

**CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AS A TOOL FOR FIGHTING ETHNOCENTRISM IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the bio-social roots of Nigerians as respective citizens of the many ethnic nationalities that make up their country. As a country with plural tribes, Nigeria is blessed as a consequence. This is because the diverse and heterogeneous peoples that populate Nigeria are excellent sources of strength, if united, and enormous reservoir of human capital, if harnessed. However, from the findings of this paper that there is an undue emphasis on one's ethnic bond to the detriment of the national ideals of justice and peace, love and unity. Some citizens consequently are isolated, marginalized and seen only but not heard. This is the effect of the evil of ethnocentrism. This tribal consciousness which discriminates against one's fellow human beings based on the prejudice of native origins and boundaries has thrown Nigeria into chaos and chains of hydra-headed economic, socio-cultural, religious and political problems. This work sees the solution as the application of the contents of Christian Religious Knowledge which should influence our daily lives in the Nigerian society. Jesus Christ, the author of Christian Religion has evidenced in the Holy Bible that tongues and tribes may differ but we are from one Father (Matthew. 6:1ff) as the foundational virtue to understanding the Biblical models whose applications fight ethnocentrism. Those Biblical models encourage us to build bridges of civilization of love instead of walls and gulf of hatred. When Nigerians follow these biblical models, ethnocentrism will belong to the past and will exist no longer in our work places, streets, homes and hearts but only in history books. The methodology employed in this work is descriptive-observational which means that ethnocentrism as a social phenomenon among the Nigerian tribes and its destructive consequences were observed and studied over time.*

**Keywords:** *Christianity, Christian Religious Knowledge, Tool, Ethnocentrism and Nigeria*

**INTRODUCTION**

Christianity is a world religion founded by Jesus Christ in *Anno Domini* 33. Through Christian Religious studies, students learn the ways of Jesus Christ and the moral values which this religion transmits from generation to generation. However, every Christian in Nigeria comes from a particular ethnic group. There is this tension between the ethnic bond based on bio-social stock and Christian blood based on the water of baptism. Different ethnic groups in Nigeria should breed healthy pluralism within the Nigerian polity but unfortunately social alienation, isolation, conflict, political disequilibrium, violence and hatred along tribal lines are encouraged by structures and systems which fan the flame of ethnocentrism. Hence, ethnocentrism limits co-operation and love within the members of a particular people who belong to the same bathe of consanguinity and affinity. While Christian Religion offers one the knowledge to discover solidarity and relationships both within and outside one's tribe; it teaches communities and people to see all human beings as children of the same Father (Matthew. 6:1 ff).

In modern Nigeria, the desire to control economic resources and political offices are schemed along tribal consciousness at the grass root levels and the national life of the country. There is an unprecedental growth in ethnic consciousness as more people get involved in democratization and politicization in contemporary Nigeria. There are absurdities in more instances than one when the best Nigerians are not given opportunities to serve the nation just because they are not beneficiaries of the tyranny of number of a large ethnic group since democracy is a game of number. In the face of this fact, Christian Religious knowledge becomes a revolutionary which educates citizens into becoming moral resource persons who would be guided by a sense of social and distributive justice and commitment to service rather than discrimination syndicates based on ethnic interests. Christian Religious knowledge gives the students proper

orientation to appreciate cultural values of ethnicity. This is because ethnicity, without abuse, has the gains of historic-cultural values which correspond with the divine source of goodness, love, collaboration, communication, unity, communion and progress.

Nigeria as a nation dates back to 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated the Northern and Southern protectorates and the colony of Lagos. Lord Lugard who was then the Governor general brought into existence what is today called Nigeria. The name **Nigeria** was coined by Lady Flora Shaw from “Niger area”. This amalgamation brought together many ethnic groups with diverse cultural values, political visions, economic interests and religious affiliations. Nigeria thus became a big country with enormous population of human resources and a landmass of vast natural resources. Unfortunately, unity since its inception has been difficult unless as a united Nigeria drawn beautifully in a map. Nigeria has 6 geo-political zones, 36 states and Abuja as its Capital Territory and 774 Local Government Areas. She has according to Sowunmi, Z.K (2017: 1ff), 371 tribes, the majority of which are Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. These ethnic groups are presented below with their states of origin. They are:

Abayon – Cross River, 2. Abua (Odual) – Rivers, 3. Achipa (Achipawa) – Kebbi, 4. Adim – Cross River, 5. Adun – Cross River 6. Affade – Yobe, 7. Afizere – Plateau, 8. Afo – Plateau. 9. Agbo – Cross River, 10. Akaju – Ndem (Akajuk) – Cross River 11. Akweya – Yachi – Benue, 12. Alago (Arago) – Plateau, 13. Amo – Plateau, 14. Anaguta – Plateau, 15. Anang – Akwa Ibom, 16. Andoni – Akwa Ibom, Rivers, 17. Angas – Bauchi, Jigawa, Plateau, 18. Ankwei – Plateau, 19. Anyima – Cross River, 20. Attakar (ataka) – Kaduna, 21. Auyoka (Auyokawa) – Jigwa, 22. Awori – Lagos, Ogun, 23. Ayu – Kaduna, 24. Babur – Adamawa, Bomo, Taraba, Yobe, 25. Bachama – Adamawa, 26. Bachere – Cross River, 27. Bada – Plateau, 28. Bade – Yobe, 29. Bahumono – Cross River, 30. Bakulung – Taraba, 31. Bali – Taraba, 32. Bambora (Bambarawa) – Bauchi, 33. Bambuko – Taraba, 34. Banda (Bandawa) – Taraba, 35. Banka (Bankalawa) – Bauchi, 36. Bansa (Panso) – Adamawa, 37. Bara (Barawa) – Bauchi, 38. Barke – Bauchi, 39. Baruba (Barba) – Niger, 40. Bashiri (Bashirawa) – Plateau, 41. Bassa – Kaduna, Kogi, Niger, Plateau, 42. Batta – Adamawa, 43. Baushi – Niger, 44. Baya – Adamawa, 45. Bekwarra – Cross River, 46. Bele (Buli, Belewa) – Bauchi, 47. Besto (Bete) – Taraba, 48. Bette – Cross River, 49. Bilei – Adamawa, 50. Bille – Adamawa, 51. Bina (Binawa) – Kaduna, 52. Bini – Edo, 53. Birom – Plateau, 54. Bobua – Taraba, 55. Boki (Nki) – Cross River, 56. Bkkos – Plateau, 57. Boko (Bussawa, Bargawa) – Niger, 58. Bole (Bolewa) – Bauchi, Yobe, 59. Botlere – Adamawa, 60. Boma (Bomawa, Burmano) – Bauchi, 61. Bomboro – Bauchi, 62. Buduma – Borno, Niger, 63. Buji – Plateau, 64. Buli – Bauchi, 65. Bunu – Kogi, 66. Bura – Adamawa, 67. Burak – Bauchi, 68. Burma (Burmawa) – Plateau, 69. Buru – Yobe, 70. Buta (Butawa) – Bauchi, 71. Bwall – Plateau, 72. Bwatiye – Adamawa, 73. Bwazza – Adamawa, 74. Challa – Plateau, 75. Chama (Chamawa Fitolai) – Bauchi, 76. Chamba – Taraba, 77. Chamo – Bauchi, 78. Chibok (Chibbak) – Yobe, 79. Chinine – Borno, 80. Chip – Plateau, 81. Chokobo – Plateau, 82. Chukkol – Taraba, 83. Daba – Adamawa, 84. Dadiya – Bauchi, 85. Daka – Adamawa, 86. Dakarkari – Niger, Kebbi, 87. Danda (Dandawa) – Kebbi, 88. Dangsa – Taraba, 89. Daza (Dere, Derewa) – Bauchi, 90. Degema – Rivers, 91. Deno (Denawa) – Bauchi, 92. Dghwede – Borno, 93. Diba – Taraba, 94. Doemak (Dumuk) – Plateau, 95. Ouguri – Bauchi, 96. Duka (Dukawa) – Kebbi, 97. Duma (Dumawa) – Bauchi, 98. Ebana (Ebani) – Rivers, 99. Ebirra (Igbirra) – Edo, Kogi, Ondo, 100. Ebu – Edo, Kogi, 101. Efik – Cross River, 102. Egbema – Rivers, 103. Egede (Igedde) – Benue, 104. Eggon – Plateau, 105. Egun (Gu) – Lagos, Ogun, 106. Ejagham – Cross River, 107. Ekajuk – Cross River, 108. Eket – Akwa Ibom, 109. Ekoi – Cross River, 110. Engenni (Ngene) – Rivers, 111. Epie – Rivers, 112. Esan (Ishan) – Edo, 113. Etche – Rivers, 114. Etolu (Etilo) – Benue, 115. Etsako – Edo, 116. Etung – Cross River, 117. Etuno – Edo, 118. Palli – Adamawa, 119. Fulani (Fulbe) – Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, 120. Fyam (Fyem) – Plateau, 121. Fyer (Fer) – Plateau, 122. Ga’anda – Adamawa, 123. Gade – Niger, 124. Galambi – Bauchi, 125. Gamergu – Mulgwa – Borno, 126. Qanawuri – Plateau, 127. Gavako – Borno, 128. Gbedde – Kogi, 129. Gengle – Taraba, 130. Geji – Bauchi, 131. Gera (Gere, Gerawa) – Bauchi, 132. Geruma (Gerawa) – Bauchi, 134. Gingwak – Bauchi, 135. Gira – Adamawa, 136. Gizigz – Adamawa, 137. Goernai – Plateau, 138. Gokana (Kana) – Rivers, 139. Gombi – Adamawa, 140. Gornun (Gmun) – Taraba, 141. Gonia – Taraba, 142. Gubi (Gubawa) – Bauchi, 143. Gude – Adamawa, 144. Gudu – Adamawa, 145. Gure – Kaduna, 146. Gurmana – Niger, 147. Gururntum – Bauchi, 148. Gusu – Plateau, 149. Gwa (Gurawa) – Adamawa, 150. Gwamba Adamawa, 151. Gwandara – Kaduna, Niger, Plateau, 152. Gwari (Gbari) – Kaduna, Niger, Abuja, Plateau, 153. Gwom – Taraba, 154. Gwoza (Waha) – Borno, 155. Gyem – Bauchi, 156. Hausa - Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Taraba, Sokoto, Zamfara, 157. Higi (Hig) – Borno, Adamawa, 158. Holma – Adamawa, 159. Hona – Adamawa, 160. Ibeno – Akwa Ibom, 161. Ibibio – Akwa Ibom, 162. Ichen – Adamawa, 163. Idoma – Benue, Taraba, 164. Igalla – Kogi, 165. Igbo – Abia, Anambra, Benue, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Rivers, 166. Ijumu – Kogi, 167. Ikorn – Cross River, 168. Irigwe – Plateau, 169. Isoko – Delta, 170. Isekiri (Itsekiri) –

Delta, 171. Iyala (Iyalla) – Cross River, 172. Izondjo – Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo, Rivers, 173. Jaba – Kaduna, 174. Jahuna (Jahunawa) – Taraba, 175. Jaku – Bauchi, 176. Jara (Jaar Jarawa Jarawa - Dutse) – Bauchi, 177. Jere (Jare, Jera, Jera, Jerawa) – Bauchi, Plateau, 178. Jero – Taraba, 179. Jibu – Adamawa, 180. Jidda – Abu – Plateau, 181. Jimbin (Jimbinawa) – Bauchi, 182. Jirai – Adamawa, 183. Jonjo (Jenjo) – Taraba, 184. Jukun – Bauchi, Benue, Taraba, Plateau, 185. Kaba (Kabawa) – Taraba, 186. Kadara – Taraba, 187. Kafanchan – Kaduna, 188. Kagoro – Kaduna, 189. Kaje (Kache) – Kaduna, 190. Kajuru (Kajurawa) – Kaduna, 191. Kaka – Adamawa, 192. Kamaku (Karnukawa) – Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger, 193. Kambari – Kebbi, Niger, 194. Kambu – Adamawa, 195. Kano – Bauchi, 196. Kanakuru (Dera) – Adamawa, Borno, 197. Kanembu – Borno, 198. Kanikon – Kaduna, 199. Kantana – Plateau, 200. Kanuri – Kaduna, Adamawa, Borno, Kano, Niger, Jigawa, Plateau, Taraba, Yobe, 201. Karekare (Karaikarai) – Bauchi, Yobe, 202. Karimjo – Taraba, 203. Kariya – Bauchi, 204. Katab (Kataf) – Kaduna, 205. Kenern (Koeniem) – Plateau, 206. Kenton – Taraba, 207. Kiballo (Kiwollo) – Kaduna, 208. Kilba – Adamawa, 209. Kirfi (Kirfawa) – Bauchi, 210. Koma – Taraba, 211. Kona – Taraba, 212. Koro (Kwaro) – Kaduna, Niger, 213. Kubi (Kubawa) – Bauchi, 214. Kudachano (Kudawa) – Bauchi, 215. Kugama – Taraba, 216. Kulere (Kaler) – Plateau, 217. Kunini – Taraba, 218. Kurama – Jigawa, Kaduna, Niger, Plateau, 219. Kurdul – Adamawa, 220. Kushi – Bauchi, 221. Kuteb – Taraba, 222. Kutin – Taraba, 223. Kwalla – Plateau, 224. Kwami (Kwom) – Bauchi, 225. Kwanchi – Taraba, 226. Kwanka (Kwankwa) – Bauchi, Plateau, 227. Kwaro – Plateau, 228. Kwato – Plateau, 229. Kyenga (Kengawa) – Sokoto, 230. Laaru (Larawa) – Niger, 231. Lakka – Adamawa, 232. Lala – Adamawa, 233. Lama – Taraba, 234. Lamja – Taraba, 235. Lau – Taraba, 236. Ubbo – Adamawa, 237. Limono – Bauchi, Plateau, 238. Lopa (Lupa, Lopawa) – Niger, 239. Longuda (Lunguda) – Adamawa, Bauchi, 240. Mabo – Plateau, 241. Mada – Kaduna, Plateau, 242. Mama – Plateau, 243. Mambilla – Adamawa, 244. Manchok – Kaduna, 245. Mandara (Wandala) – Borno, 246. Manga (Mangawa) – Yobe, 247. Margi (Marghi) – Adamawa, Borno, 248. Matakarn – Adamawa, 249. Mbembe – Cross River, Enugu, 250. Mbol – Adamawa, 251. Mbube – Cross River, 252. Mbula – Adamawa, 253. Mbum – Taraba, 254. Memyang (Meryan) – Plateau, 255. Miango – Plateau, 256. Miligili (Migili) – Plateau, 257. Miya (Miyawa) – Bauchi, 258. Mobber – Borno, 259. Montol – Plateau, 260. Moruwa (Moro'a, Morwa) – Kaduna, 261. Muchaila – Adamawa, 262. Mumuye – Taraba, 263. Mundang – Adamawa, 264. Munga (Mupang) – Plateau, 265. Mushere – Plateau, 266. Nwaghavul (Mwaghavul) – Plateau, 267. Ndoro – Taraba, 268. Ngamo – Bauchi, Yobe, 269. Ngizim – Yobe, 270. Ngweshe (Ndhang. Ngoshe - Ndhang)- Adamawa, Borno, 271. Ningi (Ningawa) – Bauchi, 272. Ninzam (Ninzo) – Kaduna, Plateau, 273. Njayi – Adamawa, 274. Nkim – Cross River, 275. Nkum – Cross River, 276. Nokere (Nakere) – Plateau, 277. Nunku – Kaduna, Plateau, 278. Nupe – Niger, 279. Nyandang – Taraba, 280. Ododop Cross River, 281. Ogori – Kwara, 282. Okobo (Okkobar) – Akwa Ibom, 283. Okpamheri – Edo, 284. Olulumo – Cross River, 285. Oron – Akwa Ibom, 286. Owan – Edo, 287. Owe – Kwara, 288. Oworo-Kwara, 289. Pa'a (Pa'awa Afawa) – Bauchi, 290. Pai – Plateau, 291. Panyam – Taraba, 292. Pero – Bauchi, 293. Pire – Adamawa, 294. Pkanzom – Taraba, 295. Poll – Taraba, 296. Polchi Habe – Bauchi, 297. Pongo (Pongu) – Niger, 298. Potopo – Taraba, 299. Pyapun (Piapung) – Plateau, 300. Qua – Cross River, 301. Rebina (Rebinawa) – Bauchi, 302. Reshe – Kebbi, Niger, 303. Rindire (Rendre) Plateau, 304. Rishuwa – Kaduna, 305. Ron – Plateau, 306. Rubu – Niger, 307. Rukuba – Plateau, 308. Rumada – Kaduna, 309. Rumaya – Kaduna, 310. Sakbe – Taraba, 311. Sanga – Bauchi, 312. Sate – Taraba, 313. Saya (Sayawa Za'ar) – Bauchi, 314. Segidi (Sigidawa) – Bauchi, 315. Shanga (Shangawa) – Sokoto, 316. Shangawa (Shangau) – Plateau, 317. Shan – Shan – Plateau, 318. Shira (Shirawa) – Kano, 319. Shomo – Taraba, 320. Shuwa – Adamawa, Borno, 321. Sikdi – Plateau, 322. Siri (Sirawa) – Bauchi, 323. Srubu (Surubu) – Kaduna, 324. Sukur – Adamawa, 325. Sura – Plateau, 326. Tangale – Bauchi, 327. Tarok – Plateau, Taraba, 328. Teme – Adamawa, 329. Tera (Terawa) – Bauchi, Borno, 330. Teshena (Teshenawa) – Kano, 331. Tigon – Adamawa, 332. Tikar – Taraba, 333. Tiv – Benue, Plateau, Taraba and Nasarawa, 334. Tula – Bauchi, 335. Tur – Adamawa, 336. Ufia – Benue, 337. Ukelle – Cross River, 338. Ukwani (Kwale) – Delta, 339. Uncinda – Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, 340. Uneme (Ineme) – Edo. 341. Ura (Ula) – Niger, 342. Urhobo – Delta, 343. Utonkong – Benue, 344. Uyanga – Cross River, 345. Vemgo – Adamawa, 346. Verre – Adamawa, 347. Vommi – Taraba, 348. Wagga – Adamawa, 349. Waja – Bauchi, 350. Waka – Taraba, 351. Warja (Warja) – Jigawa, 352. Warji – Bauchi, 353. Wula – Adamawa, 354. Wurbo – Adamawa, 355. Wurkun – Taraba, 356. Yache – Cross River, 357. Yagba – Kwara, 358. Yakurr (Yako) – Cross River, 359. Yalla – Benue, 360. Yandang – Taraba, 361. Yergan (Yergum) – Plateau, 362, Yoruba – (Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Kogi), 363. Yott – Taraba, 364. Yumu – Niger, 365. Yungur – Adamawa, 366. Yuom – Plateau, 367. Zabara – Niger, 368. Zaranda – Bauchi, 369. Zarma (Zarmawa) – Kebbi, 370. Zayam (Zeam) – Bauchi, 371 Zul (Zulawa) – Bauchi. The above list of the tribes in Nigeria cannot promise any exhaustiveness and neither does its placements of their states of origin free from debates. The Igbo people, for instance, are said to be found also in Bayelsa, Edo, Kogi, Benue and Cross River States.

One big problem in Nigeria is ethnocentrism. This is a belief that one's ethnic group is superior to others. One therefore hates other people from any ethnic group different from his/her own and sees them as nonentities and all that they do as wrong while the members of his/her ethnic group are people of a superior race who are always right. The big tribes in Nigeria for example with all due respect, feel that the minority tribes should be seen and not heard (Gotan, C.T. (10044:29). They exploit the minority groups and use them for their power game. Ethnocentrism has reached such a peak that whenever there is violence or denial of right-political, economic, socio-religious, one can easily link it up with tribal sentiments.

The history of Nigeria has the tales of blood shed from ethnic clashes. We lost nearly one million people in the 1967-70 Nigeria/Biafra civil war. In the last five years tens of thousands of lives were lost in the Ife/Modakeke crisis, the Aguleri/Umuleri crisis, the Tiv/Jukun crisis, the Egbura/Basa crisis, the Ijaw/Urhobo crisis and lately the Lantang/Wase crisis in Plateau State (Gotan, C.T., (2004:31). Up till now, violence can erupt in these places any time. We have such crises in the Northeastern Nigeria, Plateau and Benue States, among others. Some ethnic warlords also hide behind religion like the Boko Haram to achieve their ethnic game plans. The problem has taken Nigeria backwards. Our minds go to the Maitatsine crisis of Kano and Yola in 1981/82, the Kafanchan religious riot of 1987, the Kano Religious riot in 1991, the Kaduna religious riot of 2000 and the Jos riot of 2001, and the Southern Kaduna killings of 2016/2017. All these killings in the name of God and religion or in the name of politics, dominance or supremacy have shockingly tribal sentiments at the background. Political positions, employment and public utility services to mention but these are shared according to ethnic bias.

This study seeks to create awareness that Christian Religious knowledge is a veritable and creditable tool for fighting ethnocentrism in Nigeria. The study sufficiently urges every Nigerian citizen irrespective of creed and tribe to imbibe the biblical values of each seeing the other as one people created by one God. This knowledge and its practical use will make Nigerians transcend the boundaries of ethnic prejudices of discrimination and acrimony. Justice will thus be enthroned and peace will then reign in the land.

#### **CLARIFICATIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS**

The importance of clarifying, defining or describing terms as a veritable preface to a work of this nature is to help one understand the precise meanings of the key terms as used in the study. In this section, therefore, we shall strive to give the clarifications of some of the key terms found in the work; namely: "Christian Religious Knowledge" and "Ethnocentrism".

#### **CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE (CRK)**

"Christian Religious Knowledge" as a concept means on one hand, a subject, a discipline, a field of study or course in the curriculum of the academia. In the *National Policy on Education* (1998:20) it is found in group C, Non –vocational electives, No. 12. The Holy Bible is the primary text used in this subject. As a course taught in Nigerian schools, it comes under different nomenclatures such as Bible Knowledge, Christian Religion, Christian Religious Knowledge, Christian Religious Studies, Christian Ethics or Christian Moral Theology. According to the *Handmaids*:

It is taught from lower nursery to basic school through interactive sessions which involve reading from colourfully illustrated bibles and acting some scenes during class sessions or performing relevant scenes in school plays during festivities like Christmas and Easter. The aim of teaching this subject is to facilitate knowledge of God – the creator; God – the Redeemer and God – the Comforter, who is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The aim is not only knowledge of the Triune God but also to instill in pupils the ability to heed the word of God and live accordingly in the way and fear of the Lord; which is exemplified through obedience to parents, teachers and elders of the society. Thereby also enabling virtuousness which translates into good citizens who love God, neighbours and who will continue to serve God in spirit with charity, humility, truthfulness, gentleness, peacefulness and prayerfulness. For the Scripture says, "teach children the way of the Lord and when they grow, they will not depart from it (Proverb 22:6) (*handmaidschool.com. n.d, 1 -2*)".

Christian Religious Knowledge are taught too in high education, in the families by devout Christian parents and in the churches during homilies, sermons, catechism classes in Roman Catholicism, Sunday school classes in protestant/Pentecostal circles and in other pastoral fora with teaching characteristics. On

the other hand, Christian Religious Knowledge is an intellectual understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the living out of those teachings in one's daily activities. Christian Religious Knowledge does not end with the power of cognition to grasp its riches and values but it must be seen to influence the lives of all who come to know them. The Holy Bible says: "My people perish because of lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Jesus Christ taught by Word and example and asks humanity to put his words into practice. In his words: "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7: 24). In this light, one should perfectly understand Christian Religious Knowledge as a guide to daily living; it is a spirituality, some practical wisdom and a way of life, hence it gives birth to Christian culture and civilization. It is in this sense that it can be used as a tool for fighting ethnocentrism.

## **ETHNOCENTRISM**

"Ethnocentrism" is the pejorative use of ethnicity. Ethnicity is from the Greek term "ethnikos" which is from "ethnos" meaning people. It was incorporated into English language about the 14<sup>th</sup> century through the Latin "ethnicus" which means "nation". (Nwaigbo, F., 2004:43). In Cultural Anthropology, one studies Ethnology as one of its major aspects. Ethnology is the scientific study of the genesis and functioning of human societies or tribes and their cultures.

For Smith, W. (1995:473) ethnicity applies to a common "decent or geographic origin" of a people. Another nuance is that ethnicity carries a "migratory status" that links ethnicity to "settlement and employment patterns" and its realization with regard to "special interests in politics" and with similar regard to "institutions that specifically serve and maintain a specific group". Ethnicity depicts certain social features that unified people with the same characteristics into "kinship, neighbourhood and community". It has the image of language and culture. The major problem of ethnicity is ethnocentrism. According to Nwaigbo, F. (2004:48): "Ethnocentrism is an assumption that one's own social or cultural group and identity are better than others. Ethnocentrism is an ideology which sees one's tribe, ethnic group, or one's cultural group, tradition, customs and values as an ideal pattern of life. Ethnocentrism is an aberration or adulteration of ethnicity, or so to say a corruption or a negation of ethnicity".

Ethnocentrism is fueled by politics of dominance, cultural supremacy, religious bigotry, language differences, superiority complex and resource control. Ethnic cleansing and Genocide are the most horrible forms of ethnocentrism. Examples include the killing of the Hebrew infant males by Pharaoh believed to be Rameses II who ruled from *circa* 1298 – 1232 BCE, (Exodus 1: 22), the Jews by Hitler who killed over 6 million Jews in Nazi concentration camps and today (2017) in Nigeria, the tribes of Southern Kaduna are crying loud that the Fulani are out to finish them from the face of the earth.

Other names for ethnocentrism include tribalism, racism, apartheid, *et cetera*. Nyame, Kofi (2011:1) wrote that: The coinage of the term ethnocentrism is attributed to William G. Summers, an American academic, said to have held the first professorship in Sociology at Yale College. He defined ethnocentrism as "the technical name for the view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it". He arrived at this concept when he observed that people have inclinations to differentiate between 'ingroups' (social groups to which an individual feels he or she belongs as a member) and 'outgroups' (to which they feel contempt, opposition, or a desire to compete).

It is an indubitable fact that Almighty God grouped the whole world into tribes and nationalities. In the words of Kasomo Daniel (2012:6) "Ethnicity in itself does not connote a negative attitude. On the contrary, ethnicity indicates a gift of God which makes us different for our mutual enrichment. It is God who makes each of us as what we are. Ethnicity gives us our social and cultural identity as well as our security. The individuals find their roots and values in their ethnic groups. One should not apologize for belonging to a particular ethnic community". As observed by Gotan, C.T (2004:29), "Ethnicity itself is not a problem. For me, the problem arises when certain people deliberately fail to realize that there are other human beings equally committed to this life as they and that they did not come to this world by chance to be passive spectators, or to escort them who feel that others are nonentities."

Nwigbo, F. (2004:55) sees the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria as rooted in the artificial borders created by the colonial masters and the strange and absurd way ethnic nationalities were emerged into communities. In his words. "The problem of ethnicity arose as a sign of crisis generated by colonial experience of Nigeria". In the Nigerian context of ethnicity, all states whether recently created or originally of ancient land marks, whether of old or new foundation inescapably experience problem associated with the diversities of ethnicity in the country. The artificial borders left behind by the British colonial powers constitute obstacles to social co-existence and co-habitation of different ethnic groups in the country with

diverse languages, cultures and religions. Nwaigbo's assertion was even strengthened by the practical experience of Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State, Nigeria. According to Odili (2002):

From our mission statement at the inception of this administration, it has been our determination based on equity and the common good of our people. We inherited conflict arising from ethnicity, chieftaincy tussles, land disputes and other socio-economic resistance to perceived exploitation and exclusion from the use of God-given resources. Three years into our administration, substantial progress has been made in resolving some of these conflicts. It is our desire to sustain its trends.

Nigeria has the problem of vicious effects of ethnocentrism. In the South-South geo-political zone, the Okrika, Ogoni and Eleme in Rivers State are at war with each other on the grounds of oil resources in their respective boundaries. There is incessant clashes in Warri area of Delta State. In the South-East, the Igbo ethnic group complain of marginalization. Chukwudifu Oputa (2004) a legal luminary, put it very succinctly that from 1967-2004, no Igbo person occupied the post of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Head of the Nigerian Judiciary. Inspector General of Police or the Head of the Federal parastatal.

The Idoma and Igala people in the North central zone (the middle belt region) complain that the presidency flies over their heads from the South to the North and from the North back to the South. In the North, the Zango-Kataf or the Kafanchan in the Southern Kaduna feel suppressed by the overriding influence of the majority Fulani/ Hausa people. In the South West, the Modakeke feel marginalized and that the Ife people are favoured by the government. Historians, sociologists and anthropologists agree that ethnocentrism breeds the major and multiple clashes and societal disorder on the African continent. Nigeria is a major victim of this evil.

### **CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE MODELS FOR FIGHTING ETHNOCENTRISM**

John Amankwah (2004:83) upholds the model as elaborated by Paul in his Letters to the Galatians. 3:28 and Colossians. 3:11. According to him: For Christians it is crucial that ethnocentrism is totally discarded knowing that in Christ the whole of humanity is one irrespective of colour, race, ethnicity, religion or nationality (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Therefore all forms of social discrimination based on colour, language, sex and gender, religion or social conditions must be eradicated. This is at variance with God's design (Psalms 86). Humanity united with Jesus Christ offers every person the privilege of first class citizen (Heb. 12:23).

In the Old Testament Nwaoru, E.O. (2004:112) presents Ruth as a breaker of ethnic boundaries and as one who transcends ethnic bias. She willingly offered her hand in marriage to Mahlon (if 4:10). A refugee from a hostile ethnic group, Bethlehem, to a man who has neither social standing nor the wherewithal. By this singular act of marrying outside her ethnic group she showed herself prepared to break ethnic barriers. The Christian religion encourages inter-tribal marriages. In her diriment impediments to Christian marriage in her *New Code of Canon Law* the Catholic Church does not frown at inter-tribal marriages. This is because, God is our Father (Matt. 6:1ff) and all of us are brothers and sisters.

In the theological categories of St Augustine in his *City of God*, he paints the picture of a new world order where in a nation, those in political authority will ensure that there is no oppression, suppression and marginalization. The welfare of the citizens becomes the top priority of those in-charge of governance. In this city, social justice will take care of the legitimate concerns of every ethnic group and the structures of marginalization against the minority groups will be totally dismantled.

The model of fighting ethnocentrism has its foundation traceable to Christ himself who is the founder of Christian Religion. Gotan, C.T. (2004:32) presents Jesus' Samaritan model. Racially the Samaritans were Semites the same as the Jews. But they intermarried with foreigners which the orthodox Jews hated with passion. Politically, the Samaritans shared part of the territory as the Jews but were in alliance with the enemies of Judah, Religiously, they did not accept all the Jewish scriptures. The Southern Jews returned from exile in 520 BC and refused the Samaritans helping them rebuild the temple. The Samaritans in the face of this development established their own rival priesthood and temple, refused to acknowledge Jerusalem and established their own center at Mount Gerizim. For the Jews, the Samaritans were not pure Jews and refused their testimonies in courts. The Samaritans, in turn refused to pay hospitality to any Jew passing through Samaria. There was hostility and each group had no dealings with the other.

Jesus stepped into this social discrimination and taught the whole humanity how well to live in the society with the Samaritan's model. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25:37) is a lesson that

didactically condemns ethnocentrism. The Samaritan did not ask whether the man on the road was a fellow countryman or stranger, friend or enemy. He saw in the man one who fell into the hands of bandits, a human person who needs assistance. Without grudges or tribal sentiments, he offered him help and showed him love.

The Holy Bible sees ethnocentrism as a sin. God created human beings, male and female in his own images and likeness (Genesis 1: 26 – 27; 9: 6). God does not discriminate against anyone and neither does He show partiality or favouritism (Deuteronomy 10:17; Acts 10:34). Jesus Christ died for all and not for a particular race or colour but rather by his death, he “purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). Jesus destroyed all barriers of race and ethnicity with his death on the cross. In the Words of Paul, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2: 14). “Ethnocentrism, whether based on historical grudges or on the erroneous teachings of men, is wholly contrary to God’s Word. We are commanded to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34), and such a command precludes any discrimination based on race or culture” (Piper, J. *gotquestions.org*, n.d, 1 - 2)

In John 4:4-42, Jesus had a long conversation with a lone Samaritan woman who came to draw water from Jacob’s well located about half a mile from the city of Sychar in Samaria. She was from Samaria, a race or tribe despised completely by the Jews. Jesus, a Jew asking for a drink from this woman was a big lesson for all ages against ethnic negative bias everywhere. This Jesus’ example of showing love to those seen as outcasts by the Jews is one more proof that God loves all peoples of every gender, nativity and colour. This attitude of Jesus which shows *inclusiveness* of all genders, peoples and nations is also found in Mark 7: 24-30 where He went to Tyre and Sidon a gentile town and cured the sick daughter of a syrophenician woman who had an unclean spirit. On this biblical story, Carey, Holly J. (201:5) wrote:

By playing the part of the religious authorities, Jesus actually highlights the *absurdity* of exclusion based on superficial issues such as ethnicity and gender. God’s kingdom breaks down such outward barriers and judges persons based on what dwells inside of their hearts. This story, then, is a prime example of Jesus’ subversion of exclusive boundaries based on the surface issues and is an outworking of those views that he had previously espoused in Mark 7, 1 – 23. This new community is an inclusive one where a Gentile woman can fully experience the blessings of God.

In Nigeria, this tenet from Christian Religious knowledge should be imbibed. Different tribes in Nigeria do not get along well among themselves due to politics, religion or struggle over economic resources. The story of the Good Samaritan turns upside down all tribal bias. The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob is another instance (John 4:1-30). The Samaritan woman was shocked that Jesus, a Jew asked her for a drink. Jesus bridged the gap of ethnic gulf and hatred. In Mark 7: 24 – 30, Jesus visited a gentile territory and healed the sick and recognized the dignity of womanhood. Christian Religious Knowledge teaches Nigerians to extend the hands of brotherhood from one tribe to the other. One of the problems than function tribalism in Nigeria is that the political class exploits ethnic sentiments for political gains. The mind of the average Nigerian has been filled with negative prejudices in electoral matters. The overriding mentality is that it must be a member of our tribe who will win the election otherwise there will post-election violence or legal battle in the electoral tribunal. Nigeria needs de-tribalized office holders who are neither mediocres nor makers of unjust gains from ethnic fronts.

The philosophy behind the National Youth Service Corps of inter-tribal experience leading to national unity for instance cannot function very well without this love imbibed from Christian Religious Knowledge. It is an experiential datum today that some Youth Corpers are discriminated against in some states because they are not indigenes of the place. After their service year, those who would have gotten “automatic” employment are not given the job because they are not indigenes. Jesus’ approach to the Samaritans draws our attention to a model which will help Nigerians fight against ethnocentrism.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations which are positive contributions towards ensuring the peaceful co-existence of citizens in a united and great Nigeria, free from the shackles of tribalism.

1. Every ethnic group should de-emphasize tribal sentiments so as to foster the national unity of Nigeria.

2. Every Nigerian citizen should love his/her neighbor. This is because tribal marks and tongues may differ but all of us are children of God just as Jesus Christ did love the Samaritans. This will make Nigerians feel at home in every part of the country.
3. Christian Religious Knowledge should be made a core course in secondary schools in Nigeria. This will enable the young ones embrace the biblical models for greater tomorrow. Biblical models should be made a critical component of General Studies, Peace Studies and conflict resolution strategies in all Tertiary institutions in the country.
4. Inter-tribal marriages should be encouraged across the country so as to promote affinity and bathe of consanguinity in Nigeria.
5. The vast natural resources and various human talents in Nigeria should be harnessed and promoted respectively based on justice so that peace will reign.
6. The National Youth Service Scheme should be given the required boost from its philosophy which is national integration. Discrimination against Youth Corpers in Nigeria should be stopped automatically or immediately and proven offenders punished accordingly.
7. Nigerians should vote into political offices those Nigerians who have love for all and therefore, are detribalized in their delivery of democracy dividends to the people of Nigeria.
8. The choice of candidates for jobs whether in the civil service or political circle should be based on merits and not tribal sentiments.
9. All those who propagate ethnic violence, genocide and ethnic cleansing under the cover of religion, rearing of cattles or in every other form should be brought to book and justice allowed to get its course.
10. In the socialization of the Nigerian child, let those values akin to the gospel such as respect for human life, desire for peace, love and societal harmony be impacted on them in their earliest years.
11. Religious leaders should not allow themselves, their religions nor their followers to be used for the sake of fanning the flames of ethnocentrism.
12. Jesus' models for inclusiveness found in the Bible should be seen as the Truth which all should live out in their daily activities whether as Muslims or African Traditional Practitioners. So it is not a Christian affair only.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ethnocentrism is a major problem in Nigeria and this is a threat to the unity and greatness of Nigeria. Each ethnic group has clannish interests and values which are at variance with others' own. This has led to major clashes and the incessant tendency to dominate others.

The biblical models of Christian Religious Knowledge are the Panacea for ethnocentrism in Nigeria. When Nigerians see themselves as one people whose origins are in God, live in love and inter-marry without discrimination, harness and share the nation's resources guided by justice, Nigeria, will remain united as one great country. In other words the unity and greatness of Nigeria is possible, her multiple ethnic groups notwithstanding. This is because ethnocentrism is not a necessary social evil that must be found in every nation that has plural ethnic nationalities. Therefore, this work invites all Nigerians to embrace the biblical models of Christian Religious Knowledge so as to destroy the grip and the smoking ruins of ethnocentrism that bedevils Nigeria and tends to destroy her nationhood.



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