



A Penetrating Light

BY MICHELLE BOWDEN

Brought up in an atheist home, I was taught about God only in assemblies and religious education classes at school. Yet even at a young age, I was affected by the Bible stories I learned and the hymns I sang. I wanted to know if the things I'd learned about God were true, but I had no one to ask.

The answer came on a wet, dark day in 1970 when I was nine years old. My mum, aunt, uncle, and I were visiting the city of Norwich in eastern England. The highlight of this trip was the magnificent old cathedral. I was impressed with its sheer size and splendor, but what really caught my attention was a tall stained-glass window. Sadly, on such an overcast day, the lack of light meant the colors were rather dull.

My thoughts turned to God: Did He live? Was He real? There were so many questions to which I was eager to know the answers. Gradually, the colors of the stained-glass window became more vivid. A shaft of sunlight had broken through the clouds and was shining through the window. The light also seemed to penetrate my heart, filling every part of me with a warm and comfortable feeling. I had never felt anything so intensely wonderful and joyful. In the midst of this I had the assurance that God did indeed live and that He loved me.

Four years later I read a magazine article in which a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints explained some of his religious beliefs. I felt the same warm, comforting feeling I had felt at Norwich Cathedral. It encompassed me and seemed to fill me with light. I was again assured of God's reality and of His love for me, and—this was the crucial part—I was assured that the things I was reading were true.

In learning about the gospel, I came to understand that what I had experienced was the influence of the Holy Ghost. My mother granted permission for me to receive the missionary discussions and be baptized. My baptism took place June 27, 1975, at the Hyde Park Chapel in London, and I became a member of the Hayes Ward, London England North Stake.

Now, more than 30 years later, I can still recall my experience in the Norwich Cathedral with the same intensity as when it happened. As a result, the Savior's words "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) have a deep and personal meaning for me.

Above all, I still feel the gratitude to my Heavenly Father and Savior because I know from my own experiences that everyone—regardless of age, circumstance, or location—is known and loved. The light of which the Savior spoke has the power to penetrate our minds, our hearts, and ultimately our lives (see D&C 88:7–13). ■