

# Tell Me IT ISN'T TRUE

BY ANTHONY ATKINS

Some life-changing days take you by surprise. April 19, 2003, was one such day for me. I was working as a chaplain for the Church of England in South Yorkshire and was happy in my work. I had been a priest for nearly 14 years and imagined I would remain so until I died.

It was the day before Easter Sunday, and since we did not have special services in the chapel of the hospital where I worked, I went to the local parish church. During the service, two Latter-day Saint missionaries entered the building. It was obvious that they were missionaries because of their haircuts, suits, and badges. I knew no one would speak to them after the service, as many Christians in England view Latter-day Saints with a great deal of suspicion. But I wondered why they had come to the service, and I wanted to let them know what true Christianity was like.

I chatted with them for a while, and they told me a little about their beliefs. As the conversation came to an end,



*At first I was resistant to the message  
of the restored gospel.  
If it was true, I would lose my job,  
my house, and many friends.*

Elder Spencer said they would like to visit with me again and teach me more. I agreed, thinking that an hour spent with me was one less hour they could spend with some unfortunate person who might be taken in by their misguided ideas.

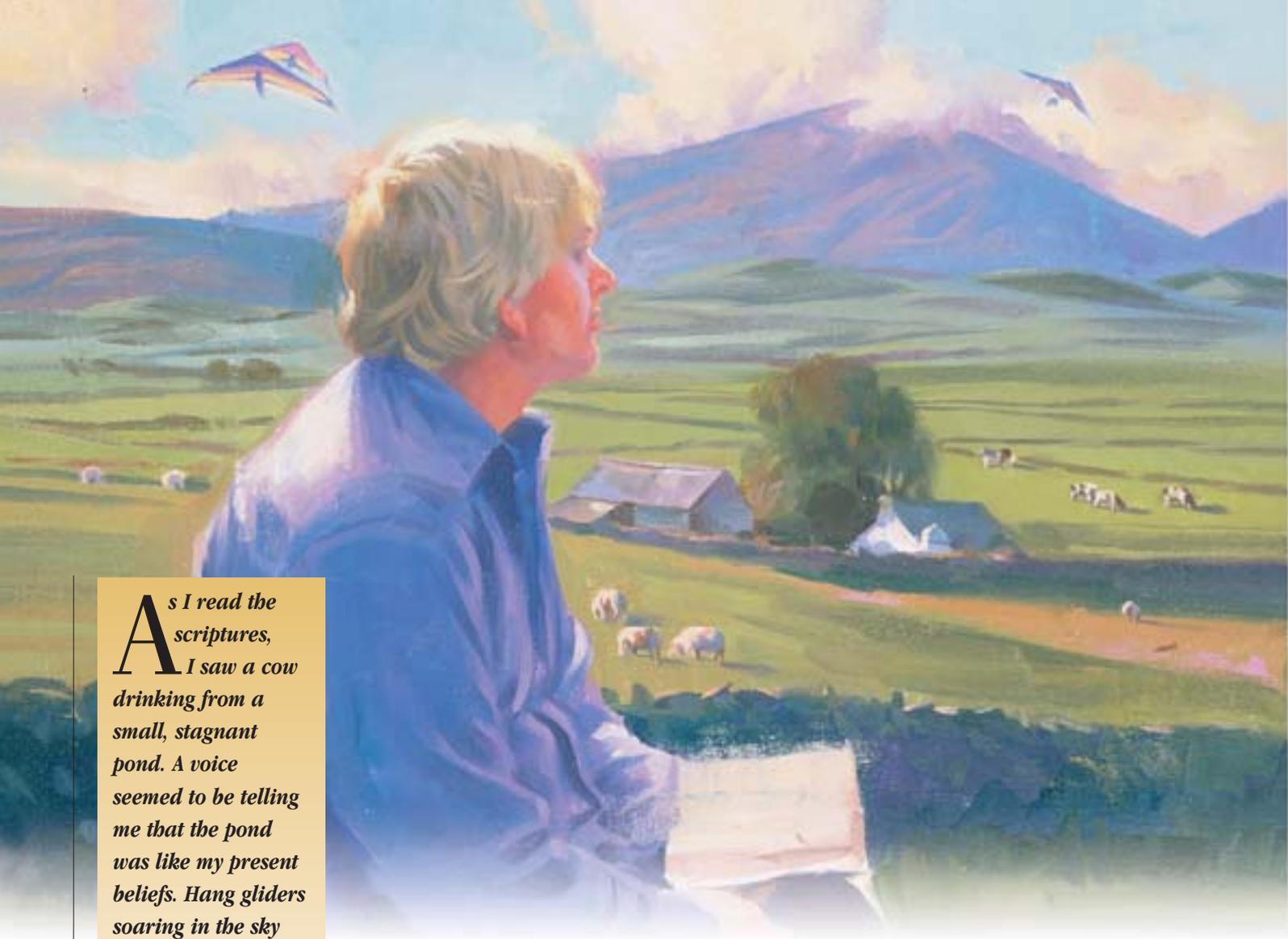
## **“By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them”**

The following Thursday, the elders met with me as planned. They taught me about the Savior, and I knew it was the same Jesus I had loved all my life. The phrase “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20) went round in my head. I could not find fault with anything they said.

They gave me a Book of Mormon and asked me to pray about Moroni’s promise (see Moroni 10:4). I

agreed. To my surprise, I also agreed to a return appointment, even though that was not part of my plan.

From that day forward I began to read the Book of Mormon. I felt guilty doing so. For every page I read, I also read a page from the Bible to offset it. As promised, I did



**A**s I read the scriptures, I saw a cow drinking from a small, stagnant pond. A voice seemed to be telling me that the pond was like my present beliefs. Hang gliders soaring in the sky above me seemed to represent an offer from the Lord to go to a higher place.

the Book of Mormon to be a deeply spiritual book that testified of the Savior. Yet I struggled with many of the book's teachings, as well as the belief that there are prophets today and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

Elder Spencer and Elder Stefan continued to teach me. I asked them many questions, and I felt the Spirit as they taught, although I did not recognize it at the time. I enjoyed their visits but thought it was because they were nice people. It was humbling to be taught eternal truths by two 20-year-olds. They had spent three weeks in the Missionary Training Center, and I had spent three years in theological college. But Heavenly Father had prepared Elder Spencer to love the Bible and to use it, along with the Book of Mormon, to teach me. Still, I was resistant to

pray about the book, but I asked Heavenly Father to reveal to me that it wasn't true. I did not receive that answer. I found

the message of the restored gospel. If it was true, I would lose my job, my house, and many friends.

What also made it difficult was that the Savior was already part of my life. It is hard to see the light when one is already in the light. I needed to be sure. I had good days, and I had bad days when I wished I had never met the elders. But even though I did not yet have a testimony of the Restoration, I could not stop reading the Book of Mormon.

As I continued to read the Bible, it supported all the elders had taught me. What they taught challenged many of my beliefs but also confirmed many others and clarified some of my beliefs that I had not fully understood.

#### **"The Lord Is on Thy Side"**

This was a challenging time for me. Facing such huge changes was not easy, but I knew Heavenly Father had taken care of me before and would continue to do so. The words of the hymn "Be Still, My Soul" became special to me:

*Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;  
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In ev'ry change he faithful will remain. . . .*

*Be still, my soul: Thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as he has the past.<sup>1</sup>*

I had planned to spend some time at a monastery in France, but due to a train strike I was unable to go. I was disappointed, as I thought that was where I would get the answer to my searching. I decided to have a spiritual day in one of my favorite places in the countryside. After lunch I was driving and listening to a general conference talk by President Gordon B. Hinckley called “The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith.” It ends with an invitation to those willing to listen to the message of the Church: “To these we say in a spirit of love, bring with you all that you have of good and truth which you have received from whatever source, and come and let us see if we may add to it.”<sup>2</sup> At this point my heart began to pound, and I felt ill.

I parked the car and stood outside till the feelings subsided. I felt impelled to walk down a country lane. There was nowhere to sit other than on a gatepost, but I knew that was where I should stay. I opened my Bible and there saw the account of the Apostasy in Thessalonians (see 2 Thessalonians 2). I tried again and got Peter’s account (see 2 Peter 2). This was not what I wanted, so I read from the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon.

As I read, I noticed a small, algae-covered pond across the road. A cow came and began to drink from it. It seemed as though an inner voice were telling me that the pond was like my present beliefs, which gave me sustenance, but they were not the springs of living water the Savior was now offering me. I looked up and saw

hang gliders soaring in the sky above me, and I sensed that the Lord was offering to take me to a higher place.

I began to suspect that the Church was indeed true. Two days after this experience in the country, I attended my first baptism. The Spirit was so strong that it was the greatest spiritual experience I had ever had. My tears flowed. I was so overwhelmed that I wanted to leave, but I had given a ride to the elders, so I had to stay.

Even after all this, the thought of leaving my job and my home was almost too much to contemplate. I visited a ward where I was introduced to a friend who helped me explore possible careers. After much prayer and reflection I eventually settled on seeking training as a social worker, and I obtained a place at a university.

### **A New Life**

Finally I ended my service as a priest and went off into the unknown. I moved into a new flat and started at the university. I entered the waters of baptism and became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was the greatest day of my life. Words can never describe what an amazing occasion it was.

I have since been ordained to the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods and have received my endowment in the temple.

I know the Lord’s Church has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that it has the true priesthood authority. I love the missionaries of the Church for the work they do. I am eternally grateful for all those who taught me and who did not give up on me, knowing what was in my heart even when I did not know myself. ■

### **NOTES**

1. *Hymns*, no. 124.
2. *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 81.



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