

DEFENDING MY THESIS—AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

When I was a university student, the honors program in which I was enrolled required students to write a thesis. Each student's thesis had to be supervised and approved by two professors.

For my thesis I chose to research and analyze warfare in the Book of

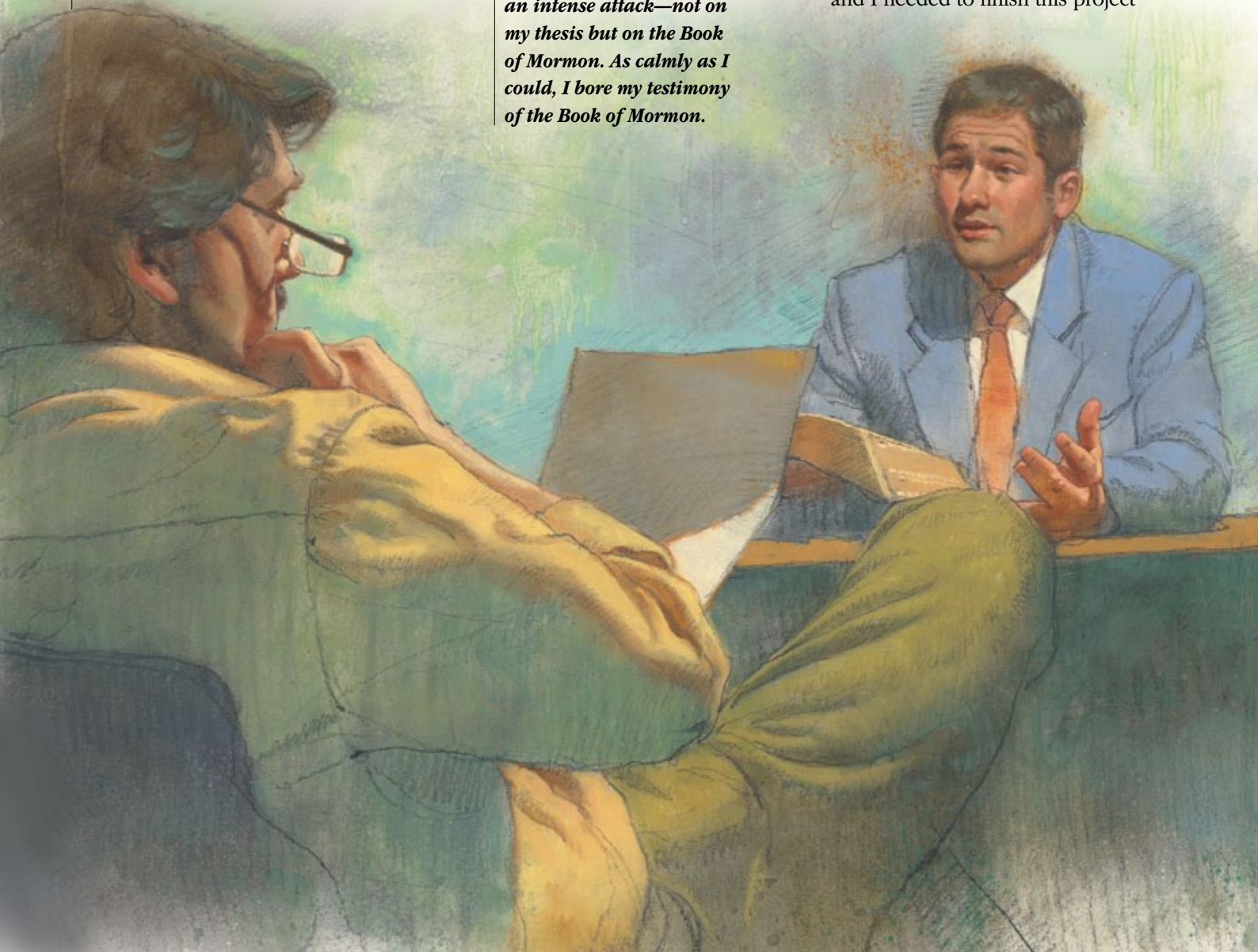
Mormon. I consulted with one professor about my idea, and he agreed to be one of my supervisors. He also suggested another professor as a potential second supervisor.

I met with the second professor

Almost immediately, the professor launched into an intense attack—not on my thesis but on the Book of Mormon. As calmly as I could, I bore my testimony of the Book of Mormon.

to explain my thesis topic to him. As soon as I mentioned the Book of Mormon, his demeanor changed and he began to criticize the Church. I listened quietly until he had finished and then briefly explained that I felt he misunderstood our beliefs. He didn't seem convinced, but to my surprise he agreed to supervise my thesis.

After almost a year of research and writing, I submitted my thesis for faculty approval. During that year I had been accepted to law school, and I needed to finish this project



to graduate and move forward.

Within a week I received an e-mail from the professor who had criticized the Church. He asked me to meet him at his office.

When I arrived, he asked me to close the door and sit down. Almost immediately, he launched into an attack—not on my thesis but on the Book of Mormon. As calmly as I could, I bore my testimony of the Book of Mormon.

I hesitantly asked the professor if he would still approve my thesis. He said he would not.

I went home feeling depressed and unsure what to do. Without this man's approval, I could lose my chances to graduate from the honors program and to begin law school. I prayed that everything would work out somehow.

When I explained my situation to the other professor who was supervising my thesis, he advised me to visit the professor the next day and give him one more chance to approve my thesis.

The next morning I found myself waiting outside the professor's office. I was nervous, unsure of how he would react to seeing me again. When he arrived, he silently opened his office door, gesturing for me to come in. Without saying a word he took out a pen and signed my thesis, officially giving me his approval. He offered no explanation of what had caused him to change his mind but smiled at me as I said good-bye.

I am grateful that I had the

opportunity to bear my testimony to this man. I know that as we stand for what we believe, Heavenly Father will strengthen and bless us. ■

Scott Macdonald, California, USA

WHEN I MEET MY BROTHER AGAIN

When I was a young girl, I desperately wanted my brother, Juan Fernando, to run and play like other children. When I asked my mom why he couldn't, she said he had suffered a severe brain injury at birth from lack of oxygen and would never be able to do those things.

My brother spent his entire life in bed. Because I was raised in the Church, I understood and accepted his condition and knew the greatness of his spirit. Nevertheless, my young heart longed for him to be like others, even though I couldn't imagine what it would be like to watch him walk or run or speak.

I was worried about who would take care of him if the rest of the family died before he did. In heartfelt prayers I pleaded with Heavenly Father not to take us before He took Juan Fernando. I knew He would answer me.

My brother was 16 when he died on a cold winter afternoon, leaving a tremendous void in our family. We

felt sadness but also hope. A few days after he died, I fell asleep while thinking about him and had a beautiful dream.

I was walking, but my vision was dimmed by clouds. I could see something in the distance, so I continued walking slowly toward it. As I drew closer, I saw that it was a wagon full of beautiful flowers. While staring at them, I noticed a handsome young man, dressed in white, standing by the wagon. I paused a moment, trying to recognize him, and then I realized it was my brother. I was so happy to see him. He spoke to me, and I wanted to hug and kiss him. Then I woke up.

I was so grateful that I heard his voice and saw him looking whole. I can only imagine the moment when we will meet again. I'm sure there will be hugs and kisses and loving words—all thanks to the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Because of the Savior we will all rise from the grave and can be reunited as families, never to be separated again.

I remember the words of Amulek: "The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame" (Alma 11:43).

I'm thankful for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings peace to my soul. I know I will see my brother again someday. ■

María Isabel Parra de Uribe, Mexico

MY PIONEER DAYS IN CALGARY

I was born in a small town in northern England in 1947. When I was 15 years old, I was introduced to the missionaries through friends, and I joined the Church. My family, however, did not join.

As I learned about the early pioneers of the Church, I felt that I had been shortchanged by not having a heritage of ancestors who had crossed the plains. But as I progressed in the gospel, my feelings changed.

I came to understand that the early pioneers forged the way for people like me to join the Church. The two missionaries who introduced me to the gospel were descendants of those pioneers, so I owe much to the pioneers. I came to feel linked to them in a special way.

I also realized that I *do* have a heritage of generous, hardworking people who sacrificed, labored, and even fought wars to make it possible for me to have things they never had and to give me the freedoms I enjoy today. My parents didn't join the Church, but they raised me with good values and principles that prepared me to accept the gospel.

Finally, I learned that there are many kinds of pioneers. I am a first-generation member of the Church. My family was not happy with my decision to be baptized, which made it

difficult for me to attend my meetings. Our small branch struggled because of a lack of members, especially priesthood holders. Eventually it became evident that the mission was going to close it.

As a result, I decided to move to Canada, which was one of the hardest decisions I have ever made. I was an only child and loved my parents very much, as they loved me, but my testimony would have been at risk had I stayed in an area where I couldn't attend church. I can still remember the night I left—my father running alongside the train blowing kisses to me while my mother looked on. My heart was breaking, but I knew I had to leave.

I arrived in Calgary, Alberta, on Mother's Day in May 1967. I attended church with the members I was staying with and cried through the whole meeting. I remember writing letters home to my parents with tears streaming down my face, telling them I loved Canada but missed England and my family so much.

I struggled to adjust to my new life, suffering homesickness, loneliness, and disappointments, but I stayed true to the gospel. I attended all of my meetings and accepted callings. These were my pioneer days.



I can still remember the night I left—my father running alongside the train blowing kisses to me while my mother looked on. My heart was breaking, but I knew I had to leave.

Eventually I met my husband. We were sealed in the Cardston Alberta Temple and raised three children in the Church.

Each time I return to England, I am flooded with memories of my conversion and can't help but be grateful for my blessings. Where might I be today had I not had the courage to make such a difficult choice and follow the Spirit?

I will be eternally grateful to the early pioneers both in and out of the Church who paved the way so that I and others like me could hear the gospel. Those who came before gave me the opportunity and the courage to be a modern-day pioneer. ■
Lorraine Gilmour, Ontario, Canada

TWO CITIES AND A TENDER MERCY

Like Nauvoo, Illinois, the city of Natchez, Mississippi, USA, sits high on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. Early Latter-day Saints coming from England often passed through Natchez on their way upriver from New Orleans to Nauvoo. In fact, in 1844 a group of ruffians set fire to a boat docked at Natchez that was carrying a number of Latter-day Saints.

When I arrived in Natchez to accept a job with the U.S. National Park Service, I entertained doubts and fears. I had left all that was comfortable and familiar to me in Utah, and as I took up residence in this new and seemingly foreign city, I felt lost and alone.

On my first day of training, the supervising ranger began by taking me through the park's Civil War-era mansion and demonstrating the type of guided tour I would soon be expected to conduct. By the time we had finished exploring the first floor, I was already having a hard time remembering all of the details. From the French rococo revival furniture to the English porcelain china, the ornate home embodied Southern

prosperity—and thoroughly overwhelmed me. Realizing that we had yet to see the second level of the home, I was overcome with a feeling of frustration and a longing for home.

As we climbed the grand staircase, an oil painting of a townscape caught my attention. I had never seen it before, yet there was something familiar about it. My eyes were drawn to the depiction of a large building atop the town's bluff, and I recognized the sweeping curve that the river made around the city. Could it really be what I thought it was?

I asked if the painting was a depiction of Nauvoo. My supervisor, startled by my question, replied that indeed it was. I soon learned that the

painting had been purchased by one of the home's later owners because presumably it had been painted during the mid-19th century and the river scene coincided nicely with the Natchez landscape.

The Saints who passed through Natchez amid persecution must have felt a great sense of relief and gratitude when they finally arrived at Nauvoo. Similarly, I felt comforted when I saw the painting of Nauvoo in the mansion in Natchez. Seeing the painting helped me know that Heavenly Father was aware of my situation and would bless me with the strength to overcome my homesickness, fear, and doubts. I knew that the painting of Nauvoo was a tender mercy of the Lord. ■

Tiffany Taylor Bowles, Illinois, USA

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