

The Biblical Concept of Victory over Evil In the Great Controversy Between Good and Evil in Yoruba Contest

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ABSTRACT—The basis for a theology of triumph or victory in the form of prevention and protection is that there exist two systems: the system of evil, consisting of evil higher beings (the ajogun in YTR or Satan and his angels in biblical teaching) and the system of good, consisting of good higher beings (the Supreme Being and divinities in YTR, or God and His angels in biblical teaching). The opposition between these two systems results in constant conflicts in the universe. While the evil higher beings are there to harm and inflict man with evil things, the good higher beings help mankind in prevention of and protection from evil. Human beings need to offer sacrifices in order to be sure that he/she receives constant protection from the good higher beings. The focus of the discussion in this work is influenced by this theological concept. The major elements for consideration in the discussion include the existence of good and bad spirits, the activities of the evil spirits, and the superior power of good spirits over the evil spirits, the essence of the conflicts in the universe, and the means of triumphing over the evil spirits in Yoruba context.

Keywords: Yoruba, YTR, good and evil, Nigeria, traditional religion, Ajogun, Orisa

I. Introduction

There is constant fear of evil among the traditional Yoruba, hence the desire to overcome evil forces and activities. The questions addressed in this paper are: (1) what is the Yoruba idea of the Great

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Controversy? What is the biblical idea of the Great Controversy? Do they have similarities? How is victory over evil made possible? How relevant is the biblical idea of triumph to the Yoruba People?

II. The Yoruba Concept of the Cosmic Conflict

In Yoruba cosmology, there is a concept of cosmic conflict between benevolent and malevolent spirits. Apart from their belief in the Supreme Being, the Yoruba hold the belief in the existence of other numerous divinities. Yoruba Traditional Religion (YTR) scholars are not unanimous on the number of divinities in the culture. E. Bolaji Idowu notes that the suggested numbers of divinities include 200, 400, 401 and 1, 700 (Idowu, 1996, p. 64). Nonetheless, Wande Abimbola views that the number of divinities in the culture is 601. Based on this view, he presents the Yoruba idea of cosmic conflict and resolution in relation to the need for sacrifice in YTR (Wande Abimbola, 1994, pp. 75-80).

Abimbola reveals that according to *Ifa*, an oracular system, the whole universe is divided into two halves. The 601 supernatural beings that are occupying it are divided into two categories. The first category consists of 200 supernatural beings with the generic name *Ajogun*, while the second category consists of 401 supernatural beings with the generic name *Orisa*. The *Ajogun*, who are totally malevolent in nature, occupy the left side of the universe, while the *Orisa*, who are benevolent in nature, occupy the right half of the universe. In this respect, they form opposing forces against each other (Abimbola, 1994, pp. 75-76). Baba Ifa Karade defines the *Ajogun* as “negating forces” (Karade, 1993, p. 95). Likewise, Segun Gbadegesin identifies them as “the forces of evil which afflict unprotected human beings” (Gadegesin, 1991, p. 102).

Abimbola continues to describe that on the one hand, the wicked *Ajogun*, without any redeeming element, have witches as their allies in causing various problems in the world. On the other hand, the *Orisa* fight the *Ajogun* in order to offer protection to human being. This results in constant struggle between the *Ajogun* and the *Orisa* in the universe (Abimbola, 1994, pp. 76-80). J. A. Omolafe holds the same view (Omolafe, 1990, p. 75). Not only is there a constant struggle between the *Orisa* and *Ajogun*, but the *Ajogun* and their allies are responsible for many of the misfortunes and calamities which human beings experience. Omolafe puts it this way: “Those *Ajogun*