

“HITHERTO HAS THE LORD HELPED US”

VICE-CHANCELLOR’S ADDRESS TO THE MAIDEN CONVOCATION OF CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS STATE, ON SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2012

Your Excellencies, The Proprietor/Visitor, The Chancellor, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Pro-Chancellor, Members of the Board of Trustees and Governing Council of Caleb University, My Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Chancellors, Pro-Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of Other Universities, Parents and Friends of Caleb University, Dear Graduands, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Gentlemen of the Press.

Today is a major milestone in the annals of Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State. It marks the culmination of the process that began many years ago with the conception and establishment of what is today the first private University in Lagos State to produce holders of bachelor’s degrees in various disciplines. For this, all glory belongs to God Almighty through Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Rock of Ages, the Ancient of Days, the I am that I am. That is why this Address is entitled “Hitherto has the Lord helped us.”

On behalf of the Management, Staff and Students of this University, I felicitate with our Proprietor and Visitor, Prince Oladega Adebogun, PhD, DSc, *honoris causa*, whose singular vision, sacrifice, doggedness and faith drove the Caleb Project to where we stand today. I extend the same compliments to The Chairman, Dr. Christopher Kolade, CON and Members of the Board of Trustees, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman, Professor ’Nimbe Adedipe, and Members of the Governing Council on this great accomplishment and for the support that they have given Management to contribute to making this day possible.

I heartily congratulate the pioneer Governor of Lagos State and elder statesman, His Excellency Brigadier-General Mobolaji Johnson (Rtd.), DSc, *honoris causa*, on his double distinction as the first recipient of the honorary doctorate degree of Caleb University and on his installation as Chancellor. This achievement is well earned and richly deserved. Council and Senate did not encounter any difficulty in reaching a unanimous decision on his choice. He is thus well placed to lead the charge as we embark on the next phase of the development of this University. I also rejoice with our pioneer graduands and their families on the attainment of this turning point in their lives.

Caleb University was granted an operating licence by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2007. Academic activities commenced at the take-off site at Magodo, Lagos on January 21, 2008. This is why January 21 is celebrated as our Foundation Day. For the record, last year's Foundation Day Lecture was delivered by Professor J.K. Olupona, NNOM, of Harvard University, USA while the Convocation Lecture, which has just been delivered, was initially meant to coincide with this year's Foundation Day. Please join me in thanking Professor Banji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, Director, Global Monitoring and Research Division, United Nations-Habitat, Nairobi, Kenya for his erudite lecture and for his personal sacrifice. He changed his travel plans when this Convocation was postponed and then travelled from Nairobi at his own expense to deliver this maiden Convocation Lecture.

Caleb University relocated to its permanent site here at Imota, hometown of our Proprietor, on November 23, 2009. This compact and cozy campus is home away from home, far from the madding crowd, a place of serenity and solemnity, a haven of gently rolling hills and lush vegetation, of clean air, chirping birds and scurrying small game in their natural habitat. This abode of peace is the ideal setting for study, research and reflection, and for developing the "six-o'clock" personality. We have striven to ensure the comfort of our staff and students by engaging a franchise operator to offer catering services and a commercial bank to provide financial services. Our internal operating systems are transparent, all-inclusive, proactive and result-oriented, and we maintain cordial and fruitful relations with external regulatory bodies, the host community and our supportive parents.

From inception, the University adopted a Collegiate system, starting with three Colleges – Environmental Management and Sciences (COLENSMA), Pure and Applied Sciences (COPAS) and Social and Management Sciences (COSOMAS). In July 2010, it presented twelve programmes – Architecture, Building, Quantity Surveying, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Business Administration, Economics, Biochemistry, Computer Science, Industrial Chemistry, Microbiology, and Physics with Computational Modelling - for accreditation by the National Universities Commission (NUC). To the glory of God, none was denied accreditation. In the meantime, we have introduced new programmes - Mass Communication, International Relations and Political Science - to further diversify our course offerings. Plans are afoot to introduce the

College of Law and cognate disciplines in the Social Sciences and Humanities – Sociology, Philosophy and Psychology – and the College of Engineering and Technology.

Our professional programmes are duly regulated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON), the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) and the Council of Registered Builders of Nigeria (CORBON). In 2010/11, our Accounting programme secured four years' full accreditation while the Architecture programme obtained three years' full accreditation. For this, we are deeply grateful to the immediate past President of ICAN, Major-General Sebastian Onwuama (Rtd.), and his counterparts at ARCON and NIA, Arc. Umar Aliyu and Arc. Orji, respectively. Our Building and Quantity Surveying programmes are ready for professional accreditation.

In addition to the regular full-time programmes, Caleb University also runs both the part-time and HND-to-degree conversion programmes in a few disciplines – Accounting, Business Administration, Quantity Surveying and Building. This is our own contribution to the expansion of access to education, specifically by ensuring the academic and professional self-development of an important stratum of professionals in the workplace.

In all cases, we have taken steps to maintain high standards in compliance with the demands of regulatory bodies and the market. In the face of the nation-wide acute scarcity of qualified staff, we have been able to hold our own through strategic headhunting, sabbatical placements and a competitive salary package based on the Federal wage package, which came into effect from January 2011. At Caleb, we have a blend of highly experienced Professors, young and dynamic scholars and researchers, and focused, academically inclined students.

Of the 92 pioneer graduands, two earned First Class Honours degrees (in Industrial Chemistry and Economics, respectively), 32 emerged in the Second Class Upper Honours category, 48 obtained the Second Class Lower Honours degrees in various disciplines. Only nine graduated in Third Class while one graduand obtained a Pass degree. Their certificates and transcripts are ready for collection after this ceremony. The two first class graduands will collect theirs in this hall. The best graduating student, Mr. Temitope Eric Bakare, is undertaking his primary assignment under the national youth service corps scheme in his Department here at Caleb University. He is expected to be one of the pioneering students on our postgraduate programme.

That one of the First Class graduands, Miss Anike Temilade Atolagbe, is a lady indicates that Caleb University gives everyone a chance to excel regardless of gender. So, anyone wanting their children, especially females, to achieve their full potential should bring them here.

Committed to the wholesome development of the total personality of our graduates, Caleb University offers facilities for sports, leadership and spiritual development. While our permanent sports complex is set to take off, available facilities keep our students engaged during the regular Wednesday afternoon and weekend sports sessions. As a Christian, faith-based University, our Chaplaincy provides spiritual and counselling services to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of our staff and students. Indeed, many members of staff are ordained ministers of various Christian denominations, who also double as spiritual mentors to our students. The Caleb Leadership Academy, which is in its second year, was initiated to prepare our students for leadership both on and off-campus. Interactive sessions handled personally by the Vice-Chancellor and professionals from the private sector have added spice to the holistic curriculum available to our budding leaders. As is expected of a pace-setting University, discipline is maintained and appropriate sanctions administered after due process. We ensure that parents receive their wards' results by text message and electronic mail. Our dress code, formal on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, sports on Wednesdays and informal on Fridays, is also typically Caleb. Everyone, including Management, is compliant.

Our academic and non-teaching staff have been positively engaged in research, publishing and public service, winning national and international recognitions. A striking illustration is Dr. Chuma C. Okoro, who spent several months in 2011 at the University of Calgary on the joint sponsorship of Caleb University and some multinational oil firms. His research team also won a highly competitive Petroleum Trust Development Fund research grant in 2012 for a major project in the oil sector. In 2011, our Registrar, Mrs B.A. Awere, was honoured with a lifetime achievement by the Association of Nigerian University Professional Administrators (ANUPA) while the Vice-Chancellor was conferred with the Fellowship of the Nigerian Academy of Letters, the apex academic body in the Humanities disciplines. The University hosted the annual Professor Idowu Sobowale International Conference in May 2011, which attracted leading scholars and professionals, including 90-year old Pa Laban Namme, a veteran newspaper editor. On February 13, 2012, we received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan

to Nigeria, His Excellency Ryuichi Shoji. That was his first visit to any Nigerian University. On February 28, 2012, we also hosted a Black History Month event of the Public Affairs Section of the United States Embassy. Today, we are pleased to have in attendance on our campus distinguished men and women from all walks of life. This underscores our openness to positive partnerships.

Before I conclude, let me publicly acknowledge the endurance and determination of our graduating students who have had to cope with the challenges of pioneering. As I often admonished them, pioneering comes with pains and privileges. There will never be another pioneering graduating set at Caleb and this honour is theirs forever. But this imposes the responsibility of sustained interest in the progress and development of their alma mater. It also makes it incumbent upon them to be good ambassadors of Caleb University.

Permit me to also appreciate the pioneer Vice-Chancellor of this University, Professor Timothy Tayo, the acting Vice-Chancellor, from whom I took over, Professor A.I Akinwande, the pioneer Registrar, Prince Bola Taiwo, pioneer Deans, Professor S.O Ajayi, Professor Funso Akingbade and Arc. Adedokun, and others too numerous to mention for laying the foundation upon which later functionaries built. I thank them for contributing to the success that we are celebrating today. Last but not least, Management is deeply appreciative of the work of the Ceremonies Committee, ably led by Professor Nosa Owens-Ibie. I humbly request all members of the Committee to stand for recognition wherever they may be.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that as we celebrate today, we must acknowledge that the process of institution-building is never-ending. I gratefully acknowledge the endowment of prizes by various stakeholders in the Caleb Project. May God bless you all. Still, I hereby make a Macedonian call to all friends of Caleb University, parents of past and present students, and all lovers of progress to partner with us through endowment of Professorial Chairs, grants and prizes, bequests of property and infrastructure, and any other form of material support for their preferred projects and academic programmes here at Caleb University.

Caleb University is a mustard seed that is blossoming into the proverbial oak tree. Now is the time for all stakeholders to re-commit themselves to taking it to greater heights. Working together in unity of vision and purpose, and with God's backing, we shall surely get there.

Long live Caleb University! Long live Lagos State!! Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!!!

Thank you for listening. God bless.

Professor Ayodeji O. OLUKOJU, Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Letters

Vice-Chancellor