

Protocol

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Eminent Invited Guests,
My Colleagues and Students,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Introduction

First, I wish to acknowledge God Almighty for bringing such a day to pass in my life. Little did I imagine that I will ever stand on any podium to deliver an Inaugural Lecture of any University at all, talk less of Ajayi Crowther University. My standing here today is no less a testimony to the greatness and favour of God who had ordained it from the beginning of the world. To Him I return all honour and glory; dominion, power and praise.

Secondly, I appreciate the Vice Chancellor of this great University, in person of the Rt. Revd. Professor Dapo Asaju: a brother and colleague in the ministry of God's Church in the Anglican Communion and a fellow Bishop. We have come together a long way. A man of vision and mission: a high priest of deep honesty and integrity. Thank you for your massive contribution to the growth of this great University and the marvel of transformation it has witnessed under your leadership. May you and your generation be forever blessed in Jesus name.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, May I announce that the title of my lecture is: 'THE MADNESS OF GOD: An examination of the divine Obsessive Compulsive Disorder'. Certainly, this is a startling title and can be sometimes disturbing to the religious. Happily, Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, this is a Christian University and we are also in academic setting, the church herself being the initiator of scholarship as we have it today.

It is interesting though, Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir that the initial scare the church had, also came from the scholars. The Enlightenment period of the 17th and 18th centuries was the result of the innovations brought in by the scholars. These Scholars began to look critically at the Bible and tell us things like: Moses did not write what the Church has always referred to as the first five books of Moses (Pentateuch) or that the creation story in Genesis is a myth of creation which is not originally Jewish but borrowed from Babylonian myth. With this type of analysis of the Old Testament by scholars, the Bible began to experience mutilation and believers' faith in the Bible began to be eroded. It would appear that the Bible was soon to

find its way out of existence in consequence of the terrible vilification. What is strange however is the Bible's ability to survive every assassination attempt. Four centuries on, the Bible remains perhaps the most read of all books in the world. Therefore, let no one be intimidated by any scholastic attempt today.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, let me now go to the definition of terminologies.

Definition of Terminologies:

What is Madness?

This is *a negative state of mental health. It is a mania, a state of mental sickness.*

To mention the word 'madness' is to conjure the concept of mental unwellness in an individual. Indeed the Dictionary defines madness as 'the noun of the adjective mad which is to be mentally deranged, insane, subject to an overpowering emotion beyond self-control.

The issues relating to psychiatric matters generally are Mental Health issues which always demand sufficient attention. To speak of madness or lunacy is usually repulsive to anyone who feels normal because there is a social scale against which everyone in society is measured.

In the traditional Yoruba culture for instance, the institution of marriage is very sacred and high-profiled and families place premium on which families their children will marry from or into. Therefore painstaking effort is made in investigating families.

Certainly, one family they would resist connection with was a family where mental problem, insanity or lunacy was prevalent. The disease was abhorred and could lead to ostracism for any sufferer. Therefore madness is a mental health issue and it is one of a deep social concern.

Mental Health has been defined as a person's condition with regard to their psychological, emotional and social wellbeing. It is about what affects how we think, feel and act especially when measured against some acceptable social norms. When people manifest traits of disorder against acceptable social practice, they become suspect to mental ill-health. Attitudinal deficiencies like irrational behavior, unusual rage, unexplained hyperactivity and periodic exaggerated self expression tend to point to a disorder of some kind. Unfortunately, people who appear normal are sometimes sufferers. Or how do you explain celebrities and distinguished socialites who suffer kleptomania? They steal from public shops in scandalous situations that show some form of abnormalities, absurdities or disorders manifested in a person's life. Simply put, the person behaves in strange, bizarre and unusual manner. However, such disorder may be in different ranges of intensity from mild to strong. In medical parlance, it may be described as from mild to chronic. One of such disorders is what medical science has identified as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

What is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder?

Simply put, it is excessive thoughts (obsession) that lead to repetitive behaviours (compulsion) in which the sufferer tends to believe he is compelled to do an action. So he keeps repeating

it. It is said to be chronic, often needing medical diagnosis. So it tends to be lifelong because it is chronic. It is said that though treatment can help relieve the patient, this condition cannot be cured. As it were, it is an incurable pattern of life.

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) says it is a common chronic and long-lasting-disorder in which a person has an uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts and behavior that he feels the urge to repeat over and over.

THE MADNESS OF GOD: An examination of Divine Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, let me proceed to introduce how I came about my topic of Lecture: THE MADNESS OF GOD. This topic itself is intriguing.

If God were man, He would have been challenged by many a man as to why He does some things the way He does them and perhaps there would have been psychoanalysis of His person. My curiosity for this topic was triggered many years ago while undergoing prophetic studies in the Old Testament and I found out that prophets in Ancient Israel were unique but at the same time very much stigmatized and it is intriguing that those who are destined to be carriers of divine message were also regarded as people with mental derangement of one type or the other. Why is this so? And how credible is this notion? Why would God choose as it were to use as agents of His grace, men of doubtful and distorted personalities?

I set out to undertake a comparative study of prophecy in the Old Testament and some *Aladura* Churches in Nigeria and then attempted equally a comparative analysis of some prophets and people with schizophrenia using certain parameters including:

1. Demographic Data
2. Appearance
3. Behavior
4. Solitude
5. Ego Functions
6. Vision and illusion

Since the ancient Israelite prophets are no longer available as test materials, present day prophets in some of the *Aladura* churches provided good substitutes because like the ancient prophets, they manifest the same traits of irregular behaviours, falling into trance, convulsing and demonstrating somewhat epileptic fits that are not characteristic of normal living. However, the study was very wary of psychoanalysis by distance since ancient prophets are not directly available.

Critical scholarship states that there is no supernatural element in the ancient prophets and that what they called inspiration was really a figment of their imagination. For instance, Abraham Herschel referred to two scholars: Schleiermacher and Spinoza as rationalists who harboured great bias against the Hebrew Bible and believed that prophets were no more than great moral teachers influenced by the spirit of their age. But this is most unfair. This is because if the prophets were simply influenced by the spirit of their age, how come that spirit did not produce prophets of that kind in Assyria or Babylon? Why was the prophetic phenomenon in Israel so unique as to become a

reference point of discussion till date? There must be something remarkable about them as to win themselves a place within the annals of history.

It is more of the nature of the ministry of the prophets that called attention to them. Their appearance and mannerisms were the reasons for their stigma. They were full of oddities and absurdities and most often, circumstances around them were always of bizarre nature. They were not seen as ordinary men but men characterized by irregular actions resulting from 'divine possession'. When possessed, they could engage in feats of unimaginable endurance. The prophet could be so out of his mind that he could strip himself naked (I Sam. 19:24) fall down in an epileptic manner (Ezek. 1:28), run ahead of a mounted chariot with bare feet (I Kings 18:46), or dig the wall of the house with bare hand (Ezek.12:1-16). Such irregular actions made them a peculiar people of their time. Some within their community queried their sanity. Hence for instance, the prophet who bumped into a meeting of the military Council to anoint Jehu was referred to as 'mad fellow' (2 Kings 9:11). Whatever it is, prophets were leaders in their own right endowed with charisma as given by the ***ruah***, the Spirit of God that possessed Kings and Judges in their generations.

Scholars have insisted that prophecy was due to a morbid condition, resulting from perturbations of the growth of the psyche, or from derangement of the nervous system. Hence T.J. Meek sums up everything by saying categorically that:

There is a close relationship between prophecy and insanity.

The kind of temperament that lends itself to psychic experiences to automations may result in genius or it may become psychopathic and lead to melancholy and outright insanity.

The etymology of the word nabi has revealed that he was one who poured out his utterances loudly and madly with deep breaths as one giving incoherent cries. The Hebrew word for prophet is *nabi* and though the root of the word is difficult to assess, it is thought to derive from cognate Akkadian and Arabic words meaning 'to call' or 'to announce' or from the word *naba* which means 'to bubble up' as if to say that prophets were people who bubble up with inspiration.

A study from the Hebrew Lexicon is helpful indeed. The reflexive form of the word *nabi* shows that it means to prophesy under the influence of a divine spirit or in an ecstatic state. *Hithnabi* (reflexive) therefore frequently means to speak in an excited manner, to rave. This connotation might suggest the question whether or not the root *naba* did not originally express some mental emotion. If this is so, it will support the suggestion that prophets to some extent have abnormal characteristics. *Nabi* therefore, originally meant one who is carried away by a supernatural power. Thus insanity was sacred to the Israelites, the insane man being believed to be possessed by a supernatural power.

However, that was not all that the Prophets were known for. In fact, Lasebikan (1985) stated that they were religious activists who played a teaching role of the reformation of their society,

challenging abuse of power by leaders and or the despotic rule of Kings. Akao (1993) notes that prophets defy generally accepted academic description. Dada (2002) said a prophet is first and foremost a preacher who calls people to repentance and teaches them godly living. Whybray (1993) notes that Israelite prophets had different functions such as rebuking despotic Kings for their immoral behaviours (2 Sam. 12:1-12, 1 Kings 18:15-19, 21) helping people to discover lost property (1 Sam. 9:1-20) acting as military advisors to Kings (1 Kings 22; 1-28, 2 Kings 43: 11-19) appointing, enthroning and dethroning Kings (2 Kings 9:1-13, performing miracles of various kinds (2 Kings 6:1-7, 5:1-4, 1 Kings 17:17-24, 2 Kings 4:8-37. Ramsey (1977) affirms that prophets always laid claims to being the mouth piece of God and as Lasebikan further noted that they interpreted the law to the people reminding them of their oath to Yahweh and seeking to direct all of them to a life of rededication. For them, minor injustice assumed cosmic proportion.

However, it is not the functions of prophets that have come under the radar for scrutiny rather it is the vehicle that has raised the challenge. It is the abnormal way in which they carried out their messages that has caught scholars' attention for a long time. E.C. Broome (1949) has equated the prophetic characteristic of Ezekiel with paranoid schizophrenia. He described him as a "true psychotic", whose characteristics include "period of *Catatonia*", "an influencing machine" "a narcissistic masochistic conflict, with attendant fantasies of castration and unconscious sexual regression, schizophrenic withdrawal delusions of persecution and grandeur."

Psychoanalysis tends to see every artistic design as a reflection of some distortion in the experience of the artist. Hence scholars, seeing prophets as nothing more than artists have frequently explained that "the prophetic inspiration was a state of mind due to some distortion of experience, traceable to neurosis. In the visionary experiences of the prophets, in their unmannerly appearance and sensational behavior, scholars sought to discover features of an abnormal mentality. The secret of prophetic experiences was felt to lie in their tendencies to ecstatic possession, in mental derangement, after all it was a common belief in the ancient world of the Semitic race that human personality is accessible to invasion by some external force. That force is the *Ruah*, the spirit with the original meaning of the wind which is capable of seizing any object and moves it anywhere. So the spirit seizes the prophet and enables him in a trance or vision to see what was not open to the ordinary eyes and do what was strange in the eyes of the common man.

For instance, Oesterley and Robinson (1934) gave a psychoanalytical explanation of prophet Hosea who married an adulterer, by saying that from his marrying a promiscuous woman, we may infer that he was a person of sensuous disposition and that he suffered from sex-obsession which drove him into the thing of which he had the greatest horror. Hosea's life has been interpreted as one emanating from sex obsession or as in Carl Jung's definition "anima- experience." Here was a prophet of God who claimed that God asked him to marry a harlot as an illustration of God's unending love for His promiscuous people Israel (Hosea 3:1-5). God has an obsession to save man. He would do anything to save him. He renews His plans of salvation no matter how recalcitrant man is. But

Hosea's excuse is ridiculous and unacceptable in the light of our understanding of God as a moral God who would not promote immorality. This seems to be absurd and lunatic to say the least. Well, at the same time, it may suggest that once God has a plan, He is obsessed with it and would do everything to accomplish the purpose whether it is wise or not in human understanding.

If it is true that they are prophets of God and are sent by Him, then it almost suggests that there is something about them that is divine, something beyond the level of the ordinary, something inexplicable that sustained their history these many centuries. Their perceived 'madness' must be the God given genius in them to perform under a protective cloak. If they have divine approval, then they cannot be separated from the God who called them; after all, it is God who in the beginning created man in His own image with all His divine characteristics (Gen.1) and gave him stewardship of all things. But why would anyone choose that His agents act in such symbolic manners as to make them sometimes odious in the sight of the people? How does He expect that listeners would positively respond to such odious individuals? This is awkward. The strategy is absurd, abnormal and unusual. If this is a divine principle, it simply is unimpressive. It is foolishness. But that is God and the way He works.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, it should have become clear to us now, why the title of my Lecture is THE MADNESS OF GOD: An examination of Divine Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. It is because God's ways are totally undemocratic, unpredictable and incomprehensible. So it has no definition or pattern. It can be

awkward, strange, bizarre and unusual to human style. If a man in all his wisdom would approach issues the way God goes about it, Psychiatry will quickly adjure him as suffering from a form of mania but the truth is that whatever God chooses to do, He does at all cost (compulsive). He is unstoppable and unquestionable. He feels compelled to do it and He can use any method no matter how questionable it is to man. He can choose to suspend the laws of nature in order to make things happen; after all, the iron axe head floated (2 Kings 6:1-7) and Joshua caused the sun to stand still (Joshua 10:12-14). These two biblical events challenge science and cannot just be explained away.

But it is not because God is able to do anything that makes Him unique and unusual; it is that His methodology can be very absurd and ridiculous as revealed in the historical exercises of the Prophets in the Bible. These were men who held on to the claim that they were called by God to be agents of His grace to the nation of Israel and the story of the call of prophet Jonah is an example. What is so sacrosanct about Nineveh that she must be saved at all cost? Why was God so desperate to save her such that Jonah was compelled to go there? Why did God feel compelled to salvage Nineveh from destruction? It is the Divine Compulsive Obsessive Disorder in God that made Him irrepressible to cause a whale to swallow the prophet and emptied him on the dry land where he received the commission afresh (Jonah 3:1-2).

And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

This passage testifies to the passion of God and the repetition is indicative of the divine obsession to get Nineveh saved at all cost. Whereas a substitute to recalcitrant Jonah could be found, yet God considered what that would cost in time management for Him delivering Nineveh was the optimum task and must be done with speed.

The Prophet (*ha nabi*) in Israel was a unique, strange and queer man all at the same time. He was supposed to stand in peculiar position as one who gives out divinely inspired message because he dealt with the supernatural as both the recipient and deliverer of divine messages not available to the ordinary man. He was a man overtaken by the spirit of the divine and in that state of possession can manifest in awkward forms because he swelled up and raved, which might suggest some mental emotion for which prophets were thought to some extent to be abnormal.

The way the prophets challenged headlong their threats does not leave them with much option than to be lunatic in their approach. The contest on Mount Carmel between Elijah (alone) and the 850 pretending prophets of Baal and Asherah is a case in point (1Kings 18). Invariably, they were sent to daunting situations where it was always difficult to succeed and fear alone could incapacitate them. For instance, as Jeremiah was called, a youth that he was, he was told that his listeners would fight him but he should not look at their faces (Jer.1:6&19). How does one go into an intimidating situation and be optimistic without some toughness? This on its own appears lunatic. The stories of the prophets should therefore be understood in the light of actions and reactions.

Should God however disguise in the abnormal to get His message across to man? The prophet in early Israel was to a large extent ecstatic; that is, the state of being beside oneself through some extravagant and overpowering emotion or mental exaltation. He easily fell into trance to deliver his message. This is extraordinary and to that extent, prophets were regarded as abnormal. For instance T.H. Robinson (1934) affirms that Ezekiel demonstrated unusual psychic tendencies like getting dumb, falling into trance and ecstasy, or digging the wall with his fingers (Ezek. 12:1-16) and that these are evidences of psychic abnormalities and thus concluded that:

No other prophet has given us clearer indications of that abnormal psychological state to which the term 'ecstasy' is often applied. He was subject to fits of what would today be described as epilepsy, and seems to have suffered for a number of years from some kind of aphasia.

The challenge here is that it is inconceivable that God in all His majesty would wish to do a thing and use the seemingly most inappropriate means. It appears humanly illogical except that the Bible (*Ta Biblia*, the taken word of God) explains this abnormality. The truth here is that it was not the bother of prophets whether or not they offered their oracles in a state of physical distortion or finesse. Theirs was simply to deliver the message even at the peril of their own lives. Given that such lifestyle is queriable to our understanding, we must admit that we cannot limit God to within the boundaries of our understanding and if God inspired the prophets to be who they were, we can hardly object to His wish.

The Madness of God is everywhere revealed in His action. Any student of the Bible will remember many stories that leave us with awe and questioning spirit. If there was a tragic experience of God's people in Egypt in which they suffered bondage for 400 years, it was enough and gratifying that God would remember them and decide to give them deliverance. What is strange is that He would send a man who could not speak well to go and inform Pharaoh of His decision. Absurd! A man who was in no way eloquent was sent to deliver a message that required passion, conviction and eloquent expression. That was to be the beginning of a failed mission in every probability if it was a human enterprise. Coupled with that was the fact that Moses was neither militarily tutored nor educated in the way of the world as to be suitable for the task. That was to be a fiasco of unimaginable proportion. But that was God's bizarre way of doing things. Take for instance God's initiative to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage as contained in Exodus 3:7-8, we would see the spirit of compulsion there. The intensity of God's statement shows the compulsion He has. God must by all means deliver them; an action which the verbs in the sentence suggest:

I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task masters; for I know their sorrows and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land.....(Exod. 3: 7-8)

This is desperation. To imagine that all the pleas of Moses and all his genuine excuses will not be acceptable to God suggests serious compulsion. The plan definitely ran a security risk which God didn't care about although He pledged His assurance of divine presence. "Certainly, I will be with thee". (Ex 3:12) It would appear that saving Israel from Egypt was more fundamental to God than the logistics needed to accomplish the task. That would have been foolhardiness if it were a human enterprise. And to think that Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground was certainly illogical and seemingly impossible. Scholars suggest that the Hebrew Masoretic text shows that it was not the Red Sea they crossed but the Sea of Reeds "yam suf": suggesting a misinterpretation of that text. However, archaeological discoveries are telling us a different story today with chariots dug out from under the water of the Red Sea.

So when we talk about God, we are indeed talking about the metaphysical. As long as we talk of the metaphysical realm, we are talking of what is beyond the physical. We cannot completely analyze God as the proponent of the 'God is Dead Theology' would wish. This is where science challenges things. Amazingly, science which hitherto was confined strictly to the world of materialism, physical sciences and provable facts has yielded grounds to the science of studying such phenomena which hitherto would have been described as illusions. Hence mysticism, vision, dreams and the like are being consciously examined. Opinions are beginning to shift from that of neglect to concerns for spiritual and mysterious phenomena. Charles Darwin (1859) initiated a dichotomy between religion and science about two centuries ago. It is however doubtful whether such dichotomy will not be controversial today given the

complex interaction between religion and mental illness for instance. So, we cannot but talk God.

GOD DELUSION THEORY:

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir and our distinguished audience, this is a 'faith-based' University, a Christian University and we are not afraid to discuss Bible and Religion but we are seriously challenged by Robert Pirsig (1991) who said '**when a person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called religion.**' By implication, as many as are here today who are believers in God have some forms or measures of insanity. This thought of his is sadly corroborated by Richard Darkins (2006) who contends that there is nothing like a supernatural Creator and that belief in a personal God is a delusion. As a faith-based institution therefore, it means we essentially promote and encourage the course of insanity. My reaction to that is 'why not'? If we are created in the image of God, then we have a right to 'insanity', if indeed it means believing in the unusual and doing it.

Insanity breeds development because only in taking the bizarre, the curious and unusual step into the extraordinary is scientific and technological developments made. The Wright brothers (1903) who successfully invented the airplane were first thought of as incredibly sick to conjecture a body in the air that would defy the Newton's Law of Gravity. European Newspaper especially those in France were in open derision, calling them bluffers. The society was skeptical of them. The insanity of man is the genius in him that is the creative ability divinely endowed. As Seneca the Younger (D. 65AD) quoting Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) noted; '**There was never a great genius without a**

touch of madness.' Perhaps the prophets' gifts are what come out as abnormal to us when in fact they may be the result of the genius in them.

GENIUS AND INSANITY

Among the great legacies that have come down to us from Greek civilization is the belief that great poetry comes into being through a state of madness. They see poets as very artistic and creative people who are a type of geniuses as **no man can be a good poet who is not on fire** with passion and inspired by something very like frenzy.

It appears therefore that Geniuses and madness were synonymous in the Greek thinking. The prophets i.e. the Classical prophets of ancient Israel were poets that we know; although they were not deliberately concerned with becoming poets, but when completely obsessed and possessed, uttered their speeches in such great literary work. If this is so, then they were in some way 'madmen'.

Genius and insanity may actually go together according to recent scientists who found that mental illness like schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder (mood swing) are often found in creative and intelligent people. There is a fine line they say between genius and madness because they share the same genes. Psychologists have discovered that creative people have a gene in common which is linked to psychosis and depression.

If prophets were seen as geniuses, it therefore means that they were not insane men because they were very creative. Their output in terms of poetic literature was of high classical standard and their contribution to the religio-political and socio-economic

situation of their nations marked them out as people who knew what was best for their nations – in which case they were true geniuses. Lasebikan (1986) in a comparative study of prophets and schizophrenics concluded that in spite of some exceptions to the rule, **it would be erroneous to think that prophets suffer from schizophrenia, at least because it does not appear that they are split personalities.** Unlike the prophets, schizophrenics are maladjusted people though they live among the people like the prophets nevertheless, they constitute a burden to both themselves and people around while prophets are seen as social assets within religious communities.

Similarly Lasebikan (2014) in a subsequent study years later arrived at a conclusion that the initial hypothesis that there was going to be a significant difference in the prevalence of psychopathologies between the two groups is rejected as significantly more psychopathologies were reported among the schizophrenic group. However some diagnosable schizophrenia persons present in the church are regarded as prophets. The reason for this is not entirely clear. It is perhaps because as Pierre (2001) noted that religious beliefs and delusions lie on the same continuum.

The summary of this is that prophets are not mad in just the same way as God is not; though their creative abilities make it difficult for us to understand them. They do things in unconventional, strange and unorthodox ways that raise eyebrows. Surely they are unique and uncommon which set them apart from every other.

Religious matters can be scary especially because God really cannot be put in a laboratory to be analysed as to find out why He does things the way He does them. Such uncertainty is why in the mid 1960s, a group of theologians grew up asked whether there was need to recognize God anymore. Following the devastations of the first and second world wars that shook the faith of many, questions were raised as to where God was when such horrendous events took place. This group of theologians propounded the 'Death of God' Theology as an answer to the challenging questions being raised starting with the prison writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1945) who said **'people as they are now simply cannot be religious and Christians must learn to live as if God does not exist.'**

The theologians that grew after him including John Robinson, Gabriel Vahanian, Paul Van Buren, Paul Tillich, Thomas Altizer, William Hamilton and others differed on matters of substance and style, yet they shared the challenging thought that Christianity can and must dispense with the belief in the divine, that the traditional religious language no longer makes sense in modern societies and that the term God is **"either meaningless or misleading"** because it cannot empirically tell us anything about the reality of the existence of such a transcendent Supreme Being. They therefore concluded that we can do without such a Being and still be Christians. [Paul Van Buren (1963)]. They argued that modern Christianity must come to terms with the godlessness of secularity and that God has actually died in Christ: that this death is both a historical and cosmic event, that God has willed His own death because God has no being apart from the historical person of Jesus. So God

is dead because He died in history, on the Cross and we no longer need Him. [Thomas Altizer (1966)]

This **God is Dead Theologians** sought to demythologize the Bible and separate the 'mythical' content of the Bible from its message of authentic spiritual freedom and get rid of what it calls abstract and irrelevant Being called God. Surprisingly, God rescued Himself from the hands of those Ayantayo (2018) called God's abductors.

Today, we submit that the 'God is Dead Theology' is dead but God is still alive and His knowledge continues to fill the earth.

GOD PHENOMENON

It is that strangeness, that inexplicable phenomenon that helps affirm a power beyond man who we call God. Issues about God cannot be a 'cut and paste' matter. He is a wholly other, distinct from all creations. Therefore, He cannot be fathomed by man as to decide to also kill Him. He is the one who holds all issues of life and is comprehensibly unpredictable.

God is always conceived of as the Supreme Being who created the world. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent. He is transcendental and yet immanent because we see Him in nature; in things He has created. A Being of this magnitude no doubt transcends the thoughts and imaginations of man. Though the God is Dead Theologians sought to discard with the term God since it cannot tell us anything about reality as such, at least nothing can be made intelligible empirically; but they have not succeeded in shutting God away from man's

experience. God is capable of fighting for Himself and He cannot be determined by man's limited thought. That is why He has the ability to sustain Himself and He uses any method to keep the world He created, be it sensible or senseless. He is incomparable to anything (Isaiah 40:12-28, 46:5).

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

The Crucifixion of Jesus is the greatest event in human history because it changed the world and created a new people. There is no part of the world that the event did not affect in definite and positive ways. Even those who doubted the veracity of the event confessed that something spectacular took place. The story is that a young man who claimed to be the "Son of God" and Saviour of the world was crucified as a sacrifice for humanity. This sounds ridiculous.

When in First Corinthians. 1:18-28 Paul was explaining the ministry of Jesus to the Corinthians, he taught them about this same profound truth which he calls 'the foolishness of God', the fact that God's methodology for human salvation was stupid, senseless, without wisdom and unreasonable in all human perception. It was a ridiculous approach which in all human judgment did not appear credible. This is what Apostle Paul in First Corinthians 1 vs. 25 called the 'foolishness of God' which is better than the wisdom of men.

We speak of incarnation in Christian theology that God had to come in human form to make Himself known to the world. That is another testimony to the Madness of God, His Divine Compulsive Obsessive Disorder, the fact that He would do whatever He wishes all cost to accomplish His objective albeit

absurd. Understandably, in human society, there are norms or sets of rules by which actions are measured and anything that runs against such is seen as abnormal or absurd. That is the way we tend to explain divine things also from our human perception.

The madness of God is about God doing His things in not only unpredictable ways but using totally unconventional methods, sometimes too odd to look sensible. That was the basis of Pauline theology of the Cross. While it is plausible that God would want to save humanity, it is strange and awkward that He would do that by means of the Cross because there is nothing fascinating and alluring about it. It is ludicrous that God would want to bring about salvation: through the Cross. Such an exercise is a "foolish act", looks "ill advised" in the eyes of the world. Actually, Paul was only exposing to us the minds of the Intellectuals, the Enlightened, the Aristocrats, the Intelligentsias who could not grasp the ridiculous divine approach contained therein.

God's approach to save man from sin appears to be 'nonsense'. It is share "madness" to have allowed His Son to go through torture and death eventually for a sin he did not commit. Only a foolish mind, an unintelligent and confused mind would have used the Cross as a means to such a critical issue as human salvation. Why is this so?

The Cross and its meaning:

The cross is the wood on which in the time of Jesus, criminals were nailed and it was a symbol of shame. Why should God use a shameful symbol to exemplify the ideal for His kingdom? How

did He think that would impress the hearers as to lead them to conversion? That symbol is naturally an anathema particularly to the Jews. By Jewish tradition, the criminal was first stoned to death and afterwards will be hung on the tree (Deut 21:21-23). Such criminals were hung on trees to stand as a warning to the public to dissuade them from criminal acts. Such a man became accursed for hanging on the cross, cut off from and denied by his family. It was such a humiliating experience for the victim who automatically became a social outcast. It was this hanging on the tree that translated later into crucifixion in the Roman period. Only slaves and common criminals were crucified but very rarely a Roman citizen. If this is so, why would God expect the Gentiles to appreciate the theology of a criminal becoming their Saviour? Everything seems totally incredible. The divine claims of one ignominiously executed cannot be taken seriously. It is foolishness. Weighed against common sense, it is unreasonable and a stupid action. It is ludicrous; yet God works through it from age to age, drawing men to Himself. God is not mad after all!

CONCLUSION

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, in this paper, I've attempted to explain that despite the strange ways in which God works, He demonstrates that He is a being beyond our imagination and description and that if truly He is the one who has called the prophets for which reason they behave in strange ways, then it will be understandable that their root is in the supernatural. Even when they rave and utter incomprehensible statements, it is not a case of mental illness depicted in speech disabilities as Lasebikan (1985) noted.

Attempting a scientific analysis of this phenomenon will amount to nothing.

Secondly, except we are to discard of God as recommended by **the Death of God Theologians**, we must accept that the area of the divine, the supernatural is inviolate and human efforts cannot tamper with it or obliterate God from the world He has created. The mystery of the divine must therefore continue after all. In contrast to the God Delusion Theory, Schleiermacher (1799) stated that **religion is the outcome neither of the fear of death nor of the fear of God. It answers a deep need in man**. That is why people of faith find answers to their needs as Lasebikan (1986) noted in the cases of those who practice faith healing in the *Aladura* and neo-Pentecostal churches.

Thirdly, if there is a thin line between genius and insanity, we must not be too quick to condemn human actions that we do not understand particularly children whose inquisitiveness we might discourage in the name of social norms. This might be killing the genius in them to become great inventors of their generation. They need wisdom to explore themselves.

Fourthly, the issue we are considering is not a religious matter only. It is educational as it is social. The theory of personalities has shown that people are differently configured with different attitudes and reactions. As studies have shown, these abnormal and strange tendencies towards awkward mental display can be found in artists and creative individuals as well as poets and musicians and all who are in high altitude thinking. Therefore, there must be room in the society for all these categories of people to fulfill their God given destinies.

Concluding Remarks:

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir,
Permit me to end this lecture with some self-disclosure because this formed the foundation of the title of the Lecture; for only divine disorder could have paved the way for me to do what I am doing today. The course of my life has been so charted that I am left with no choice of thought than to accept that there a deliberate divine guidance that has led me up to man.

When I was to enter the university, it was with a single purpose. The ultimate in my mind was to end up as an academic and become a Professor albeit of Dramatic Arts but my mother – a daughter of a clergyman and Bishop thought I should be a clergyman for which reason when her father died, she took her father's old collar and wrapped it round my neck. I snapped at it angrily and cut the collar into pieces, threw them at her and thought within myself that being a clergyman was not the noblest of career where other professions were mentioned. Interestingly, in spite of my efforts to run away from Church ministry, I found myself reading ultimately in the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Ibadan, first for a Diploma, then a Degree and later my post-graduate degrees of a Masters and a Doctorate. The events within those years are too intertwining and long that it will be boring to share in this lecture. Suffice it to say that I had deliberately chosen to avoid Religious Knowledge for my Higher School Certificate and instead read Economics along with History and Literature hoping I might read Theatre Arts following in the line of Professor Wole Soyinka whose plays and others I had acted in my Secondary

school days as president of Dramatic Arts Society. However, my inability to gain admission into the University for a few years forced me to adjust to a longer route of discipline in Religious Studies by first reading for a Diploma in Religious Studies.

I was outstanding both in my Diploma and first Degree classes and became a University Scholar. Soon, I began to smell church ministry which I had dodged all along. So, I took a detour to Education to read for the Masters Degree in Guidance and Counseling as an escape route from the line that could possibly and easily end me up in Church ministry. I had taken up interest in Abnormal Psychology as the area of specialization to pursue my PhD when the then Professor and Head of Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan; the Venerable Professor J. Omosade Awolalu a product of St. Andrews College Oyo (SACOPA) came looking for me in my Education Department. To my horror, he came to appeal to me to come back to Religious Studies Department being the best student of my graduating set with a very good performance both in Greek and Hebrew languages, which most students abhorred. He took time to encourage me, spent days to pursue and convince me, showing me that I had a future in the Department if I came back not minding that I would still start fresh with a Masters degree in that department. I was to agree with the persuasions of Professor Awolalu who was *'in locus parentis'* my father. I obliged.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, I returned to the Department of Religious Studies to do my M.A degree and that was the path I took until I got my Ph.D degree. But the catch was there. A few years on, I inevitably was ordained in 1984 to join a long list of

Lecturers in the department who were almost all ordained into the ministry at that time. My mother came alive. It was for her, a vision and a mission accomplished.

How my primary vision to be a Professor and my mother's vision to be a Clergyman were effectively combined can only be supernatural. God moves in a mysterious way.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, I was a Senior Lecturer for ten years before the Church appointed me as Bishop of Ondo in 1998. I was already set to be on Sabbatical Leave in Sheffield University in the U.K. and that was a big challenge for me to choose between the spiritual and the physical. I chose the former, knowing full well that I was closing the door to my academic career, after all, despite all my previous efforts to escape like prophet Jonah from spiritual responsibility, I have found myself engulfed in it. I dared not choose otherwise. I went for 20 years to be Bishop and Archbishop in the Church of God without any iota of suspicion that I would ever return.

A return to Academics

Today, I deliver the 13th Inaugural Lecture of this University joyfully as a Professor of Old Testament Studies and give thanks to God who alone is able to do what no man can do. He is the Alpha and Omega who knows the end from the beginning. He has taken me through the winding roads to get me to the place of my desire.

Although I did some lecturing on invitation as Associate Lecturer both at the Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta and Ajayi Crowther University here within the period, it was

without fore knowing the reasons why. I was even able to publish a few academic articles both in local and international learned journals, which were just accidental events. When the Vice Chancellor invited me in the last year of my episcopate to come for the post of a professor in this university on retirement from the church, I was indifferent, knowing that the university regulations would not support me on account of age. His explanations on the dearth of Old Testament scholars generally and the need of the university in that area gave me a rethink. The committed disposition of the Vice Chancellor who sought and invited me for the post coupled with his knowledge of my academic status including my publications past and present encouraged me to join the staff at Ajayi Crowther University.

The Vice Chancellor asked me to compile my publications and send to him for forwarding to the Assessors. I was thereafter invited for Interview and appointed to the post of Professor of Old Testament Studies. Today the rest is history. This is the consequence of divine disorder. Without doubt, this unfolding story of my life clearly shows that there is strangeness in God, an inexplicable phenomenon in the way He works and orders things. This is an evidence of how God chooses to do what may seem unreal, awkward, impossible, ridiculous and irrational to man but is best to Him.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, thank you very much indeed.

It is therefore my pleasure to dedicate this Inaugural lecture to my father, the late Revd. Gabriel Ladokun Lasebikan, my mother, the late Mrs. Grace Jokotade Lasebikan and my very loving wife, Mrs. Esther Oyinlola Lasebikan.

To God be all the glory.

Thank you all for your presence and attention.

Acknowledgement:

I give praise and honour to my heavenly Father the creator of all things, who gave me life. He is the source of all wisdom and He gives liberally as He wishes. I appreciate Him for making a diamond out of my coal. With a grateful heart I remember my parents The Revd Gabriel Ladokun and Mrs. Grace Jokotade Lasebikan of blessed memory, who jointly labored in diverse ways to ensure that I became who God wanted me to be despite my thought to the contrary. I'm sure they are happy where they are watching this day come to be.

I am grateful to all the teachers who taught me right through the different levels from cradle till date. I appreciate all for putting me on the solid rock and building in me a super structure as a result of their impacts upon my life. My thanks go to the late Ven. E. A. Alayande for instilling discipline as a super Principal of Ibadan Grammar School and a fellow SACOBA like my father, the Revd Professor Bolaji Idowu, my teacher and Head of Department, all my undergraduate day. He was very

fond of me. I thank his successor, the late Ven. Prof J.A. Awolalu who took interest in me and was never stingy in counseling me. The Rt. Revd Prof. Akin Omoyajowo, my teacher and loving uncle deserves all accolades for a job well done. My appreciation goes to my loving father, the Rt. Revd Emmanuel Bolanle Gbonigi who finally ordained me against all odds, having studied me over time without my knowledge. My sincere thanks go to my father in the Lord, the Rt. Revd. Gideon Isaac Oladipo Olajide (rtd), a man of a Great God who lavished his passionate love upon me in no small measure. He is my mentor in whose footprints I delicately tread. He was the only one who believed in me completely when all others were scared of my spiritual style. Baba, I thank God for what your eyes are seeing today. May you continue to reap the rewards of your labour on me and the many others into whom you poured so much of you sir.

I remember today my late uncle Mr. Adebayo Adeyinka the Estate Officer of the University of Ibadan, who was my guardian when I entered the University. I appreciate him for taking care of me to enable me face my studies.

My thanks also go to all my former students of the Department of Religious Studies like the late Prof. Mrs. Dorcas Olubanke Akintunde, Professor S.A. Fatokun, Professor J.K. Ayantayo, Professor A.O. Dada, Professor Helen Labeodan, Professor Deji Aiegboyin, Dr. S.M. Mepaiyeda, Dr. O.O. Familusi, Dr. J.S. Adekoya, Dr. S.K. Olaleye. I also thank the entire Department of Religious Studies for honouring me with a Festschrift to mark my 70th birthday and retirement from active church ministry. That was mind blowing and I appreciate you all. There are several other students of mine that I cannot mention here, who

God gave me the grace to impact upon. Among them are the Ven. Dr. A.O. Ogidiolu of the Department of Religious Studies of this University, who was my student at the Crowther Graduate Seminary Abeokuta and my lovable Head of Department, the Ven. Professor Taiye Aluko who was my student in the University of Ibadan.

There are some others who today are Bishops and heads of churches that I taught and or whose B.A., M.A. MPhil. or PhD Theses I supervised. These include the Rt. Revd Dr. S.O. Sowale, the Rt. Revd Dr. J.A. Oladunjoye, The Rt. Revd Dr. A.O. Akinlalu, The Rt. Revd Dr. Akin Atere, The Rt. Revd Dr. S.G. Kuponu, The Rt. Revd Dr. Tunde Ogunbanwo and the Most Revd Dr. M.O. Fape among others. All these have inspired me by their own commitment to excellence which has richly increased my experience.

I am grateful to all the Fathers in God who continue to show love to me and my family since our retirement from active Church work like The Most Revd (Dr) Segun Okubadejo and wife, the Archbishop of Ibadan Province and Bishop of Ibadan North Diocese, the Most. Revd (Dr) J.O. Akinfenwa, the Bishop of Ibadan Diocese, the Rt. Revd Dr. J.A. Oladunjoye (rtd.), the Rt. Revd T.O.B. Fajemirokun (rtd.) and a host of others. May the cord of love that binds us together continue to get stronger in Jesus name.

I am using this opportunity to appreciate all my siblings and their spouses Mrs. Patience Kikelola and Dr. Babatunde Oyeleye., Mrs. Margaret Omotunde and Boevi Lawson, Dr. Victor Olufolahan and Biola Lasebikan for the various ways they have

contributed their bits into who I am today. May God continue to lift you all up to His glory in Jesus name.

Finally, I want to thank my better half, my soul mate and encourager in all good things, my wife and sister, Esther Arinade Oyinlola Lasebikan for her understanding, spiritual sensitivity and dedication to personally typing this lecture. Darl, may you continue to enjoy the works of your hands in Jesus name. My God given children 'Tunmbi, 'Tomilola, 'Tutu, and 'Tofunmi are hereby appreciated. They have been great sources of joy over these 45 years. I bless you all for your prayers, cooperation and for upholding the integrity of the family. May God be proud of you as you continue to lift Him high in your homes in Jesus name.

Thank you so much for listening.

BIODATA OF THE MOST REVD. PROFESSOR GEORGE LATUNJI LASEBIKAN

The Most Revd. Professor G.L. Lasebikan was born in Ibadan to the family of Rev, & Mrs. Gabriel Ladokun Lasebikan on August 7th 1948. He shares the same initials with his father who was an educationist and missionary who served as the Diocesan Education Secretary General of Ibadan Diocese in the days when the church ran the schools. His father was a graduate of St. Andrew's College with Admission Number 764 in 1930.

Education

Professor Lasebikan had his primary and secondary education variously in Ibadan. He attended Ibadan Grammar School for his School Certificate and the Loyola College for his Higher School Certificate. After his secondary education, he had a total of 12 years academic exposure at the University of Ibadan during which he earned a Diploma in Religious Studies (1973), B.A. (Hons) Religious Studies (1976), M.ED Guidance and Counseling (1980) M.A. Religious Studies (1981) and Ph.D

Religious Studies (1983) specializing in the field of Old Testament. He was a University scholar both at the undergraduate and post graduate levels. He was also the prize winner of the best student of his set. He also attended the Lincoln Theological College Drury Lane, Lincoln, England to enhance his ministerial and theological understanding.

Working Experience

Professor Lasebikan had the privilege of teaching at different levels of education, first at St. Luke's Demonstration Primary School, Molete, Ibadan and then Ibadan City Academy, a Secondary School in Ibadan. Later he taught at The Polytechnic, Ibadan (1979-81) before joining the services of the University of Ibadan, first as a Teaching Assistant in 1979 after which he became a substantive Lecturer in the same University's Department of Religious Studies in 1981. He was appointed Lecturer II in 1981 and became Lecturer I in 1984 while he was promoted Senior Lecturer in 1988. There he was until he retired in 1998 as a Senior Lecturer. Professor Lasebikan, being an Old Testament specialist supervised several students' projects for the award of Bachelor's degree while he also supervised several M.A. and M.Phil dissertations as well as Ph.D Theses.

The Call and Ministry

Although he had his call to ministry as far back as 1973, his Bishop did not feel responsive to send him to theological college for training because of his somewhat radical spiritual outlook

and could not be ordained until 1984. He had served the church in various capacities both in Nigeria and abroad since becoming a deacon in 1984. He was the chaplain of the Chapel of the Resurrection while a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. He was a Parish Assistant at St. Philemon Church of England, Liverpool. Professor Lasebikan became Vicar of All Souls' Church, Bodija in January 1991 and built the Church up from its small features for which he was preferred a Canon. After the preferment of Canonry on him in April 1992, he had an uninterrupted rise to the episcopate. He was made Archdeacon in 1995 three years after the Canonry and the All Souls' Church which he pastored was made to lead others in what the then Bishop, the Rt. Revd. G.I.O. Olajide described in specific terms with specific duties on evangelism as a Convocation of Churches Peculiar. In January 1998, he was appointed and installed Provost of the Cathedral of St. James the Great, Ibadan and before the end of the same year; he was elected, consecrated and enthroned as the 6th Bishop of Ondo Diocese.

Everywhere he has worked, even overseas, he has left behind a very rich legacy of humility, truthfulness and integrity. He is a great mobilizer of both the young and the old for church growth. He is a great advocate and initiator of lay mobilization and training for dynamic church expansion. Professor Lasebikan has served as CMS Mission Partner to Great Britain. He was a resource person to the EFAC International Conference in Kent, Britain as well as West African Coordinator of EFAC International. He is also a prominent Speaker at several national and international Christian conferences, seminars and revivals.

Mere providence brought an unusual privilege of being a teacher to a number of clergy across churches while in the University. Some of these today are Bishops in various churches, some of whom are currently in the Church of Nigeria by His grace. It is very humbling. The Lord has used his ministry in various stations and various priests he worked with to build him up without knowing that he would be a bishop.

Professor Lasebikan published widely in both local and international peer-reviewed journals. He has a number of religious publications used by Christians across denominations. He also has been able to effectively marry scholarship with spirituality. This is evidence in his ministries at the Chapel of the Resurrection, All Souls' Church, Bodija and at the Cathedral Church of St. James, Oke Bola, Ibadan and Ondo Diocese where he was Bishop. His scholarship has enriched his ministry.

Professor Lasebikan is happily married to Mrs. Esther Oyinlola Lasebikan (nee Olojo), HD (accounts), MBA (FUTA) FCCA, a woman of many parts with creative ability in various technical fields. God has blessed them with four children namely: Tunmbi, Tomilola, Tutu and Tofunmi, all of whom are graduates of different universities of Nigeria and abroad with different disciplines at both undergraduate and post graduate levels.

Professor Lasebikan was the Bishop of Ondo Diocese and the Archbishop of Ondo Ecclesiastical Province of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) comprising 12 Dioceses in Ondo and Ekiti States. He also served as the Dean, Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion. To the glory of God, after his retirement from active church ministry, he took up appointment as

Professor of Old Testament Studies, in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo.

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