**INTRODUCTION**

In Biblical creationism, it is revealed to those dwell on earth that had strength and power when He wrought the borders of the world. By His wondrous might, He established the sun and moon, the rocks and earth and the ocean-stream, water and clouds. By His strength the Lord upholdeth all the deep expanse, middle-earth. The Son of God beholdeth from the heavens the sea and its foundations; He numbereth every drop of the showers of rain. By His wondrous power He hath ordained the number of the days. Even so in six days, by His Spirit’s might, the Lord in heaven devised the valleys of the world and the high hills, and founded them. Who is there that clearly knoweth all that mighty work except Eternal God?[[1]](#footnote-2) But facing the routine vicissitudes of life would be diffulcut enough on its own, without any outside force “stacking the deck.” Unfortunately, there is an outside force marshaled against us. Within the pages of Holy Writ, that “outside force” is identified by a variety of designation, but likely the best known and most widely used is the name: Satan.[[2]](#footnote-3) The Bible says that Satan was created by God as a cherub, the most powerful of God's angelic beings. Some time after his creation and before the creation of mankind, Satan rebelled against God and took one third of the angels (now referred to as demons) with him into rebellion. Four persons in the Old Testament had a direct confrontation with Satan. From their experiences is *the targets Satan aims at in your life; the weapons he uses to attack you; the purposes that he wants to achieve; and the defenses God has provided for you.[[3]](#footnote-4)*

In Yoruba Traditional Religious System, Esu is a fundamental Orisa and of great importance in Yoruba land. There is no shrine you will get to in Yoruba land where you will not see the image or a representation of Esu. In fact, well-established towns (i.e. those that have their OSUGBO and the OBA in council) also have their ESU at a spot, some in the entrance of the town and some in the ILEDI (i.e. the secretariat of the traditional and indigenous system of government). It is believed by the Yoruba that Esu has two hundred names. Some of them are: **Lagemo Orun** (the sacred child of heaven) **Alaakalu** (one whose greatness is manifested all over the place). **Esu Odara**(one who can do and undo). **Ogiri oko**(he who is as hard as a rock) etc. All these are names drawn from Esu praise songs i.e. the way and manner with which he does things positively and negatively. Others are: **Elegbara** (the mighty and powerful one) **Papawara**(the quickest and fastest one). **Akeregbaye**(small but in control of the whole world). **Onibode**(the gate man).[[4]](#footnote-5)

**The Person of Satan: A Theological Assessment**

In Christianity, Satan is also known as the Devil and, although the Book of Genesis does not mention him, he is often identified as the serpent in the Garden of Eden. In the Middle Ages, Satan played a minimal role in Christian theology and was used as a comic relief figure in mystery plays. Most Christians believe the answer to that question is obvious: “God created Satan.” But that is not really true. God created Lucifer. That may seem like a small distinction at first glance, but once you understand who really made Satan, it will change your perspective of him forever. During the early modern period, Satan's significance greatly increased as beliefs such as demonic possession and witchcraft became more prevalent. During the Age of Enlightenment, belief in the existence of Satan became harshly criticized. Nonetheless, belief in Satan has persisted, particularly in the Americas.

The most common English synonym for "Satan" is "devil", which descends from Middle English devel, from Old English dēofol, that in turn represents an early Germanic borrowing of Latin diabolus (also the source of "diabolical"). This in turn was borrowed from Greek diabolos "slanderer", from diaballein "to slander": dia- "across, through" + ballein "to hurl". In the New Testament, the words Satan and diabolos are used interchangeably as synonyms. Beelzebub, [[5]](#footnote-6)meaning "Lord of Flies", is the contemptuous name given in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament to a Philistine god whose original name has been reconstructed as most probably "Ba'al Zabul", meaning "Baal the Prince". The Synoptic Gospels identify Satan and Beelzebub as the same.[[6]](#footnote-7)

The name Abaddon (meaning "place of destruction") is used six times in the Old Testament, mainly as a name for one the regions of Sheol. Revelation 9:11 describes Abaddon, whose name is translated into Greek as Apollyon, meaning "the destroyer", as an angel who rules the Abyss. In modern usage, Abaddon is sometimes equated with Satan.[[7]](#footnote-8) The original Hebrew term sâtan (Hebrew: שָּׂטָן‎) is a generic noun meaning "accuser" or "adversary",[[8]](#footnote-9) which is used throughout the Hebrew Bible to refer to ordinary human adversaries, as well as a specific supernatural entity.[[9]](#footnote-10) The word is derived from a verb meaning primarily "to obstruct, oppose".[[10]](#footnote-11) When it is used without the definite article (simply satan), the word can refer to any accuser, but when it is used with the definite article (ha-satan), it usually refers specifically to the heavenly accuser: the satan. The word "satan" does not occur in the Book of Genesis, which mentions only a talking serpent[[11]](#footnote-12) and does not identify the serpent with any supernatural entity.[[12]](#footnote-13) The first occurrence of the word "satan" in the Hebrew Bible in reference to a supernatural figure comes from Numbers 22:22, which describes the Angel of Yahweh confronting Balaam on his donkey: "Balaam's departure aroused the wrath of Elohim, and the Angel of Yahweh stood in the road as a satan against him." In 2 Samuel 24, Yahweh sends the "Angel of Yahweh" to inflict a plague against Israel for three days, killing 70,000 people as punishment for David having taken a census without his approval. 1 Chronicles 21:1 repeats this story, but replaces the "Angel of Yahweh" with an entity referred to as "a satan".[[13]](#footnote-14)

The history of Satan is described in the Bible in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-19. These two biblical passages also reference the king of Babylon, the King of Tyre, and the spiritual power behind the kings. What caused Satan to be cast from Heaven? He fell because of pride that originated from his desire to be God instead of a servant of God. Satan was the highest of all the angels, but he wasn’t happy. He desired to be God and rule the universe. God cast Satan out of heaven as a fallen angel.[[14]](#footnote-15)

Some passages clearly refer to the satan, without using the word itself. 1 Samuel 2:12 describes the sons of Eli as "sons of Belial"; the later usage of this word makes it clearly a synonym for "satan". In 1 Samuel 16:14-23 Yahweh sends a "troubling spirit" to torment King Saul as a mechanism to ingratiate David with the king. In 1 Kings 22:19-25, the prophet Micaiah describes to King Ahab a vision of Yahweh sitting on his throne surrounded by the Host of Heaven. Yahweh asks the Host which of them will lead Ahab astray. A "spirit", whose name is not specified, but who is analogous to the satan, volunteers to be "a Lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets".[[15]](#footnote-16)

Jesus Himself testified of Satan’s existence. During His ministry, He personally faced temptation from the devil (Matthew 4:1-11), cast out demons possessing people (Luke 8:27-33), and defeated the evil one and his legion of demon angels at the cross. Christ also helped us understand the ongoing, spiritual war between God and Satan, good and evil (Isaiah 14:12-15; Luke 10:17-20). With Jesus Christ on our side, we need not fear Satan’s limited power (Hebrew 2:14-15). We ought to be wise, however, in resisting his tactics: “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Throughout the history of Satan, evil has been his identity because he is directly opposite God’s character. God’s holy standard found in the Bible exposes evil. If not relying on its truth, we can easily error:

1. One error is denying Satan’s existence
2. Another mistake is fearfully focusing on Satan rather than on Christ Jesus who overcame him
3. Others outright worship Satan, preferring the darkness of evil rather than light that reveals sin (John 3:19; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Any of these approaches please the devil. He wants us denying, fearing, obeying, or worshiping him. Unless we follow the trustworthy source, the Bible, he’ll deceive us (Ephesians 6:10-11).

One of the accepted methods of demonstrating that an entity is a real person is by presenting proof of its possession of intellect, emotions and will. All three of these are possessed by Satan.

1. Satan's Intellect: Satan's intellectual abilities are clearly demonstrated in the New Testament. Two will be selected as representative of the many which could be given. First, Satan tempted Christ (Matt. 4:1-11). The Lord dealt with Satan as a re.al person. If this statement is denied, then all rational interpretation of these verses is hopeless. Satan demonstrated his intellect by recalling from memory a portion of the Old Testament, Psalm 91:11, 12 (Matt. 4:6). In general, the application of this section to the situation at hand was appropriate, which is another demonstration of intellectual ability. His omission of an important part of the context (Psalm 91:1) points out that he has the ability to twist and pervert written documents to suit his purposes. Second, the Apostle Paul pointed out that Satan might get an advantage over the saint (II Cor. 2:11). However, it is not necessary for him to be victorious since believers can know about his devices. The word "devices" translates the word to noema. The basic meaning of the word is "thought or mind.”[[16]](#footnote-17) It may be used in an evil sense, as here, of "design or plot." Such ability does demonstrate that Satan possesses intellect.
2. Satan's Emotions: One verse clearly points out an emotion in connection with Satan. At the middle of the Tribulation, Satan will be cast out of heaven. He then initiates a time of severe persecution against Israel. His attitude toward the nation is described in Revelation 12: 17, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman." The verb used here is orgizo. Pride also may be predicated of Satan in I Timothy 3:6.[[17]](#footnote-18)
3. Satan's Will: It is indicated in II Timothy 2:26 that there are those "who are taken captive by him at his will." Other expressions of his will are seen in the fact that he tempts (I Cor. 7:5), he filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3), he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ (John 13:2), and he afflicted men (Acts 10:38).

**Overcoming Satan: A Biblical Solution**

The apostle John says that believers can overcome Satan when "the word of God abides in you." When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He cited scripture to him (Matthew 4:1-10). In addition, Paul tells us that the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, is our only offensive weapon against the Satan (Ephesians 6:13-17). In the parable of the sower, Jesus said that there were those who heard the word of God, but failed to take it in, and so were led astray by the devil (the seed that fell by the side of the road). So Christians resist the devil by knowing and memorizing scripture so that we cannot be deceived by the lies of Satan. The Bible gives believers the following instructions about resisting the devil:

1. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)
2. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27)
3. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Ephesians 6:16)
4. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

**THE ISSUE OF ESU (SATAN) IN YORUBA RELIGIOUS TRADITION**

Eṣù is the name of a divinity among adherents of Yoruba religion anywhere in the world; the divinity is very significant in the practice or observance of Yoruba religious experience.[[18]](#footnote-19) The deity, Eṣù, is a male by gender. However, he is capable of taking up the appearance of any other gender or entities as he pleases. In Yoruba religion, Eṣù is the inspector of rituals, sacrifice, and worship – the primordial duties assigned to him by Olodumare.[[19]](#footnote-20) To Christianity, the Devil is against the salvation plan of God. He tempts people and leads them astray against the plans of God for mankind. The erroneous identification of the Devil with Eṣù is further strengthened by the translation of the Bible into the Yoruba language. Eṣù is taken as the equivalent of the Devil and Satan. With this, there is the Yoruba Christian misconception of Eṣù. The same is true about the Islamic conception of Shaytan. The Quran admonishes Muslims always to avoid the evil machinations of Shaytan. Therefore, due to the same problem of scriptural translation, Yoruba Muslims equated Eṣù with Shaytan and came up with the Yoruba Islamic misconception of Eṣù.[[20]](#footnote-21) Infact, the word *Satani* is a foreign character introduced into the Yoruba religious vocabulary through Christianity and Islam. He, like Jesus or Mohammed, has no precise equivalent in the Yoruba language and religious thought.[[21]](#footnote-22)

He is also the special relation officer to Olodumare among the divinities.[[22]](#footnote-23) Outside being the name of a divinity in the crowded Yoruba Pantheon, the term Eṣù remains popular among all categories of people regardless of age, religion, gender, or social status, and this is the consequence of the attributes of Eṣù often misconstrued or manipulated to suit oneself. Eṣù is the name of one of the primordial divinities in this pantheon; among others, we have Orunmila (the wisdom divinity) Ogun (divinity in charge of iron and war) Obatala (creative divinity). To the people, Olodumare is the origin and source of all beings including the divinities. Therefore, Olodumare created Eṣù as one of his lieutenants.[[23]](#footnote-24)

Some regions combine Ogun with the trickster god, Eshu. Eshu, or Legba as he is also known, had mistakenly been identified by Europeans with the Devil in the past. The Yoruba pantheon, however, has no evil gods; a more accurate comparison would be between Eshu and the Satan of the Book of Job, to whom God assigns the task of trying men's faith. One myth dealing with Eshu illustrates his mischievousness: Eshu, posing as a merchant, alternately sold increasingly magnificent gifts to each of a man's two wives; the ensuirlg battle for the husband's favor tore the family apart. Surprisingly, Eshu also serves as the guardian of houses and villages. When worshipped in this tutelary position, his followers call him Baba ("father"). Eshu also serves as the god of I fa, a sophisticated and complex geomantic divirlatory tool which uses nuts, signs, and increasing squares of the number four to predict all facets of the future.[[24]](#footnote-25)

Eṣù, therefore, stands out among existing divinities in Yoruba theology because he has the will-power to approve or disapprove of all worships and rituals directed to Olodumare and/or any of the other divinities.[[25]](#footnote-26) Among the divinities, Eṣù is very close to Orunmila. Relying on oral traditions, both Eṣù and Orunmila are close friends;[[26]](#footnote-27) and this is evident in the shrine of *Babalawo* (Ifa priest) where the emblem of Eṣù is always kept close to that of Orunmila. Although, there is no consensus among scholars on the exact relationship that exists between Eṣù and Orunmila, some of the suggested relationships include the view that

1. Eṣù is the right hand divinity to Orunmila,
2. Eṣù runs errands for Orunmila,[[27]](#footnote-28)
3. Eṣù taught Orunmila the act of divination, and
4. While Orunmila declares the will of Olodumare to the world and those who choose to ignore these directives are punished by Eṣù and, in return for this service, Orunmila always provides sacrifice which is the food upon which Eṣù feeds.[[28]](#footnote-29)

It is important to note, from the suggestions stated above concerning the relationship between Eṣù and Orunmila, that the nature of Eṣù is compromised as he is not a character that plays subordinate roles to other divinities. It is true that there is a close interaction between Eṣù and Orunmila. As a matter of fact, when Eṣù tricks people into committing trouble, it is Orunmila that always comes to the rescue by prescribing appropriate sacrifice. This is a clear indication that the two divinities work in collaboration.

Esu is primarily a special relations officer between Orun (heaven) and Aye (Earth). He is the “inspector – general” or the confidential secretary of Olodumare, which makes the final recommendation to Olodumare for the latter approval. He also reports on regular basis to Olodumare on the deeds of men and divinities, incorrectness of worship in general and sacrifices in particular. Orunmila is assigned the duty of listening to the voice of Olodumare through divination and declare his (Olodumare’s) will to the world but, wherever the formers declaration is not heeded to, it is the duty of Esu to enforce the will of Olodumare by bringing some calamity as a sort of punishment upon the recalcitrant.  Orunmila in returns of the above functions to Esu always give Esu first of all in his drinks and food at every meal apart from the special appeasement to Esu for particular assignment. Therefore, there exist a very strong link between Esu and Orunmila is the Babalawo. Esu is the approver and bearer of sacrifices to Orun (i.e. the spirit world) and is well known to the babalawos as door – opener or gate man: Olureku / Onibode or better put OSETURA.

ORISA Esu can spoil things if they are not done as prescribed. As an enforcer of the will of Olodumare by the divinities and man, Esu would definitely bring bad and good things to people depending on the frequency they maintained with Olodumare’s will. This is the reason behind the misrepresentation of ESU as “devil” by those that are shallow in the knowledge of ESU earthly duties.

Esu is a personification of good and evil, which is an acknowledgement of the presence and co – existence of positively and negatively forces in the world. The special relations position of ESU is well explained in many of his praise song. Some of which are: Elekun n sunkun, Esu n sun eje (Esu is shedding blood when the owner of the problem is shedding tears) Onigbowa aye (the one in control of aye i.e. earth). Alare na ode orun (the special middle man between heaven and earth). Eni mo o ko, eni ko o, o o mo (he who knows him never meet him and he who meets him does not know him). O gba iwaju wole, onile gba ehin jade (he came through the front door and the owner of the house ran out through the back door). O lo daindain mookun oro (one who has the anointed rope to success, wealth and all the good things).

According to the holy sacred verses of IFA called ODUS, Ketu is believed to the earliest home of Esu. His worship predominates today in Erin near Ilobu, in all Osun State in Yoruba. Esu annual festival comes up in February in Ile – Oluji (a town in Ondo State of Yoruba). The festival marks the beginning of farming in the year. Esu can be appeased with one or all of the followings: eku (rat), eja (fish), omi tutu (clean water), oti (gin), obi (kolanut), orogbo (bitter kola), marshed yam (eewo), ogede omini (a type of banana), eyin adie (hen egg), epo pupa (palm oil), akara (bean cake), gbugburu (roasted corn), eyele (pigeon), akuko adie (cock), obuko (he – goat). Esu is never to be fed with Adin (black extracted from palm kernel seed); it is forbidden.

When one is to appease Esu, one first have to use his/her mouth to whistle 6 times to the left and right side of the Esu symbol i.e. 3 times on each side. One would then say APEJE 3times (meaning I have called, answer me). You will now say TI ABA PONSO IMALE AJI (while holding your left in the boxer’s form and using your right palm to beat the top of the left 3 times).  
The next thing is the praise songs of Esu, followed by the making of ones request/desire to Esu while the items are presented one after the other.  Esu is known not to share anything with anyone; he takes his things wholly or fully. Lastly is the breaking of kolanut. Esu’s emblems or symbols are various. It can be given image of clay or wood, a piece of late rite of rock. The original and the aboriginal seat of ESU from creation in all of us is Ookan aya as the Yoruba call it i.e. the focal point is our chests i.e. heart. This is where the decision to do or not to do be it positive or negative is taken.  The heart as part of the body is not bad, but decisions taken up there may turn out to be bad or good.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Satan is often comically portrayed as a guy in a red devil suit. He probably likes it this way, since most people (including Christians) are apt to disbelieve in his existence. As a "non-existent" force in people's lives, Satan is free to influence them without being discovered as the cause of many of their problems. However, the Bible says that Satan is a beautiful and powerful fallen angel, who would like to do nothing more than take away the joy of Christians through deception, and lead people into rebellion against God. Although Satan is destined for the Lake of Fire, biblical prophecy indicates that he will deceive entire nations and kingdoms before he is relegated to eternal damnation, along with the other fallen angels he led into rebellion against God.

Let us conclude by saying it is abnormal for anybody to equate ESU the divinity in the Yoruba theology to SATAN or DEVIL or LUCIFER. It is difficult and in fact impossible to find an exact equivalent of one character in a theology in another theology. However, if anybody wants to describe or find an equivalent of Esu in Yoruba belief system in any other theology or God revelation, ESU is better called the holy and invisible spirit.[[29]](#footnote-30) Eṣù as a divinity of Olodumare has the onerous task of assisting the Numinous in the theocratic governance of the cosmos. His duties are determined by Olodumare and he has no option but to implement the directives of his creator. As the inspector of rituals and adjutant of sacrifices as well as worship, he may, in the course of his duties, incur the anger and displeasure of humanity as he punishes their ritual laxity and weaknesses. To blame Eṣù for the evil deeds of man is to create a paradox that may be difficult to explain. The probable conclusion from the foregoing discussion is that, unlike in the Christian and Islamic traditions, the Yoruba do not have an all-evil being to which one can wholly attribute evil. Nevertheless, evil exists in the world. The problem then is how does one account for it?

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