

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES AND LEGACY OF DR AKANU IBIAM (1906-1995)

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Abstract

Nigeria has been bedeviled by corruption, insecurity, poverty and underdevelopment. The failure of our political leaders to live up to the responsibility of personal example and to make sacrifices for the country has been identified as the bane of the Nigerian state. Long periods of military interference, God-fatherism and corruption in the politics of the nation have led to the emergence of many leaders of very poor quality—leaders whose primary motivation to leadership is selfish ambition and greed. Nevertheless, there have been one or two political leaders who have distinguished themselves by their solid background and achievements and sterling qualities. This paper is an attempt to highlight the roles of one of the few exceptional political leaders, whose lives and legacies distinguish them as role models. It examines the political roles of Dr Akanu Ibiam as legislator and as Governor of Eastern Nigeria, and underlines the legacies of this great leader. Historical investigation was carried out into the life and work of Dr Akanu Ibiam, especially his roles in the development of the country, Nigeria. The life and political roles of Dr Akanu Ibiam, as presented in this study, is a shining example of good leadership. Political leaders and all of us should emulate people like him.

Keywords: political leadership, legacy, Dr Akanu Ibiam, Nigeria.

Introduction

Achebe (1983) noted that the failure of Nigerian political leaders to live up to the challenge of personal example and the responsibilities of leadership is the bane of the Nigerian state. Poor and corrupt leadership has continued to bedevil the country. It was largely responsible for the intervention of the military in government, and successive military coupists had used it as an excuse. At long last, the military rulers succeeded in ravaging and impoverishing the country. They plunged the nation into civil war, abused human rights, entrenched corruption and prebendalism in politics and public institutions. Prebendalism stifles true democracy, enthrones mediocrity and forces the wrong kind of leaders on the nation. Over fifty years of military and civilian leadership in Nigeria have been riddled with corruption, degeneration of infrastructure, social amenities, and societal values. Nigeria is rated as one of the largest producer and exporter of crude oil in the world and has made so much money from oil since the 1970s, yet it is one of the countries with the largest

number of the poor. The United Nations Human Development Report for Nigeria, 2016 described the country as “one the poorest and unequal country, with over 80 million or 64% of her population living below poverty line” (as cited in Opejobi, 2016, para. 6). Many of our leaders have stolen billions of dollars from the money that accrued to the government and have left the nation in a poor and degenerate state. Their greed and squander mania have stigmatized Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations of the world. They have used their ill-gotten wealth to build formidable economic and socio-political empires whence they continue to exploit and dominate the country.

In any case, amid this dark maze of ineptitude and endemic corruption of political leaders, there have been a few exceptional leaders whose life and legacies epitomize good leadership. Their exemplary leadership in government and their devotion to the welfare of the people mark them out as role models in political leadership. Dr Akanu Ibiam is a shining example of such rare breed of leaders in Nigeria. He served as a medical missionary, local and international/ecumenical church leader, legislator, political adviser, governor, traditional ruler, and chairman and member of numerous government and ecclesiastical committees and agencies. This paper highlights the earliest political roles of Dr Akanu Ibiam.

An appraisal of Political Leadership in Nigeria

Leadership is an onerous task. The Holy Bible underscores the significance of leadership by referring to leaders as shepherds, and the followers as sheep. To be a good shepherd requires much sacrifice and effort. Good leadership demands nothing less. Leadership is required to give direction and to mobilize the people to realize the ideal mutually held by the leaders and the followers. Leadership is required to work for the collective goal of the group as well as create room for individual self-actualization. It is expected to infuse values and purpose in the group. The leader shows the way for others to follow. Achebe (1983) defines the leader as a role model, whose life and deeds shape those of the followers and that of the entire society.

Political leadership—leadership through the political institutions and offices of a community or state—defines and shapes the life of the people and the social systems. It could facilitate or hinder the progress of the people and the state. However great the system of government or the wealth of a nation is, bad leadership would ruin it. That has been the case in Nigeria, which is a country with a population of about 170 million and with equally huge material and human resources, yet sunk in poverty and underdevelopment. Achebe (1983, p. 1) identified the problem of Nigeria as “simply and squarely failure of leadership.” Anyaoku (2011) also believes that bad leadership is the cause of Nigeria’s backwardness and underdevelopment. Joshua S., Oni, S. and Agbude, G. (2011) and Egbegunam (2012) share the same viewpoint. Military coupists in Nigeria had used the excuse of failure of governance and corrupt leadership to seize power.

The rate of corruption and backwardness in Nigeria after 29 years of military rule and 28 years of civilian government bespeaks gross failure of leadership. The country has been crippled by a succession of leaders who have failed to lead by example and to make the

required sacrifices. Their sheer lack of vision and direction has plunged the nation into the abyss of poverty and underdevelopment. A few of them with vision lacked the will and ability to achieve good leadership. Achebe (1983, p. 80) points out that the political careers of even our earliest and ablest politicians were driven chiefly by selfishness and opportunism. Their selfishness, parochialism and opportunism belied any sense of patriotism, and impoverished their great potentials. The chief aim of most of our political leaders has been to enrich and perpetuate themselves in office (Egbegbunam 2012).

Godfatherism, political corruption and violence have undermined the electoral process, and entrenched mediocrity and corruption in Nigeria politics. The effect is systemic corruption, poverty, underdevelopment, failed infrastructure, breakdown of societal value system and underdevelopment. As long as the process of choosing our leaders are compromised, we will keep on turning up the wrong leaders—leaders who are primarily motivated by selfish ambition and greed and who have no regard for the rule of law, accountability, transparency and equity. If integrity and merit are upheld in the electoral and political processes, the right leaders will naturally emerge (Anyaoku, 2011).

Dr Akanu Ibiam: His Background

Dr Akanu Ibiam was born on November 29, 1906 in Unwana. He attended Hope Waddell Training Institution, Calabar, where he did his primary and junior school between 1912 and 1918. In 1921, he had transferred to Kings College, Lagos, which offered the subjects he required for a career in Medicine. At Hope Waddell and Kings College, Dr Ibiam combined academic excellence with outstanding performance in sports and athletics (Kalu 1986). He graduated from Kings College in 1924, having obtained distinction in the Senior Cambridge Certificate. Dr Ibiam was a rare bundle of good character, physical and mental abilities. The Principal of Kings College, Captain H. A. Harman, attested that Ibiam was “A Steady lad of good character who ought to have a very successful future” (Nwafo, 1988, p. 30). The training and discipline that Dr Ibiam had imbibed at the missionary school stuck with him all through his lifetime. At Hope Waddell, the missionary set high academic and ethical standards. The school set great store by the values of obedience, loyalty, punctuality, respect, discipline, hard work and dedication to duty. The concern for character was sweetly blended with that of academic excellence (Aye 1967). It was also at Hope Waddell that Dr Ibiam imbibed that attitude of gratitude to and keen interest in the Christian missions.

In 1927, Dr Ibiam was admitted as a medical student of St Andrews University, Scotland. He was the first African to read Medicine at St. Andrews. Dr Ibiam successfully graduated from St Andrews in 1934 and immediately proceeded to London to obtain a certificate in Tropical Medicine. A contemporary of his at St Andrews, Dr David Lowe, recalled that Dr Ibiam was a splendid ambassador from Nigeria (Nwafo, 1988, p. 258).

After his training as a medical doctor, Dr Ibiam chose to be a missionary. He spurned the glaring opportunities for a cushy job in government and private practice and signed for a precarious career with the Christian missions. That was a strange decision. Dr Ibiam then

applied to the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland Mission at Edinburgh for the post of a medical missionary in Calabar. The Church of Scotland Mission had established a mission station at Calabar in 1846, and in 1888 it established its first Igbo station at Unwana, the home of Dr Ibiam. Dr Ibiam's parents had not converted to Christianity, but through the influence of his uncle and that of his elder brother, Dr Ibiam embraced Christianity quite early in life. His father had died when Ibiam was just a suckling and his mother did not embrace Christianity until eleven years after Dr Ibiam had qualified as a medical doctor (Nwafo, 1988).

Dr Ibiam returned in 1936 to Nigeria, where he was offered an appointment as a medical missionary by the local council of the Presbyterian Calabar Mission ("The Man Akanu Ibiam," 1983). As a medical missionary, Dr Ibiam's salary was half of that of his colleagues in government and he had none of their allowances and entitlements. As a young Nigerian doctor in those days, Dr Ibiam would have had a fat salary with opportunities for rapid promotion, a furnished home in the best districts, a motor car and opportunity for private services, in addition to job security and good retirement benefits. He rather settled for a job without much pay or prospects, a job the satisfaction of which was only that it was unto the Lord (Nwafo, 1988, p. 8).

Dr Ibiam settled to career as a medical missionary of the Church of Scotland Mission, Calabar. He served the church first at Abiriba, where he founded a hospital and developed it between 1936 and 1945. He later worked as the medical superintendent of the Mary Slessor Memorial Hospital, Itu between 1945 and 1948. He was transferred from Itu to Church of Scotland Mission Hospital, Uburu in 1952. He left Uburu in 1957, when he was appointed as the Principal of Hope Waddel Training Institution, Calabar. The institution was founded in 1859 by the Presbyterian Calabar Mission, and Dr Ibiam became its first African Principal. Wherever he worked, Dr Ibiam displayed utmost devotion and sacrifice and accountability. He had entered into the missionary field with his wife, Eudora Olanyinka Ibiam, who was a qualified teacher, dispenser (Pharmacist) and midwife (Nwafo 1988). The couple devoted their lives to the work of missions and the transformation of society. Dr Ibiam and his wife were humbly doing their missionary work when opportunities for political leadership and public assignments flowed in.

In 1946, a year after his arrival at Itu, he had become the Representative of Afikpo Divisional Council. In the same year, he was elected into the Legislative Council at Lagos (Kalu 1986, p. 18). Once Dr Ibiam entered into public life, it was difficult to confine him to the hospital. He got several appointments in committees and boards of religious and government agencies, in addition to his legislative work. The Mission Council approved his new roles in the public sector and temporarily relieved him of his position as resident doctor. It reassigned him to the supervision of outpatient clinics in Arochukwu District. Also Dr Ibiam combined his work as the Principal of Hope Waddel with numerous assignments in church and government. For instance, he was then the President of the Christian Council of Nigeria and the Chairman of the Provisional Council of the University of Ibadan (Kalu 1986). His ability to superbly combine these numerous assignments and

roles portray him as a very energetic and resourceful leader. With this background, we can now delve into the political leadership roles of Dr Akanu Ibiam.

Dr Ibiam as Legislator (1946-1953)

Dr. Ibiam made immense contribution to the political development of the country, having served as a member of the Legislative Council and also in the Executive Council. As a member of the Legislative Council he contributed to the constitutional development of the country, especially in the evolution of the Richards constitution of 1946 and the Macpherson Constitution of 1951. 1946 marked the beginning of the political career of Dr. Ibiam. In that year, he became a member of the Afikpo Divisional Council, and in the following year he became the Chairman of the Council. The Arthur Richards Constitution was introduced in 1946. It gave room for greater participation by Nigerians in the affairs of the state by reconstituting the Legislative Council and making it cover all of the country. It also abolished the official majority and gave room for the participation of unofficial members (non- Government officials) in the Council. The Constitution also created regional councils, consisting of a house of assembly in each of the Northern, Eastern and Western provinces, and a house of chiefs in the North, whose role was purely advisory. In 1946, Dr. Ibiam was selected as a member of the Eastern House of Assembly. Dr. Ibiam was the fourth unofficial member of the Legislative Council and the provincial member for the Ogoja Province in the Eastern House of Assembly (Kalu, 1986, p. 18).

In 1951, the Richards Constitution was replaced by the Macpherson Constitution, and Nigerians were given more room for participation in its making. The Constitution established a 145-member House of Representatives, 136 of them elected, to replace the Legislative Council. It also introduced bicameral legislature for both North and West, and retained unicameral House of Assembly for the East. In 1951, Dr. Ibiam contested election and won into Eastern House of Assembly, where he represented the Ogoja Province and the Afikpo Division of that Province. In February 1953, Dr. Ibiam joined the National Independence Party and became its treasurer, but soon withdrew his membership. He never belonged to any political party afterwards (Nwafo, 1988, p.163). His withdrawal from party politics was not unconnected with the partisan, vilifying and corrupt nature of politics in Nigeria which made it difficult for some scrupulous persons to join the race.

It is apparent that Dr. Ibiam had no selfish political ambition and that despite his involvement in the political development of the country, he did not think of himself as a career politician. Rather his interest in the welfare and development of his people and that public-spirited disposition, which were partly responsible for his decision to become a missionary, prepared him for political leadership. Meanwhile, Dr. Ibiam had established a proven record of achievement, of integrity, honesty and hard work. These were the attributes that recommended him as one who would be useful as a leader in that critical and formative stage of the country's development. The District Officer of Afikpo Division recognized these rare qualities of Ibiam and his potential as a good leader, and encouraged him to enter into public life. According to Nwafo (1988) the District Officer had thought that Nigeria needed men like Dr. Ibiam—highly educated, unassuming and not materialistic (p.148).

Dr. Ibiam combined his legislative work with the missionary career. By 1946, when he became a legislator, he was the medical superintendent of the Mary Slessor (CSM) Hospital, Itu. Between 1948 and 1952 he was a medical missionary in Arochukwu District, where he supervised outpatient clinics. The mission had reassigned him to outpatient medical work to enable him cope with his legislative work and other public engagements. In 1952, he was appointed the Medical Superintendent of the CSM Hospital, Uburu; his first priority and career was the missionary work.

As a legislator, Dr. Ibiam was a vigorous and gifted speaker and full of ideas on social progress. Some of his views were so radical and ground-breaking that it took several years for them to be appreciated. He was thorough and forceful in the presentation of his views and relentless in the pursuit of his goal. He believed in a progressive and constitutional advancement of self-government, and he deplored political gimmicks and violence. He confidently affirmed that “we will get all we want from the British Government by legitimate and constitutional means” (Nwafo, 1988, p. 149).

Furthermore, he was ready to channel his interest in and preoccupation with education into practical ends. In the Legislative Council’s Session of March 1947, Dr. Ibiam had argued that the people of Nigeria needed Free and Compulsory Mass Education (FCME). He believed that it was the right of citizens of Nigeria to enjoy this education up to at least Standard VI. For this to be achieved, he proposed that the Government make the Africans pay taxes in order to secure a better future for their children. Free and compulsory education would ensure that boys and girls have equal educational opportunities. Besides if the African parents were relieved at the early stages of their children’s education, they would use those “free” years to save for the higher education of their eligible wards. He acknowledged that not everyone might go to secondary school or university, but that leaders of the country would likely come from those who are so educated (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1947-1949*, p. 181).

Two years after the proposition was dropped, Dr. Ibiam still repackaged it and pushed it forward to the Legislative Council. In presenting his proposal for the Local Education Rates or the Compulsory Mass Free Education Fund to the House in a session meeting of December 15, 1949, Dr. Ibiam stated:

I shall not be happy or satisfied until I see the children of Nigeria enjoying all the educational facilities which are enjoyed by other children of the world... Any responsible Nigerian and any government official whose attitude by word or deed does not assist to bring about this, I must relentlessly oppose in the name of the people of Nigeria (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1947-1949*, p. 193).

His proposal was hailed by many members, and based on their favourable disposition, the House, after further debate in the issue on December 16, 1949, recommended that the local authority or Native Authority (N.A) introduce Local Education and School Rates in suitable areas with a view to progressive introduction of compulsory primary education. It also recommended the amendment of the Native Authority Ordinance, 1943, so as to allow Local Education or School Rates to be used for the support of approved voluntary agencies’ schools. This recommendation was approved by the majority of the House (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1947-1949*, p. 193).

Dr. Ibiam's concern for the welfare of the masses runs through all his debates. In a debate of the House in August 1, 1947, Dr. Ibiam had expressed his opposition to the Motor Traffic License Bill, and he decried the monopoly enjoyed by the big companies and the stifling of petty traders. He lamented that Africans were ill-equipped to dictate their own prices but had their prices decided for them by others. "If we go to the shops," Dr. Ibiam keenly observed, "the shops name their price and we have to buy; if the shops want to buy from us, they say we buy at that" (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1947-1949*, p. 53).

Any group that had Dr. Ibiam as a representative would be assured of effective and unselfish representation. He was always passionate and meticulous in presenting the needs of his people. No aspect of their lives seemed to escape his perceptive mind and ubiquitous eyes. He would ask for almost everything for his people. A typical example of this attribute of Dr. Ibiam could be seen in his contribution on the debates on the "Regional Estimates of Expenditure on December 8, 1949 (3rd Budget Session of the Assembly)." After the second reading of the Appropriation Bill, Dr. Ibiam stood up to make his contribution, and in a single presentation, he requested for the following provision for his constituency in the light of the new Appropriation Bill:

- (i) Further efforts to be made for the cultivation of rice in the Niger, although the Committee had concluded that it was a difficult thing to do. He also expressed his eagerness to see the Cross River Basin being used for the cultivation of rice.
- (ii) Oil mill to be established in the Afikpo Division, where the Edda and the Ikun had engaged in the growing of oil palm and the processing of its products on a large scale.
- (iii) The forestation of certain parts of Ogoja Province to be carried out, since the country would be in much need of timber in the future.
- (iv) The building of industries in Ishiagu clay fields for making crockery, bricks, cement products and tiles. He noted that under Sir Donald Cameron, then Governor of Nigeria, most of the bricks used to build houses in Enugu were from there, and he urged that the industries be revitalized in order to provide employment for the people of the Province.
- (v) In the area of education, he noted that the Government had promised to give his Province three secondary schools, but none had been built at that time. He indicated that the Afikpo people were anxious to see the proposed school for boys, and he wanted to know what was preventing the Government from building the schools.
- (vi) On public works, he wondered when the roads in Ogoja Province would be tarred. He expressed the people's dissatisfaction with pontoons as means of transportation in Ogoja Province, as that was fraught with hazards and accidents. His people would like to have a bridge across the Akpoha River in the Afikpo Division. "I am not satisfied to hear that we have no money," Dr Ibiam snapped. Then he suggested that "We could borrow money to build bridges, not only bridges like this, but on the Niger as well" (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1949-1954*, p. 58).

- (vii) The Government should institute a Cross River passenger service. He noted that when he was a school boy, there was a regular transport service between Calabar and Ikom, but it was no longer in operation. He expressed worry about the suffering of “my brothers” who were busy paddling their canoes to and fro the River in order to sell their goods and pay their taxes while “the Government just sit back and look at us struggling” (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly 1949-1954*, p. 59).
- (viii) The provision of a catering guest house in Ogoja Province, since all the provinces in the Eastern Region had got one, excepting Ogoja. He suggested that Abakaliki be considered for the guest house, and urged the Secretary of Eastern Provinces to look into the matter, as further negligence would be understood as discrimination against his people.
- (ix) The provision of telephone facilities in Ogoja Province, since other provinces were helped to get them. He reminded them of the agreement that the “haves” should stay put while the ‘have-nots’ have something. “That is not being carried out,” he remarked (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly 1949-1954*, p. 59).
- (x) The vaccination of every child at least before the child is six months. This should be backed up with legislation. Government should support and encourage leprosy work.

After all these endless requests and petitions he concluded thus: “I support the establishment of the Regional Expenditure 1950-1951” (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1947-1949*, p. 59).

Dr. Ibiam was not only militant in pressing his demands, but sometimes he appeared to see farther than his contemporaries. Such expression of foresight and a percipient mind could be seen in his objection to a motion forwarded by Mr. J.A. Nwachukwu on July 16, 1952. Mr. Nwachukwu had implored the House to ask the “Lt. Governor to prevail upon the Eastern Region Production Development Board to withdraw the offer of £500,000 loan intended for the Onitsha Market as this was not in the best interest of the Eastern Region” (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly 1952*, p. 199). Dr Ibiam observed that the money given to the Onitsha Council was a loan and not a grant and that the loan would yield interests that the Board could use for other purposes. He indicated that Onitsha was an important market. A big market like Onitsha would attract an incredible amount of trade from other parts of Nigeria into the Eastern Region. Then, he added: “There is the lordly Niger and personally I envisage a time when we shall have a bridge across the River Niger” (“Hear! Hear!”— that was the roar from the House in reaction to the seemingly weirdness of the idea at that time) (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly 1952*, p. 199). Twelve years after, this was no longer a dream. The French Construction Company, Dumez, constructed the Niger Bridge between 1964 and 1965. The Bridge was completed in December 1965. It was one of the landmark achievements of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, under Sir Alhaji Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as President.

Equally, in a debate on the July 12, 1952 Dr. Ibiam had proposed that a four-bedded sickroom be provided in all the approved secondary schools and teacher training colleges

to help improve the health of the students. Mr. J.A. Nwachukwu, in opposition to this motion, first paid the following compliments to Dr. Ibiam:

Sir Francis Ibiam is a man who commands our great respect and we are very, very proud of him—no matter how much we may differ in our views or outlook. I must say here without any contradictions that he commands our great respect... We have noted him all along as an elder statesman who has always had a progressive idea in relation to his country and this Region (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1952, p. 35*).

Dr. Ibiam's contribution at the House was motivated not by personal or party interests, but by his love for his people and keen interest in their welfare and in the development of the country. He believed that the country must be built with sacrificial devotion and on honesty, integrity, unselfishness, truth and love. The Government must see to it that the "weaker one" is protected and that the "small man" is not trampled upon by his wealthy brother. "We must stop those big ones from taking advantage of them," he insisted (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly 1952, p. 201*). This was not just good talk from a demagogue or a plebeian idealist, but deep-seated convictions and motivations of a man who was given to selfless service and philanthropy. In a speech on the floor of the House on July 14, 1952, he clearly stated: "Your honour, I am not a party man" (Applause). He continued as follows:

I am here, sir, to encourage the advancement, the economic welfare and everything that is good for the people of Nigeria... I am jealous of this region in particular, and I am jealous about Nigeria as a whole, our country is something for which we should all sacrifice so that we may be able to go forward. If we do not do that and if we think of just what we can get out of power or what we can get out of our position as privileged men, then I do not think we are doing justice to the people who sent us here. I represent the Ogoja Province and the Afikpo Division in that Province; and I have fought for this Province for the past few years and I intend to continue to fight for it while I remain a member of this House (*Debates in the Eastern House of Assembly, 1952, pp. 92-93*).

With this kind of mission and forthrightness, it is not surprising that Dr. Ibiam would not be boxed into the narrow confines of party politics. He had once in 1953 joined a new political party and became its treasurer, but he pulled out as swiftly as he had joined it. He had expressed his abhorrence of political parties, and he apologized to his friends, admirers and well-wishers for his stint in the new party (Nwafo, 1988, p.164).

As a legislator, Dr. Ibiam made immense contribution to the political, socio-economic and cultural development of the country. He was responsible for the bill that sought for the replacement of the derogatory word, "native", used by the Europeans to designate Africans. He argued that "native" had been used as a derogatory term for the African, and suggested that "Nigerians" or "Africans" should be used instead. He argued that little as the matter might seem, it impinged on the heart and dignity of the African peoples ("Legislative Council Debates, August 21, 1948"). Dr. Ibiam introduced the Publication Ordinance Bill, which required that for the purpose of records and history, one copy of documents and books published in Nigeria should be placed in the library of the University College, Ibadan. He first introduced the motion on August 21, 1948, and it was not until March 30,

1950 that it was passed into law (Nwafo, 1988, p. 158). As a legislator he fought for better condition of service for pharmacists, who were at that time called dispensers. As a result of his campaigns, the pharmacists' commencing salary was increased by 100 per cent and pharmacists were considered for promotion to senior service.

In another campaign, he fought against Private Practice (P. P.) by Government medical officers. He believed that the practice was not in the best interest of the country. This is because when the attention of the doctor is divided between self-interest and public service, the self-interest seems to take pride of place. He maintained that priority attention be given to patients, and that any medical doctor who thought that Nigerian government was not paying him/her well, should "resign his/her appointment and pursue a private practice of his/her own vogue" (Nwafo 1988, p. 155). Most of his colleagues misunderstood his motives, and they raised a storm of protest against it. Ibiam was not perturbed by the barrage of criticisms from his professional colleagues, who thought that he acted out of jealousy and selfish considerations, having gotten himself involved in that missionary business. Ibiam had proposed that private practice should stop immediately. Although private practice was not abolished completely as Ibiam had expected, his proposition engendered certain reforms in medical practice in Nigeria. One of such was that P. P. must not be done inside government institutions and no doctor was permitted to charge any fees within Government hospital or dispensary. All medical fees must be paid to the almoner or the cashier (Nwafo, 1988, pp. 155-6)

The House of Assembly was dissolved on May 6, 1953. A new Federal Constitution was to replace the Macpherson Constitution the following year. That was also the year the Regions were to gain self-rule. Then, Dr. Ibiam had quitted politics, and by the time the new Assembly reconstituted, he was already deep at work in the CSM Hospital, Uburu (Nwafo, 1988, p.164). Ibiam had always been true to his missionary calling. Few years later, he was again dragged into politics, not as a legislator but as the Governor of Eastern Nigeria.

Dr Ibiam as Governor of Eastern Nigeria (December 1960-January 1966)

Elder Sir Dr. Francis Akanu Ibiam was installed as the Governor of Eastern Nigeria on December 15, 1960 at the Enugu Sports Stadium. He was the first indigenous Governor of Eastern Nigeria. He had succeeded Sir Robert Stapledon who had served in that capacity from November 1956 to May 1960. Although the Governorship was not an elective office, there were equally very prominent men of Eastern Nigeria who were being tipped for the position that time. Among them were top politicians of the ruling party, the NCNC. Dr. Ibiam was not a member of National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), and he had returned to his missionary work in the Church of Scotland Mission. It was Chief E. E. Emole who had suggested his name at the cabinet meeting at Enugu. By then Dr. Michael I. Okpara, a medical doctor and a vibrant politician of the NCNC, had been elected as Premier of the Eastern Region. Since Nigeria was running a parliamentary system of Government, the Premier had full executive powers, while the Governor was a ceremonial head in the manner of the British Monarch (Nwafo, 1988, p. 167).

When the name of Francis was suggested, he was unanimously adopted as the right candidate for the position. Dr. Ibiam was a well-known figure, distinguished by his impeccable character, humility, dedication and selfless service to humanity. When he was

the Medical Superintendent at Abiriba, he had encouraged the people to send their brilliant pupils to school. One of the greatest fruits of such encouragement was Chief E. E. Emole, who was sent to the United Kingdom to read law. He came back and became the first lawyer in the Bende Division. He was the Minister of Finance in the cabinet of Dr. Michael I. Okpara (Nwafo, 1988, p. 167).

Dr. Ibiam and his wife were in Lagos to attend a service at the Church of Christ Cathedral at Marina, Lagos to commemorate the Independence of Nigeria. They had gone to Lagos from Ibadan, where he had presided over the meeting of the Governing Council of the University College, Ibadan. After the service, Dr Okpara invited Dr. Francis for a talk. He told him that his cabinet had been screening candidates for the vacant position of Governor and that his candidacy had been endorsed by them. He encouraged Dr. Ibiam to accept the offer, and Dr. Ibiam agreed to think over it. Dr Ibiam discussed it with his wife, and she was delighted about the prospect of him becoming the Governor, but Dr. Ibiam himself was yet to make up his mind about the proposal. A few days later, He and his wife were at Afikpo, shopping, when the news of his appointment filled the air. The Radio Nigeria, Enugu had been making repeated broadcast of the appointment of Sir Francis Akanu Ibiam as the new Governor of Eastern Nigeria. Dr. Ibiam felt embarrassed to hear about his appointment over the airwaves and when he was still thinking of what to do with the offer. Many individuals encouraged him to take up the position without further hesitation. He wrote to the Church of Scotland Mission for guidance, and the mission encouraged him and granted him leave of absence to enable him fill the new position. Dr. Francis Ibiam was sworn in as the Governor of Eastern Nigeria on December 15, 1960 (Nwafo, 1988, p. 169). Dr. Ibiam was not just a Governor, but he made it quite clear that he was a Christian Governor or a “missionary Governor” as was suggested in one of the dailies. The Christian values and principles of honesty, accountability, humility and the fear of God guided his decisions and actions throughout his tenure as Governor. He made efforts to bring his Christian influence to bear on the Government. The Premier, Dr. M.I. Okpara, did not fail to extol the virtues of Dr. Ibiam. He had once referred to him as a “rare personality, the only Nigerian who qualified as a medical doctor and went to earn a pittance as a medical missionary among his people” (Nwafo, 1988, p. 170). At another instance, Dr. Okpara spoke of him thus: “Truly it can be said that you have never spared yourself in the service of your country” (Nwafo, 1988, p. 170).

Although Dr. Ibiam’s position was a ceremonial one, his advice and influence carried much weight. Every week, he met the Premier to discuss the affairs of the state. He had been a veteran legislator and had headed many committees and boards in Government and in private concerns. His influence on the government of Dr M. I. Okpara was constructive. Dr. Ibiam believed that honesty was still the best policy. He was a paragon of honesty and accountability. At the end of each financial year, Dr. Ibiam returned to the Government coffers all unspent monies. He discouraged the Okpara cabinet from operating personal bank accounts abroad, and by so doing helped to curb greed and corruption of public officers. He set example by his life and servant-leadership for the politicians to emulate. With Ibiam, a godly atmosphere was possible in the Government house. Kalu (1986, p. 35) has revealed that most members of the Cabinet did not own their own personal houses until

long after they had been out of office. Dr. Ibiam himself built his country home through a loan from the African Continental Bank.

The position of the Governor of Eastern Nigeria gave Dr. Ibiam ample scope to reach and influence a greater number of people through the media. His speeches were widely publicized and he used such opportunities to advocate for national integration, patriotism, loyalty, equality of opportunity for all, human rights and social justice. He equally used such media to condemn nepotism, corruption, tribalism and other ills that plagued the Nigerian society. At the international level, he was unequivocal in his condemnation of social injustice and discrimination, oppression, and those structures and elements that denigrate the human person. He used every available opportunity to project a positive image of Africa and to defend it against oppressive forces.

Before he became the Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Dr. Ibiam had been involved in the ecumenical movement. He used his new position and influence to help foster unity among the churches, so that they would be strong and effective witness in Nigeria. He organized, hosted and attended several local and international ecumenical conferences during his tenure as Governor of Eastern Nigeria. By then he was a President of the World Council of Churches. One of his most popular speeches, "What about Africa" was delivered at a conference of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi in 1961, when he was the Governor of Eastern Nigeria.

Nigeria had just gained independence, but the euphoria of independence was yielding to the arduous task of nation building. The high hopes and optimism about the new nation was being vitiated by the evil forces of corruption, tribalism, nepotism and selfish ambition. Dr. Ibiam felt a great concern about certain developments in the country, especially in 1965 when, after the parliamentary elections in the west, political turmoil threatened the peace of the country. There were widespread allegations about the rigging of the elections, and this was followed by arson, looting and violence. The Federal Government seemed to be at a loss what to do about the total breakdown of law and order in that Region. It appeared to Dr. Ibiam that Nigeria had gained independence from foreign rule only to use it to destroy itself. He lamented that "The Federal Government and the press were guilty of conspiracy of silence and indifference in the face of deteriorating situation in a section of our country" (Nwafo, 1988, p. 174). Out of frustration at the ugly turn of events in the country, he issued the warning that "Anybody who causes the downfall of Nigeria and brings about disruption of our beloved country will not get away with it; Nemesis will overtake them" (Nwafo, 1988, p. 175).

For this warning, Dr. Ibiam was dubbed "prophet of doom" by one of the newspapers, and he earned more criticism from many other Nigerians, who could not discern the times. Doomsday did really come. Dr. Francis held the position of Governor of Eastern Nigeria from 1960 to 1966 (Jan 15), when the military came into power.

"Ibiamism": The Legacy of Dr Akanu Ibiam Self-Sacrifice and Selfless Service

It was Dr. K.O. Mbadiwe who coined the word, "Ibiamism," in a speech on the 80th birthday of Dr. Akanu Ibiam in 1986. He used it to describe Ibiam as a symbol of self-denial (Nwafo, 1988, p. 234). Dr. Ibiam is distinguished by his self-sacrifice and selfless

service to humanity and to God. These are the qualities that enabled him to pursue a career of medical missionary work in the villages of our country. It also enabled him to render selfless service as a political leader, statesman and traditional ruler.

Godliness

The cardinal virtue of Dr. Akanu Ibiam was the fear of God. He loved God so much, and he lived a truly devoted Christian life. With deep-seated Christian convictions, he effectively matched his confession of the faith with action. Dr. Ibiam was a militant Christian who used every opportunity to project and to defend his faith. He believed so much in prayer, meditation and fasting as means of spiritual growth and strength. He needed that inspiration and strength to overcome the forces of evil.

Sense of Mission and Steadfastness of Purpose

The life of Dr. Ibiam was characterized by a high sense of mission and purpose in life. Quite early in life he realized his mission and purpose in life, and he stuck to it. His focus and steadfastness made it difficult for him to be discouraged, sidetracked or intimidated.

Integrity, Honesty and Accountability

Dr. Ibiam is a man of honour and integrity. He believed that honesty is the best policy at all times. His transparency was proverbial. This made him a highly-sought-after candidate for positions of trust and responsibility. Positions and appointments readily fell to him, without him canvassing for them. He was vehement in his condemnation of bribery and corruption. Those who were bent on selfishly and corruptly enriching themselves felt so uncomfortable having him around. Such people might oppose him, but others admired him for that.

Contempt for Material Wealth

Dr. Ibiam combined godliness with contentment. He was able to put the spiritual things before the material. He is a practical example of one who sought the kingdom of God and its righteousness first. This helped him to eschew any materialistic and acquisitive tendencies as well as to put the interests of others and those of his country before his own. He laboured to improve the physical and material wellbeing of others and without making his own material wellbeing a priority. He left a good name, having carefully followed the Biblical advice to choose good reputation over great riches.

A Perfect Blend of Spiritual and Temporal Concerns

Dr. Ibiam made a sweet blend of spiritual and temporal concerns. He did not believe that a Christian should turn a blind eye to the responsibilities and challenges in his environment or country. His was a philosophy of active involvement in the world. He saw the Christian as the salt and the light of the world; as God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works in the world. He proved that genuine Christianity is not incompatible with godly participation in politics or societal improvement. The world is dying for real Christian influence, and those Christians who find themselves in politics should see it as an opportunity to bear effective witness for Christ by rendering selfless service to the people.

Patriotism and Public Spirit

The love for one's country and the desire to make genuine contributions to the society or group should be the greatest motivations of those who aspire to hold public office as it was true of Dr. Ibiam. His love for his people, for Nigeria and Africa as a whole motivated him to seek their welfare and to defend them against aggressors and all oppressive forces

Hard work, Meticulousness and Dedication to Duty

Dr. Ibiam had an eye for details and the reputation of being thorough and meticulous in his work. He was a man given to hard work. He slept so little and worked so much. Rev. Dr. Akanu Otu, a nephew of Dr. Ibiam and who had lived with him, confirms that Dr. Ibiam kept to time and was always busy. He noted that if you lived with Dr. Ibiam you must be busy and take your time seriously, too (Personal Communication, Feb. 22, 2014). It was because of his hard work and dedication to duties that he was able to successfully combine his numerous responsibilities and commitments.

Excellence in Work and Service

Dr. Ibiam set great store by excellence. Whatever he did, he gave it his best. He worked whole- heartedly and was ready to persevere at it until a good result was achieved. Whether in speech, writing or work, Dr. Ibiam tried to be the best he could.

Frankness and Intrepidity and Courage

Dr. Ibiam loved the truth and "speaks straight." Double-speaking, double standards and diplomacy were alien to Dr. Ibiam's nature. His love for truth and the fearlessness in declaring it portray him as a man of courage and as one who could not be unduly influenced. He could be stiff and uncompromising in defence of his opinions and cherished ideals. He would equally go at great lengths to push them forward. This had made some critics accuse him of being autocratic. It took a man of great courage and intrepidity to engage in a global crusade against apartheid and racial discrimination and colonialism in Africa. He equally fought to restore the dignity of the African person and to project the African identity. He was a true "Pan-Africanist."

A Philanthropist

Dr. Ibiam freely gave himself for the wellbeing of his people. He encouraged, initiated and supported efforts and programmes meant for human capacity building and social progress. Through his efforts many people had scholarships to study at home and abroad. He initiated the scholarship scheme for the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, which had stayed for 115 years by the 1960s without producing a single graduate minister. He so much believed in and worked for youth and women empowerment. He maintained that our youth are our future, and no sacrifice is too great to make on their behalf. Equally, He was a strong advocate of equal opportunities for all and a kind of affirmative action for women to enable them square up with their men counterparts. Although he was highly placed and privileged, he detested social inequality and all kinds of social oppression and discrimination.

High Regard for Learning and Education

Dr. Ibiam saw education as a tool for enlightenment and social progress. It is a viable weapon against ignorance, superstition and backwardness in Africa and elsewhere. He had advocated for education for all, a free and compulsory mass education, and high quality education in Nigeria. He believed that the church in Africa would be highly benefited by an educated ministry. He encouraged and supported many young people in their educational pursuits.

Humility and Simplicity of Life

Although Dr. Ibiam had the best of education available in his time and had enjoyed great positions and titles of honour, he consistently maintained a humble and simple lifestyle. He freely mingled with the people at all levels and shunned ostentation. His conservatism in dress, appearance and food would pass him for an ascetic.

Dr. Ibiam, an advocate for national unity

At church and in the society, Dr Ibiam was a strong advocate for peace and unity. His interest in and devotion to Christian unity resulted in many ecumenical initiatives and involvements at national and international levels. He was equally earnestly concerned about the unity and peace of Nigeria, his conspicuous role in the Nigeria-Biafra War, notwithstanding. The truth is that Dr Ibiam was not a man who gave half-hearted devotion to any cause he deemed just. He had defended the unity and peace of the country with equally ardent energy.

Conclusion

The greatest asset of any state is the quality of its political leaders. This is so because leaders are role models and hold a position of trust for the people. Leadership demands unusual sacrifice for and dedication to the wellbeing of the people. For the leader, it is not about him/her; it is about his/her people. Good leaders are *born to serve* (*Born to Serve* is the apt title of Nwafo's biography of Dr Ibiam). It is usual for us to begin to extol the virtues of good leaders like Mohandas Ghandi, Aminu Kano, Akanu Ibiam and Nelson Mandela, and make them appear as if they had come from another planet. We seem to so readily forget that they were humans like us, subject to like passions and living under like circumstances as the rest of us now do. We may so much talk and write about them and celebrate them, but we scarcely wish to make them our object of inspiration or role models. Achebe (1983) has rightly pointed out that the significance of the portrayal of the lives of these powerful people is not that we become like them in every way, but that we should acknowledge that they still were humans like us, not angels, and that their lives should be an inspiration to us. They should inspire in us noble sentiments and worthy achievements. Dr Akanu Ibiam is one of the few political leaders in Nigeria who should serve as inspiration to us. Our political leaders and all the rest should emulate his exemplary leadership.

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