

NBT S
M-DIV
OL-1-C
299.696

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF BLESSING
AND CURSING IN YORUBA TRADITIONAL
RELIGION AND JUDAISM.**

**AN ESSAY PRESENTED
TO THE FACULTY OF**

**THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO, OYO STATE, NIGERIA.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD
OF MASTER OF DIVINITY DEGREE**

By

JOHN AKINTUNDE OLADIRAN

JUNE, 1999.

99246

Though this concept of blessing and cursing is so strong in the cultural and religious life of these two people, it has improved their ethical value and their inter-personal relationship between them and God and other men. If this concept then becomes a policeman to guard the laws, then the people are still under the curses of the law. To be totally delivered is to accept the redemptive work of Christ on the Cross.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is time for all Yoruba traditional religionists - The Sango worshippers, Esu, Osun, Obatala, Yemoja, Egungun, Ogun, Orisa-oko, Orunmila, etc. to come together in conferences and organize a religious convention where the traditional beliefs, concepts, liturgical order of each deity will be put into writings. Some literary works had been done by some theologians and educated adherents such as Chief Yemi Eleburuibo, Chief Esuleke, Chief Micheal Ajiboye and Chief Jimoh Buraimoh just to mention a few. These works are not adequate for posterity sake. The call is to serve as a spring-board to other studies, not to serve as a reaction to any religion.

The Yoruba traditional religionists must be open-minded. They must not see Christianity as the religion of the Europeans (whites) who came to condemn their way of life. But, must be ready to see in Christianity, the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God to bring total deliverance from sin, death and suffering which will enable the believer to have both spiritual and physical blessings here on earth and life after.

It is time for African theologians to formulate Christologies that are relevant to African culture (Inculturation of the gospel). Inculturation will prevent Christo paganism or half-baked Christianity called syncretism (Olorun ko ko aajo) meaning "Heaven helps those who help themselves."

The Yoruba have known God - Olodumare before the Missionaries came and they worship God in their own context. When the gospel is preached or to be preached, their cultural self esteem must not be destroyed. They must not be treated as heathens rather the gospel should be preached to them in their own context. Start where you find them. The example of Paul the Apostle at Athen (Acts 17:16-31) can be used as a guide towards evangelization of a religious group that are Monotheist in principle but polytheist in practice.

C.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the Yoruba and the Jews have cultural and religious similarities when a view such as “blessing and cursing” is considered. Blessing and Cursing form the pivot on which the faith of the two ethnic groups revolves to worship God and relate with other human beings. The concept is the guiding principle which determines the ethical value of the society and their religious enthusiasm. The two religious groups search desperately for material goods of life since both share the same life philosophical thinking. This search is extended from the family circle to the Almighty God who is the giver of all good things.

The mode of seeking the LORD God is the prescribed Old Testament way of the time of Moses. The Yoruba religionists have progressed by having weekly gathering on Saturdays to have services at Ile - Isin Ibile (traditional Churches) located at Osogbo, Olla, via Ejigbo, and Mashifa, Ogbomoso.⁶ The enthusiasm of both religions adherents to be blessed and not to be cursed increased their religious faithfulness to offering sacrifices in order to find favour with God in the case of the Jews and the divinities in the case of Yoruba traditional religion.

The thrust of this write-up is the problem of syncretism which erupted because of social, political, economic, and psychological problems that the Christians are struggling with. This problem is aggravated because of the way Christianity was introduced without considering the culture of the people. There was cultural revolution which drove those who have no one faith back to the root.

In order to evangelize the Yoruba especially those who are still in the worship of intermediary deities, the gospel should be preached to them in their own context. Contextualization of the gospel must be understood to mean the biblical text interpreted directly (without compromise) to suit the culture. Examples are: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman of John 4 and Paul the apostle and the “saga of the Athenian unknown god” In Acts 17. This is not an effort to synthesize Christianity with Yoruba tradition religion which will result in syncretism but to

⁶Fakunle Oyewumi, Ile Areago. Isundunrin, Osun State, Interview, 7 February, 1999.

enable traditional religionists to experience God in the New and final revelation which is in Christ Jesus.⁷ To open their eyes to see God's reconciliatory sacrifice which is better and more acceptable than their own frequent sacrifice. The priests who see their role as a source of livelihood should be fully integrated into the church-setting having been convinced that they have genuinely accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Then the saying will come to pass.

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.⁸

Thus, the concept of blessing and cursing in Yoruba traditional religion and Judaism enables us to progress from African Theology to African Christian Theology.

⁷Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa, Kenya*: Evangel Publishing House, 1975, p.55

⁸Gal. 3:14 (NIV)