



BOOK REVIEW — PRESENTATION SCRIPT

Edged in Excellence

Becoming a Leading Professional

A Tribute to the Life of Engr. George C. Okoroma, FNSE, FAEng, JP

Reviewed and Presented

By

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1. Opening & Protocol

Good morning, everyone.

[PROTOCOL]

It is a rare privilege to stand before this distinguished gathering to review a book that is, in every sense, a labour of love — 'Edged in Excellence: Becoming a Leading Professional,' the tribute biography of Engr. George C. Okoroma, FNSE, FAEng, JP, written by his son, Chukwumela George Okoroma.

As someone who has spent his career studying what makes communication — and character — genuinely excellent, I can tell you honestly: this book earns its title. Let me tell you why.

2. What This Book Is

This is not a conventional biography. It is, in truth, four books bound as one — a life story, a chorus of testimonies, a devotional, and a professional archive — held together by a single conviction that runs through every page: that excellence and character are never separate pursuits.

At roughly four hundred pages and forty-three chapters, richly illustrated with personal photographs spanning from the nineteen-seventies to this year, it traces the life of a man born on Friday, the 4th of July, 1952, into the Asah Okoroma trading family of Omoku, in Rivers State — through boarding school, through Rivers State University, through the Université Paul Sabatier in Toulouse, France — into a career that would see him become a leading consulting engineer and, this year, President of FIDIC Africa.

The book carries a foreword written by Her Excellency, Prof. (Mrs) Ngozi Nma Odu, Deputy Governor of Rivers State — who I understand honours us with her presence today — and I want to draw your attention to one line from that foreword, because I believe it is the key that unlocks the entire book.

“*True greatness is built on obedience, diligence, humility, and consistency.*”

— **Prof. (Mrs) Ngozi Nma Odu, Deputy Governor of Rivers State, Foreword**

That sentence is not just a comment on the book. It is the book's thesis, stated before the story even begins.

3. The Architecture of the Book

The book is organised into four deliberate movements, and I want to walk you briefly through each, because the structure itself tells a story.

Part I — The Biography

The opening chapters trace his early life, his education, and the slow, deliberate building of an engineering practice — culminating in his devotion to the Church of Christ, for which his firm, Gapec Consultants, has provided engineering services free of charge to church building projects across and beyond Nigeria.

Part II — Reflections from Family, Friends, and Well-Wishers

This, for me, is the emotional core of the book. Here, the son steps back, and more than a dozen voices step forward — children, lifelong friends, mentees, colleagues — each contributing their own chapter. One friend of over fifty years, recalling their boarding school days together, writes:

“He was already focused, already disciplined, already careful about his choices. He was not extravagant with words or resources.”

— from a tribute chapter, Part II

What struck me about this section is that it is not one voice praising a father. It is many independent voices, decades apart in when they met him, arriving at the same description. That kind of consistency across witnesses is rare — and it is the strongest form of evidence any biography can offer.

Part III — Teachings on Faith and Christian Living

Here the book changes register entirely and becomes a devotional. Engr. Okoroma works through the lives of Abraham, Moses, and Job as models of obedience and enduring faith, and moves into reflections on stewardship,

authority, and what he calls 'accounting for God's given resources: your time, your talents, and your treasures.'

Part IV — Professional Writings and Speeches

The book closes with a compiled archive of his conference papers and keynote addresses — on infrastructure development, engineering ethics, risk management, entrepreneurship for engineers, continuing professional development, even Sukuk bond financing for transport infrastructure. This section reads less like memoir and more like a professional inheritance — a body of thinking he is handing down to the next generation of engineers.

4. What Stayed With Me

Let me share three moments from the book that I believe capture its spirit.

On formation

In the opening chapters, he recalls his father's discipline around something as ordinary as television — being told, in effect, to stop watching and go study, so that one day he could afford the newer version of whatever he wanted, later, on his own terms. Reflecting on it as an adult, he writes:

“My father was an evangelist for delayed gratification, preaching the gospel of work-hard now, enjoy-later.”

— **Part I, Early Life**

It is a small memory. But it is, I would argue, the seed from which the entire rest of the book grows.

On leadership and faith intertwined

In Part IV, in a paper on Christian ethics in business and leadership, he poses a question that I found genuinely convicting, and I want to leave it with this room exactly as he wrote it:

“Are we truly the salt of the earth in our businesses? Is our light still shining in our leadership roles?”

— **Part IV, Christian Ethics in Business and Leadership**

That is not a rhetorical question. It is, I believe, the standard by which he has tried to live his own career — and it is the standard this book quietly invites every reader to hold themselves to.

On what excellence actually costs

But the passage that moved me most was not about Engr. Okoroma at all. It comes in the book's closing acknowledgement, where he turns to thank his wife — and, in doing so, redefines everything the reader has just spent four hundred pages admiring:

“Every contract won, every office held, every milestone reached, every wall that bears my name, has been sustained by your patience, your sacrifice, and your unwavering support. This book belongs to you as much as it belongs to me.”

— Acknowledgement, closing page

That single passage, for me, is the most honest sentence in the book. It tells us that the excellence this volume celebrates was never a solitary achievement.

5. A Reviewer's Honest Reflection

Now, a proper review is not simply a chorus of praise, and I do not think Engr. Okoroma — an engineer, a man of precision — would want it to be. So let me offer two honest reflections.

First, the book asks its reader to move across three very different registers — memoir, devotional, and technical white paper — within a single volume. It is an ambitious structure, and largely, it succeeds. But I will say that the turn from the personal warmth of Part Two into the more academic register of Part Four is the one place the book asks a little extra patience of its reader.

Second, this is, candidly, a tribute volume — written by a son, gathered from admirers. I say that not as a criticism, but as an observation worth naming honestly. What earns it credibility, in my view, is that the testimonies are specific and independently corroborating rather than generic. When a dozen different voices, meeting him in different decades, describe the same quiet discipline — that is not flattery. That is evidence.

6. Closing

'Edged in Excellence' ultimately makes one argument, restated across four different forms — biography, testimony, scripture, and professional practice: that character precedes competence, and that a legacy edged in excellence is never built alone.

For anyone in this room who leads a business, an institution, a family, or a profession, I do not believe this is a book to be read once and shelved. I believe it is a standard — one to be returned to.

On behalf of the African Institute of Public Speaking and Communication Excellence, I congratulate Chukwumela George Okoroma for the discipline it took to write this, I congratulate Her Excellency the Deputy Governor for a foreword that so precisely names the book's soul, and above all, I congratulate Engr. George C. Okoroma — a life, indeed, edged in excellence.

Thank you.