AJAYI CROWTHER UNIVERSITY, OYO

Reconnecting with the Great Tradition: The Mission of New Generation Universities

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delivered by
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Chairman and Members of Board of Trustees,
Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council,
My Lords Spiritual and Temporal,
Distinguished Members of Council,
Members of Senate and Congregation,
Our Distinguished Alumni,
Dear Parents,
Graduating Students of Ajayi Crowther University,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Ladies & Gentlemen

I am grateful for this precious opportunity to offer my opinion on the university system in Nigeria. It is a system in which my colleagues and I have spent a lifetime of service as teachers and researchers. Many of us have had no other life outside the universities where we have lived and worked, and our loyalty to the system has had nothing to do with material reward. This is therefore a welcome opportunity to put forward the viewpoint of one who is not always able to offer opinions outside his own narrowly specialized field, not counting, of course, the occasional media interviews on the public affairs of the moment. During the talk that follows, I will raise three questions that seem to me of major importance in considering the place of private universities in our country today, with particular reference to the mission schools. First, what is the justification for a faith-based university in a country like ours, and what do we lose by not having one? Second, why is tradition important to the university system, and what does it mean to Ajayi Crowther University, or in what sense is it significant for its development? Finally, what and how much would it cost Nigerian universities to achieve the international and world class status towards which they aspire in their Vision Statements? The third question is meant to place this vision in a realistic context. Its significance is that, for Nigerians, adjectives like "international" and "ultra-modern" and "world class" are magical and could instantly invest new institutions and buildings with high performance and achievement by the mere act of naming.

I shall begin with a short account of how some of us came to be where we are as

university teachers and researchers, for this may help you to understand my position on the tradition and principles of university education and some of the issues that are presently at the foreground of public discussion. It should also enable the students to see from the brief recall of my student days how easy it is for me to identify with them.

In those undergraduate days a long time ago, not many of my colleagues and I ever thought that we would end up as teachers in the ivory tower. We were too much overawed and excited just to be on the university campus. If it was an ivory tower to the academic staff, to many of us coming from a different environment it was an oasis full of riches – not only the lushness of the vegetation and the elegance of the buildings, but also our discovery of a vast world of learning in library, laboratory and bookshop, the inexhaustible flow of ideas in the classrooms, our personal independence and the lavish provision for our material comfort. We were seduced by the university at our first contact with it. But the puzzle for me was, if after all this abundance, I had to go back to the world outside when all that I would take back was a degree at the end of my course, what was a university really about? I did not have to wait for too long to get the first part of the answer to my puzzle. As our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kenneth Dike was to tell us in my second year that the material provision for Nigerian undergraduates was too lavish and elitist, and would have to stop. He had just returned from a symposium in the United States where Vice-Chancellors and College Presidents queued for their buffet luncheon and did not see why undergraduates should not queue. That lesson was not lost on us. In colonial times, Nigerian university students were served at table like the heirs apparent that they were because the system was preparing them to step into the shoes of the departing colonial masters. The inherited colonial university system did regulate the behavior staff and student through various rules and procedures and rituals and ceremonies to ensure that the requirements of character and learning at the heart of this tradition are kept in place. These devices became increasingly important with the diminishing religious influence in universities. Many of the colonial officers who were sent out on her majesty's duty to the colonies were graduates of the public schools and the great English universities, which educated their students for leadership. Their sound training was surety for their good behaviour since their postings took them far from the prying eyes of Headquarters. But would that have worked in the very different cultures of post-colonial states? The new lesson for us Nigerian students at the vanguard of a new generation was that after graduating, I should go out into the world as one who serves, not as one who expects to be served.

Every undergraduate should discover in this key meeting point of his or her intellectual and moral education the wellspring of all the values that contribute to the great tradition of the university system. It is true that many fresh students would have come prepared by their family or religious community for this moral discovery. The problem is that, liberated from the immediate control of the family, the average student gives in to the temptation of the new found campus freedom with its prodigal

opportunities. Faith-based universities are surrogate families with teachers *in loco parentis.* They add a moral compass to the structured life-style in the organized and regulated hostel facilities while providing facilities for the guidance and counseling of students in transition into adulthood. I will return briefly to the responsibility of the graduating student towards the end of this talk.

If some of any of my friends and I dared to dream at any time as undergraduates, we were later surprised when our dream became reality. The University of Ibadan became the home of this fledgling scholar and some of his friends. When I retired, as a mature scholar and teacher I hope, it was clear to me that God would not let me take that rest, for I ended up in Bowen University, although I had not planned to be there. I am unable to assess my own contribution to the private university system, but I can say that in the twilight of their careers some of my colleagues on contract have brought the rare gift of wisdom to the classroom and helped the young institutions to grow. It is a privilege that is unlikely to be available to new institutions in the future. What I can affirm is that I and others like me have an abiding interest in the development of both the public and the private university systems and in their relationship because we have been stakeholders in both systems. We believe that our opinions matter because we are witnesses of the changing scenes that different generations and universities have passed through.

Then as now, the university system has been an unfailing source of glory and joy to individuals and families. This week's festivities show it, and it will be even more striking tomorrow when people turn out radiant in robes fit for royalty. Everywhere on foundation day, town and gown congregate in their splendour to celebrate the tested survivors of the tough intellectual exchange that keeps a university alive. But no one will mistake this radiance for concord within the system. Seen against the history of the demonstrations, conflicts and closures that have shaped the evolving tradition of Nigerian tertiary education, convocation ceremonies would seem to be moments of peace and respite between recurrent conflicts.

We should set these conflicts in context. In some situations even harmony is alien to the spirit that sustains the culture of research and discovery. The conflict of ideas and the regeneration of scholarly authority are good for the system if they drive the spirit of inquiry towards creativity and the growth of knowledge. In the history of tertiary education in Nigeria, however, the institutions and structures that are meant to nurture this tradition have been almost overwhelmed by the kind of rancour and tyranny that are alien to the system. In other words, two kinds of conflict are present within the Nigerian university system. Certain kinds of conflict and dissent are inherent in most intellectual traditions. They take the form of a conflict of ideas, an offering of alternatives or a challenge to outmoded ideas. But the other, more disruptive conflict of violent protests and demonstrations is an expression of frustration when dialogue fails, an undesirable approach to grievances that are often legitimate. The Nigerian university system has

undergone some of the most disturbing and traumatic experiences of any social system. Its chief executives have learnt to sleep with one eye open, and its unions have evolved into sophisticated labour and public relations organizations. This other form of conflict may seem an extraneous outgrowth in the system, but it has always been present at the infancy of the university system when the culture that sustains it has not yet attained maturity.

Since most of my listeners are students it is important to point out that student protests are not new. At the earliest student demonstration 800 years ago, students negotiated and won the recognition of their innovative organization of students and their teachers into an academic institution with freedom of association and corporate rights and privileges, under the King's protection. They demonstrated their maturity by thus obtaining the earliest recorded right to academic freedom. This maturity had nothing to do with how old they were; it only showed that they were ready for adult life with all its rights and responsibilities by not behaving like a mob. You could not negotiate with a mob because a mob is a monster that vandalizes or destroys everything in its path. And vandalism is exactly the opposite of all that a university stands for – conservation and tradition as the right environment for innovation and creativity. Violence has in fact affected the normal activities of the universities. Professor Julius Okojie, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission has confirmed that that "private universities have become alternative choices to the existing public universities", and that the "(f)requent closures, unstable academic calendar, general instability on the campuses of public universities due to staff and student unrest among others lead to decline in the traditional university values of integrity and industry." One indirect cause could be that the universities had reached their maximum carrying capacity, given the Nigerian social environment. Although many universities elsewhere have grown to two or three times the average student population of Nigerian universities, the State Universities that have attempted this have run into problems and have had to prune numbers down drastically.

The recent explosion of university education in Nigeria has been widely welcomed because it promises wider access to university education. But there has also been some skepticism regarding the quality of their service delivery because it is known that there are not enough qualified teachers to go round, and it is assumed that good teachers would only leave one of the older public institutions for a newer one on a higher status that he is unable to earn in his own university. The truth is that the academic leadership positions in these newer institutions, especially the corporately owned ones, are normally filled by the recruitment of retired professors, although the recent extension of the retired age of professors is causing some difficulty with this solution. The question of standards can only be ascertained when the traditional means of evaluation – external examining and employer's rating, have had time to come into play.

What I consider to be a more central question is the role of faith-based institutions in a country that is still negotiating a path between the ideals of a secular state

and the competing claims of different ethnicities and religions. The nation is being torn apart by a religious conflict in which the sources and forms of knowledge and education are the core target, and the ideal of a university as a national and international institution is being put into question. At the background are restless ethnic nationalities barely kept in check by national self interest. At this point I would like to pay tribute to the mothers of Chibok, who are fully stretched out on their cross, tortured by hope that fades but will not go away, their unimaginable suffering more difficult to bear than bereavement because mere sympathy would not bring relief. We are not just partakers in their grief. Beyond our shared humanity, their suffering is closer to us than we might imagine. Who knows how many of those girls dreamed of education at a University like Ajayi Crowther? This tragedy highlights the role of faith-based universities as possible academic havens for students who do not feel comfortable in learning environments with active religious prejudices.

This is one major reason why the question of faith-based universities is a fundamental one at the forefront of current public awareness and discussion. What needs to be addressed immediately, therefore, is the official discomfort with the model adopted by proprietors of faith-based institutions. This unease is apparent in one of the conditions for licensing new universities. Unlike private secondary schools, private universities are not allowed to bear the names of any religion, sect or denomination, although they may be named after individuals or religious symbols. There is also the related concern that the objective of a faith-based institution is quite literally to convert non-believers, or that its approach to knowledge and student admission may be exclusive and sectarian.

It is hard to argue that these fears are not well grounded, given major precedents of other cultures. Up till the late 19th century, such was the influence of the Church of England that a test of religious affiliation was applied to student admission in some leading English Universities. But in this case change was only a matter of time, especially after a debate in which the argument eventually ended in favour of the liberal position taken by Cardinal John Newman. Newman began life as an evangelical Calvinist, became Anglican High Church and was eventually received into the Catholic Church. He was the Founder and Rector of the Catholic University of Ireland, later the University College, Dublin. Although he was reactionary in his defence of slavery in the age of the Abolitionist Movement, his idea of a university was intellectually liberating and forward looking. It drew on his experience of the university that he founded and provided illumination in the midst of the contentious academic atmosphere of his time. He was the first major thinker to challenge the idea of the practical utility of university education and proposed a refocusing on a liberal education as sufficient minimum condition for knowledge and service. The modern policy maker might be scandalized by that position, given the priority given to professional programmes and the consequent creation of specialized universities for professional programmes like Agriculture, Technology and Education. Everyone knows that to be viable, universities that used to be known for their

strong liberal arts programmes have had to accommodate professional programmes, or at least innovate by reflecting a utilitarian purpose in their programme offerings. However, the argument that angered Newman's fellow Catholic Bishops, although it reassured the critics of faith-based universities, was his affirmation that "if a university is a direct preparation for this world, let it be what it professes. It is not a convent, and it is not a seminary…. Its function is intellectual culture". The inter-religious conflicts in Oxford at the time shows that this was still a sensible and moderate conception of the essential role of universities in the intellectual milieu of the 19th century. This may sound rather mild compared with the secular concept of the 20th century adopted since colonial times, where the idea of worship is only a supplement, voluntary for those who wish, because the West now delights in the separation of church and state.

The more serious and persistent challenge to the concept of faith or religion as a context for the pursuit of knowledge in a university has come, paradoxically, from the rise and dominance of modern science, which began to influence scholarship since its rise during the European Renaissance. The grounding of science in verification and proof which was part of the rise of the secular worldview in the West, has led to the academic doctrine that knowledge and faith are incompatible, and that scholars are expected to keep their faith separate from their scientific findings. If knowledge was not governed by the protocols of experimental science, it was not true knowledge. Cardinal Newman's ideas were already in conflict with this concept of knowledge. But the doctrine remained dominant throughout the 20th century, although before the end of the century, the position was already being challenged by the argument of scholars as different as the historian, Professor J.F. Ade Ajayi, in whose view History is essentially an attempt to discern the mind and purpose of God; or the atmospheric physicist Professor John Houghton, who argued on scientific grounds that the design and structure of the universe, as well as the human brains that discovered the scientific laws that govern this design, "were part of God's creation. They are God's laws, and the science that humans explore is God's science." A priest, social scientist and student of the history of ideas, the Reverend Professor Louis Munoz, similarly argued that a secular vision is fundamentally flawed because of its denial of the transcendental explanation of the world. His supporting historical evidence is that the development of science was made possible by the confidence that faith gave to humanity during the High Middle Ages. All these ideas are implicit in Christ's encounter with the Jewish priests in Mark 12. 15 – 17. If a coin is authorized by Caesar and bears his image it should be rendered to him. The implication is: if it is accepted that all of created nature bears the image of God and His authority, the quest for knowledge is also the quest to discern the mind and purpose of God.

The opposition to the planting of centres of learning bearing the authority and the image of Christ did not occur only among scholars or policy makers taking ideological positions. It often took a more violent political form, like the indiscriminate religious violence of Boko Haram, like the veiled threat at the University of Ibadan when Banjo

was in the saddle and the removal of the Cross and the image of Christ was given as a condition of peaceful coexistence. In a well-known case that occurred just over a decade ago, there was such overt local hostility to one of the new faith-based universities that the proprietors of the University as well as the Governor of the State offered to relocate the institution to a less hostile religious environment. Thankfully, goodwill was successfully negotiated.

It is for these reasons – because their structure and orientation do not derive from the supposedly neutral secular model of public institutions or because they are not affiliated to existing institutions -- that the emergence of private universities was initially received with some skepticism in some quarters. In other words, the preferred Nigerian model is the public institution, even if that model reaches no farther back than the sixty-five years of university education in Nigeria. What is not often taken into account is that while Ibadan has set a standard of academic excellence, the university tradition which inspired the creation of the faith-based institution reaches beyond the University College, Ibadan as well as the University of London to which it was affiliated. In other words, proprietors of faith-based institutions could look to an older historical model for alternative guidelines on structure, orientation and governance.

I will now try to sketch the process that led from the origins of the university tradition as a faith-based institution to the publicly owned secular university that became the only model in Nigeria until recent times.

The roots of the university system have been traced to the French Middle Ages when students assembled in Paris to receive instruction from teachers under the supervision of churches and monasteries. Four core elements that shaped the great tradition of university education were developed at that time. The first was that the idea of a university began with the early custodians of advanced knowledge and its transmission, monasteries and churches, who were authorized by royal decree to incorporate an existing relation of teachers and learners into an academic union. Second, it was this two-tier membership of teachers and students that still constitutes the essential core of a university. In those formative times, their relationship was a basic one -- students sometimes even chose their own teacher after forming themselves into groups, The objectives and the procedure were equally basic – to store, transmit and reproduce knowledge. In other words, the preparation included research activity and a system for stocking books, and the man business was teaching and examination. Third, a certain level of literacy, a necessary means for the preservation and transmission of learning, was the qualification for membership. This was a major difference from the oral procedure of the Greek philosophers as well as the sources of knowledge in African oral cultures. The fourth element was the freedom to pursue these objectives without interference from outsiders. After a dispute with some townsmen leading to rioting, students sought from the King recognition of “the union of the masters and students of Paris,” with corporate rights, privileges and protection of the king. They named this union, *universitas*, in the

Latin lingua franca of their time.

The establishment of the earliest universities in the West, including the first English-speaking universities of Oxford (1167) and Cambridge (1209) in England, and St. Andrews in Scotland (1413), soon followed. The centuries following these developments would be decisive in putting to test the autonomy of this universal institution that was evolving into a free, self-regulating system. To what extent would it survive its church origins or be modified by new historical tensions from its regional, secular, colonial and missionary initiatives far from its place of origin? Before the egalitarian principles of the United States came into play, the university was an ivory tower where scholars found intellectual retreat and a place where extra-mural visitors came on summer pilgrimage and tourism. The American republic democratized its exclusive and elitist nature largely by lowering the class barrier to university admission. She widened the bases of university proprietorship, patronage and finance, and strengthened the creative research links with industry, introduced curriculum reforms, one of which, the unit or credit course system, has been adopted as the basis of the academic curriculum of Nigerian universities.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the competition between colonial governments and Christian missions for the penetration and development of Africa was largely through the agency of western education. It was, for example, the Anglican mission that established Fourah Bay College, the first Western-type university in West Africa, where Crowther was a foundation student, as well as the University of Durham to which Fourah Bay was affiliated. Like Thomas Jefferson Bowen, his Baptist contemporary, Samuel Ajayi Crowther was a pioneer Christian missionary and educationist. But he was not just a missionary; he was an outstanding knowledge pathfinder. Together with the pioneering historical scholarship of Samuel Johnson who, like Crowther, was a 19th century ex-slave convert and Anglican pastor, Crowther's work on the Yoruba language with his translation of the Bible were two of the three most significant factors in the making of a modern Yoruba identity, the third factor being the Yoruba nineteenth century wars. For, like the English, the Yoruba have elevated one dialect of their language into a culturally unifying and colonizing force.

It was close to a century after the Anglican mission at Fourah Bay that the colonial government established the first University College in Nigeria in 1948. The university tradition that took Christian Europe over eight centuries to develop was thus extended to West Africa on a platter of gold, as the popular saying goes. It is worth noting that this act of freely giving by the British colonial government and its agencies was not similarly extended to technology transfer or political rule. The British showed that they recognized the necessity for university autonomy and its regional presence by keeping the idea of a university separate from their politics. Some of the early colonial officers' progressive ideas about African education and development seemed to be well in advance of colonial policy and practice, even sometimes comparable to those of some

of our founding fathers. Writing in 1924 Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, the former Governor General of the Gold Coast warned that "to trust the leadership of the race to insufficiently trained leadership in education would be far worse than no education at all". Even if this progressive vision fitted into the British idea of a higher education within the imperialist system, it was remarkable when seen against the background of the nationalist struggles that yielded fruit only many years after the birth of the University College, before independence was won by various English speaking West African colonies. Compare this with the situation in Francophone West Africa, remembering that the first university was established in Dakar only a decade after Ibadan in spite of, or perhaps because of, the Civilizing Mission of the French colonizers, which offered their educated subjects the right to assimilation.

The glorious inheritance at Ibadan survived for about two decades, then, brimming over with the confidence of its victory at the Civil War, the Nigerian military appeared on the scene and soon started trampling on the great tradition of academic autonomy – freedom of speech, freedom of universities to regulate their own governance, and almost took away the only thing to which universities could claim a monopoly – freedom of each university to develop and administer its own curriculum; the extra-mural powers even began to frown on the presence of a Christian symbol in one university, not remembering that it all started as an initiative of the church (if they had read History in school). Imperialism had greater understanding and accommodation. But the problem was not the firm secular foundation on which the Nigerian university was founded. That was good in itself, and it has produced wonderful results in other places where the principles of cultured conduct are firmly in place and university traditions and autonomy are respected.

At this point in its historical evolution the Nigerian university system had had to deal with two successive problems. The first problem was that the University College, built during the British Empire, was modeled on the intellectual traditions of England. Implicit in that model were the class structure and hidden imperial and racist assumptions of those traditions. A university is both the product of a universal idea and the response to the body of ideas that shaped the academic institutions of a particular milieu. The intellectuals at Ibadan recognized quite early, that that system was a product of the British class structure that had been shaped by centuries of feudal loyalties, civil wars, dynastic struggles and an elitist school system that produced the imperial forms that they imposed on their colonies. It worked for the British because discipline and social responsibility were ingrained in the university educated ruling class that administered the colonies with such brutal efficiency. Rejecting that model, the intellectuals at Ibadan had begun to reshape the curriculum and the academic tradition of the University College with the Nigerian experience in mind by the time it attained full autonomy in 1962. It was part of the recognition of the nature of the model that a university on a different model from the United States was also planted at Nsukka, which admitted its first students in in

1960. In other words, the first problem of developing an African intellectual tradition was already being fixed.

The second problem was an ethical one. In this case, the trouble was not the secular basis as such. The trouble was that under the military regime the ethical underpinnings and moral restraints that are fundamental to a secular system were discarded or ignored, confirming Munoz's view that a secular vision is fundamentally flawed because of its denial of the transcendental explanation of the world. In other words, the main problem with the secular system is a problem that is familiar to the modern world – the emptying of spiritual resources from contemporary culture and society.

Trouble for Nigerian universities was only a matter of time. The high profile strikes by academic and non-academic staff and the instability of the university calendar were merely the reaction and the symptom; even the student cults were not the main problem, for they were only set up to provide protection for the social cancer eating into the very foundations of the knowledge that students were being prepared for. The academic departments, at first naïve, soon became suspicious that student entry grades were not matching their performance in class. It soon became public knowledge that the admission requirements – the certificates and entry examinations – were all a thinly veiled deception with the collusion of parents and guardians. But when universities set out to correct this by devising a post-UTME test – a clear vote of no confidence on the examining body, a Federal legislator, apparently a parent, threatened to take the Universities to court.

Everybody is aware that this ethical collapse was one of the three reasons for the licensing of the new generation of universities, the other reasons being the large number of unsuccessful admission candidates and the Federal Government's need to share the financial burden of higher education with the private sector. Perhaps, as Professor Ayo Banjo, a former Vice-Chancellor of Ibadan once complained, the admission situation hardly justifies the large number of new universities that have been granted licenses but has only aggravated the staffing situation, since, no one has tried to find out how far an increase in the carrying capacity of existing universities could address that problem. There were fifty existing private universities at the last count. The nine that are in the pipeline would bring the total number of universities to 138. Nevertheless, the emergence of a new generation of universities has renewed and concentrated the focus on three key recurrent issues in the administration of universities in Nigeria – funding, responsibility for the regulation and supervision of universities, and the growing clamour of religious organizations to be allowed back into the business of providing education for Nigerians. This demand by the Christian missions was justified by their track record in educational development in Nigeria.

To take the case of one of the leaders in this area, the Anglican mission, whose contribution to education through its establishment of primary and secondary schools and

training colleges was of such quality, and whose products have so excelled in their professions, that one would be justified in saying that at the time of the government takeover of schools, an Anglican university was only one class away from St. Andrews College, Oyo. My point here is this -- given the initial prejudice against the new generation universities, the graduating students of ACU need to be reassured that their university was not built on virgin land or on sinking sand. It is sufficiently grounded in antecedents and tradition for Ajayi Crowther to inspire the alumni expectations by not only the conventional mementoes, alumni ties, scarves and pins, but by something more fundamental and enduring – pride in a distinguished tradition and lineage, and none more prominent and praise-worthy than its forerunner, St. Andrews College, Oyo, and its nominal ancestor, Bishop Ajayi Crowther. By providing the take-off campus as well as the association with its distinguished past, St. Andrew's College campus for ACU provided a foundation that was more than merely physical and more like the old Fourah Bay College and the University of Durham, each built on the foundation of an Anglican theological college. They were all also connected with the Anglican missionary enterprise in West Africa, whose illustrious pathfinder and pioneer was Bishop Ajayi Crowther. ACU students and alumni cannot fail to be inspired by Crowther who, in terms of the university ideal of character and learning, was a founding ancestor of their institution: Crowther proved his genius by his accession from a sixteen year old slave boy to bishop, scholar, culture-hero and benefactor of generations that he would never know about. In spite of his accomplishments, he remained the servant of God for, according to J. F. Ade Ajayi, at one point in his ministry he trekked back to Lagos from Rabbeh on the Niger when his vehicle failed.

The demand by the Christian missions for the return of schools to their owners, which was part of the events leading to the licensing of new universities, was only the private sector reaction to the falling moral tone of schools as well as the instability of the university calendar. The Senior Staff University of Universities (ASUU), whose frequent strikes was meant to nudge the government into quick action, eventually managed to negotiate an acceptable solution which, if it seemed to be short term had, at least, set the terms for future negotiations and brought some stability back to a system that nevertheless still had some catching up to do.

Although ASUU succeeded in obtaining important funding benefits for the Nigerian university system, and stakeholders can look forward to the return of a stable calendar, two of the underlying issues at the trade union negotiations are still worth revisiting because of their implications for the formation of popular attitudes that will not go away and, consequently, the formation of public policy on budgeting for the financing of universities at the two levels of student fees and staff emoluments. The government licensing and regulation of private universities with responsibility for their own funding has brought these issues to the fore, including the public awareness that university education is not cheap. The resistance to fee increase by student and staff unions meant

that the hidden cost was borne by underfunded universities and underpaid teachers. It is clearly time for more creative solutions.

The solution adopted by the government -- a public-private partnership model for the creation of more universities -- has major implications for funding and academic autonomy.

University education as presently conceived and popularly perceived is a stepping stone to an elite class with its social and economic privileges. If it is also understood to be a right for all qualified citizens irrespective of the level of their wealth, should it be funded from public coffers if only a small percentage of the population, rich and poor alike, have access to it, and if the rich can obtain superior preparation for university admission? Can governments afford it without depriving other sectors of the economy and without doing injustice to deserving citizens who have no access to public institutions? The not-so-gray area of the degree of government responsibility for private institutions that offer public service remains undetermined. In the ongoing controversy over the distribution of the Tetfund, private universities have a watertight case for a share of the education tax on the profits of private companies who have already paid the normal tax on their profits. Since fee-paying private universities have to be run on market principles if they are to survive, the case for government supplementation of the funding these universities is based on national interest. An exclusive reliance on fees and the lack of government support in the form of grants-in-aid is taking a predictable toll on those disciplines that are essential for the invigoration of a modern national culture. History, Mathematics and Physics, for example – are at threatened by their decreasing popularity in the face of the competing demand for allied professional courses like Diplomatic Studies and Engineering, so that teachers are being forced to rethink and innovate for the survival of these disciplines that are not viable because of their low enrolment. Who should bear the cost of running these programmes in private universities if not enough students enroll to make them viable?

The level of emoluments for university staff cannot be separated from the remuneration of all classes of teachers. This has always been based on the persistent myth that scholarship thrives best among highly educated but materially deprived scholars. The application of the myth is not limited to any time or place, as we find in its faithful reflection in the literatures of different periods. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reproduces the familiar complaint that the neglect of scholarship had turned Elizabethan scholars into beggars and also led them to undignified graves. In our own age, one of the starving intellectual consultants to an African dictator in Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* complains in a familiar Yoruba idiom that he cannot think on empty stomach. Drawing support from the misrepresentation of a scriptural account of the enhanced spiritual status of the poor, and the life of the early apostles and their intellectual successors -- monks, ministers of the gospel and school teachers – who renounced material comfort, this false doctrine has been recycled in anecdotes and

sayings generation after generation until it became gospel truth in official policies.

To prevent the recurrence and persistence of this myth of the poor, self-sacrificing intellectual, we must begin with the recognition that the human world as we know it now was constructed by knowledge out of the raw material of nature as God created it for us. This is the meaning of culture – breeding and intellectual achievement. That delightful complex that we call culture and civilization is not the product of brute strength or of instinct but of intelligence, education and creativity. The alternative to civilization is the state of nature – primitive man, naked like the apes, hunting and gathering food, or, if you permit me, still like Adam soon after the fall, still literally dependent on the sweat of his brow for his food. Brute strength in humans is nothing compared to that of the great apes. Brute strength is nothing unless it is powered by human intelligence. If this fact is not recognized, the country will continue to lose many of its gifted scholars to other professions or to more talent-friendly cultures.

Now that charters have been granted to a new generation of universities for the primary duties of teaching, research and social service, it is essential that a faith-based university that has obtained adequate space to express the fundamental values of character and learning be left alone to do what a university knows how to do better than anyone else, teaching and research and not be told what to do by outsiders to the university system, especially since a particular university is only one player among many others. If the one who pays the piper calls tune that his university plays, and it is not a tune that universities are accustomed to play, it will play very badly indeed.

If universities must look to outside assistance for their activities, let it come in the form of large grants to meet NUC accreditation requirements, which include the key requirement of proprietors' funding. The universities would then justifiably aspire to the stellar vision of becoming world-class universities, knowing that there is no short cut to distinction. At present the highest placement of a Nigerian university in one of the rankings is 67,000. The requirements widely published in the various world rankings are quite high. These include staff-student ratio -- which could be lower than 12 – 1 at the high ranking levels, and diversity. -- Diversity is interpreted as the presence of international staff and students, and it depends on the ability to attract this international presence by adequate funds, no matter the foreign exchange rate. The alternative, as Banjo, the former Vice-Chancellor of Ibadan suggested, is for universities to seek the more modest goal of carving an international niche of their own by specializing in the science and culture of their environment. The knowledge so generated will in no way be inferior or less international than other forms of knowledge, and distinction will eventually come from the recognition of peers and the post-graduation performance of the products of each university.

There is surely another path to distinction if we look closely at the development of the world-class universities that are constantly cited as models. While nurturing the universal principles of the system, they adapted the great tradition of university teaching,

research and support administration to their own histories and ideology. Oxford and Cambridge in England, St. Andrews, Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, University College, Dublin, originally established as a Catholic University, were shaped by "a system of understanding or body of ideas which give shape to the knowledge of the time" (Dictionary.com), which Greek philosophers followed by Foucault, the French philosopher called, *episteme***.** The enabling environment for this body of ideas is created by a historical consciousness. The discipline of History is the nursery of national memory. Because of its official neglect in Nigeria, historical consciousness is being replaced by the alternative culture of forgetting. For example, nearly all the candidates for the naming of our streets and monuments are heroes of the present who lived within living memory. How do we measure the present depth of our memory? Are some of the old names on our streets and monuments signs of our continuing reverence for our colonial rulers?

In addition to its commitment to its larger Nigerian environment and its response to the cultural and religious pressures of this environment, Ajayi Crowther University has a history and a body of ideas to which it could connect, conserve and nurture within the universally recognized tradition of the university system. The elements of this tradition are too well known to its founders and other stakeholders for me to itemize here. But I should refer to one strand that stands out in its history. I tried to suggest earlier that the sources of these ideas as well as their actual inspiration and their impact could be traced from the present, through the history of St. Andrews College, Oyo and the achievements of its alumni, the inspiration of Ajayi Crowther, the pre-colonial and colonial activities of the Anglican mission in Nigeria, Fourah Bay College and its association with Durham University and, perhaps with less certainty, the inspiring example of the six hundred year old University of St. Andrews, which shares the same foundation day with Ajayi Crowther University, as well as the name and memory of the patron saint of her predecessor.

There is a different issue to which I would like instead to draw attention. It is to be probably peculiar to the new universities, for we can assume that the older public institutions have evolved a well-defined structure of management in response to their experience and the complexity of their institutions. It is important because it is of growing concern to the teaching and research staff whose opinions do not always find a vent because of the absence of the conventional outlets. That aspect of university administration that is put under pressure when the managers of new institutions are so challenged by the pioneering circumstances and the demands of proprietors that they are faced with finding a delicate balance between the democratic values that are implicit in university culture and the authoritarian norm favoured in professional programmes shaped by the peculiar risks involved in professional practice. Their choice is between two models of university administration. There is, on the one hand, a business model with an executive Chairman or Managing Director empowered to steer his own course and

overrule all committee decisions, whatever its effect on staff motivation and job satisfaction. At the other end is a system so democratic that fresh entrants not yet tried in the crucible of research and teaching are burdened with major administrative responsibilities for Departments and committees, especially if they are drawn from a particular constituency. The judicious manager would be influenced by the successes in the great traditions of the university system, aware of the need to steer a wise course between options that may easily become forms of temptation to personal power.

I now offer two parables as stepping stones to my conclusion. First: Imagine that a future Minister for Higher Education and Development has a nightmare in which the present generation of historians has died out completely, the last Nigerian history book was published fifty years ago to mark the death of the last historian, and the Historical Society of Nigeria now exists only between the pages of the final *Proceedings of the Historical Society*. This nightmare comes immediately after a dream in which his President tells him to employ as special advisers five historians from India and Pakistan. The reason is that African historians in two neighbouring countries have just published five books on Nigerian history, and Mr. President does not like their interpretation of cross-border ethnic relations and the locations of our international borders on their maps. Convinced that Nigeria is always at war, these West African historians argue that large sections of their country were ceded by Nigeria during the 19th Century Yoruba wars, the Biafran War, and the war with Boko Haram. So their countries are considering taking their case to The Hague, citing many learned legal authorities and the Bakassi Peninsular as a legal precedence. This is only a parable, not speculation or prediction, so I have no comment.

The second parable is that of the Visitor to a faith-based university who wakes up to an early morning broadcast of the government takeover of his university along with other universities. No compensation is offered. Mind you, this announcement need not be by one of our Fellow Countrymen. Our elected political representatives are also quite capable of the task that must be done. What does the Visitor do? Being a Reverend gentleman who has just been nominated as the next President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, he remembers that the central message of Christianity is fortitude, sacrifice and forgiveness for the greater good of humankind. He takes consolation in the knowledge that the seeds of character-and-learning that his institution has sown will bear fruit because they have not fallen by the wayside, or on stony places, or among thorns, but on good ground. If his Governing Council and the university staff have played their parts well, he would find that only a group of buildings have been taken over, not the hearts of men. Again, this is only a parable.

My final word should be addressed directly to the graduating students, who are the real reason for this convocation. As you graduate from Oyo, you know that you are surrounded by expectations – your own expectations, those of your parents, your alma mater and the society. Above all these, you know that your Maker expects much of you,

since He has given you much. Your picture of all this would be quite simple. In your first year, you came into a system described by a former Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Adeniyi, as the university maze, and you were taught to find your way around the complexity of its ideas, expectations, requirements and prohibitions. You have, for this reason, been equipped to cope with the expectations of the outside world. You have also acquired a plan and structured lifestyle from the peculiar campus living in a mission university. And this should henceforth give meaning and significance to your life. Both these skills and abilities should stay with you throughout your life. If the teaching of your lecturers has taken root in your hearts and borne fruit, as I believe that it has, and if you have imbibed the values of the great tradition of university education, as I believe you have, you will go out into the world to make a difference by rendering service and not expect to be served by society or to exploit the society or take advantage of other people. You will seek to bring honour to your *alma mater* and justify yourself before your God by keeping your conscience completely clean. Then, you will not tremble before any challenges because you have been educated to cope with all challenges, because the Lord God who gave you the character and learning to overcome all obstacles will not allow you to falter, and will give you the strength and resilience to fulfill the hopes of your parents and guardians and also fulfill your glorious destiny.