



# Covenant University

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## *2nd Convocation Ceremony Address*

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### **New Horizons for Leadership in Nation States of Africa: Models, Paradigms & Developmental Paths**

Text of a lecture delivered by  
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# **New Horizons for Leadership in Nation States of Africa: Models, Paradigms & Developmental Paths**

*By*  
**Professor Jerry Gana,**  
*Chairman, Institute of Civil Society, Abuja, Nigeria.*

I feel highly honoured to be invited to give this year's Convocation Lecture of Covenant University, especially coming so soon after the distinguished lecture given last year by His Excellency, General (Dr.) Yakubu Gowon, our beloved former Head of State. I remain deeply grateful for this recognition.

After reading some relevant literature about your great University, so graciously sent to me by the Vice Chancellor, I cannot but salute the wisdom and clear vision of the founding fathers, especially our beloved Chancellor Dr. David Oyedepo. The divine mandate to raise a New Generation of leaders is so appropriate; your sense of mission most inspiring; your strong commitment to excellence, so elevating. Beyond the superb beauty of your Campus, is the intellectual elegance of your faculty. To have attracted this distinguished array of accomplished academics, intellectuals and researchers is truly worthy of great admiration. I have no doubt that this intimidating collection of some of the brightest minds in our nation will soon ignite new and powerful ideas for African development.

But there cannot be **teachers** without **learners**. Let me therefore appreciate the academic 'Eagles' of this great University. May you continue to learn how to fly to great heights in both Church and Society. To be a member of this illustrious academic community is a privilege to be deeply cherished.

To the new graduates, let me express our joyful congratulations. We are delighted to see this new generation of leaders; a people of integrity; eagles with clear vision; lions with disciplined strength; transformers filled with knowledge and power. We rejoice with you. May you be excellent ambassadors for Christ and for Covenant University.

According to the Vice Chancellor's letter of invitation to me to give this lecture, "the vision that God gave to the Chancellor of Covenant University, Dr. David Oyedepo, came with this compelling mandate:

*‘Raise me a new generation of leaders, through qualitative, life applicable and value-based leadership skill development education, embedded in sound Biblical principles thereby restoring the dignity of the black race’.*

It is not surprising therefore that the topic for this Convocation Lecture is given as:

“New Horizons for Leadership in Nation States of Africa: Models, Paradigms and Developmental Paths”.

### **The Importance of Leadership:**

With reference to the development of human societies, John Maxwell firmly declares that “Everything rises and falls on leadership”. Leadership is vitally fundamental. No society or organization can rise above the quality of its leaders. Therefore, if you have mediocre leaders don’t expect high-class development strategies. Indeed President Harry Truman once observed that “In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skilful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better”. In every part of the world, but particularly in Africa, “we are in desperate need of true, competent, principled, sensitive, compassionate and spiritually conscious leaders”, (Myles Munroe, -2005, p.22). Good leaders make things happen. They not only fire the imagination of followers but mobilize them for concrete action. A nation without good leaders is therefore caught in a paralysis of in-action. Society tends to move in circles with very little hope of moving forward. The role of good leadership is so critical that Myles Munroe states so dramatically:

“An army of sheep led by a lion will always defeat an army of lions led by a sheep”.

In other words, the quality of leadership matters greatly, - Leadership with vision; leadership with courage; leadership with character; leadership driven by honesty, integrity, discipline, humility, reliability, perseverance and a strong work ethic.

If leadership is so vital, then we must pay serious attention not only to the processes of raising new leaders, but how such leaders emerge or are elected. In

most African States today, the desire is to elect leaders democratically. Unfortunately there is something woefully wrong with our democracy. It may therefore be helpful to devote a few thoughts to the essence of democracy.

### **The Essence of Democracy:**

At the heart of democracy is freedom of the people to freely choose those who govern their affairs, the power to renew or to change such managers at regular elections, and the right to expect accountability from those elected to govern. Classical affirmations of democracy greatly emphasised popular sovereignty or the rule of the whole people. For instance, speaking of the early city states of Greece, PERICLES, declared that “our constitution is called democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in position of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty” (Richardo Blaug et al, 2004).

Speaking further on popular participation, PERICLES asserted that “we Athenians ... take our decision on policy or submit them to proper discussions: for we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated”. This emphasis on public debate of policy issues and widespread consultations to build consensus is noteworthy. If our democracy is to be sustainable we must promote a robust culture of public debate and widespread consultations to build a broad consensus on issues.

But to freely debate, there must be a genuine respect for individual freedoms, especially the freedom of expression. There must also be a profound respect for the rule of law. According to Aristotle, “In democracies which obey the law there are no demagogues; it is the better class of citizens who preside over affairs. Demagogues arise in states where the laws are not sovereign. The people then become an autocrat ..., with the many playing the sovereign, not as individuals, but collectively” (Aristotle in Ricardo Blaug et al 2004, p.32). Emphasising the need for the rule of law, Machiavelli argued that “anyone who does not regulate his

conduct by laws will make the same mistake as the masses are guilty of". Concluding, he asserts that "just as princely forms of government have endured for a very long time, so too have republican forms of government; and that in both cases it has been essential for them to be regulated by laws. For a prince who does what he likes is a lunatic, and a populace which does what it likes is unwise ... When the populace has thrown off all restraint, it is not the mad things it does that are terrifying, ... but of what may come of them, for amidst such confusion there may come to be a tyrant", (Machiavelli, *The Discourse*, ed. Bernard Crick, 1970).

The rule of law is therefore basic to democracy. However, according to Rousseau, "it is not good for him who makes the laws to execute them .... Nothing is more dangerous than the influence of private interest in public affairs" (Rousseau, 1972). This is the fundamental logic behind the separation of powers in our Presidential System of Government.

In advocating for a completely popular form of government, John Stuart Mill assert that the "Best form of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but called on to take an actual part in the government, by personal discharge of some public function.." But since all cannot participate directly in government it follows that the ideal type of government must be representative governance. (John Stuart Mill, 1861)

Thus democratic practice today reflects several contributions of representative governments. Some are parliamentary, in which elected representatives of the people proceed to elect a government of the majority Party in Government; others are presidential in format, involving the separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. We believe that in its representative form, democracy can continue to be "government of the people, by the people, and for the people".

But such a democracy can only work if the electoral processes are free, fair, credible and transparent. Once elections are massively rigged then there is no hope for sustainable democracy. Election riggers are therefore killers of democracy.

They are vicious enemies of civil society. Free, fair, and credible elections are central to the survival of democracy in Africa.

Since our main concern in this lecture is to identify the new horizons of leadership in African nation-states, I consider it appropriate to briefly review the major phases of leadership development in Africa. We may identify three broad phases: namely,

- i) The Age of Leadership with Ideology
- (ii) The Era of Authoritarian Dictatorships
- (iii) The New Age of Democracy

### **Age of Leadership with Ideology**

The distinguished array of nationalist leaders, who struggled against colonial powers for the restoration of our independence, were men and women of principles and ideas. Most of them were not only highly educated but they deeply believed in the power of ideas to ignite popular movements for freedom. We salute the wisdom of such leaders as Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Haile Selassie, Tafawa-Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo, Hamani Diori, Aminu Kano, to mention a few. These post-independence leaders were greatly influenced by some principles and ideals.

Unfortunately most of them succumbed in the end to the African traditional concept of authority. According to Professor Nwabueze, “Authority in African traditional society is conceived as being personal, permanent, mystical and pervasive. The Chief in most African traditional societies is a personal ruler and his office is held for life. His office pervades all the other relations in the community, for he is both “legislator, executive, judge, priest, medium, father, etc” (Nwabueze, 2003, p.273).

18. The tragic fall from high principles and ideals to cultural conceptions of power, perhaps explains the considerable number of Africa’s personal rulers hanging on to power for so long. The list is almost endless; for example:

\*Felix Houphouet Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire died in office after 34 years

as President

* Sir Dauda Jawara of the Gambia	21 years
* Eyadema of Togo	31 years
* William Tubman of Liberia	28 years
* Sekou Toure of Guinea	26 years
* Kamuzu Banda of Malawi	29 years
* Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia	27years
* Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia	32 years
* Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya	15 years

It is interesting to note that only Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Leopold Senghor of Senegal left office voluntarily, after 27 and 21 years, respectively.

### **The Era of Authoritarian Dictatorship**

From the mid-1960s, Africa entered into a painful phase of authoritarian governments, mostly military in character. The founding fathers in several nations were succeeded by military officers in government. Whereas some military governments were patriotic and benevolent, most dictatorships of that era were oppressive, repressive, and inhuman. A very illuminating study of this period by Professor Nwabueze, gives “a heart-rending account of the evils of authoritarian rule that leaves us in no doubt that it is a form of rule to be avoided by all means ... Its evils are pervasive, ranging from atrocious repressions, bloody reign of terror to the privatisation of the State” (F.R.A., Williams, 2003, p. xxvii). Surely, the bloody reigns of Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire); Jean-Bedel Bokassa (Central African Empire); Marcias Nguema (Equatorial Guinea); Mengistu Haile Mariam (Ethiopia) and of course Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, will go down in history as Africa’s darkest hour of bad leadership.

### **The New Age of Democracy:**

The evils of dictatorship, combined with worldwide events, triggered internal popular ‘protests, mass demonstrations, rallies, agitations and civil strikes which set the stage for the collapse of authoritarian governments. Political systems of several African States experienced democratic transformations. Indeed the events of 1989 - 98 have been described as “the greatest expansion of freedom in human

history”, (Tom Matthew on ‘The Decade of Democracy’ in Newsweek Magazine, December 1994).

As Nwabueze aptly observed, “Before the events of 1989 - 94, who could have believed that the once all-conquering, all-powerful Life President Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, the tyrannous Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, the invincible Founding President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire could have been consigned so ignominiously to the rubbish dump of history”. The collapse of dictatorships paved the way for the emergence of democracy in several Africa countries. Unfortunately the pillars of democracy are still too weak in many countries to ensure good governance, social justice and development.

For democracy to become sustainable, serious efforts must be made to overcome such challenges as very weak institutions; unorganised civil society; massive rigging of elections; widespread poverty and unemployment; and lack of political will to insist on good governance, the rule of law and transparent due process in public affairs.

In other words, the new horizon in our democratic development is the growth of constitutional democracy, which may be defined as:

“a government freely elected by the people and limited in its powers by a written Constitution having the force of a supreme law overriding all inconsistent legislative and executive acts of government, and whose provisions are observed and respected in practice by the rulers and the ruled as the active, governing rules of government administration and the game of politics” (Nwabueze, 2003, p. xxvii).

Since man cannot fully realise his creative potential except within an ordered society, government is a necessity. The question is which type of government. The position of this lecture is that no other system of governance so far devised by man is more suitable and effective for the administration of civil society than a constitutional democracy, in which rulers are freely elected by the people, and their powers limited by an agreed Constitution which has the force of a fundamental law of the land. However, a system of government cannot be stronger or more effective than the people who govern its processes. This brings us back to the quality of



leadership. Therefore, the new horizons for leadership in Africa are being generated by institutions like Covenant University that are so totally committed to raising a new generation of good, responsible, godly, disciplined, and knowledgeable leaders.

Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me to consider a few thoughts on the kind of leadership that can move Africa forward even under constitutional democracies.

### **The Path of Honour:**

If we are to succeed in building truly great nations in Africa, we must raise leaders that are filled with a deep sense of honour and integrity. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, such leaders must be prepared to “stand like a rock, in matters of principle” while swimming with the current in simple matters of taste. Leaders that are not prepared to stand for anything will fall for everything. That would be a tragic leadership.

According to Aristotle, “dignity does not consist in possessing honours, but in deserving them”. The tendency today is for leaders to seek to possess honours, but as Mark Twain argued, “it is better to deserve honours and not have them than to have them and not deserve them”. The question of honour is so strong that some philosophers are prepared to assert that:

- “he who has lost honour can lose nothing more” (Publilius Syrus)
- “whoever would not die to preserve his honour would be infamous”  
(Blaise Pasca I)

I consider that the first chapter in the book of honour is honesty. Leaders of honour must be honest. It was George Washington who once prayed, “I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man”. To be honest is to firmly stand and speak for the truth. In the words of Fredric Amiel, “Truth is not only violated by falsehood; it may be equally outraged by silence”. Your silence on certain matters may be a great violation of the truth. Therefore, leaders of honour must speak out on essential issues affecting society. But in speaking out, note the wise advice of Marcus Aurelius:

“If it is not right, do not do it;  
If it is not true, do not say it”

In the famous words of Sir Winston Churchill, “Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is”. Truth exists, only falsehood has to be invented. To be honourable, please speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In the words of John Dryden “Truth is the foundation of all knowledge and the cement of all societies”. Falsehood tears society into pieces; only truth cements. Beyond that, truth also liberates. In the gracious words of the Lord Jesus: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”.

We must endeavour to speak the truth as leaders. What Charles de Gaulle said of the politicians of his day should not be allowed to apply to African political leaders. According to de Gaulle: “Since a politician never believes what he says, he is always astonished when others do”. Remember the verdict of Winston Churchill: “There is no worse mistake in public leadership than to hold out false hopes soon to be swept away.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the second chapter in the book of honour is building a good reputation. A good name is better than great riches. In fact reputation in itself is a huge resource. Unfortunately, like glass and chinaware, a good reputation once cracked can never be well mended. It is therefore important for leaders to carefully cultivate good reputation and to maintain same. Note that “goodwill, like a good name, is obtained by many actions, but lost by just one”. Watch your actions; protect your reputation, if you wish to be a leader of honour.

The third chapter in the book of honour is respect for justice. According to Benjamin Disraeli - “Justice and power must be brought together, so that whatever is just may be powerful, and whatever is powerful may be just”. The issue of respect for justice and equity is so vital that St. Augustine once thundered: “Let justice be done though the world perish”. It is interesting that while our innocent children and youth usually love justice, most adults prefer ‘mercy’. Of course the reasons are clear! It is great to be merciful, but if we want peace and progress in society, let justice be done. Leaders must be fair to all. However, it is also

important to remember that “mercy is better than vengeance”, to quote a Greek proverb.

### **Leadership with Integrity:**

Against the sordid picture of corruption in high places, we must continue the struggle for raising leaders with integrity. **The logic of sound character for good leadership is very clear. Without character leaders soon collapse under the weight of evil pressures.** We must therefore inculcate sound values in all our leaders, including the sense of shame. Because **“he that has no shame has no conscience”**.

Leadership with character and integrity is vital for any developing society, because it is such trustworthy leadership that would lay the solid foundations for genuine development. However, please note that, **“integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful”**. (Samuel Johnson).

### **Leadership with Capacity:**

The fundamental function of leadership is to get things done, or to obtain results. Thus **“great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions”** (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002, p.3). To ignite mass participation in development, strong leadership is essential; a leadership that can mobilize and fire the imagination of the followership. Since democratically elected leaders must reach out to the electorate through political campaigns and public debates, democratic leadership tends to be more effective in mobilizing the people into popular action. Dictatorship tends to be depressive. On the other hand, true democracy ignites joyful participation. It is argued that **“when people feel good, they work at their best. Feeling good lubricates mental efficiency, making people better at understanding information and using decision rules in complex judgements”** (Goleman et al, 2002 p.14).

Given its power to mobilize the people, democratic leadership is much better placed to effect development. However, such leadership must have not only a very

clear sense of direction but must possess a solid power base. To be effective such leadership must be strong without being dictatorial. Herein lies the dilemma of walking the tightrope between too much government and too little. As Ali Mazrui once argued elsewhere, “At some stage an excess of government becomes tyranny; at some other stage too little government becomes anarchy. Either trend can lead to the failed state” (Mazrui, 1999, p.36). Maintaining a good balance of power is thus desirable. Such a balance is easier obtained in democratic systems, especially in a multi-party democracy based on the doctrine of the separation of powers. Checks and balances are important, because “power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely”.

### **Leadership with Clear Vision:**

To move the people to achieve results, good leadership must also possess clarity of vision. Vision may be defined as the ability to see the desired product or state of being, and the ways and means of getting to such a desired end. With clear vision leaders are better able to mobilize, organize and move the followership into positive action to achieve desired objectives. Without vision a pathetic paralysis of inaction may set in, simply because the leader is unable to see a clear way forward. Good leadership with a clear vision is thus a great asset. Leaders must motivate followers to realize their vision.

### **Leadership with Legitimate Authority:**

In addition to clear vision, good leaders must seek to lead with authority. Since democracy facilitates free choice, democratically elected leaders tend to enjoy legitimate authority - the power to act decisively. Executive leadership is expected to provide decisive answers to the problems of vision, direction, orientation, protection, and conflict of values. In a parliamentary democracy the leadership status of a Prime Minister cannot be as decisive as in an executive presidential system. In a parliamentary system, power is more diffused and unstable, since a whole government can be removed through a vote of no confidence by Parliament.

The executive presidential system appears more stable and decisive since the Executive President derives his mandate from a direct national vote by the electorate. However, to avoid the tendency to dictatorship, an elected President should be compelled to share powers with the Legislature and the Judiciary, as so

nicely provided by the framers of our Constitution. It is thus important that the Constitution be honoured, respected, and followed by elected leaders.

The point to emphasize here is that decisive leadership with legitimate authority greatly facilitates development through effective implementation of development programmes. There is nothing as harmful to the development process as an illegitimate and indecisive leadership. An important aspect of good governance is a legitimate and very decisive leadership. Since democracy, through free and fair elections, tends to robustly confer legitimacy, democratic governance facilitates development by massively promoting popular participation. You can thus imagine the enormous harm done to a political system when elections are rigged. Such painful actions ruin legitimacy, thereby destroying authority. Legitimate authority derives from free, fair, transparent and credible elections.

Your Excellencies, the Regents, the Hon. Chancellor, Hon. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, by raising a new generation of leaders you are in fact igniting new horizons for Nigeria and Africa. We admire your great vision, because vision adds value to life. By your great steps of faith, you have demonstrated that all victories begin with daring to start. As the saying goes:

“Inspiration without perspiration is a daydream; perspiration without inspiration is a nightmare”.

Thank God, yours has been the case of inspiration plus perspiration producing excellence.

And so, in the words of the great Apostle Paul:

**“whatever things are true,  
whatever things are noble,  
whatever things are just,  
whatever things are pure, .  
whatever things are lovely,  
whatever things are of good report,  
if there is any virtue, and  
if there is anything praiseworthy  
- meditate on these things”.** (Philippians 4:8)

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