

“ON THE RUNWAY”

VICE-CHANCELLOR’S ADDRESS TO THE THIRD CONVOCATION OF CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS STATE, ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2013

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

Introduction

Today’s event is a litany of “firsts.” It is our first convocation in the students’ year of graduation; we are awarding the first set of honorary doctorates to **external** stakeholders (after the initial statutory awards to the Visitor and Chancellor); it also includes the award to the first female honoree; and this is my first major official act in my second term as Vice-Chancellor of this University. This third convocation is coming only seven months after the second one on March 9, 2013. On behalf of the Caleb University Family, I express deep gratitude to God through the Lord Jesus Christ for the great things He has wrought in our lives and institution. I thank everyone that submitted to God’s will to be used in the developing this University before and during my tenure, not least, our Visitor/Proprietor, Dr. Oladega Adebogun, other stakeholders in Governance, Management, staff and students, our dear parents, gentlemen of the media, who have been fair and generous in the coverage of our activities, and, on the home

front, my ever-supportive and greatly beloved wife, best friend and comrade in arms, Barr. Omowumi Olukoju, JP.

In my address to the maiden convocation on March 10, 2012, entitled “**Hitherto Has the Lord Helped Us,**” I acknowledged divine intervention in the translation of the mustard seed of faith sown by the Proprietor/Visitor, Dr. Oladega Adebogun, into the reality of this University as we now have it: **the first (and still the only) private university in Lagos State to produce bachelor’s degree holders** in as many as twelve disciplines across three Colleges from 2011 till date. My address to the second convocation on March 9, 2013 was captioned “**From Imota to Immortality,**” a timely reminder to all that we are on a journey stretching from time to eternity, with milestones and unavoidable challenges, which we must surmount on our way to success and victory. Today, continuing our metaphor of mobility and progress, I adopt “**On the Runway**” as the title of this Address. It has a Biblical resonance in **I Corinthians 9: 24: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So, run that ye may obtain.”(KJV)**

In deploying the imagery of the aviation sector – and I do so with apologies to experts in the field, such as Elder Godwin Jibodu, an aeronautics engineer, who is the Gamaliel of our Governing Council – I wish to paint the picture of this institution and of our graduands as aircraft poised for take-off on the runway. As we all know, conventional aircraft (I am excluding contraptions that take off vertically, such as the helicopter, hovercraft or rocket) though different in design, carrying capacity and flight plan, must use the **runway**. Anywhere else is the **wrong way**. They must taxi and build up speed for a smooth take-off. The runway is aptly named because at some point you must run along the charted way. So it is

with Caleb University and its products. We are on the runway, taxiing for take-off, continuing our journey from Imota to Immortality.

All races or journeys have a beginning. Ours began with the vision of the Proprietor/Visitor of this institution, Dr. Oladega Adebogun, and the faith that carried it through, assisted no doubt by various stakeholders. Their efforts were crowned with glorious success when the University was granted an operating licence by the Federal Government of Nigeria in May 2007. The University took off at Magodo, Lagos in January 2008 and relocated to this 110-hectare site at Imota in November 2009. The rest, as the cliché goes, is history. We thank God and acknowledge the support of the Visitor, our Chancellor, Chairman and Members of the Board of Trustees, past and current Chairmen and Members of the Governing Council, past and present academic and non-academic staff, students, parents and all wellwishers that God used to realize the Caleb Dream. I also wish to place on record the deep gratitude of my family and friends to God, the Ultimate Appointing Authority, and to the Visitor, Board of Trustees and the Governing Council for renewing my contract as Vice-Chancellor for a final term of three years. With your support and prayers, I believe that God will take us to greater heights in my second term in office in Jesus Name. Amen.

Please join me in thanking our Convocation Lecturer, Ms Evelyn N. Oputu, OON Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Bank of Industry, for honouring our invitation. Though she could not deliver the lecture in person because of an emergency, the quality of her lecture did not disappoint anyone who has followed her illustrious career of outstanding performance atop a critical national agency.

Milestones

Since the last Convocation seven months ago, the University has undertaken the following major activities:

- **Caleb Leadership Academy Lecture**, “Authentic Leadership,” delivered on 13 March 2013 by Professor Paul Omojo Omaji, Pioneer Vice-Chancellor, Salem University, Lokoja. Dr. Christopher Kolade, CON (Chairman of the BOT and a respected leader of Nigeria’s Organised Private Sector), Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa (three-term Member of the House of Representatives and member of our Governing Council) and Professor Peter Okebukola, OFR (distinguished scholar and former NUC Executive Secretary), have consented to feature on the CLA platform during the 2013/14 session. For the record, the Caleb Leadership Academy was initiated in 2011 by the incumbent Vice-Chancellor.
- **Mass Communication Forum Lecture**, “Outliving Competition: The Story of the Nigerian Tribune,” delivered on 15 March 2013 by Mr. Edward Dickson, the Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of the African Newspapers of Nigeria PLC, publishers of *The Tribune* newspapers (the oldest surviving Nigerian newspaper). The speaker led a delegation of one Director and two editors to the University. For the record, the Mass Communication Forum was initiated in 2012 by the Head of Department, Prof. Nosa Owens-Ibie.
- **Maiden Inaugural Lecture**, “Communicating an Implosion: Signs and Wander, Popular Culture and the Crumbling of Empire,” delivered on 9 April 2013 by Professor Nosa Owens-Ibie of the Department of Mass Communication.

- **College of Social and Management Sciences (COSOMAS) Public Lecture**, “Corporate Social Responsibility,” delivered on 11 April 2013 by Dr. V. Broomes, a UK-based Consultant. This was facilitated by Professor Olukunle Iyanda, former Dean of COSOMAS and current Dean of the College of Postgraduate Studies.
- **Maiden College of Postgraduate Studies (COPOS) Public Lecture**, “Building a Globally Competitive University Through Research,” delivered on 2 July 2013 by Professor D.I. Olaleye of the Department of Virology, University of Ibadan. The event, facilitated by the Founding Dean of COPOS, Professor S.O. Ajayi, marked the formal take-off of the College. I hereby register the gratitude of everyone of us to Professors S.O. Ajayi and O.S. Okedele for laying the foundation on which Professor Olukunle Iyanda will now build over the next two years of his Deanship of COPOS. I need to add that admission into our M.Sc. Programme in Architecture is still ongoing and our applications for resource verification for the MBA, M.Sc. Computer Science and other programmes have been forwarded to the NUC. We expect these programmes to take off in the next session.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Work commenced on the Idowu Sobowale International School of Mass Communication and on hostel projects for male and female undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- **MOU with University of Birmingham:** The agreement was endorsed by the NUC and signed on behalf of the University by the Vice-Chancellor on 18 September 2013.
- **Nigerian Tribune-Mass Communication Programme CSR Initiative:** Following a visit by the Management of the Tribune newspapers on the Mass Communication Forum platform, the organization endowed the Prize

for the Best Research Project on Mass Communication, with effect from this maiden graduation of the Department, and presented a gift of N100,000 to acquire some equipment for the Department. It also added the following Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives – two top editorial/management staff with requisite academic qualifications to teach writing, reporting and production courses in print journalism at no cost to the university; year-long supply of complimentary copies of the newspaper titles; and creation of capacity development platform for Caleb University staff and students for publishing worthy news items. A major endowment in the Department in the name of the Co-Founder and Chair of the Tribune Group, Chief (Dr.) H.I.D. Awolowo is being finalized.

- **Completion of the University Ventures’ Water Factory and Bakery:** All is now set for commercial production with effect from November 2013.
- **Linkages:** The University concluded formal affiliation with ABU-based Interim Joint Matriculation Board (IJMB) to run sub-degree programmes. Prof. Musbau Sofoluwe of North Carolina A & T State University, Greensboro, USA, is also working on a collaborative summer programme with private sector participation with us at Caleb University that will enable him to teach as an Adjunct Professor.
- **Sterling Bank Initiative:** One of the bankers of this University, Sterling Bank PLC, has offered special employment opportunities to graduates of Caleb University beginning with the current graduating set with a minimum of Second Class Upper Honours degree who desire to pursue a career in banking. Those concerned should see the Acting Registrar for details after this ceremony.

- **Honours for Vice-Chancellor:** (a) Public presentation of **Festschrift:** Saheed Aderinto & Paul Osifodunrin (eds.), *The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Ayodeji Olukoju* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 18 June 2013; (b) Vice-Chancellor's **Delivery of Nigerian Academy of Letters Convocation Lecture**, "Nigeria's Cultural Tapestry and the Challenge of Development," on 15 August 2013; (c) **Invitation to deliver the 21st Convocation Lecture** of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta next month; (d) **Election as President**, Organisation for Historical Research in Nigeria, 12 October 2013. These honours truly belong to the University, for whom the Vice-Chancellor is a mascot.

The October 2013 Convocation

A major highlight of this Convocation is the conferment of honorary doctorate degrees on two eminent Nigerians. Unfortunately, Deacon Gamaliel Onosode, OFR, former Pro-Chancellor of the Universities of Ibadan and Lagos, current Pro-Chancellor of Bowen University, and a highly respected leader of Corporate Nigeria, could not make the trip back to Nigeria in time for this ceremony. He will, therefore, take his turn during the next Convocation. But we have in our midst Engineer (Mrs) Florence Seriki, MFR, of Omatek Computers fame, an outstanding entrepreneur and investor in capacity development in the education sector. Unknown to her, this University acquired over 100 units of Omatek Desktop computers in 2010 and they are still in use. Little did we know that she will be our first honorary doctorate awardee! We are honoured as an institution to be associated with these distinguished Nigerians. We wish to assure them and other wellwishers that their choice was predicated on their reputation for integrity and

service to humanity, two of the core values of this University. On behalf of all of us at Caleb University, I heartily rejoice with them on this attainment and wish them many more years of fruitful service to God and Humanity.

Another notable feature of this event is the graduation of the first set of bachelor's degree holders in Mass Communication. They join their counterparts from twelve degree programmes in the College of Environmental Science and Management (COLENSMA); College of Pure and Applied Sciences (COPAS); and College of Social and Management Sciences (COSOMAS). The breakdown of the **158** graduands' results is as follows: **three** obtained First Class Honours degrees (one each in Computer Science, Industrial Chemistry and Mass Communication), **43** emerged in the Second Class Upper Honours category, **80** bagged Second Class Lower Honours degrees; and **32** obtained Third Class degrees. Graduands will collect scrolls containing their transcripts in this hall but collect and sign for their certificates in the Colleges today. The three first class honours graduands will collect theirs inside this hall.

Let me re-state some canons about the award of First Class Honours degrees at Caleb University. First, every First Class degree awarded here is earned, credible and globally competitive. To cite a striking example: Mr. Eric Tope Bakare, First Class Honours in Industrial Chemistry in 2011, our pioneer best graduating student, came first in the entrance examination into the MSc Chemistry class at the University of Ibadan. Second, four of the eight First Class graduands in March 2013 and two of the three at today's event are female. This shows that everyone has a fair chance of fulfilling their dreams at Caleb University irrespective of gender or other considerations. Moreover, focused female students stand the best chance of excelling by enrolling with us at Caleb University. Third, we do not

produce First Class according to quota or to market ourselves. We simply create the conducive ambience for everyone studying here to achieve their full potential.

My admonition to our graduands is hinged on the imagery of an airplane taxiing for take-off. This is a chance for you to rev up to the required speed, avoid whatever may bring you down as you race down the runway, watch your cockpit instrument panel, brace up for stormy weather and face all challenges with courage, conviction, commitment and candour. Apply the practical and theoretical lessons learnt during your stay here. Remember what we taught you in the Chapel and on the Caleb Leadership Academy platform. Everyone is a leader as leadership is contextual and it is up to you to rise to the occasion as you face the challenges of life. I charge you once again to “**Love Caleb and Live It.**”

Let me assure you that we shall always appreciate you and count on you to be good ambassadors of your alma mater. There is no other that you can call your own. I am confident that you shall all succeed as several of you have demonstrated already. I salute our best graduating student, **Boluwatife Oyekan** of Industrial Chemistry and the best graduating student in COSOMAS, **Damilola Adesanya** of Mass Communication, two young leaders who exemplified the best in character and learning, and fittingly graduated in the First Class category. Equally active in the Chapel and in academics were other budding leaders, such as **Chiamaka Obasi, Victor Banjo, Dubem Uduego, Janet Jiya** and **Joseph Olaoye**, who are surely bound for greater heights. May the Lord Jesus Christ keep you all from falling and may you attain the lofty heights of your dreams.

Conclusion

I conclude by gratefully acknowledging the endowment of prizes, including one by a 2012 First Class graduate, **Miss Ifeoma Aya**, for the best 100-level student at Caleb University. I charge all other alumni (both honorary and regular) to emulate her glowing example. But I also take this opportunity to renew my clarion call to all Friends of Caleb to endow Professorial Chairs and prizes, fund research, make tangible donations of physical facilities and equipment, and lend whatever material support at their disposal. This University is like a child that has only one set of biological parents but is a ward of the entire community. Whatever you give is appreciated by God, who loves cheerful and sacrificial givers.

On behalf of the University Community, I thank the Ceremonies Committee, led by the indefatigable Professor Nosa Owens-Ibie, for the prudent management of resources and able coordination of this event. Members of the Committee should please rise for recognition.

Finally, as our graduands (and, indeed, all of us) now taxi for take-off on the **runway** of life, I charge them (and everyone else) to opt for the **narrow way** paved with the Blood of Jesus, to **run away** from all ungodliness and studiously avoid the **broad way**, which is the **wrong way**. May the Lord Jesus Christ grant them (and everyone of us) a smooth take-off, safe flight and happy landing all through life.

Thank you for listening. God bless.

Professor Ayodeji O. OLUKOJU

Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Letters

Vice-Chancellor