to make way for royal forest enlargements. English resistance to this expansion resulted in outlaws like Robin Hood.[41] Thus, many early depictions of Robin Hood show him in the royal forest hunting deer with a bow and arrow.

Throughout the Mormon Panorama, animals are portrayed as companions to the Church members. In *Saints Driven from Jackson County Missouri* (fig. 4), a small dog tries to defend its master by attacking the vigilantes. In the exodus scenes from both Missouri and Nauvoo (figs. 5 and 9), horses and oxen are depicted as obliging and essential helpers. In *Leaving Missouri* (fig. 5), several chickens are also making their way into the wilderness with the caravan.

The painting *Catching Quails* (fig. 15) most directly links the Church members with the animals of the forest. This scene shows the poor and sick from Nauvoo who were unable to leave with the earlier large evacuation and had finally been forced out at gunpoint. A small glimpse of

40. Laura Allred Hurtado, "Joseph Smith Preaching to the Indians," *Pioneer* 66, no. 1 (2019), 64.

41. Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 26, 30; Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 140.

Figure 15. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Catching Quails,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 76¼ × 113 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

Nauvoo, the temple, and the river can be seen on the right side of the canvas (in keeping with Christensen's formula for showing civilization on the right and wilderness on the left). The Latter-day Saints evidently also viewed the expulsion from Nauvoo as one more abuse in a string of trespasses against their legal rights. The lecture script emphasizes the injustice of the mob: "when the mobb [*sic*] element decided to eliminate all mormons from the state regardless of poverty or any other reason."[42] A flock of quail appeared in their makeshift camp, so numerous that children could catch them, and the episode became another link in Latter-day Saint memory between their community and the ancient chosen people. Jensen and Oman describe the image as follows: "On 9 October 1846 flocks of quail landed in the Mormon camp, providing food for the destitute refugees. Thus, amid the sickness and suffering, God's intervention was seen as a modern-day equivalent of the quail and manna given the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 16:13–15)."[43]

42. "Catching Quails," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."
43. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 110.

Like Biblical outcasts or Robin Hood's band of outlaws, the Church members are shown as being illegitimately forced from their homes and land but finding protection and food in the forest. The canopy of trees in *Catching Quails* dominates the image, taking up almost two-thirds of the canvas, and it is larger than the human drama that takes place below it. As in the Daniel Maclise painting of Robin Hood's men in the greenwood, the landscape is not an afterthought or a quaint addition, but rather an integral part of the story. The forest symbolizes both the people's outcast status and the protection they receive from God. The lecture makes a similar point: "Here they are at a point of starvation, but true to God and his cause. They humbly asked God to come to their rescue in this hour of trouble, starvation staring them in the face. The Lord caused these birds to come by the meriods [*sic*] swarming on the camp grounds and in the tents and were so tame that men, women and children could catch them with their hands as you see them doing. Thus you see how the Lord hears and answers the prayers of those who come to him in humility and faith."[44]

It is believed that Christensen interviewed or read accounts from Church members who witnessed the events depicted in order to portray them accurately, and in many of the scenes there is careful attention to detail and historical accuracy.[45] As just one example, the *Catching Quails* painting and accompanying script matches up remarkably well with this published account of the event from an eyewitness:

> On the 9th October, several wagons with oxen having been sent by the Twelve to fetch the poor Saints away, where [*sic*] drawn out in a line on the river banks, ready to start. . . . The quails descend. . . . See the sick knock them down with sticks, and t little children catch them alive with their hands! . . . They rise again, the flocks increase in number, seldom going seven rods from our camp, continually flying round the camp, sometimes under the wagons, sometimes over, and even into the wagons, where the poor sick Saints are lying in bed; thus having a direct manifestation from the Most High, that although we are driven by men, He has not forsaken us, but that His eyes are continually over us for good. . . . In the afternoon hundreds were flying at a time.[46]

Accordingly, the painting includes the wagons lined up by the river, the sick administered to in makeshift shelters, the numerous quail all through the camp, and the children catching the birds by hand. The fact

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44. "Catching Quails," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."

45. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, *On the Road with C.C.A. Christensen*.

46. Thomas Bullock, "Letter from the Camp to Elder Franklin Richards," *Millennial Star* 10 (January 15, 1848): 29.

Figure 16. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *The Battle of Crooked River,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

that Christensen worked to recreate the scenes accurately indicates his desire for the paintings to be read as historical truth and for these foundational stories to be passed on to future generations.

Clashes with Political and Military Forces

Whatever deeper themes are woven into the outlaw legends, the fight is always, at some level, political. When the tension boils over to violence or military force, the outlaws are portrayed as unjustly put in a position of having to defend themselves. In the story of Robin Hood, it is corrupt local sheriffs, abbots, and bishops that compel him to defend himself and his oppressed friends. These local officials had legal authority but abused it, making their actions illegitimate and tyrannical.[47] Thus, in the topsy-turvy world of the greenwood, it is these officials who are actually outside the law, and it is the banished "outlaws" who enact true law and justice.

The Battle of Crooked River (fig. 16) visualizes these same themes of a world turned upside-down by local authorities illegitimately using violence against the Church members. It depicts the culmination of

47. Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 128.

escalating tensions between Latter-day Saints and their neighbors in Daviess County in 1838, as a Latter-day Saint militia sought to rescue three of their men captured by a unit of the Missouri state militia. The lecture script describes how three of the Latter-day Saints, including their leader, Apostle David Patten (who is seen wounded in the field), were killed in the fight. It goes on to say, "Returning to Farwest [*sic*], they were met by the Saints who bitterly mourned the loss of their dear Husbands and providers who laid down their own lives in trying to save the lives of their brethern [*sic*], and thus become martyrs for the cause of truth."[48] Like Robin Hood, these men risked their lives and used extralegal means to try to save their friends from what they saw as unjust oppression.

As in other Mormon Panorama paintings, the narrative is overwhelmed by the landscape, with a thick grove of trees and an open meadow taking up the entire right half of the canvas. A scene of a shoot-out between an encampment of vigilantes and a band of Latter-day Saints could place more emphasis on the action of battle, or even on the captured men they sought to liberate. But Christensen instead tucked all the violence and heroics inside a powerful landscape. The Latter-day Saint men blend into the brush, but their shapes strongly echo the grove of trees behind them. The Latter-day Saints are much more unified with the landscape in terms of color and form than the mobbers, who stand out on the bank of the river with their white wagons and peaked tents. This too is like the Anglo-Saxon outlaw's stealthy movement within the landscape, and especially his connection to the trees of the forest. Sarah Harlan-Haughey argues, "The literary outlaw becomes, in some ways, treelike, before springing into action—from tree to wolf in a moment. His attitude of casual waiting, of menacing immobility, is perhaps one of the most powerful and recognizable motifs of this tradition."[49] There is a sense of this in Christensen's painting, as the Latter-day Saints emerge from the trees with deadly force.

The atrocities of political leaders are even more pronounced in *Haun's Mill* (fig. 17). In 1838, three days after the Missouri governor, Lilburn Boggs, issued Executive Order 44, stating that "the Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace," a group of Missouri militiamen attacked

48. "Picture # 6 [Crooked River Battle]," in "Lecture and Notes, Undated."
49. Harlan-Haughey, *Ecology of the English Outlaw,* 171.

Figure 17. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Haun's Mill,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

the Latter-day Saint settlement of Hawn's Mill.[50] Although there is some debate about whether the militia was authorized by the state or not, in the painting the attackers wear brass-hilted U.S. cavalry sabers, symbolizing that they are not just a rag-tag mob of civilians but rather acting on behalf of the state. The long sabers are all sheathed, and the men rely instead on their firearms to do violence to the Latter-day Saints.

Seventeen settlers were killed in this attack, and Christensen's painting does not shy away from portraying the defenselessness of the Latter-day Saints as women and children run into the woods in the background while the militia surrounds the entire settlement. The militiamen shoot at the fleeing women, take aim into houses, and peer behind a wagon curtain as if to leave no survivors. The settlers' livestock, including a calf and pig, are turned loose in the chaos. The lecture script gives a detailed description of the victims and the actions of the attackers. It also identifies the man in white attacked beside the wagon as "Father

50. Lilburn W. Boggs, Executive Order to John B. Clark, October 27, 1838, Missouri State Archives, https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/archives/resources/findingaids/miscmormrecs/eo/18381027_extermorder.pdf.

McBride, an aged veteran who had fought in the Revolutionary War to establish the freedom which he as an American citizen was entitled to enjoy, that of worshiping [*sic*] God according to the dictates of his own conscience. After being shot down with his own gun and yet on his bended knees pleading for mercy he was litterally [*sic*] cut to peaces [*sic*] with an old fashioned corn cutter."[51]

In every detail, this painting drives home the understanding that men authorized by the state were acting contrary to the values and laws of the country. Religious liberty was understood to be one of the founding principles of America, and the language of the script also draws on the Church's eleventh article of faith, which states, "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" (A of F 1:11).

Miscarriage of justice is also a theme in *Liberty Jail* (fig. 18), showing Joseph Smith and six other Church leaders being jailed. In the wake of Governor Boggs's extermination order, the leaders were arrested at Far West, Missouri, and taken to Liberty Jail to await trial. In the painting, the Latter-day Saint leaders walk into their imprisonment peacefully, while the sneering jailor stands at the threshold holding the keys that will lock them in. Although there are many figures in the image, Christensen chose to reveal the faces of only the five men who appear to be shepherding the prisoners to jail—one on horseback and holding a rifle, the jailor, one driving the wagon that transported the prisoners, another on horseback, and one with a chain slung over his shoulder. The prisoners are seen only from the back in their black hats and coats. Local citizens from Liberty came to watch the proceedings, and this crowd of men, women, and children is also shown only from the back. By emphasizing the faces of the jailor and his accomplices, Christensen emphasizes the unjust actions of men in local authority. The lecture script recounts that the Church leaders were "cruely [*sic*] treated, poorly fed, at one time they were given human flesh to eat, and [the] next morning asked how the Mormon beef tasted."[52]

The script also points out that the painting "is a true representation of Liberty Jail as we have taken this from a photo."[53] Indeed, the painted

51. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Jackson County Persicutions [*sic*]. Haun's Mill.

52. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Liberty Jail.

53. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Liberty Jail. Jensen and Oman observe that the portrayal of Liberty Jail in this scene is almost identical to the undated Christensen

Figure 18. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Liberty Jail,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114⅛ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

Figure 19. J. T. Hicks, *Liberty Jail, Liberty, Clay Co. Mo.,* 1878, photograph, 14 × 20 cm, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

building and its surroundings match quite closely to an 1878 photograph of the jail taken by J. T. Hicks, who had a photography studio in Liberty, Missouri (fig. 19). Christensen's image appears to be based on the Hicks photograph, including the size, shape, and angle of the building and the placement of its door and two small windows. The painting also echoes the photograph's background, containing a pointed picket fence around the jail separating it from a few trees and houses on both sides. Christensen made a symbolic change to the fence though, leaving it orderly on the right, as in the photograph, but changing the fence on the left side of the jail into rough logs, some of which have fallen down. The change from straight and uniform pointed planks on the right to logs that are roughly hewn and askew on the left is consistent with Christensen's symbolic rhythmic movement from civilization and justice on the right to mob-rule and injustice on the left of his compositions. The jailor and the wagon carrying the prisoners appear to have used the rough fence on the left side to access the jail, perhaps knocking down the fallen posts in the process. To highlight the breakdown of the social contract in *Liberty Jail,* Christensen also painted a vivid sunset in the sky on the left side behind the rough fence and the jail as if the sun were setting on justice, or perhaps on the American experiment.

The Liberty Jail prisoners were eventually able to return to their families, although by this time the Latter-day Saints had been driven out of Missouri. They soon settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, and were allowed by the governor to create a local government and organize their own militia. Christensen depicted this militia in *Joseph Mustering the Nauvoo Legion* (fig. 20). It looks like any number of paintings of nineteenth-century patriotic American military parades. Uniformed troops line up in a neat, long line while a fife and drum play on the end. Joseph Smith rides a white horse and inspects the troops with his mounted officers, who carry American flags. Off to the side, women, children, and an old man waving a hat observe the parade. In the background, signs of economic prosperity abound in the sprawling town—brick houses, white picket fences, and bustling river port. Everything indicates order. Jensen and Oman point out that even Christensen's experimental technique for representing the row of soldiers makes them look like "a three-colored picket fence" and that "the neatness and order in the Nauvoo Legion contrasts with the state militia mobs that were led against the

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painting *Liberty Jail Clay Co. Mo.*, which does not include any people, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 75.

Figure 20. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Joseph Mustering the Nauvoo Legion,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

Figure 21. *Smith at the Head of the Nauvoo Legion,* etching, c. 1851, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1853), Northern Illinois University, Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project, https://digital.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-lincoln%3A32055.

Mormons."[54] But underlying and compelling all this patriotism and military order was the fear of extralegal violent action by their fellow citizens. The lecture script for this scene reads:

> This is the prophet Joseph mustering the Nauvoo Legion having received this oppointment [*sic*] from the governor of the State of Ill. We shall not refer to the many times he drilled and trained his brethern [*sic*] in military science so as to be more able to maintain their rights as American citizens against the mob element. We shall just refer to the last time he met with the Legion. On this occasion Joseph formed them into [a] hollow square or horse shoe circle so as to be heard by them all if possible and asked them if they would be willing to lay down their lives in defence [*sic*] of their religion and their prophet and leader, if necessary, to which they shouted "yes, yes!" Then Joseph drew his sword and pointed it heavenward and said, "so will I lay down my life for you and for the gosple [*sic*] sake if necessary." These words were construed into treason against the State and again Joseph was to go on trial.[55]

Similar to his references to the McGahey lithograph and the Hicks photograph in other scenes, Christensen lent authenticity to this painting by patterning it on an etching of the same subject published in Charles Mackay's 1851 *The Mormons, or Latter-day Saints: With Memoirs of the Life and Death of Joseph Smith, the "American Mahomet"* (fig. 21). The book had several printings in London and the United States in the 1850s and was widely reviewed.[56] Christensen may have been familiar with the etching from this book or from *Harper's* where it was reprinted in 1853, along with seventeen other etchings from *The Mormons.*[57] In both Christensen's painting and the earlier etching, Joseph Smith is on horseback at the front of a procession. In both images, he wears the same costume of a feathered hat, dark jacket, white breeches, epaulets, and sash. There is a similar treatment of the troop line with many figures pressed close together and faces undefined, although Christensen accentuated this effect and lengthened the line considerably. In the etching, Smith is accompanied by Emma Smith, who leads a company of women on

54. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 103.

55. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Joseph Mustering Nauvoo Legion.

56. Leonard J. Arrington, "Charles Mackay and His 'True and Impartial History' of the Mormons," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1968): 24–40.

57. Six of the eighteen scenes in *Harper's* also appear in the later Mormon Panorama, including tarring and feathering Joseph Smith, the Nauvoo Temple, Joseph Smith preaching to Native Americans, Joseph Smith leading the Nauvoo Legion, the death of Joseph Smith, and crossing the Mississippi on the ice.

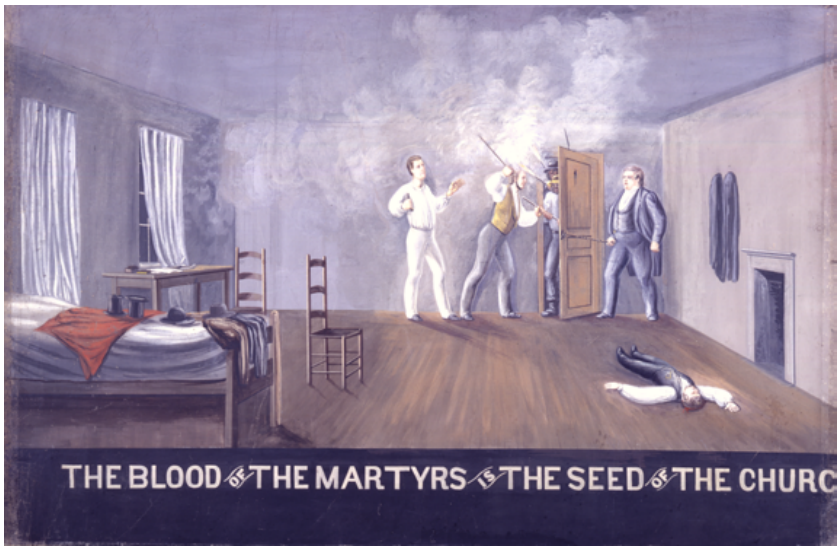

Figure 22. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Interior of Carthage Jail,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 120 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

horseback. In Christensen's version, however, only one woman (perhaps Emma) is included at the back of the procession, and all the other figures are changed to men. Christensen also changed the two flags to clearly be American flags, emphasizing that the Latter-day Saints were law-abiding U.S. citizens. Finally, whereas the etching simply shows the Nauvoo temple and a few buildings on the hill behind the figures, Christensen opened up the landscape to show a more expansive view of the city and the land.

The next scene shows the martyrdom of Joseph Smith in *Interior of Carthage Jail* (fig. 22). It is the only painting of the Mormon Panorama to include a caption, which Jensen and Oman believe "tells us of the importance Christensen attached to this experience as the culmination of mob persecution against the early Saints."[58] It also has the longest lecture-script entry, which recounts various injustices by local officials. It reads, in part:

> Joseph had been arrested about 50 times on various charges but never had been proven guilty of any crime. This time he and his brother Hyrum were charged with High Treason against the state of Illinois and therefore

58. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 104.

> awaiting their trial in the jail, under the pledged faith of the Governor that they should have a fair trial. . . . The Governor had called out the State Militia to aid in arresting the brethern [*sic*], expecting that people of Nauvoo would stand up in defense for their beloved leaders, but now having them in his power, he disbanded his forces, which principally consisted of the mob that so long and cruelly had persecuted them and the Saints, only retaining a few hundred men as a body guard for himself and a company of the Carthage Grays to guard the prisoners in jail, and these were, of the whole force, the most bitter enemies of the Prophet and had openly declared that the prisoners would not see the sun set on a certain day. This took place in the morning of 27th of June, 1844. . . . A force of about 150 men during the day lay in waiting, partly concealed by a grove of timber about 1½ miles West of the prison, while the Carthage Grays outside the prison walls were in league with them and had their guns only loaded with blank cartridges . . . the mob burst upon the jail, a sham scuffle took place outside between the eight men of Carthage Grays that should have defended the prisoners, and the next moment the stairway was thronged with the mob, who tried to force the door open.[59]

The script goes on to describe how Hyrum was mortally shot, John Taylor was wounded, and Joseph Smith leaped through the window and was shot. There is a sparseness and lack of detail in the painting that sets it apart from the others. The bare floor slopes up in an exaggerated and menacing angle. The sense of emptiness and loss is heightened by two empty chairs and a bed with hats and jackets that will not be picked up again.

Within two years, almost all of the Latter-day Saints had left Nauvoo due to continued persecution. *The Battle of Nauvoo* (fig. 23) depicts one final clash with the government, when an armed mob of hundreds attacked the few remaining Church members. The script reads, "When the mobb [*sic*] element decided to eliminate all mormons from the state regardless of pove-rty [*sic*] or any other reason. Our poor saints were nobly befriended by Captain Anderson and his son, who declared a Mormon had as good a right to his religion as other demonations [*sic*] to theirs."[60]

The painting shows the Latter-day Saints scrambling to mount a defense against the vigilantes who are storming across the field in the background in a cloud of white smoke from their firearms. The script explains that the Latter-day Saints unsuccessfully tried to fashion

59. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Interior of Carthage Jail, 2nd Interior of Carthage Jail.
60. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Catching Quails.

Figure 23. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *The Battle of Nauvoo,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 76½ × 113½ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

cannons with old metal parts. Christensen poignantly included details of orderly life run amok—chimney smoke from a tidy house (complete with outhouse in back) that will soon be destroyed, split-rail fences torn down in the chaos, gun smoke obscuring the bountiful corn fields, armed men coming out of houses, a ripe squash patch about to be trampled instead of harvested, a family dog running along with the commotion, and a hat blown off in the rush to defend the town.

Symbolic Dress and Disguise

In the Anglo-Saxon literature, the outlaws often used tricks of disguise to outfox their enemies, either concealing their true identity (as Robin Hood did at a Nottingham archery contest) or actually pretending to be another known person (as Robin Hood did when he donned the cloak and blew the horn of his slain enemy Guy of Gisborne, fooling the sheriff of Nottingham).[61] Although the Mormon Panorama does not show the Latter-day Saints using tricks of disguise, costuming and

61. Holt, *Robin Hood,* 32, 35.

Figure 24. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *The Arrest of Mormon Leaders,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114⅛ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

dress do serve as important visual symbols. For example, Jensen and Oman describe how in *The Arrest of the Mormon Leaders* (fig. 24), "the passively posed, clean-shaven, neatly dressed Latter-day Saint leaders are placed opposite the aggressive, unkempt, roughly dressed mob that is bristling with weapons."[62] Christensen here visualized a theme among nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint writers that contrasted law-abiding Latter-day Saints with their unruly tormentors. Parley P. Pratt, for example, "consistently portrayed the Mormons as 'citizens' while designating the vigilantes as 'Robbers,'" and President Brigham Young "argued in 1855 that the Mormons had broken no laws, but that it was their opponents that had trampled on the Constitution."[63] As in *Haun's*

62. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 99.

63. Parley P. Pratt, *History of the Late Persecution Inflicted by the State of Missouri upon the Mormons, in Which Ten Thousand American Citizens Were Robbed, Plundered, and Driven from the State, and Many Others Murdered, Martyred, &c. for Their Religion, and All This by Military Force, by Order of the Executive* (Detroit: Dawson and Bates, 1839), 30; and Grua, "Memoirs of the Persecuted," 69, 75, referencing Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 2:172 (February 18, 1855).

Figure 25. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Exterior of Carthage Jail,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 78 × 114½ inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

Mill (fig. 17), the mounted officer brandishing his cavalry saber in this painting visualizes the sanction of the political state to this trespass.

Similarly, in *Exterior of Carthage Jail* (fig. 25), some members of the mob that murdered Joseph Smith wear "government-issue ammunition pouches, implying that the state government of Illinois was at least passively an accomplice."[64] Moreover, it is the state-sanctioned mobbers who wear a sort of disguise, as many of them have blackened faces. Jensen and Oman note this disguise was to help them "avoid identification with a clearly unlawful act."[65] The lecture script makes no mention of the blackened faces, yet it does include the narrative detail that "William Webb then stepped forth drawing a large knife intending to sever Joseph's head from his body in order to gain the $500.00 reward that was offered for his head, dead or alive."[66] The state had imprisoned the Prophet and made him an outlaw with a bounty on his head, just like an outlaw from medieval literature. There is also a sense here of the failure

64. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 105.
65. Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 105.
66. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Exterior of Carthage Jail.

of the political state to protect the innocent, and that is highlighted by the women and children who flee from the violence with arms raised, and by Joseph's murdered body dressed in pure white and protected from further maiming by a bright beam of light from heaven.

Establishment of True Authority

Over the course of the Mormon Panorama, there is a shift in attitude about the desirability of untamed ecological space. In the early paintings, such as *Saints Driven from Jackson County Missouri* (fig. 4), the Latter-day Saints are shown being forced to leave their civilized homes and flee into the forest like animals or outlaws. However, in outlawry "it is only outside it [the law] that true justice can be found,"[67] and we start to see a sense of this in the Mormon Panorama paintings as the forest provides shelter and resources for the refugees, and natural elements conspire to aid them.

The shift in the desirability of wilderness is brought full circle in the twenty-third and final image, *Entering the Great Salt Lake Valley* (fig. 26), which shows a caravan of pioneer wagons emerging from a wooded canyon. Finally, the Latter-day Saints have reached the other side of the forest that they were thrust into earlier in Missouri and Nauvoo. The movement of the figures is strikingly different in this painting in that it moves from the left, from under a lush canopy of greenwood, to the right, where an empty valley lies before them. In addition, the movement is no longer toward the viewer and the foreground, but away from the viewer and into an expansive background.

The forest is remembered here as a liminal space where the Church members were transformed from outlaws to heroes, and also a barrier between the U.S. government and the new society the Latter-day Saints hoped to build. The forest had become a place of protection for the Latter-day Saints, although it was always meant to be a temporary one. The valley is imagined as a blank slate on which to build a new and better society. Christensen's lecture script says that Brigham Young "had proved himself a modern Moses" and that when his wagon train reached the Salt Lake Valley, "the pioneers at once began plowing up the ground."[68] According to historian David Grua, the religious persecution experienced by the Latter-day Saints in Missouri and Illinois

67. Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend,* 91.

68. "Lecture and Notes, Undated," Entering Great Salt Lake Valley.

Figure 26. C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912), *Entering the Great Salt Lake Valley,* c. 1878, tempera on muslin, 77¼ × 113 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C. C. A. Christensen, 1970.

caused them to conclude "that America as a nation had fallen and that true patriots would only find freedom in the American West."[69] Thus, in 1854, Apostle George A. Smith proclaimed, "Like the pilgrim fathers who first landed upon Plymouth Rock, we are here pilgrims, and exiles from *liberty*; and instead of being driven into the wilderness to perish, as our enemies had designed, we find ourselves in the middle of the floor, or on the top of the heap. Right in the country that scientific men and other travellers had declared worthless, we are becoming rich in the comforts and blessings of life, we are now rocking in the cradle of liberty, in which we are daily growing."[70]

As Robert Pogue Harrison has noted, the old English outlaw stories always end with rectification and emergence from the forest: "Once absolved, the outlaw leaves the forest behind and steps into the light of

69. Grua, "Memoirs of the Persecuted," 60.

70. George A Smith, in *Journal of Discourses,* 2:24 (July 24, 1854), emphasis in original.

salvation."[71] In part, this is true in the final Christensen painting, where the sun-dappled valley beckoning to the pioneers clearly lies beyond and apart from the shadowy forest. Yet, unlike the traditional outlaw narrative, the Latter-day Saints aren't absolved or repatriated into the U.S. legal system. There is no final reconciliation with a king or government, but only with God.

Conclusion: Zion as Greenwood

The Mormon Panorama exhibits motifs that are found in outlaw literature as well as in the Biblical exodus. The Anglo-Saxon outlaw literature also has significant overlap with the exodus story, but it has not been well explored by scholars.[72] It has been documented elsewhere that nineteenth-century members of the Church saw themselves as reenacting the ancient Israelite exodus as a chosen people. They may even have seen themselves as the third iteration of this story, following both Old Testament and Book of Mormon exodus patterns. Although a detailed examination of these parallels is beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth noting that the themes of outlawry are also strikingly apparent in the Book of Mormon. Nephi's story, for example, matches up nicely with the themes of outlaw literature identified above: (1) loss of status when he was bound and abused by his older brothers (1 Ne. 3:28; 7:16); (2) loss of land when his family left Jerusalem and gave up their inheritance (1 Ne. 2:4); (3) existence in a prolonged wilderness exile outside the borders of Jerusalem and then in a new continent (1 Ne. 17:4); (4) gathering of supporters, including Zoram and Ishmael (1 Ne. 4:35; 7:4–5); (5) companionship of animals in the sense that wild beasts were divinely provided and their meat was even made "sweet" so it did not need to be cooked (1 Ne. 16:31; 17:2, 12); (6) numerous political clashes in the New World between the rival Nephites and Lamanites (2 Ne. 5:14); (7) tricks of disguise when Nephi donned Laban's clothes and imitated Laban's voice to gain access to the plates of brass (1 Ne 4:19–20); and (8) establishment of true authority when

71. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 81.

72. Although Simon Schama suggests they are ancient patterns, and Sarah Harlan-Haughey mentions a possible connection between Cain in the Old Testament and Beowulf, the authors Maurice Keen and J. C. Holt, who wrote two foundational studies on Anglo-Saxon outlaw legends, do not explore this connection with more ancient ideas about Exodus.

Nephi led his band of followers into the wilderness, observed the law of Moses, and built a temple (2 Ne. 5:7–16). Nephi even embodies other Anglo-Saxon outlaw traits and tropes such as superhuman strength, archery prowess, beheading of the enemy, and wicked elder brothers. There may be more to say about how the themes of outlawry show up in the Book of Mormon, especially in the character of Nephi, or how Christensen's images reflect Biblical exodus patterns.

As Robin Hood's greenwood became a powerful symbol of his cause, so the American wilderness became a symbol for the Latter-day Saints of their outsider status, moral rightness, and divine deliverance. Both the Mormon Panorama and the Anglo-Saxon legends were motivated by a concern with political corruption, an attentiveness to moralizing meaning, a sense of pride of place, and even simply a need for entertainment. Christensen's paintings visualize the moral rightness of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints relative to injustice in American society and government. Their outcast status became evidence for them that they were God's chosen people, called upon to establish true justice and righteousness in a special place apart. And Christensen presented this history as a form of entertainment—an evening of theatrical art, oral history, and hymn singing.

The Mormon Panorama was an important tool in solidifying the collective memory of the Church. It not only collated the early stories of persecution, hardship, faith, and miracles but also added a visual dimension to the oral narrative and presented it in a theatrical, emotional, and memorable way. Christensen drew from Dibble's list of scenes, followed published accounts of events such as in the *Catching Quail* painting, studied photographs of sites such as Hicks's photograph of Liberty Jail, copied McGahey's lithograph of Joseph preaching to Native Americans and the published lithograph of Joseph with the Nauvoo Legion, and conducted interviews with witnesses to get details such as the manner of death for Father McBride in *Haun's Mill.* These efforts gave his narrative a greater sense of accuracy, legitimacy, and objectiveness. By focusing on these particular scenes, Christensen encouraged other members to focus on them too. Christensen built upon memories of specific moments in Church history that were already coalescing in the collective consciousness of the Latter-day Saints, but he was the first to complete a full set of images, thus helping to consolidate that memory and shape the narrative.

Although Christensen began the Mormon Panorama in 1878, just a year after the death of Brigham Young, Christensen never depicted him

in these images, even when the script mentioned Young specifically, as it did in the final image of wagons arriving in the Salt Lake Valley. Joseph Smith, however, appeared in eight of the twenty-three paintings. This suggests that the Mormon Panorama was intended primarily for the edification and memory shaping of the younger generation that never knew Joseph Smith. In 1879, Christensen wrote, "The old generation who bore the burdens of the day in the persecutions in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois will no longer be with us a few years hence. History will preserve much, but art alone can make the narrative of the suffering of the Saints comprehensible for posterity."[73] Christensen's presentation of key moments in early Church history allowed generations of Church members to identify with and internalize these experiences.

Church leaders at the time welcomed Christensen's contribution to stabilizing Latter-day Saint memory and identity. Christensen began showing his presentation in 1880, the same year that Joseph Smith's First Vision account was canonized. Several handbills advertising Mormon Panorama presentations were endorsed by Church President John Taylor, his counselor Joseph F. Smith, many Utah bishops, stake presidents, and even a mayor. On one such handbill, the endorsement reads: "We, the Undersigned, having witnessed Elder C. C. A. Christensen's Historical Panorama and Lecture, do hereby certify that we were pleasantly entertained and highly edified thereby, and with pleasure recommend them to the patronage of the Latter-day Saints, and all lovers of Truth and Fine Art."[74]

Both the outlaw legends and the Mormon Panorama narrative were based on real events but seen through the lens of people at a slightly later time who were projecting their own circumstances and desires onto the past. By the time Christensen painted these scenes in the 1880s, he was looking back half a century to imagine events such as the expulsion from Jackson County. These paintings, therefore, help us understand the context and priorities of Utah Latter-day Saints in the late nineteenth century. By that time, the Latter-day Saints had fully embraced their status as outsiders in American society. In 1857, Stephen Douglas said, "The inhabitants of Utah, as a community, are *outlaws* and alien

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73. C. C. A Christensen to A. W. Winberg, *Bikuben,* March 20, 1879, quoted in Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 18.

74. Handbill, "The Grand Historical Exhibition," n.d, c. 1880s, Brigham Young University Museum of Art.

enemies, unfit to exercise the right to self-government."[75] The Latter-day Saints knew they were seen as unquestionably different from and unable to assimilate into American society.

Moreover, by the late nineteenth century, renewed tensions with the federal government over statehood and polygamy kept issues of land ownership and usage a central issue for the Latter-day Saints. In illustrating the Latter-day Saint experience, Christensen presented them not only as outsiders but also as heroic figures with a divine right to the land. According to Steven Harper, "Christensen's depiction of past persecutions would have resonated with Latter-day Saints who were dealing with a hostile government and Protestant establishment. The illustrated narration catalyzed memory recursion."[76] The overarching themes of the Mormon Panorama are persecution and injustice, and "Christensen emphasized persecution in his scenes, both visually and orally, from the harassment Smith experienced as a result of his vision to his being tarred and feathered in Ohio to the Missouri persecutions to Smith's martyrdom to the saints' being driven from the United States. By so doing, he forged a coherent narrative characterized by chosen-ness and opposition."[77] Pressure from the federal government in the late nineteenth century colored the way the Latter-day Saints remembered earlier events, even influencing which moments they chose to emphasize. The narrative told by Christensen's Mormon Panorama is one of persecution, and it had as much to do with the earlier events as it did with circumstances surrounding the Church members viewing the presentation in 1880.

Latter-day Saint self-understanding has changed since the nineteenth century, and Church members today no longer view themselves as persecuted outcasts in quite the same way that they once did. In his book *The Mormon People,* Matthew Bowman argues that over the course of the twentieth century Latter-day Saints shifted from seeing themselves as outsiders to seeing themselves (or at least trying to portray themselves) as the ultimate insiders.[78] Perhaps this outlaw hero

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75. Stephen A. Douglas, *Kansas, Utah, and the Dred Scott Decision. Remarks of Hon. Stephen A. Douglas, Delivered in the State House at Springfield, Illinois, on 12th June, 1857* (Springfield, Ill.: 1857), 6–8, as quoted in Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People,"* 109, emphasis added.

76. Harper, *First Vision,* 111.

77. Harper, *First Vision,* 110.

78. Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of An American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012).

narrative does not hold up as well today, but there are still threads of it in Latter-day Saint memory. Members of the Church still see pioneer art in their Church manuals, celebrate Pioneer Day to commemorate the arrival of the Latter-day Saints in the Salt Lake valley, dress their youth in pioneer costume to reenact pioneer treks, and sing pioneer songs with lines like "We'll find the place which God for us prepared, Far away in the West."[79] For Latter-day Saints, Zion is still in some sense like Robin Hood's greenwood: a place on the borders of society where God's exiled chosen people can be called together and dwell in righteousness.

Jennifer Champoux lives in Colorado with her husband and three children. She has taught art history as adjunct faculty at several colleges and enjoys writing about and lecturing on religious art. She holds a BA in international politics from Brigham Young University and an MA in art history from Boston University. A portion of this paper was presented at the 2019 Mormon Scholars in the Humanities Conference, and the author is grateful for feedback from conference participants, especially Samuel Brown, Christopher Jones, and Gary Ettari. The author also wishes to thank Ashlee Whitaker, curator at the BYU Museum of Art, for her invaluable assistance. And she thanks Mark Champoux for his brilliant editing and unfailing support.

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79. William Clayton, "Come, Come Ye Saints," *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 30.