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ORISA POPO DIVINITY:
A THEOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE
IN OGBOMOSOLAND

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Going through this essay, there are certain important things that would be noted, most of which were either not observed by many early missionaries or were simply ignored. Now, for someone to pretend as if they are not there, is to be building a big castle in a very thin air. Any ministry that is founded upon such an assumption may not be very prosperous.

We have been able to discover that Ogbomoso people, and indeed the Yoruba, are not to be classed among the primitive people. Even before the coming of the Europeans and western educators, the Ogbomoso indigenes were advanced socially, educationally and scientifically. Although it may not be in the western style. They have been able to design their own clothes. One writer¹ says, "no one remembers a time when the Yoruba have not worn clothes."

They have a way of educating themselves and communicating with one another² through a symbolic system, which is called Aroko. Traditional medical science has been very effective. Up to now, people go to their local

¹E. Bolaji Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief (Ikeja: Longman, 1962), p. 5.

²F. W. Butt-Thompson, West African Secret Societies: Their Organizations, Officials and Teachings (Connecticut: Negro Universities Press, 1970), p. 168.

medical doctors who diagnose and treat their sicknesses and diseases. Even some medical doctors in the orthodox hospitals would secretly tell their patients to go and seek local treatment, especially with respect to some sicknesses which they could not diagnose. George E. Simpson wrote that,³

In 1964, Professor O. Onuaguluchi of the Department of Pharmacology, Medical School of the University of Ibadan . . . (said) . . . his analyses showed that certain plant materials used by traditional doctors are effective.

The Ogbomoso people, by their religion, have had a concept of God. This concept may not be adequate to the Christians, but it is a reliable acceptable concept to the people. Their understanding of God is that He is not an available God. He is too busy to pay attention to a singular individual. What is more, they believe that God (Olodumare) did not create everything all alone. He is believed to make use of some help from some Orisa, especially, Orisapopo.

Through the Orisapopo divinity, Ogbomoso people have had an experience of what holiness and purity is all about. As a matter of fact, total ignorance is not an issue here. They believe that keeping to the rules and regulations of Orisapopo endows man with holiness. With the coming of holiness comes prosperity, is the idea. The purpose of Orisa is to give prosperity. Any divinity that does not

³George E. Simpson, Yoruba Religion and Medicine in Ibadan (Ibadan: University Press, 1980), p. 97.

make its worshippers prosperous is considered very useless. On most occasions, it is practically thrown away. There is a Yoruba adage that says, "Osa bo le gbe mi, fi mi sile, Bo se ba mi," translated, "Divinity, if you cannot make me prosperous, leave me as you met me."

The issue of discipline makes the worshippers of Orisa popo to seriously fear her. The Ogbomoso people hate every form of human deformity. Some families that have children that are blind, lame, mentally deformed, or even leprous, make sure that they hide them away from people, so that they do not number such as a member of their family. It is this fear that makes them to worship the Orisa with all respect that they could offer, so that they will not be so wickedly disciplined. Suffice it to quickly say that the onlyway of escape was through the act of appeasing the divinity. In this case, through sacrifice of either animals or birds, depending on what the requirements are.

The people are not at a loss to whether there is life after death. They have a knowledge of heaven and hell. It is believed that every human being shall give account to either Olodumare or Orisapopo. Salvation is basically with respect to the work of the individual on earth. A good person will go to Orun rere, that is "good heaven," whereas a bad person will go to Orun Apadi, that is a "potsherd heaven." The potsherd heaven indicates

a place of fire, heat and great suffering. Potsherd itself connotes wastage, uselessness, impoverishment, sorrow, pain and nothingness. Nobody wants to be there!

Through the Orisapopo religion, the worshippers have tried to make their personal definition of man. They have concluded that man has a deposit of Olodumare (God in him. This is through the breath of life which God has given to man. Man is not on the same level with animals. As a matter of fact they believe that man was created by an agent of God, that is, Orisapopo. Man was not a product of organic evolution, as shown by Charles Darwin (1809-1882).⁴

Not only did they recognize that man was created, but that he was also given a free will. He is not forced to do anything against his will. He was to put his rational power into full use. However, he shall give his account of how he spent his life on earth to Olodumare (God).

That is not all, the thought of rendering account on the last day, as made the intra and inter human relationship to be solid. The people thus know that they must love themselves and also others. They all perceive God in every man.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since it has been established that the Orisapopo worshippers are highly learned in spiritual matters, and

⁴Elisabeth Kroeber et al, Biology (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1960), p. 488.

every other thing that has to do with man, it is therefore important to deal with them at that level. A minister of the gospel should use their knowledge to start with in his ministry. Hence it would be as working from the known to the unknown. St. Paul started preaching to the Athenians using this principle as recorded in Acts 17:22-34.

The Athenian concept of the non-availability of God is the same with the Ogbomoso Orisapopo worshippers. Acts 17:26⁵ says, "Though He (God) is not far from each one of us."

People should know that God is very near. Some schools of thought may want to say that Orisapopo is equal to, or represents, Christ Jesus.⁶ That is completely wrong. Nobody should make that mistake. Orisapopo is one of the divinities, whereas, Jesus is the Son of God and has no equal in that rank. Orisapopo cannot save anybody on the last day. Jesus Christ has come to save the lost. Orisapopo is not God, whereas at the birth of Jesus Christ he was named Emmanuel, that is, God with us (Matthew 1:23).⁷

The writer also believes that in preaching to the Ogbomoso people, it is better to start on their soteriology. The Orisapopo worshippers believe that salvation

⁵The Bible, New King James Version (1983).

⁶J. Omosade Awolalu and P. A. Dopamu, West African Traditional Religion (Ibadan: Onibonoje Press, 1979), pp. 66-67.

⁷The Bible, New King James Version (1983).

