

Christian Churches and Nigeria's Political Economy of Oil and Conflict

Christian Churches and Nigeria's Political
Economy of Oil and Conflict:
Baptist and Pentecostal Perspectives

By

Nkem Emerald Osuigwe

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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To the memory of my late parents and all the *innocent victims*
of the Niger Delta conflict

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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to commend this work by Nkem Osuigwe as a fascinating insider account of the effects of oil related corruption, pollution and violence on the communities and churches of the Niger Delta. The corruption and neglect that have characterised the actions of the oil industry in the Niger Delta over more than fifty years are beginning to be exposed in the Nigerian and Western media but this study adds a valuable ethnographic depth to the impacts of the industry in the region. As is increasingly well known, the Delta has endured a vast number of leaks from poorly maintained overground pipes left unrepaired even as they pass through crop lands, forests and even villages, and numerous unchecked leaks from well heads. The large ecosystem of the Delta as well as human dwellings have been systematically polluted and no proper clean-up has been attempted, despite numerous attempts to force the oil companies to clean up through civil protests and in the courts. To add insult to injury, as the peoples of the Delta have seen their lands, waters and air polluted and wasted by the oil companies, they have not benefited much from the oil revenues that have gone into government coffers and oil company profits. Much is made in the world media of the desolation by the oil industry of the waters around North America and other developed countries from major oil leaks such as the Deepwater oil blowout in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. But the oil spilled in the Niger Delta far exceeds that massive blowout both in quantity and in the effects on people and the environment. It has however not attracted the same kind of attention and the companies have neglected their responsibilities to stop leaks and clean up the oil in affected areas. As is so often the case, environmental injustice and pollution, coupled with natural resource exploitation by powerful outside interests, have together occasioned growing civil conflict.

The Niger Delta has been plagued by oil-related violence for years. Civil protests have been violently put down by security personnel and police and the prominent literary voice of the oil protest in the Delta of Ken Saro Wiwa was brutally murdered in jail. The violent response of the authorities to legitimate civil protest has in turn provoked an alternative response in the region which has also become a major cause of violence. As the people of the Delta have been denied benefits from the oil while their environment has been ruined by the oil industry, some have taken

affairs into their own hands. There is now widespread pilfering of oil from wellheads and pipelines which has magnified the problem of oil spillages. At the same time there has been violent conflict between gangs involved in extracting and marketing stolen oil obtained which has seen a tragic rise in gun-related injuries and killings particularly amongst young men in the region.

The Christian Churches have a more than one hundred year history of mission and witness in the Niger Delta and since many in the region attend church, many church members have been affected by the corruption and pollution of the oil industry in the region, and the civil conflict that it has provoked. In this study Osuigwe has used his position as a Baptist pastor in the region, and his knowledge of his own and other churches, to unfold an ethnographic study of the effects of and responses to the oil-related violence among congregations and their members. The study gives a powerful insight into the ways in which Christians in the region have responded to the violence, through forms of worship, through attempts at reconciliation and encouragement to the participants to lay down their arms, and through attempts at interventions with the authorities to address the roots of the violence in the structural injustices of the oil industry in the Delta. This book also makes an important contribution to the scholarly study of African independent churches. The received view amongst Western scholars is that African evangelical churches are conservative and quietist in their relationships to the wider society and that they largely reject the attempts of the more established mission churches to link Christian mission and worship with African cultural concepts and practices. This study shows that on the contrary such churches in the Delta have been much involved in societal efforts to address and repair oil-related violence and injustice, and that the faith and worship of their members and pastors contextualise the gospel in a range of ways in the cultural idioms and practices of the region.

I commend this book warmly to its potential readers. Osuigwe has a powerful story to tell which includes much human suffering from which his own church and family has not been immune. He tells it engagingly and passionately while at the same time showing the scholarly implications of his story for the study of African Christianity and for African Christian theology as well as for the political economy of oil in the developing world

Professor Michael Northcott

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African Instituted (or Independent, Initiated, Indigenous) Churches
bpd	barrels per day
BSF	Baptist Students Fellowship
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria
CfAN	Christ for All Nations
CMS	Church Missionary Society
C of O	Certificate of Occupancy
COMAND	Coalition of Militant Action in the Niger Delta
CPFN	Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria
ECWA	Evangelical Church of West Africa [now Evangelical Church Winning All]
EDICESA	Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre of Eastern and Southern Africa
ERA	Environmental Rights Action
FoEN	Friends of the Earth Nigeria
GRA	Government Reservation Area
HRW	Human Rights Watch
H2H	Heart-to-Heart
INC	Ijaw National Council
IVF	Idumini Volunteer Force
IYC	Ijaw Youth Congress
JRC	Joint Revolutionary Council
JTF	Joint Task Force
MB	Martyrs Brigade
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNOCs	Multi-national Oil Companies
MOPOL	Mobile Police
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDDB	Niger Delta Development Board
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDPKVF	Niger Delta Peace Keeping Volunteer Force
NDPVF	Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force

NDVS	Niger Delta Vigilante Service and Niger Delta Vengeance Seekers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NEITI	Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
NNOC	Nigerian National Oil Corporation
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NT	New Testament
NUPENG	National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers
OAIC	Organisation of African Instituted Churches
OMPADEC	Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission
ORA	Operation Reach All
PA	Personal Assistant
PENGASSAN	Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria
PFN	Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London)
SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company
TEKAN	<i>Tarayar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Nigeria</i>
WAEC SSCE	West African Examination Council Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

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First, I must appreciate my church, Faith Baptist Church, Port Harcourt and the entire membership for their spiritual, moral and financial support. Without their gracious approval of study leave for me, I would not have been able to embark on this journey in the first place. Worthy of note in this regard are the Pastoral Team, the Church Council, and the Diaconate for leading the church in my absence and for mobilising the members to give financially towards my tuition fees. This was especially so in 2008/2009 when, as a result of the paralyses of economic activities in Port Harcourt occasioned by youth militancy, I had to suspend my studies for one year. Thus the support – spiritual, moral and financial – which I received from the members is highly appreciated. I must not fail to thank especially the mothers in the church under the auspices of the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS) for their collective financial support in 2007 and 2009. God bless you, mothers! I am grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Synopsis of Oil and Conflict in Nigeria

Nigeria produces about 3% of the world's crude oil and is Africa's leading oil producer, as well as the eleventh largest producer in the world (Energy Information Administration 2005). It should be noted that Angola at a point during the conflict overtook Nigeria as Africa's leading producer of crude oil. Oil accounts for about 80% of government revenue and 95% of export earnings (Omiyi 2004). Up to the 1960s, agriculture was the mainstay of her economy before crude oil assumed the position beginning from the 1970s, following the first wave of oil boom in 1973-74. From a meagre 5,100 bpd in 1958, when the country exported her first crude oil, the volume of Nigeria's crude oil export reached 2.5 million bpd in 2005. Also, the country's crude oil stock increased from an estimated 5 billion barrels in 1969 to more than 35 billion barrels by 2004 (OPEC 2004, 16/17), with the Government planning to extend it to more than 40 billion barrels by 2010 (Itsueli 2005, 9). Thus, within the first fifty years of oil exportation, Nigeria amassed nearly half a billion dollars in revenue.

Most of the crude oil comes from just nine of the thirty six states that make up the Nigerian Federation. Using oil deposit as the basis of classification, the nine states are politically and collectively known as the Niger Delta, which includes two states from the South-East geo-political zone (Abia and Imo), one from the South-West (Ondo), and six from the South-South (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers). The proportion of oil production from these states is uneven with three of them – Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta – accounting for about 75% of the entire production in the country and about 50% of Government revenue (African Network for Environment and Economic Justice, ANNEJ, 2004, 3).

Within this scenario, it is reasonable to state that nine states of Nigeria produce the bulk of the revenue with which the Nigerian Government at the three tiers runs its affairs. Despite the huge revenue from oil, the region from where the revenue derives is economically deprived and environmentally degraded. For example, Michael L. Ross, in a report for

the UK Department for International Development notes as follows: “Poverty in the south-south region is 58.2 percent, the highest rate in Nigeria; literacy rates, access to health services, and access to safe water are exceptionally low, and unemployment rates are exceptionally high” (cf. Ross 2003).

The case of the communities from where oil is directly drilled is even more precarious. This is best illustrated by the experience of Oloibiri, the community where oil was first drilled and exported from Nigeria in 1956 and 1958, respectively. Emmanuel Emmanuel captures the situation succinctly:

As of today, 48 years after, Oloibiri is referred to as fossil town because there is nothing to show that the town opened the door to the international oil market for Nigeria. The only historical relics there is an old signboard marked ‘Oloibiri Oil Well 1’ with over-grown bush. Oloibiri has no roads, no hospital, no electricity and no water supply after 48 years of oil record (Emmanuel 2004, 1).

For decades, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, the people of the region protested against what they considered to be the unjust way the Nigerian Government and the Multi-national Oil Companies (MNOCs) treated them. The protests were generally uncoordinated, muted and ill-organised (Ikelegbe 2001, 438). Thus, the Government and MNOCs, for mutually beneficial reasons (Frynas 2000, 8), chose and could afford to ignore their agitations. But things took a different turn in the early 1990s as a new wave of demand for economic equity and environmental responsibility came from the Ogoni through their umbrella body, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and under the leadership of the late Ken Saro-Wiwa. Saro-Wiwa and eight of his compatriots – Baribo Bera, Saturday Dbee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuinem, Paul Levura and Felix Nwate – were later executed in 1995 by the then ruling military junta in Nigeria. That act brought the nascent struggle to the international limelight.

The Ogoni example served as an impetus for other Niger Delta groups. Thus, beginning from 1999, when the military relinquished power to a democratically-elected civilian administration and thereby restored certain basic human rights, such as freedom of expression, the agitation became more vociferous, better organised, more widespread, and violent. The major purveyors of the violent form of the agitation are the youths. ‘Youths’ here refers to young people between the ages of sixteen and thirty five in various local communities in the region who either are organised to serve as the ‘Youth wing’ of their community development

unions and/or ethnic bodies, or organise themselves as counter-force to their leaders so as to champion one cause or the other. They took up arms against the Nigerian Government, the MNOCs, and even against themselves, and began to fight for control/access to the lucrative but illegal sale of crude oil known as oil bunkering, which refers to the illicit pilfering and sale of crude oil siphoned from the network of oil pipelines that criss-cross the Niger Delta. They later resorted to hostage-taking and the seizure or destruction of oil facilities. The human and non-human costs of the violence are inestimable. It is estimated that between 1999 when civilian administration was restored and 2006, about 100,000 people lost their lives as a result of the violence (*The Guardian* 2006). There is hardly anyone in the region that has not been affected directly or indirectly by the violence. Government's response to the violence is mixed but has often been to use force and thereby elongate the circle of violence and exacerbate the reign of destruction in the region.

Several studies have been carried out from various perspectives and attempts have been made to address the problem. The perspectives include the legal, economic, human rights, policy, political science, and environmental. They focus mainly on describing and/or analysing the problems associated with oil in Nigeria or on proffering possible solutions to the socio-political, economic and environmental issues emanating from it. However, no study hitherto has been carried out on the problem from the perspective of Christian social witness. This book is designed to address this lack.

1.2 Overview of Christian witness in the Niger Delta

The first attempt at Christian witness in Nigeria was carried out by the Roman Catholics, who came from Portugal in the 16th century, first to Benin in 1515 and to Warri in the 1570s (Isichei 1995, 62-63; Sanneh 1983, 36-52). These initial efforts were deemed “futile, feeble, and spasmodic” (Ayandele 1966, 3).

However, this initial failure was reversed in the 19th century, especially between 1841 and 1891, when the major mission churches successfully entered the country. The missionary bodies of the period include: the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which came mainly from Germany, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, which came from England, the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which came from America, and the Catholic Society of African Missions of France that came from France (Ajayi 1965, xiii-xiv).

Christian missions reached the Niger Delta during the period. Thus, the city states in the region embraced the (Anglican) faith: Bonny in 1864, Brass in 1868, New Calabar in 1874, and Okrika in 1880 (Ayandele 1966, 71). The Presbyterians had reached Old Calabar in 1846; the Methodists got to Opobo in 1884, the same year the Holy Ghost Fathers (Roman Catholic) arrived at Onitsha in Eastern Nigeria; the Qua Iboe Church was planted in Cross River in 1887 (McKeown 1902, 61-67); while the Baptists started their missionary work in Buguma City in 1893. Several of these missionary endeavours were carried out at the request and/or support of some of the local kings and chiefs. For example, the introduction of Christianity to Okrika was made possible with the aid of three Okrika chiefs, namely, Atorudibo, Ogan, and George (Ogan 1988, 22-23). Also, the planting of the Christian mission in Bonny in 1864 followed the request in 1861 of King William Dappa Pepple to the Anglican Bishop of London, after his reinstatement to the throne following a period of deposition and deportation to Fernando Po (Alagoa and Fombo 1972, 19-27; Ayandele 1966, 71-115). Some of the rulers and leaders played active roles in their churches, such as King George Pepple I of Bonny, who served as a Sunday School Teacher in his local congregation, and King Eyo Honesty VI of Creek Town in Old Calabar, who chaired the Finance Committee of his church (Ayandele 1966, 78 and 98, respectively).

According to G.D. Numbere, this early Christian missionary effort in the region was “not only spiritual but also social” (2006). Thus, despite the negative criticisms of their work, some of which are valid (Ayandele 1966, 83/84), the Missions carried out social services that positively impacted on the lives of the people. Their successes in this regard could be gauged by some of the roles they played: They helped to reduce some of the languages to written form, established schools and hospitals, and brought an end to such dehumanising practices as domestic slavery, human sacrifice, infanticide, twin murders, punishment by ordeal, immolation, and cannibalism. Most importantly, the Christian Missions stood for “social ideals such as brotherhood, freedom, individual rights, justice and honour,” and Christianity became “a social leveller” (Ayandele, 83/84).

The rate of growth and success of these missionary bodies varied, but they later spread to different parts of the region. Eventually, beginning from the late 1960s, the Pentecostal fervour reached the area. Three indigenous Pentecostal leaders that sprang up in the area during this period include G.D. Numbere, who established the Greater Evangelism World Crusade in Rivers State in 1972 (Numbere 2002, 16), Mba Adozie in the southeast, and the more widely known late Benson Idahosa, who started the Church of God Mission (Numbere 2006). They are prefigured by

Garrick Braide, who was originally an Anglican. Following a visionary experience he had in 1912, he adopted a prophetic and healing ministry. However, as a result of suspicion and hostility from the Church, he and his followers pulled out in 1916. Some of his followers later formed the Christ Army Church (Isichei 1995, 287).

Christian witness in the region at present is represented by various church groups within the Christian Association of Nigeria. There are five blocks of churches in the body: the Roman Catholics; the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), comprising mainly of the Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists; PFN-CPFN (Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria); TEKAN-ECWA (Evangelical Church of West Africa); and OAIC (Organisation of African Instituted Churches).

Getting the records of the current spread of these churches is very difficult. However, using Rivers State as an example, and based on information received from various sources, the configuration of some of these denominations could be deduced from the following data: the Roman Catholics have one Diocese in the State, the Port Harcourt Diocese, which is under the Calabar Ecclesiastical Province. The Diocese was carved out from the Owerri Diocese in 1994, with forty parishes and eight 'quasi-parishes'. The Anglicans have five Dioceses, with two new ones in the making as at the time of this research. In all there are 205 parishes in the five dioceses. The Methodists have two dioceses: the Port Harcourt Diocese and the Bori Diocese. The Port Harcourt Diocese has nine circuits and sixty four congregations, while the Bori Diocese has eight circuits and sixty five congregations. The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria in Rivers State has two Presbyteries – Port Harcourt and Port Harcourt North. The Port Harcourt Presbytery has five parishes, in addition to mission stations in Abonnema, Mbiama, and Bayelsa. The Port Harcourt North Presbytery has six parishes and at least two mission stations at Obuihe and Bodo City. The Baptists, under the umbrella of the Rivers Baptist Conference, have sixteen Associations and 306 local churches. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Rivers State Chapter, is divided into six 'Regions', each of which in turn is subdivided into 'zones'. There is a total of 107 zones spread across the state. Each zone has several local churches in its membership and most of the churches are autonomous and self-governing congregations of various shades and sizes.

The ubiquity of Christian witness in the region could be explained in a couple of ways. The first is its spread. There are virtually churches in the nooks and crannies of the major cities and towns as they vie for physical and sonic space. In addition to the spread of some of the mission-founded

churches and the more widely known Pentecostal churches, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, The Living Faith Mission, alias Winners' Chapel, and Deeper Life Christian Ministry, others have sprung up in the region. Some of the key ones within Port Harcourt metropolis are Greater Evangelism World Crusade (founded by Apostle G.D. Numbere), Redemption Ministries (founded by Pastor Steven Akinola), The Royal House Of Grace (founded by Apostle Prince David Zilley Aggrey), Salvation Ministries (founded by David Ibiyeomie), The Royal Church (founded by Bishop Chinasa Nwosu), and Abundant Life Evangelical Mission (founded by Apostle Eugene Ogu, the Rivers State Chairman of PFN). Others are the Living Gospel Mission (founded by Rev. Fubara Ibama), Logos Ministries (founded by Bishop Yomi Isijola), Foundation Faith Ministries (founded by Bishop Sam Amaga), El Shaddai Church (founded by Bishop Elkanah Hansen) and The Hilltop International Christian Centre (founded by Pastor and Mrs. Chris Oahre).

A major feature of these churches and the second major pointer to Christian presence in the region is their competition for urban space and for new members through the electronic media and modern technology and through their imposing buildings, mass gatherings, and ocular adverts, such as massive billboards, banners and posters (de Witte 2008, 691; 2003, 172–202; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 336–57; Hackett 1998, 258–277.) The idea seems to be, 'the bigger and louder, the better and more attractive'. For example, the Rivers State Government-owned radio station, *Radio Rivers*, had at least thirteen different quarterly religious programmes sponsored by these churches in 2006, while the Rivers State Television, Port Harcourt *Channel 22* had a good number of religious programmes, also sponsored by these churches. Thus, according to its 2006 3rd Quarter Programme Schedule, the Television Station had at least twenty three of such programmes, including ones by the Hilltop International Christian Centre, Christ Embassy, Salvation Ministries, Redemption Ministries, and Greater Evangelism World Crusade. From the foregoing, it is obvious that Christian churches are well spread in the region.

1.3 Literature Review and Justification for Book

Several studies have been carried out on Nigeria and the Niger Delta vis-à-vis the oil industry and its impact on the region. These have led to several publications on oil in the country and region. Although it is difficult to appropriately categorise the studies since they address the various issues related to Nigeria's oil industry from several perspectives, they could reasonably be grouped for purposes of analysis as follows: political

economy/foreign policy (e.g., Schatzl 1969; Pearson 1970; Onoh 1983; Shaw 1984; Ihonvbere and Shaw 1988; Ikein 1990; Khan 1994; Nnadozie 1995; Onosode 1998), human rights (e.g., Human Rights Watch 1999; Amnesty International, ERA/Friends of the Earth, and Okonta and Douglas, 2001), legal (e.g., Muhammed-Jallo 1989; and Ebeku 2002), conflict and oil-related litigation (e.g., Frynas 2000), policy and governance (e.g., Turner 1977; Brooks 2004), civil society (e.g., Ikelegbe 2001), and environment and health (e.g., ERA, Ebeku, and Steyn 2003).

From the above sketch, certain extrapolations could be drawn. The marked increase in the number of studies on the oil industry in Nigeria serves as an index to the world-wide attention it has received, especially in the light of the outcry against the alleged economic and environmental injustice brought about by the Nigerian Government and the oil companies on the region from where the oil is produced. The second point to note is that these studies are carried out by both Nigerian and non-Nigerian researchers and academics. And, thirdly, it is apparent that the economic issues in Nigeria's oil industry are in the front burner as they predominate in the studies. Individually and collectively the studies have been able to highlight the various intricacies associated with the oil economy as a whole and Nigeria in particular. They have helped to critique, complement, supplement, and/or expand the frontiers of research on Nigeria's oil economy within its socio-political and economic setting. In effect some of the studies complement each further.

For example, the two pioneering works on Nigeria's oil by L.H. Schatzl (1969) and Scott R. Pearson (1970) complement each other for, whereas Schatzl traces the economic history of Nigeria's petroleum industry, Pearson analyses and describes the impact of the industry on the country's economy up to 1968. Also while Manby's *The Price of Oil* (1999), which examines the issue from an individual rights' perspective, is complemented by Ebeku's thesis (2002), which looks at it from the perspective of the collective rights of the people of the region. A careful reading of the whole helps to understand the parts, and vice versa. The researchers have brought to bear on the studies their respective backgrounds, academic interests, professional goals, and intellectual expertise and as such have pushed the literature on the Niger Delta and Nigeria's oil economy to a level higher than it was in the 1970s.

The above positive remarks notwithstanding, a number of issues could be raised with these studies. With a few exceptions, most of them focus on the "superstructure" of the oil industry in Nigeria, namely, the political, legal and economic frameworks within which it operates, such as the enabling laws, regulations, and institutions that control, supervise and/or

manage the oil-related agencies and companies in Nigeria and thereby downplay the “substructure,” which is the people of the region from where the oil is produced. The above criticism will be illustrated with representative publications from each of the perspectives identified above.

Sarah A. Khan and T.E. Turner represent the political economy viewpoint. As the title of Khan’s work indicates, *Nigeria: The Political Economy of Oil*, it is centred on the political economy of Nigeria’s oil, especially on business operations, within the context of its history, economic policy and international relations. The book does not discuss how the oil affects the people of the region and/or the environment. Even in her discussion on the issue of gas flaring in Nigeria, vis-à-vis its impact on global warming, Khan is silent on the impact of such gas flares on the Niger Delta. The same criticism is applicable to Turner’s study. Turner ably gives an in-depth analysis of the development of oil administration and policy in Nigeria between 1957 and 1977 and exposes the rivalry and bickering that existed between the Ministry of Mines and Power and the Nigerian National Oil Corporation (NNOC) before the two agencies of government were eventually merged to form the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in 1977. Due to the focus of the study there is no discussion on the impact of the industry on the people of the Niger Delta (See Turner 1977).

Ebeku’s work represents the legal perspective as it examines the legal aspects of environmental and equity issues as they relate to the activities of the oil industry in the Niger Delta. He rightly argues that these activities are carried out as a collaborative venture between the Government of Nigeria and the MNOCs who receive huge revenue while despoiling the environmental, economic and social well-being of the people of the region. This neglect, he argues, has led to violent protests by the people of the region. A major asset of the thesis is the extensive discussion of the history of marginalization and fear of it among the ethnic minorities of the region. However, in his discussion on the unjust context within which the industry operates, he sees the injustice solely from the viewpoint of marginalization by the majority ethnic groups. Although the argument has some truth in it, it is not the whole truth as the author excludes other considerations such as corruption and the fact that the injustices are perpetrated by persons from several ethnic groups in Nigeria, including leading figures from the Niger Delta. This is amply illustrated by the allegations of corrupt enrichment and embezzlement of state funds by the impeached first civilian Governor of Bayelsa State, Chief Diepiriye Alamieyeseigha. Therefore, the scope of diagnosis of the problem and prognosis of the probable solutions should not be limited to ethnic or

regional cleavages. Another criticism of Ebeku's otherwise well-researched work is his narrow definition of the Niger Delta, which he limits to the States of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. Geographically speaking, such a restricted definition may be tenable, but since the central point of the discussion and therefore the common denominator is oil, it is not reasonable to cut off other oil producing states from the analysis because the same deleterious effects from oil operations are applicable to all the communities where oil is produced.

Writing from an environmental point of view, Maria Steyn brought an innovative dimension into the research on the oil economy in Nigeria in her thesis. The title of the thesis is self-revealing: "Oil Politics in Ecuador and Nigeria: A Perspective from Environmental History on the Struggles between Ethnic Minority Groups, Multinational Oil Companies and National Governments." The study is a comparative analysis of the environmental and human impacts of oil developments on oil-producing ethnic minorities in Ecuador and Nigeria and the struggles of such ethnic minority groups against their national governments and the MNOCs. It uses the case study method and comparative analysis approach in examining the experience of the Cofan and Siona-Secova Indians in Ecuador and the Ogoni in Nigeria. Since the writer sees ethnic marginalisation as the sole paradigm to explain the oil-related injustice in both countries, especially Nigeria, without emphasizing the role of the "compradors" made up of persons of various ethnic groups, both majority and minority, it suffers from the same hermeneutical weakness as the work by Ebeku. According to Frynas, the term "comprador" is a Portuguese word for "buyer." He explains that "a comprador would perform the task of providing access to local markets for foreign firms." That is, he performs the role of a 'gatekeeper' or middleman for foreign firms (Frynas, 28, footnote # 47).

The work by Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas is an excellent exposé on the travails of the people of the Niger Delta as a result of the tragedies brought upon them by the oil industry. Their study is essentially from a human rights perspective. In terms of content and analysis, the book does justice to its title, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil in the Niger Delta*. By singling out Shell for blame in the crisis, especially as it pertains to the Ogoni struggle, its case is weakened in scope because the crisis is beyond one company and, again, the Nigerian Government holds 55% equity in the Joint Venture Partnership (JVP) through the NNPC. The book also ignores the issue of how the Governments of the States and Local Government Areas have (mis)managed the extra revenue from oil in the form of the 13 per cent derivation fund since 1999. According to

figures published by the Federal Ministry of Finance in Abuja, the nine oil producing States have received more oil revenue funds from the Federation Account since 1999 on account of the increase in the derivation fund and excess crude oil income. For example, records show that in 2005, these States received 36% of the ₦866 billion allotted to the 36 States of Nigeria.

Frynas' book, *Oil in Nigeria: Conflict and Litigation between Oil Companies and Village Communities*, dwells specifically on conflict and litigation in the region. Using a socio-legal approach, Frynas analyses the conflicts between the oil companies and the oil-producing communities, which he calls "village communities," by focusing on litigation. He gives a helpful perspective on the oil-related conflict in the region but the book suffers from two major weaknesses. Whereas the stated focus of the study as could be deduced from the title is 'conflict and litigation', the book does not dwell sufficiently on the issue of conflict; rather it pays more attention to litigation. Also, in the gathering of data for his analysis, Frynas failed to interact with the people affected by the oil operations. Instead, he draws his information from a survey of 154 Nigerian lawyers; thus the voice of the real sufferers is not heard in the study.

A unique and very useful study deserves some mention. It is an article by Augustine Ikelegbe in which he carries out an elaborate discussion of the oil economy as it pertains to the Niger Delta from the perspective of civil society. His study is a broad description of the development, types, profiles, methods and ramifications of the various civil society groups in the Niger Delta vis-à-vis the quest for 'resource control'. He concludes from his study that "civil groups have reconstructed the agitation into a broad, participatory, highly mobilised and coordinated struggle and redirected it into a struggle for self-determination, equity and civil and environmental rights" (Ikelegbe, 437).

So far, it is apparent from the above review that no academic study has been carried out on the issue of oil and conflict in Nigeria from the perspective of Christian social witness. Two studies merely make reference to the church. Augustine Ikein uses a Methodist view of systems theory to argue for responsible behaviour that places in proper balance economic benefit and human ecology in his discussion on the need to care for the oil-producing areas. L. J. Brooks includes religious associations and church groups in her discussion on local and international NGOs and other groups. She argues that whereas local NGOs suffered under the military in Nigeria, church groups flourished. She therefore avers that these church groups could have served as veritable instruments in the

delivery of community needs, but according to her, they failed to utilize their vantage position.

To the best of our knowledge, this book is the first study of Nigeria's oil industry from the perspective of Christian social witness. In doing so, it adopts approaches in practical theology, especially the emergent field of congregational studies, with its emphasis on qualitative research, and African Christian Theology. There is also increasing emphasis on grassroots theology, or theology from below, especially the approach that deals with the socio-political challenges of the continent that runs through such African theologians as Jean-Marc Ela (1986, 1988), Jesse Mugambi (1995), Kä Mana (2004), and Charles Villa-Vicencio (1992). Whereas the operative word in Ela's analysis is *liberation*; that of the last three is *reconstruction*. Also, whereas the main emphasis of Ela's theology is on human liberation with focus on praxis (Parratt 1995, 142), the theology of reconstruction takes it further by rejecting the tendency to polarise the themes of *inculturation* and *liberation* and by integrating them and insisting that Jesus engaged in issues of personal liberation and social transformation in his ministry. However, it has been argued elsewhere that even the theology of reconstruction is not broad enough as it does not sufficiently grapple with matters of the non-human environment (Osugwe 2012).

1.4 Research Questions, Objectives and Scope

The pivotal questions this book seeks to address are:

1. What are the underlying theological issues and beliefs of the three congregations in this research within the context of oil and conflict? Of particular interest here in the light of the allegation that African evangelical Christianity is preoccupied with soul winning is an investigation and analysis of their theology of conversion.
2. What is their prevalent praxis within the context of Nigeria's political economy of oil and conflict?
3. How accurate is the view represented by Paul Gifford that African evangelical and 'fundamentalist' Christianity lacks social responsibility and is a-political and anti-development?
4. How would a contextual political theology for Nigeria's political economy of oil look like?

The above questions help to delimit the main objectives of this study. The objectives are first, to investigate, document, analyse and clarify the

theological and social consciousness of Baptist and Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria, within the context of the Niger Delta conflict, and second, to use the data to examine the veracity or otherwise of the claims that African evangelical Christianity is so other-worldly in orientation that it lacks this-worldly responsibility. There are also two ancillary objectives. The first, which seeks to provide the socio-political background and facilitate the achievement of the main objectives above, is an examination and critique of Nigeria's political economy of oil and conflict, while the second is to propose and sketch a theological perspective to the conflict in the form of a political theology.

The scope and limit of this book are circumscribed by the above objectives. Thus, no attempt is made to address the views and perceptions of other mission churches, such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches. It is also outside the scope of the book to examine the views of the African Indigenous Churches (AICs). Rather the study focuses on the witness of two local Baptist congregations and a Pentecostal church in the region with particular reference to the question of oil and conflict.

1.5 Methodology

This book is divided into two major parts, each of which requires its own approach in data gathering and analysis. The first part, which lays the foundation for the second, depends on both primary and secondary sources for its data gathering and analysis. It is covered in the critical review and analysis of the Gifford literature and the literature on Gifford that follows in Chapter Two and the discussion on Nigeria's political economy of oil and conflict in Chapter Three.

The second part, which is on the investigation of Christian witness in the Niger Delta within the context of oil and violence, depends mainly on primary sources through an ethnographic field study using the case study approach. Thus data was gathered using focus group discussion, interviews, participant observation, and spontaneous conversations. Also, members' prayers, songs and sermons were noted and analysed. For the case studies, the following churches were selected: First Baptist Church, Buguma City in Asaritoru Local Government Area of Rivers State ('First Baptist' henceforth), Faith Baptist Church, Port Harcourt (hereafter, 'Faith Baptist'), and The Hilltop International Christian Centre, Port Harcourt ('Hilltop' henceforth).

There are three major reasons for their selection: theological, geographical, and pragmatic. The key theological ground for the choice of