



THE TRUTH FOUND ME

I relied on my Heavenly Father during the years our family was imprisoned during World War II. A few years later, when the missionaries taught me about the Godhead, I recognized the Heavenly Father in whom I had always believed.

BY MARIANNE ROHRBOUGH

I was born in 1932 far away from the restored Church of Jesus Christ; my family and I didn't even know there was such a thing. My father was the manager of a rubber and coffee plantation that bordered a tropical jungle on East Java, one of the bigger islands of what is now known as Indonesia. We were Dutch.

I cannot remember a time in my life that I didn't believe in God and Jesus Christ. We lived too far away from Jember, the closest town, to attend the church we belonged to, but my father read to my younger brother, Peter, and me from a children's Bible before we went to bed each night. I loved those Bible stories, and that homespun faith was strong in me.

World War II broke out; the Dutch East Indies, as Indonesia was then called, was conquered, and we spent two years in prison camps separated from my father. My mother; Peter; my four-year-old sister, Barbara; and I survived the ordeal, but our world was turned upside down when we found out that my father, who was in another camp, hadn't. I remember walking out of our barracks

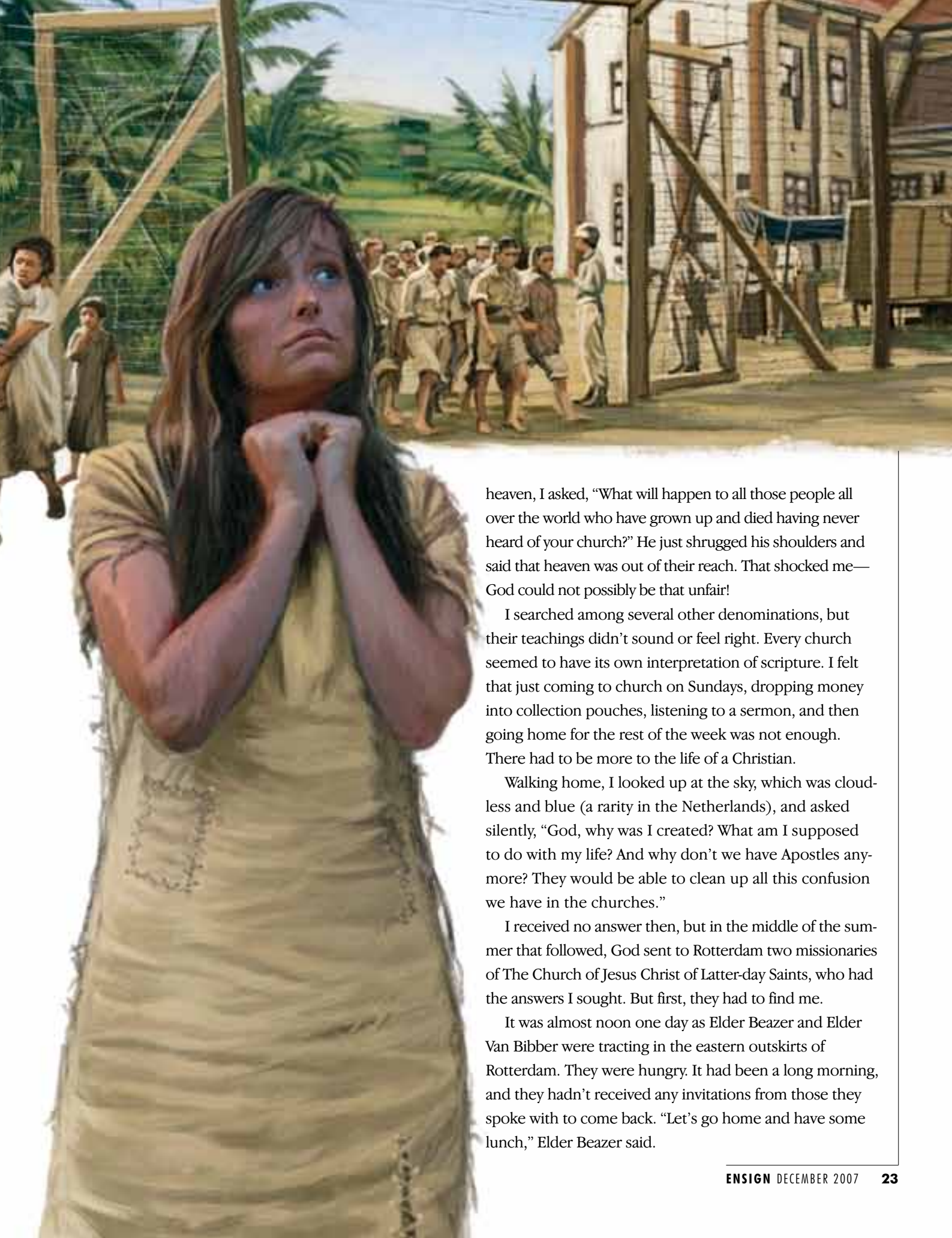
after hearing the news. I looked up at the blue sky and said to my Heavenly Father, "Well, God, it's now between Thee and me. Thou art the only Father I have left."

Shortly after, we were deported from Indonesia to the Netherlands. Two years later my mother remarried, and we moved to Rotterdam.

When I was 18, my mother wanted me to attend a confirmation class at our church. I was eager to go because I loved to learn about God. But it quickly became the most confusing time in my life. I was taught that God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost were the same person—that Jesus was God in physical form. That brought up a lot of questions in my mind: Who was in heaven while God was on earth as Christ? Was Christ praying to Himself when He prayed? How could God forsake Himself while He was hanging on the cross? How could God stand at His own right hand as Stephen saw in a vision? Things just didn't seem to add up, and when I said that I couldn't understand such things, I was told in a very decisive way by my teacher, "We can never comprehend God. The moment you understand God, He will cease to be God to you."

I was too timid to say anything more, but my teacher could tell that I didn't believe him. Consequently, I flunked the class.

Even though I decided not to go back, I still felt the need to belong to a church so I could draw closer to God. A friend talked me into seeing a clergyman of another faith, but when he told me that only members of his religion would go to



heaven, I asked, “What will happen to all those people all over the world who have grown up and died having never heard of your church?” He just shrugged his shoulders and said that heaven was out of their reach. That shocked me—God could not possibly be that unfair!

I searched among several other denominations, but their teachings didn’t sound or feel right. Every church seemed to have its own interpretation of scripture. I felt that just coming to church on Sundays, dropping money into collection pouches, listening to a sermon, and then going home for the rest of the week was not enough. There had to be more to the life of a Christian.

Walking home, I looked up at the sky, which was cloudless and blue (a rarity in the Netherlands), and asked silently, “God, why was I created? What am I supposed to do with my life? And why don’t we have Apostles anymore? They would be able to clean up all this confusion we have in the churches.”

I received no answer then, but in the middle of the summer that followed, God sent to Rotterdam two missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who had the answers I sought. But first, they had to find me.

It was almost noon one day as Elder Beazer and Elder Van Bibber were tracting in the eastern outskirts of Rotterdam. They were hungry. It had been a long morning, and they hadn’t received any invitations from those they spoke with to come back. “Let’s go home and have some lunch,” Elder Beazer said.



“How about one more door?” suggested Elder Van Bibber.

“All right,” Elder Beazer replied.

“One more door.”

They rang the doorbell, and a slim, dark-haired woman with brown eyes opened the door. After the young men introduced themselves as missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the woman invited them in. They taught her the first lesson and made an appointment to return.

When I came home from work that day, my mother greeted me with the words, “You’ll never guess who came to the door today.”

“Who?” I asked.

“Two young men from America. They wanted to talk about God, and I let them in.”

“Oh,” I said, uninterested. Had I been home to open the door, I wouldn’t have let them in.

“They explained God to me.”

I froze in my tracks. “What did you say?”

“They explained God to me,” she repeated. “Here, I’ll show you.”

Curious, I followed my mother into the parlor. From the coffee table she picked up a small piece of paper. On it the missionaries had drawn three stick figures. “One is God the Father, one is the Son, and the third is the Holy

Ghost. The Father and the Son have bodies of flesh and bones, but the Holy Ghost doesn’t. That is why He’s drawn in dotted lines. They are three separate beings.”

For a moment I just stared at her. “That’s it!” I finally said. “That makes sense.” I *knew* it was true.

Elder Beazer and Elder Van Bibber continued to teach my mother, and when I came

home from the office, she taught me what she had learned. When she told me the elders had talked about apostles and prophets, things clicked. It all sounded so familiar to me.

Although my mother typically slept in on Sundays until noon, she started to get up early and take two different streetcars to get to the only Latter-day Saint branch building in Rotterdam, located on the other side of town. Since I always had more questions than my mother could answer after the missionaries’ visits to our home, she finally said, “Why don’t you just come with me to church on Sundays? Then you can ask them those questions yourself.”

I did, much to the surprise of the elders, who hadn’t known I existed. I kept going. The elders were transferred, and two others finished teaching me. On February 4, 1955, I was baptized. I was immediately called to serve as the Sunday School secretary, and a year later I was called on a full-time mission to the Netherlands.

I had finally come home, thanks to two elders who decided to listen to the Spirit and knock on one more door. ■