

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Knowledge of the True Nature of the Godhead Is a Blessing—The First Vision

By Elder Terence M. Vinson

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency

In the weeks and months leading up to my baptism into the Church at the age of 23, I was always thrilled to be taught by the missionaries. I loved to learn from them, especially things that made clear to me what had previously confused me. Perhaps the most obvious of these was my relationship to God. Knowing that God the Father and Jesus Christ together visited and spoke to Joseph Smith and had the appearance of men was a wonderful discovery to me. And, surprisingly at the time, it didn't astound me as it probably should have, given the erroneous teaching I had received all my life about a God who could not be comprehended and who both filled space and yet sometimes was present in a specific place at a specific time.

What I've also found over the years as I've spoken to those who are members of other churches is that many of them believe in God as we know He exists—as a Heavenly Father. They believe that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to the earth, as foretold in the scriptures, and that they are entirely separate beings. They believe this innately despite the

doctrines of their churches teaching otherwise. As I have considered this, I have realized that it shouldn't surprise me because while we're here on the earth, we're not so much discovering new doctrine as we are taught by the Spirit, but rediscovering doctrine that we'd known prior to this life. There is a more literal “re-cognition,” rather than just “recognition” in the usual sense of the word.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) gave an appropriate summary of what had happened to the truth regarding the Godhead over the centuries as he said: “It should be remembered that the entire Christian world in 1820 had lost the true doctrine concerning God. The simple truth which was understood so clearly by the apostles and saints of old had been lost in the mysteries of an apostate world. All the ancient prophets, and the apostles of Jesus Christ had a clear understanding that the Father and the Son were separate personages, as our scriptures so clearly teach. Through apostasy this knowledge was lost, and in the year



*Elder
Terence M.
Vinson*

325 A.D., a strange doctrine was introduced and soon spread throughout the Christian world. This doctrine confounded the persons of the Godhead, and distorted the true doctrine of God” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (1960), 3:117).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave further clarification: “In the year A.D. 325 the Roman emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea to address —among other things—the growing issue of God’s alleged “trinity in unity.” What emerged from the heated contentions of churchmen, philosophers, and ecclesiastical dignitaries came to be known (after another 125 years

and three more major councils) as the Nicene Creed, with later reformulations such as the Athanasian Creed. These various evolutions and iterations of creeds—and others to come over the centuries—declared the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be abstract, absolute, transcendent, immanent, consubstantial, coeternal, and unknowable, without body, parts, or passions and dwelling outside space and time. ...”

But “we believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission. We believe Them to be filled with the same godly sense of mercy and love, justice and grace, patience, forgiveness, and redemption. I think it is accurate to say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable *except* believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true. Indeed no less a source than the stalwart *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* records that “the formal doctrine of the Trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is *not* to be found in the [New Testament]” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov.

2007, 40). So what, in simple terms, is the true doctrine concerning the Godhead?

The Godhead consists of three separate persons: God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. All three are united in purpose, as stated so well above by Elder Holland, but their roles differ in order to accomplish Heavenly Father’s great plan of salvation.

God the Father, also known as Elohim, is both the supreme ruler of the universe and, at the same time, the most loving and kind of fathers. In my work in Papua New Guinea, where the people speak Pidgin English, their name for Heavenly Father says it better than most. There, He is called “Papa God,” and that is who He is! The great plan of salvation is His, and the opportunity for us to come to earth and receive bodies, to progress and grow, and to have eternal happiness are all of His conceiving. It is to Him that we pray, through the name of Jesus Christ. But it is He who answers our prayers and loves us unconditionally as a true father.

Jesus Christ, also known as Jehovah, works under the direction of Heavenly Father. He is the Father’s only begotten Son in the flesh and is in complete harmony with the Father in all things. He is also the eldest of

His Father’s spirit children and it was He who created the earth under His Father’s direction. He willingly accepted the wonderful, yet terrible, assignment to be the Redeemer of us all. His Atonement was motivated by love, and love is His hallmark. Our goal is to develop to the stage where our wills are also aligned with His and the Father’s and to emulate His characteristics (see 3 Nephi 27:21, 27).

The third member of the Godhead is the Holy Ghost. He is a personage of spirit. He is sometimes called the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God. His role is to testify of the truth to us so that we have His help in combatting the challenges of this life. He can give us comfort in times of turmoil and bring peace and assurance to our hearts as we do the things that enable us to have His companionship. The Holy Ghost “will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). The Holy Ghost was assigned to remain with us after the Saviour left the earth in order to teach, comfort and help us, and to witness to us of truth. When we hear or read eternal truths and have sincere hearts and real intent, the Holy Ghost will give us an assurance of that truth (see Moroni 10:4). That assurance usually comes through a warm feeling in our

hearts, similar to the feelings we have when we hold a newborn baby in our arms. It is a quiet, peaceful feeling. We try to enable such feelings by having reverence and quietness in our Church meetings. Our Church music is of that quiet, reverent nature rather than loud drumming and raucous singing so that we encourage the Holy Spirit to be there and to be felt.

How blessed we are to understand these truths and to be able to really know God. That is our objective. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen” (Moroni 7:48). It is the greatest of joys to know our Heavenly Father’s love, to feel the blessings of the Atonement in our lives, and to enjoy the peace, comfort, and witness of the Holy Ghost. With this divine heritage, we can have assurance and always feel loved. What a blessing to be members of our Saviour’s Church and to be counted amongst His sheep. ■

Pioneer from Takoradi, Ghana

By Sister Martha Lily Bassaw Osei

Martha Lily Bassaw Osei is an early pioneer member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in West Africa. The strength of her conversion and testimony are a blessing not only to her, but to all those who know her.

Martha and her husband were living in Cape Coast, both employed—he as an attorney and she as an accountant. After a move to Takoradi for employment, her husband then left for Accra for some work while Martha remained in Takoradi. It was then that Martha became acquainted with a group that called itself the “Mormon Church.” Martha had a dream at this time. “I dreamt one time that there is a church within this church which is so beautiful.” She later realized that this church had the basic teachings but not the authority of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Because of some political issues, he had to flee to America. Martha, by that time, had been given a copy of the Book of Mormon. “I told him that if he reached America, he should look out for that Church whose book I have given him,” Martha relates. Months later he wrote to Martha that he had found

the Church. He came back to Ghana and took Martha to the United States where they ended up in Provo, Utah. Martha felt uncomfortable that she was so very far from her homeland. However, the first night in Provo changed her view dramatically. “That night we slept in Provo, I had a dream that an uncle, who had died nearly ten years previously, came to me. He told me about the Church—that the Church is also in the hereafter and that the Book of Mormon was true.” This was in September 1978. Martha learned that her husband had been baptized, and although she knew the Church must be true, she did not know much about the Church. “The missionaries started to teach me the gospel and it was there that I learned about the Book of Mormon properly and about Joseph Smith. It was there in Provo that I was baptized.”

Although Martha’s husband was coming and going from Provo for the next three years, Martha remained in Provo, growing in her knowledge of the Church and the gospel. She had a wonderful opportunity to visit Nauvoo and Carthage, Illinois. Her longing for home

and desire to reunite with her mother, still in Ghana, became stronger. So, in 1981, Martha returned to Africa where she found that the same wonderful spiritual feelings she had experienced in America were present in the members who worshiped in the Church in Ghana.

Martha became very involved in Relief Society, teaching and organizing activities. She witnessed the rapid growth of the membership as new branches were created. She has continued to serve in many callings in Relief Society and Young

Women where she has had a great influence on many women. She currently serves in the Accra Ghana Temple as a senior missionary.

Martha loves music, and the hymns have strengthened her. She says, “Whatever comes, the Lord promised me that He is with me. Words from the hymn “How Firm a Foundation” inspire this strength . . . ‘Fear not, I am with thee.’ Martha states, “There are certain difficulties we will have, and then Lord is saying, ‘I am with you. . . . The soul that on Jesus hath leaned

for repose, I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never . . . no never forsake!’ (*Hymns*, no. 85).

“My testimony is that I know from the bottom of my heart, as my uncle said, that this Church is the Church of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon is true. I have been alone for all these years, and the scriptures and books of the Church are what I read. They strengthen me. They have the answer to all questions. That is what I read and feel the Spirit of the Lord with me.” ■

MISSIONARY

Family Reunited by Two “Young Boys”

By Elder Steve Deedweh

Nigeria Benin City Mission

As sister Bose (not real name) emerged from the waters of baptism she was really grateful for the privilege to be baptized. Looking back on her recent past, baptism should have been a far cry. Only the grace of God could bring to pass what appeared impossible to her. It was indeed, a season of miracles for her.

When Bose came in contact with the missionaries, she knew that the gospel they were preaching was true. She needed the gospel to reorganize her life that was then in tatters. She was eager to be baptized and so she prepared herself for the baptismal interview. But her expectations were soon dampened. She wept profusely when

she learned that she could not be baptized on account of her moral life—she was living with a man other than her husband.

Undaunted, Bose was willing to make amends immediately and continue with her new found faith. But it was not that easy. There were more rivers yet to cross.

Bose’s interview further revealed that she had a husband, Victor, (not real name) who had walked out on her and their five children. And all efforts and entreaties by their families to reconcile them had failed. So, being frustrated and lonely, she welcomed another man, Alex (not his real name) into her life.



The missionaries helped explain to the troubled sister (shown here with models) what she needed to do in order to become worthy of baptism and temple blessings.

As the interview further revealed, Alex had moved in with Bose after also leaving his own home, his wife Mary, (not real name) and children. Such was the sordid state of affairs that surrounded Bose. Her dreams of being baptized,

visiting and worshipping in the Temple of God, began to recede in her view.

However, more than Bose herself, the missionary companions were equally concerned about the loss of this lovely daughter of God to



Elder Deedweh

the whims and snares of the devil. What should be done?

Elder A said to his companion, “We cannot leave sister Bose alone. We must keep visiting her as the Mission President has directed.”

Elder B agreed, “Yes. And we must be prayerful too to know the mind of God for her.”

During one of such visits, the missionaries were impressed upon by the Spirit to ask Bose if she truly would want to be re-united with her husband, and even be sealed in the temple with her family. “Yes”, she responded emphatically.

“We assure you”, continued the missionaries, “that it would be as you desire if you would go and reconcile Alex with his wife and family. Do that and watch how God will bless you and your family.”

As a woman of faith, Bose accepted the huge challenge. She knew Heavenly Father would

forgive her, but she doubted that her husband should ever accept her again. She expressed this doubt when the missionaries asked for her husband’s contact information. Yet she obliged them.

Bose visited Mary as she promised, not knowing what to expect. But with tears in their eyes and an outpouring of love for Bose’s courage, Mary forgave Bose and Alex, her repentant husband. Alex was later welcomed home to his family.

Meanwhile, the missionaries had contacted and visited Victor, Bose’s husband. The encounter was one of great surprise for Victor.

“How could these young men bear so powerful testimonies of the divinity of marriage and the family? He wondered. Yet he felt the truthfulness of it and knew immediately what God would have him do.

Victor and Bose were finally reunited as a family in one home. Bose and her children have been baptized and Victor is currently receiving the missionary teachings as well. ■

YOUTH

For the Strength of the Youth

By **Desmond Akatugba**

Kaneshie Stake, Dansoman Ward

In the times we live in, the youth are faced with so many trials and temptations which many fail to overcome, thereby falling away from the faith. That is why we as Latter-day Saints have *For the Strength of Youth*, a booklet which helps inform the youth of the various dangers that exist in the world today. This booklet consists of various topics, including dating, dress and appearance, music and dancing, language, etc., but

I would like to elaborate on the topic of dating.

Dating, according to the Church standards, is where two or more people of the opposite sex go out to a place of recreation to have fun and get to know more about each other. The Church advises that dating should normally begin at the age of 16. In cultures where it is acceptable, dating can help you develop lasting friendships and eventually find an eternal companion.



Desmond Akatugba

It is also advisable to date those with high standards and to never be willing to compromise your standards just to make your date happy. It is also inappropriate to go on frequent dates with the same person.

After all, the purpose of going on a date is getting to know people better.

“Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. Many young people do not date . . . during their [teen] years because they are not [yet] interested, . . . do not have opportunities” or simply want to delay forming serious friendships (*A Parent’s Guide* [manual, 1985], 40). However, good friendships can and should be developed at every age.

A typical example of an LDS group date I have experienced was when three of my friends and I went on a date to the mall. Prior to the day of the date, we made sure to inform our parents, and my friend’s mum offered to drop us off. It was all fun on reaching the mall. We all stayed close to each other during all the activities we participated in. One of my fond memories of that experience was when we ate together and spoke about various issues which helped us to get to know each other better, strengthen our friendship, and also strengthen our moral standards.

For the Strength of Youth is an essential manual in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and, if taken seriously, it can instill in us the basic truth and principles of Jesus Christ from an early age to help us in the future when we face bigger challenges. ■

My Favorite Scripture: 1 Nephi 3:7–9

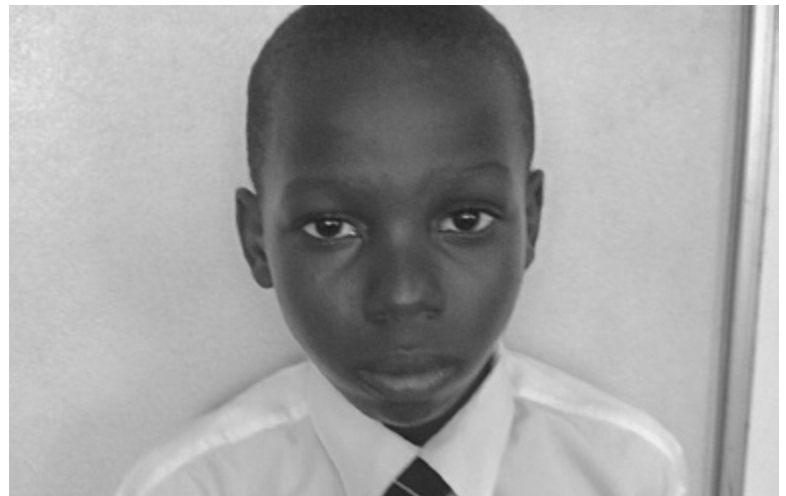
By **Benjamin C. W. (Age 12)**

Third Ward; Calabar Stake, Calabar, Nigeria

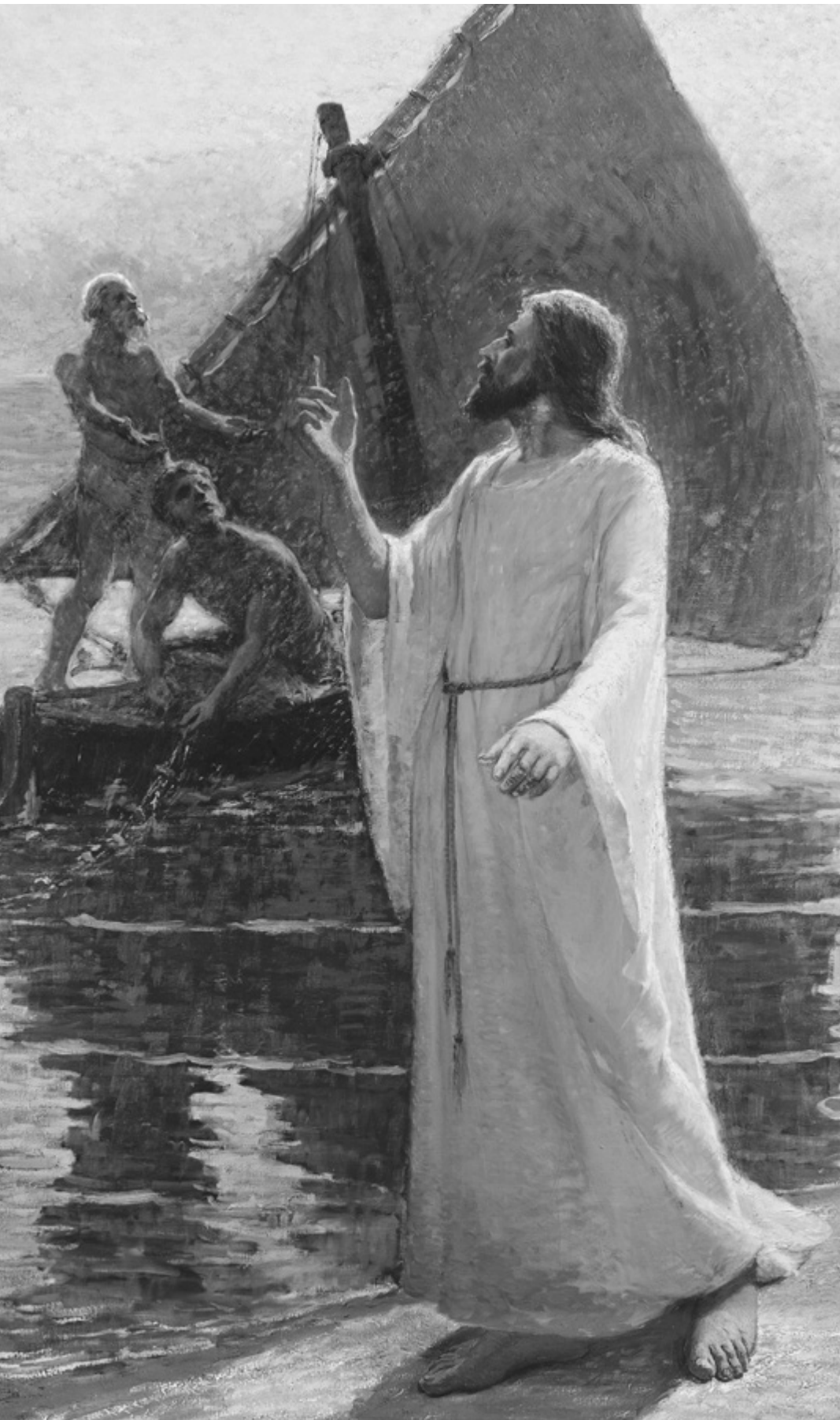
The favorite scripture of Benjamin C. W. is 1 Nephi 3:7–9. This particular scripture is important to Benjamin. He said Nephi obeyed his father. Because Nephi obeyed his father, Benjamin also obeyed his own father. The Lord had commanded that Nephi and his brothers should go unto the house of Laban and seek the records. They were to bring them down into the wilderness. His brothers murmured, “saying it is a hard thing” which the Lord had required of them (1 Nephi 3:5); Nephi went without murmuring and the Lord favored him (see 1 Nephi 3:6). Benjamin said, “This is important and, as the scriptures say, whenever somebody sends

me on errand, I don’t murmur.”

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commanded them. And it came to pass that when that when my father heard these words he was exceedingly glad, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord. And I, Nephi, and my brethren took the journey in the wilderness, with our tents, to go up to the land of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 3:7–9). ■



Benjamin C. W.



UPCOMING AREA EVENTS

October 4–5, 2014

General Conference

October 21–24, 2014

Mission Presidents
Seminar

November 4, 2014

General Conference
Rebroadcast

STAKE/DISTRICT CREATION/ REORGANIZATION

May 17–18, 2014

Umuahia Nigeria Stake
Created

Asaga Ohafia Nigeria
District Created

May 31–June 1, 2014

Niangon North Cote
D'Ivoire Stake (Renamed)

Niangon South Cote
D'Ivoire Stake Created

June 28, 2014

Enugu Nigeria Stake
Created